Editor's Introduction
Special Issue: Multiliteracies: A Closer Look at Practice and Pedagogies

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The three articles in this special issue of the *Language and Literacy e-Journal* originated in the 9th Annual Language and Literacy Researchers of Canada (LLRC) pre-conference entitled*: Multiliteracies: A closer look at practice and pedagogies*, which took place at Sir Wilfred Laurier University/University of Waterloo in May 2012. The goal of this pre-conference was to push along understandings of multiliteracies theory in the context of actual practices and pedagogies in linguistically, ethnically and socially diverse learning settings. In his plenary address to the pre-conference, Jim Cummins located multiliteracies pedagogies within a critical analysis of the places and spaces in which we teach and learn. He encouraged participants to be aware of, and appraise the current realities that shape our practice, including our own "blindspots" and a willingness to engage with the critical question: "What image of the child are we sketching in our instruction?" (Cummins, May 26, 2012).

The articles that comprise this special issue respond to this challenging question by illustrating for readers the complexities and consequences for multiliteracies pedagogies in the context of linguistic diversity (Prasad), children's multimodal learning and identity work outside of school (Burke) and the realities of teacher education in the context of lifelong learning and globalization (Gouthro and Holloway). Each article draws upon innovative methodologies and theoretical lenses to further our understanding of children and adults as active meaning makers who incorporate multiple modes of representation across places, spaces and age groups in ways that out-pace predominant print-based, age-specific literacy allegiances. Taken together, these articles offer educators and researchers new perspectives and research tools to support multiliteracies pedagogies, but they go beyond concerns with classroom-based practice to articulate a reformulation of traditional spatial boundaries between children and adults as researchers and knowledge makers (Prasad), between ELL youth's virtual and actual learning spaces (Burke), and between traditional teacher education programs and adult education and lifelong learning approaches in Faculties of Education (Gouthro and Holloway).

Prasad argues that exploring and valuing students' plurilingual competencies and identities inside and outside classroom settings not only supports curriculum-related learning goals, but also foregrounds the role of education in the formation of plurilingual citizens in a pluriliterate, plurilingual world. Prasad offers an innovative theoretical and research framework that draws upon Lahire's (2011) concept of "plural actors" and Cummins (2009) "Transformative Multiliteracies Pedagogy" (TMP), to sketch an image of the child in her study as active meaning maker. She invites the children in her study to co-research with her their plurilingual literacy practices, and they generate, collect and analyse their own and others' visual and multimodal artifacts, creating for readers of this article a rich landscape of evidence of their processes of plurilingual text making and how these may be harnessed to support their learning identities and classroom learning.

Building upon her own and others' explorations of online virtual reading practices and youth identities (Burke and Hammett, 2009; Rowsell and Burke, 2009); Burke draws upon Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and cultural capital, and Gee's discourse theories to investigate how the out of school virtual learning practices of two English language learning youth remain invisible in classroom settings. Within a bounded case study methodology, Burke asks her youth informants to keep a literacy log of their online practices, thus providing, along with Prasad in this issue, an opportunity for her informants to construct and contribute their own understandings of valued literacy practices in their lives. The effect is a textured, complex and multimodal narrative of youth identity construction-in-practice that defies stable or frozen representations. Indeed, youth in Burke's study are aware of and move consciously among their multiple identities. In spite of, or perhaps because of these complexities, Burke asserts that understanding youth learning in virtual spaces is central to correcting educational 'blindspots'; educators may otherwise miss opportunities for engaging learners, and may also underestimate their students' literacy and language competencies.

In the vein of disrupting usual pedagogic boundaries, Gouthro and Holloway question the compartmentalization of program and disciplines within Faculties of Education that separate adult learning, graduate studies, and K-12 practice. They suggest that education students increasingly circulate in global education networks, negotiating diverse and multi-age education settings and modes of representation and so should be equipped to engage in critical practice in adult, out of school and classroom settings. Within this lifelong education teacher education framework, it is important to not only teach about, but also with and through diverse communicative repertoires. Here, Gouthro and Holloway draw upon narrative and oral history interview methods with fiction authors to make visible the affordances of fiction writing genres as points of entry for engaging new teachers in an expanded view of teacher education and practice. The authors argue that as the boundaries between "real-life people" and fictional characters in media and in on-line environments blur, teachers require multiliteracies tools and sensibilities to engage learners in critical discussions about the ethics, agency and citizenship themes embedded in the real/fiction narratives that permeate everyday lives.

Taken together, these authors suggest, from their diverse perspectives and research contexts, that engaging with 'the image of the child/adult we sketch in our instruction' moves us beyond classroom-based instruction (as important as this is), to consider how we organize our education institutions, envision the future of learning, and engage with meaning makers and meaning making across informal and formal, virtual and actual, local and global learning spaces. If these are the worlds in which our students live and learn, then these are the worlds that should be reflected in our multiliteracies research practices and instructional pedagogies.

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