

ISSN 2054-5355

Volume No. 94

Spring 2018

RaPAL

Impact and Innovation



Journal

The Research and Practice in Adult Literacies Network

Welcome

Research and Practice in Adult Literacies (RaPAL) is the only UK-wide organisation that focusses on the role of literacies in adult life. We promote effective and innovative practices in adult literacies teaching, learning and research; and support adult literacies practitioners and researchers. We enjoy engaging in debates that touch on English language and literacy, numeracy and digital skills across homes, communities and workplaces. Through our members, digital journals, conferences and fora, policy and advocacy work, we are active in Europe and have international links.

What we do

- Encourage collaborative and reflective research
- Publish a journal three times a year
- Create networks by organising events (including an annual conference) to contribute to national debate
- Believe in democratic practices in adult literacies
- Emphasise the importance of social context in literacies
- Critique current policy and practice where it is based on simplistic notions of literacy as skill
- Campaign for the rights of adults to have access to the full range of literacies in their lives

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Editorial Information

The editorial group for 2017-2018 includes the following researchers, practitioners and practitioner-researchers: Gwyneth Allatt, Claire Collins, Samantha Duncan, Sarah Freeman, Tara Furlong, Julie Furnivall, Sue Lownsbrough, Anne Reardon-James, Irene Schwab, Yvonne Spare, Brian Street and Rachel Stubbley.

RaPAL members are involved in the compilation of the journal as editors, reviewers and referees.

We are a friendly group – open to new members and new ideas. Please contact us with any contributions (views, comments, reports and articles) and do not be put off if you are new to the field or if you have not written for a publication before. The journal is written by and for all learners, tutors/teachers and researchers who want to ask questions about this field of work. It does not matter if the questions have been asked before. We want to reflect the many voices within adult literacies work and to encourage debate.

Why not join us?

Further information can be found at our website: www.rapal.org.uk

The RaPAL Journal is also available from various subscription services: EBSCO, LMInfo and Prenax. The RaPAL journal expresses a variety of views which do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial group. The RaPAL journal was designed by Image Printing Company, Lumsdale, Matlock, Derbyshire



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Editorial

Welcome to Journal 94, which focuses on the joint RaPAL, Learning and Work Institute, UCL Institute of Education, UCU, and NATECLA conference held on 9th November 2017 at UCL Institute of Education, London. The annual conference on English, maths and ESOL was entitled *Impact and Innovation* and contributions on the day showcased innovation in adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL practice as well as providing concrete examples of the positive impact of language, literacy and numeracy learning on individuals, communities and the wider economy.

Given the impact of technology on people's lives and the new policy announcement of digital as a 'third basic skill', Journal 94 also explores some of the issues surrounding digital literacy.

This edition includes contributions from practitioners and researchers who gave presentations and led workshops at the conference. There are also articles and book reviews related to the twin themes of the conference as well as contributions relating to digital literacy.

Katie Schumuecker's article, which opens this conference edition, argues for a new approach to basic skills education. She suggests the current *outputs* based model, which tends to focus on accreditation, should be replaced by an *outcomes* based model. Katie argues that this approach would reveal the positive impact of basic skills education on people's lives.

This is followed by Tara Furlong's summary article on the most popular workshop at the conference: *Making Space: social practices, participatory and creative approaches* where Tara concludes by examining the role of RaPAL in supporting these approaches.

Graham Hall, working in Wales, where English and Welsh have equivalent official status under the *Welsh Language Act*, provides an example of practitioner research used to determine the most suitable of four different approaches, to use when offering a bilingual Foundation Degree in applied computing. He concludes that each has its merits depending on circumstances.

A further article concerned with multilingualism is provided by Professor Li Wei. This article discusses the concept of *Translanguaging*, where all the language resources available to students are used in learning. The teacher becomes a facilitator who supports critical reflection and both teacher and learner contribute to knowledge construction. A very thought provoking article for those who reject the concept of 'banking education'.

The final article in this section is from Stephen Evans who believes strongly in the power of adult education to address many of the challenges faced by our society. Stephen argues this can be done by gathering evidence of success (a similar argument to Katie's); disseminating them widely and taking collective action.

Catherine Gray challenges all of us to consider whether One Size Fits All. She has seen huge changes in F.E. Colleges as a result of the change in education policy - compulsory

attendance up to the age of 18. Previously, learners attended because they chose to continue their learning, but no longer; disengaged learners appear in the classroom at the start of the academic year. Catherine reports on the nurture group that she has started. I don't want to give the game away but her story brought me to tears.

Renata Fraser and her wonderful team of literacy tutors from Perth inspire with their stories about the impact of learning on their students. A reminder of why we started the job we do/did. The editorial team wanted to highlight the work of Stewart's Cigar Box project in prison as being innovative and the impact of his approach is that a group has wanted to return to develop their skills and gain accreditation.

Sarah Freeman in a reflective piece considers the benefits to students, of different kinds of literacies. She also raises the question of who brings literacy to the classroom and the answer is not necessarily what we think.

What is Digital Literacy? Having asked 50 + people the response from 49 was silence, then, 'I'll get back to you.' It took a while for people to consider the concept.

'Digital literacy is being able to use the internet for what you want / need and being competent at getting the computer to do what you want it to do.'

'Digital literacy is understanding what a secure connection means; in the context of banking, payment details, being able to send and reply to emails, being aware of phishing scam tactics.'

'Digital literacy does not mean that you are able to code or understand the inner workings of a computer.'

This section explores the experiences of three practitioners – the editorial team. Digital Literacy is mentioned in Section 1 by both Katie Schumuecker and Stephen Evans as an essential tool. Here we pick up on more personal and local issues.

Juliet McCaffery takes the reader through concerns that computer users face as they negotiate everyday life.

In addition, an ex-teacher, now a computer technician, was interviewed to explore the issues seen on a daily basis by a local computer repair shop.

Julie Collins' starts with the arrival of a BBC computer with 32 mb RAM. She has to wait a further 17 years before capital funding allows her to embed literacy in IT courses at a homeless hostel. In another five years the computer is being used as a creative tool for learning: to record, research, communicate, share ideas and aid critical thinking and reflection.

The idea of digital literacy as a third basic skill is picked up by Toni Lambe.

In our peer-reviewed article Irene Schwab returns to the area of multilingualism and presents her research on the teaching of reading in literacy classes, where many of the students were multilingual. This research raises a number of very important questions about

the suitability of current training for literacy tutors, given the changing student cohort, and the challenges faced by teacher educators in designing suitable programmes.

The two books reviewed for this edition provide much to think about given the current challenging times. Julie Collins reviews *Populism, Media and Education: Challenging discrimination in contemporary digital societies*. This is an edited book which will be of interest to those who seek ways in which to counteract populism through education as well as those who are interested in the role of education and citizenship in the digital era. Vera Hutchinson reviews *Literacy and Multimodality across global sites* a book in which Maureen Kendrick revisits her previous work in light of current developments in the area of multimodality.

This edition closes with Tara Furlong's round up of news from the sector.

Note from the Journal Coordinator

Hello fellow RaPAL members

We hope you enjoy this conference edition of the Journal, representing our joint conference last autumn. We have included articles from some of the speakers and workshop leaders at the event, including our peer-reviewed article.

The title of this edition, Impact and Innovation, has been extended to include the idea of digital learning as a third basic skill with a look at its impact on individuals and the wider society and the opportunities it gives us for innovation. Our three editors have all included a short account of their own digital journeys, with some experiences that probably resonate with most of us, in our own lives and in the classroom.

As always, we would welcome any comments you may have about any of the articles in this edition or about your own experience. Our next Journal will be on the subject of Literacies in Different Spaces, in some ways a continuation of the idea of innovation introduced in this one. A call for papers has gone out, so if you have any ideas for submissions or would like to talk through any suggestions, please contact me on journal@rapal.org.uk. There are guidelines on our website on the [Write for Us](#) page and support for new writers is always available.

Best wishes

Yvonne

Adult basic skills: Impact on Poverty Reduction

Katie Schmuecker

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation is an independent organisation working to solve poverty through research, policy and practice. The provision of basic skills – such as literacy, numeracy, basic digital skills and being able to speak English – have a fundamental part to play in fighting poverty in the UK by giving people the tools they need to build a better life. JRF’s Head of Policy, Katie Schmuecker, opened the Learning and Work Institute’s Annual Conference on English, Maths and ESOL last year; this article is based on the speech she gave.

What is poverty?

Poverty is when your resources are not enough to meet your basic needs – including your need to take part in the society you live in.

There are 14 million people experiencing poverty in the UK today (after paying for their housing). This means there are 14 million people waking up every day facing impossible decisions about how to make ends meet – and what to go without, whether it’s new shoes for the kids or a suitable coat for winter. Their choices are limited and their prospects for the future damaged. It’s simply not right that poverty is so widespread in a prosperous country such as the UK.

Looking at how things have changed over time, the overall level of poverty – at around 1 in 5 – has been pretty static for the last 25 years. But looking beneath the surface shows what can be achieved when we put our minds to it. Take pensioners for example. The reduction in pensioner poverty has been one of the great successes of recent times, with poverty falling from 29% in 1996/7 to 13% in 2012/13. Similarly, the concerted efforts to reduce child poverty in the late 1990s and early 2000s bore some fruit, with the child poverty rate falling from 34% in 1996/97 to 28% in 2004/05. However, JRF’s most recent state of the nation report warned that progress is beginning to unravel, with both child and pensioner poverty starting to rise again. Nonetheless, it demonstrates what can be achieved when we focus on reducing poverty.

However, to be successful in reducing poverty, we also have to know who in society is most likely to be locked in poverty. The nature of poverty changes as our society changes. JRF’s analysis shows people living in working households, those living in the private sector and younger people have all seen their risk of poverty increase.

Why basic skills matter for poverty

People who lack basic skills are at a massive disadvantage in the modern labour market. This is a problem, as for most people work provides a route out of poverty. However, with over half the people in poverty in the UK living in working households, the need for work to pay well and be of good quality must be emphasised.

Basic skills help people to improve their prospects in the world of work in all sorts of ways.

- Over 50% people with no formal qualifications are out of work and the higher peoples' qualifications are, the more their earning power. Having the basics of literacy, numeracy, digital skills and speaking English provides a foundation for other qualifications
- Technology is changing fast and changing the nature of jobs. Not having basic digital skills is likely to become more of a disadvantage over time and generally, acquiring more skills leads to greater adaptability
- Poor English language skills increases the risk of persistent poverty and being fluent in English improves the chances of employment by over a fifth, with a similar impact on wages.

It's not just in relation to work where skills can help fight poverty, but in wider society too.

- Public services and the working-age benefit system (for example Universal Credit) are increasingly delivered through digital channels first. Basic digital skills, literacy and English language will be needed to access the support people are entitled to
- The same skills are important for shopping around for a good deal on energy or a new insurance provider, which can save people money on their essential bills.

So basic skills really matter for fighting poverty. But the UK has a basic skills problem, as work for JRF by the Learning and Work Institute has shown:

<https://www.learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Skills-Poverty-Sep-16.pdf>. Some 9 million people have low literacy or numeracy or both.

- Of 24 OECD countries taking part in a skills survey we came 12th for numeracy and 17th for literacy
- 850,000 have English for Speakers of Other Languages needs
- 11.5 million lack basic digital skills, according to a framework developed by (
- <https://www.thetechpartnership.com/basic-digital-skills/basic-digital-skills-framework/basic-digital-skills-framework-2015/>).

What needs to happen?

It is clear that basic skills for adults matters for poverty. Yet we are failing to tackle to problem effectively. While the Government has committed to expanding technical education and apprenticeships, other areas of learning - which support more vulnerable people – have been scaled back. Private and individual investment has not filled this gap, and it is estimated over one million adult learners have been lost from further education.

It is perhaps not surprising that employers have not filled this gap as they tend to focus their training budgets on the already skilled – highly skilled employees are four times more likely to receive training than their less skilled counterparts.

Along with the Learning and Work Institute, JRF has proposed the development of a new approach to basic skills. We've described it as a new programme of study for adults, focused on the core capabilities needed for life and work in the 21st century: literacy, numeracy, digital, basic English for Speakers of Other Languages, financial, health and citizenship.

- It would see people undertake the modules they need and learning in the context of 'real-life' applications, such as budget management, finance planning and health information. It would be a programme of study approach rather than focused on individual qualifications
- Delivered by expanding existing provision from colleges, training providers, employment support providers, employers and community provision.

Success would be measured by the outcomes achieved – whether we are helping people into work, to earn more or to progress to further learning – rather than simply the outputs (such as qualifications gained). Failing to assess the outcomes of what we do makes it hard to track where we're really having an impact and changing lives.

Delivering this wouldn't break the bank. We currently spend about £200,000 a year on literacy and numeracy in England. Reorienting this spending on a citizens' curriculum and doubling it to make the budget £400,000 would enable basic skills to be tackled by 2030.

It's a bold target but it's one we can ill afford to neglect if we want a prosperous UK without poverty.

Making Space: social practices, participatory and creative approaches

Tara Furlong

Tara has twenty years' experience in adult education and training in the private and public sectors in the UK and abroad, specialising in integrated English language, literacies and digital learning. She is involved in providing professional development via national organisations in the UK, and publication work; and has an established history of designing and implementing systemic curriculum quality initiatives. She can be contacted at webweaver@rapal.org.uk.

Introduction

As the most popular workshop at this year's Impact and Innovation conference, uniquely booked out some time in advance, RaPAL were delighted to have initiated the idea in response to a proposal at the last AGM. Interest was subsequently expressed in expanding its brief across social practices, participatory and creative approaches. The workshop comprised presentations and a discussion panel which was chaired by Dr Sam Duncan, UCL IoE Post-14 Centre, with Graham Griffiths, UCL IoE, Linda Ulrich, NATECLA, Claire Collins and Tara Furlong, RaPAL.

This summary article outlines elements of the UK roots and current practical applications of the social practices, participatory and creative approaches to adult literacies. This does not attempt to be comprehensive or to diminish extensive wider or international practice such as the REFLECT¹ approach, but to keep reference manageable. External materials utilised in the workshop were drawn from the Literacies for Learning in Further Education Research Project between Lancaster University, Stirling University, the TLRP and ESRC, which can be found in an accessible presentation style with a wide range of helpful images [here](#). The paper concludes by looking at the role of RaPAL in sustaining these practices.

A brief historical perspective

RaPAL's social practices, participatory and creative roots lie in adult literacies and community learning, which over the decades became inclusive of embedded, integrated and contextualised learning in wider vocational ambits, such as Further Education (FE). RaPAL was born in the mid-eighties out of national post-war regeneration movements, which developed adult literacy and education in community learning contexts. Examples of types of community learning provision that worked to develop literacy include the [WEA](#), [Pecket Learning Community](#), or any number of local community learning initiatives, such as at The

¹ ActionAid https://www.actionaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/doc_lib/190_1_reflect_full.pdf

Friends' Meeting House² in Brighton. RaPAL, of course, is not unique in this historical context.

Theoretical frameworks

In parallel with campaigns achieving a degree of national policy directed towards adult literacy from the seventies, the eighties brought a burgeoning of 'academic' frameworks derived from socially grounded perspectives in literacy learning. These include Literacy as Social Practice (LSP: Street, 1984; cf. Brice Heath, 1983), situated literacies (Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič, 2000), multimodality (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001; Cope and Kalantzis, 2001) and overarching New Literacy Studies (NLS: Street, 1994, 2003; Gee, 1991) to name but a few. The term *literacies* is in recognition of this inherent contextual multiplicity, not solely the inter-relation of language, literacy, numeracy and digital functions.

Brian Street (1943-2017), Professor Emeritus of Language and Literacy at King's College London, argued that an *autonomous* model of literacy is prevalent in policy, and constructs literacy knowledge and skills as 'neutral' and 'universal'. It implies that literacy functions and has effects independent of context, not least of which are social factors. He contrasted this with an *ideological* model of literacy, which recognises that literacy is a social practice and exists in local hegemonies. It implies diversity across contexts, not solely in practices, but in fundamental underpinning conceptions of reality, in knowledge and in skills. Thus, literacy is not simply a technical skill (Street, 1984, 2000). A social practices approach may imply negotiating curriculum and meaningful participation to local contexts, which in turn implies learner and context -profiling and -generated materials. This activity generates participatory and creative approaches.

An expanding concept of adult literacies

The bulk of formal adult English (which encompasses literacy) provision occurs in FE, which tends to implicate standardised qualification routes, rather than adult and community learning (ETF, 2016, 2015:5). By the end of the nineties, FE colleges had incorporated (i.e. become 'businesses'), while highly influential international measurements and comparisons of literacy indicated chronic shortfalls across populations (DfEE, 1999; OECD, 2013). As such, responding to adult literacies moved towards private sector provision.

Of the few substantive studies of successful adult literacy education, carried out in conjunction with FE and adult and community learning, the turn of the millennium saw recognition of the effectiveness of embedded, integrated and contextualised approaches (NRDC, 2006; NALA, 2011; Kuczera, M., Field, S. and Windisch, H. C., 2016). These approaches are inclusive of continua from incipient to higher order literacies, from family to

² Since 1876, with the initiatives of the seventies' adult literacy and learning campaigns relocated since 2005 to The Friends Centre, Brighton

vocational learning, where, ‘vocational and LLN (language, literacy and numeracy) specialists working together in teams are likely to be more effective in most contexts’ (NRDC, 2006: 22). They are inclusive of academic, professional and higher order literacies. This argument is supported by social practices theoretical underpinnings, which respond to the diversity of local functions, hegemonies and contextual factors.

An expanding concept of professional practice

Sector professional bodies argue for *dual professionalism* (IfL, 2012:4) in subject and in andragogy. There is little explicit comment regarding vocation-specific literacies practices, for example. For successful LLN specialists, *dual professionalism* may be argued to extend to ‘triple professionalism’ of literacies embedded in to a wide range of vocational, professional and other life contexts. Significant success factors include where ‘LLN teaching is linked to practical, vocational content and activities (and) LLN are seen as essential in the development of learners’ professional identity and for success in their vocational area’ (NRDC, 2006:29). The importance of this work is acknowledged in current policy formation for apprenticeships, where it is recommended ‘the Institute for Apprenticeships encourages its panels of professionals to incorporate additional, occupation-specific maths and English requirements into the standards for each route’ (BIS DfE, 2016:50).

Implications for adult literacies educators’ professional practice

To respond to the diversity of local curricula and associated andragogy implicated in often standardised literacies provision, LLN educators value research-engaged andragogy and professional learning communities internal and external to their institutions (Furlong, 2017). This implicates educators’ own literacies, i.e. discussing, reading and writing, as they develop evidence-based and research-informed andragogy and curricula as part of locally nuanced provision and their ongoing professional development. Educators’ own literacies practices associated with research-engaged andragogy are argued to improve learning outcomes, and educators’ professional well-being (*ibid*).

RaPAL offers a national flexible professional learning community of ongoing CPD and peer review in diverse literacies andragogy. This includes an accessible, termly, educator-generated digital journal, annual events and a participatory, flexible- and remote- working editorial and management board.

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Developing bilingual communication skills through Content and Language Integrated Learning

Graham Hall

Graham Hall has taught courses in computing, mathematics and education at Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor, a further education college in North Wales. He has lead teaching teams for a Foundation Degree in applied computing and a BA Honours Degree in post-compulsory education and training. He can be contacted at grahamhall3@gmail.com.

Introduction

In September 2011, a Foundation Degree in applied computing was introduced at the Dolgellau campus of Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor in conjunction with Glyndŵr University. The course was offered bilingually, allowing a choice of study through the medium of English or Welsh. This article describes practitioner research (Hall, 2014) to determine the most suitable linguistic approach to use with the first group of six students, who completed the course successfully and graduated in the summer of 2013.

Bilingualism at work

It is estimated that over 90% of the population of the United Kingdom are monolingual English speakers. Nevertheless, there are areas of the country where a substantial section of the population has another language as their mother tongue. An ability to communicate bilingually can be of great benefit when working professionally with a minority language group, particularly in stressful situations or when supporting vulnerable children or adults.

Metropolitan Police commissioner Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe has said:

“We know that almost 300 languages are spoken in London. We need to recruit and deploy officers with second languages in areas where those languages are spoken. I believe it will help boost confidence, help to solve crime more effectively and support victims and witnesses.” (People Management, 2015)

An example of bilingualism in social work is the *Respekt* Project set up by the Children and Families Department of City of Edinburgh Council. This aims to support Polish families in cases of domestic violence. The service is provided by Polish speaking social workers who are able to deliver the service in the users' first language (With Scotland, 2015).

Ability to communicate in another language can be very important when travelling abroad to attend meetings or work on projects. As an example, each year a study visit to Germany is arranged for engineering students from Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor, to observe computer-aided manufacturing and robotics systems in use in car factories. In preparation for the visits, the college organises German language classes. Video interviews recorded with car plant employees during previous visits provide a teaching resource. The students

participate enthusiastically in the language sessions and find these have been helpful when they arrive in Germany.

Celtic languages are becoming increasingly important in western areas of Britain. The *Welsh Language Act* specifies that Welsh and English have equivalent official status and requires that services are made available to the public in Wales through their preferred language. The Act applies to a wide range of organisations including: schools, hospitals, transport providers and shops. An ability to communicate in both English and Welsh gives an advantage to candidates applying for work in these sectors. Our Foundation Degree in applied computing is therefore offered bilingually as a means of developing students' language skills and improving their employment opportunities within Wales.

Approaches to developing bilingualism

For the first presentation of the computing degree course in 2011, a team of four lecturers was assembled. The team consisted of two first-language Welsh speakers and two acceptably fluent second-language speakers. The first intake of six students had all attended schools in Wales where classes were delivered bilingually, but the extent of their current use of Welsh varied considerably. At one extreme, several students spoke and wrote in Welsh every day, whilst several others rarely used the language.

As a course team, we decided from the outset that we wished to integrate Welsh language with the delivery of our computing modules in ways that realistically reflect language usage in the workplace. This approach is termed 'Content and Language Integrated Learning' (Hillyard, 2011). It was apparent that different methodologies were possible, and it was decided to evaluate the effectiveness of four approaches: *optional bilingualism*, *BICS/CALP model*, *extended CLIL*, and *necessity bilingualism*. These are described below:

Optional bilingualism

Resources such as PowerPoint presentations and work sheets are produced bilingually (fig.1). The teacher tries to conduct all discussion bilingually, repeating or developing points in the two languages, so that each student can follow the lesson in the language of their choice.

Examples of real time systems for booking aircraft seats and hotel rooms...

Enghreiffiau yw systemau archebu sedd awyren ac archebu ystafell gwesty...

Looking for a city hotel, country or guest house?
Infotel has the solution!
 Book hotels online or call our experienced reservations team
 accommodation requirements in minutes.
 UK callers: 01775 843415 From outside UK: +44

This month's favourite hotels:

Figure 1: An example of a PowerPoint slide in which captions are provided in both English and Welsh

The advantages of optional bilingualism are that: it makes Welsh speakers feel included socially; it satisfies the statutory requirements to provide a bilingual course; and if done well, it can produce an interest and respect for the minority language.

The disadvantages are: a large amount of work is required from the teacher in producing materials bilingually; the pace of the lesson can be slow, which can be frustrating for both the monolingual and bilingual students; and there is probably little likelihood of students developing their language skills.

BICS CALP Model

This approach is based on the theory (Roessingh, 2005) that language can be divided into everyday conversational language (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills: BICS), and technical and specialist language (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency: CALP).

Welsh is used to communicate in everyday language, such as outlining the objectives of tasks. General resources are provided only in Welsh (fig.2), with translations available on request. English is used for technical tasks such as programming.

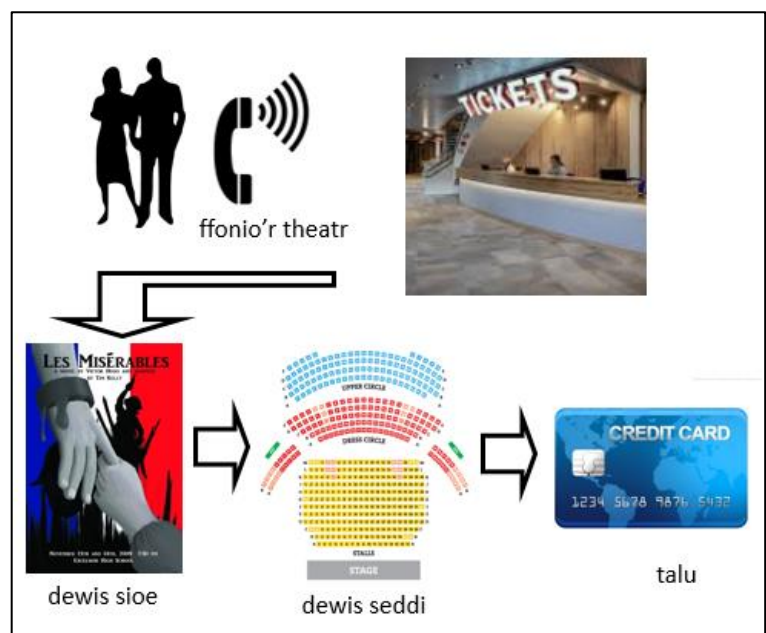


Figure 2: A PowerPoint slide in which only Welsh captions are provided when outlining the requirements for a task to produce theatre booking system software. The concepts of telephoning, choosing theatre seats, and paying by credit card involve only everyday language and would be understood in Welsh by all of the students.

The advantages of a BICS/CALP approach are that: students can improve their understanding of everyday conversational Welsh, and benefit from teaching each other; there is no requirement to learn parallel sets of technical terms in two languages; and there is less requirement to repeat concepts in both languages, so the pace of the class is faster.

Disadvantages of the BICS/CALP approach are: non-Welsh speakers may feel that they are under pressure to develop their language skills; and we are assuming that there will be no requirement for the use of specialist Welsh technical language in the workplace.

Extended CLIL

A deliberate effort is made to teach Welsh language through providing specialist technical vocabulary. It is expected that students who are not first language Welsh speakers will discuss and write in Welsh on occasions (fig.3). Welsh language is corrected as necessary.

The advantage of the extended CLIL approach is that students actively improve their spoken and written language skills, which can have both social and employment advantages.

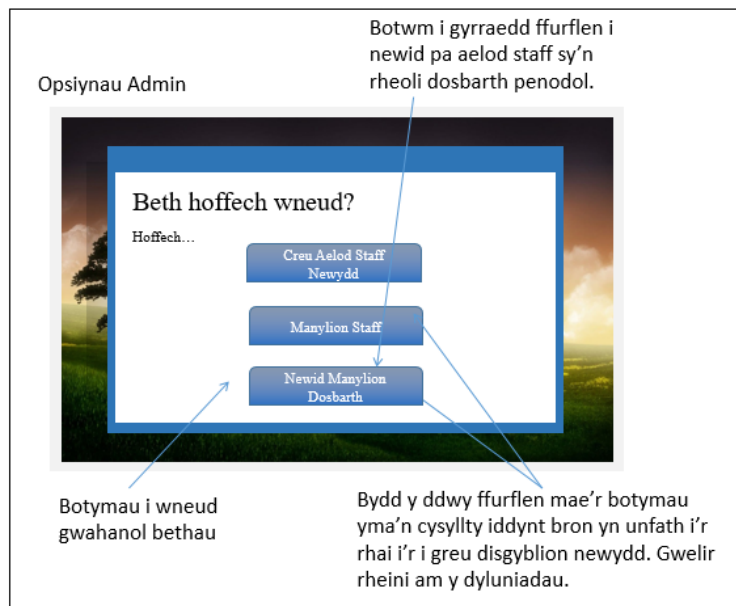


Figure 3: A page from a student's software design assignment, where it was specified by the tutor that all notes should be submitted in Welsh.

The disadvantages are: an additional workload on students; and that some students may have no interest in developing their Welsh language skills and resent this requirement.

Necessity bilingualism

Students use Welsh where this is required by an outside institution, for example: in producing bilingual web pages (fig.4) or database user screens. Help is provided by tutors on an individual basis with translation. Other course activities are carried out optionally in English or Welsh, as preferred by the student.



Figure 4: A section of a web page produced bilingually by a student for a town council in North Wales.

The advantages of the necessity bilingualism approach are that: students are able to provide products which meet the needs of clients, and develop an appreciation of the value of the minority language; students gain some language skills within in a personally motivating project environment; and students gain software skills related to the presentation of bilingual materials.

Disadvantages are: a limited development of language skills; and students remain dependent on translation services when they enter employment.

The characteristics of the four linguistic approaches are summarised below:

	Tutor speaking	Tutor writing	Student speaking	Student writing
Optional bilingualism	Both languages		optional	
BICS CALP model	Welsh for general discussion English for technical work			
Extended CLIL	Welsh specified for some course activities Additional language support if required by students			
Necessity bilingualism	optional			Welsh when required by a client

Figure 5: Summary of the verbal and written language requirements of the different approaches to bilingual course delivery for tutors and students.

Observations were made during teaching sessions and interviews were carried out with students at different times over a period of an academic year. It became apparent that this particular student group had a strong preference for learning through the BICS/CALP model, appreciating the advantages of this approach and identifying the disadvantages of the alternative methods.

Discussion

Whilst an acceptable Content and Language Integrated Learning strategy was identified for one particular group of students, we would not suggest that the same strategy is always appropriate. Much depends on the current linguistic skills of the student group, the nature of the course, and the underlying objectives in promoting and developing bilingualism. Each of the approaches may be suitable in specific circumstances:

Optional bilingualism, in which presentations are made in a combination of both languages, can be very effective for delivering short training courses in the workplace or conducting public meetings, particularly where the audience has a mixture of linguistic backgrounds.

The *BICS CALP model* can be particularly effective when training specialist professional groups who will have contact with a minority language group within the community. Examples might be medical staff, who would undertake most of their specialist training through the medium of English, but might also carry out some activities in a second language such as Urdu or Spanish as preparation for work in the community.

Extended CLIL is most appropriate for training staff who will predominantly work in a bilingual environment. An example might be teaching in schools in some areas of Wales where an ability to communicate in both languages is an essential requirement.

Necessity bilingualism provides a relatively easy way for students to prepare for work in a bilingual environment. Social workers or police may work predominantly through the medium of English on a day-to-day basis, but may sometimes need to produce information leaflets or send on-line messages in other languages in order to reach a wider group in the community.

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Translanguaging and Co-Learning

Li Wei

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Introduction

There has been a great deal of debate about policy, political, and funding issues regarding adult literacy and numeracy classes in England. Much of the debate is framed in a 'discourse of skills deficit': the UK adult workforce is somehow portrayed to have a serious skills deficit in literacy, especially English literacy, numeracy and digital literacy. The kind of discourse appears in the government's various industrial strategies documents where they talk about skills shortage. One rarely hears about the multilingual resources that the nation has, or the multilingual potential of the ethnically diverse workforce. It is mainly the deficits and shortage that the government is concerned with. Many adult learners in literacy and numeracy classes are also ethnic minorities and bilingual learners. They speak English as an additional language and they have many other different languages that they know and use. I want to promote the idea of Translanguaging and co-learning that could enable us to uncover the multilingual resources and realise the multilingual potential of the UK population.

What is Translanguaging?

The origin of the idea of Translanguaging came from Welsh revitalization programmes. Cen Williams of Bangor University, who studied the classroom practices in these Welsh revitalization programmes, observed that teachers in these programmes tried very hard to teach everything in Welsh – these are not simple language classes, but what you might call content-language-integrated learning, or CLIL - but very often the students respond in English. Many teachers believed that the only way to promote and revitalise minority languages such as Welsh was to insist on a monolingual policy, i.e. use Welsh only and all the time. The reality, however, is somewhat different: there aren't many, or any, young people who know Welsh only and no English at all. So what we have is a bilingual community of learners who are English dominant. Rather than ignoring that fact, Williams (1994) argued that it would be beneficial to the learners and to *learning* if they were allowed to use their entire linguistic repertoire, i.e. both English and Welsh. Indeed, in the classes where the teacher taught in Welsh but allowed pupils to respond in English without reinforcing monolingualism, the learning outcome seemed much better – the learners learned more both the language and the subject matters. It should also be said that despite the policy and what the schools claimed to be doing, most teachers also switched between

languages – Welsh and English – in their teaching, because the teachers themselves are also bilingual. William’s doctoral thesis was written in Welsh and it was his supervisor Colin Baker, who coined the term Translanguaging to describe the bilingual pedagogical practice that Williams studied (Baker, 2001). Translanguaging in this case was treating the learners as bilinguals, not monolinguals, to maximize the learners’ as well as the teachers’ bilingual potential in learning.

The concept of Translanguaging was then expanded by Ofelia Garcia who has been working with the minoritized learners in the US, especially those of Hispanic background who are labelled as ‘bilingual’, Ofelia Garcia (2009) talks about some of the common assumptions people make of these learners:

- About them: Non-native/ Second language speakers of English/Students with interrupted formal education (SIFE)/ English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- About their language learning/practices: Incomplete/ Interference
- About their bi-/multi-lingualism model: Additive: Double monolingualism
- About their education: A remedial one usually in the ‘dominant’ (socio-politically, in the wider society) language only. Emphasis on language structure.

And consequently their subjectivities are constructed as follows:

- They do not know English
- They only know Spanish. But their Spanish is not as good as the native, monolingual Spanish speakers
- They do not know content
- They do not know anything
- They need remediation
- They need to be segregated.

The so-called Bilingual Education Programmes for the Hispanics in the US tended to be basically English classes to Spanish-speakers. The outcome was not intended to be bilingual. Garcia defined Translanguaging as ‘multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds’ (2009: p. 45) and argued that it has the potential of *empowering* the learner and *maximizing* their learning capacity. It is also about empowering the teacher/instructor or educator and transforming the way we teach and the way we support the learners in the process of knowledge construction.

The concept of Translanguaging was further extended by myself and others in our work with bilingual learners and learners of immigrant or ethnic minority or background in the UK in English language classes, including ESOL, as well as the so-called content classes (Creese and Blackledge, 2010; Li Wei, 2011; Garcia and Li Wei, 2014). We wanted to ask the question:

why is it OK for English L1³ speakers to learn French, German, Spanish or whatever through English, and not OK for speakers of other languages to learn English in their L1s? It is more than a pedagogical question of course. Again the basic idea is to try and maximize the learners' full multilingual potential, using their bilingual background as a resource in learning.

Translanguaging has also been applied in the field of modern foreign language education, where the dominant educational model is still a monolingual one, i.e. don't use your mother tongue/L1 in the foreign language classroom for fear of interference and negative transfer (and transfer can only be negative), ignoring the fact that one cannot get rid of one's mother tongue just like that. We don't forget our English when we learn French, German, Spanish, or whatever. We need to find a more positive way of using the learners' first language(s) as a resource for learning.

Colin Baker and colleagues in Bangor did a two-piece review of the development of the concept of Translanguaging and its application in education (Lewis, Jones and Baker, 2012a, 2012b). They acknowledged the different perspective on Translanguaging that I adopt. The field that I'm working in, which influenced my conceptualization of Translanguaging, is distributed cognition. And it actually started with an extremely modest interest and a very narrow focus. Years ago, I was working with my students on listening comprehension, and I was particularly curious about why some learners with almost perfect grammatical knowledge (assessed by formal tests) found it hard to conduct a decent conversation, as they did not have comprehension difficulties with spoken interaction. So we examined several groups of learners, adult learners, who scored very high, almost perfect scores, in tests of grammar and vocabulary and reading comprehension, but scored really low, had all sorts of difficulties, in listening comprehension tasks, and therefore couldn't hold a fluent conversation. We looked at formality, genre, lexical density, accent etc. and the various strategies the learners used in listening comprehension, and discovered that one of the key differentials was the availability of visual cues – whether one was listening only to a recorded conversation or watching a video or indeed face-to-face interaction. The more visual cues one had the easier it was for the learner to follow the conversation, and in face-to-face interaction, both the speaker and the listener adjust their speech and gesture according to mutual understanding (Chien and Li, 1997, 1998).

In the vast and interdisciplinary fields of language acquisition and social interaction, there is ample evidence already that language learning and use is a multi-dimensional, and crucially, a multimodal, process. There is scientific evidence that colour and smell influence one's memory and can play an important role in language learning – again, if we look at young children's learning and reflect on our own learning experiences, we know how important these things can be in helping us to remember not only the language form but also how to use the language in context (Cook and Li, 2016). Technology plays an increasingly important role in learning.

³ Native English speakers.

Merill Swain, a leading scholar in the sociocultural theory of language learning, used the concept of *Languaging*, rather than *Translanguaging*, to look at advanced second language learners' capacity to talk through problems, or problem-solving through language – sometimes called *meta-languaging* (2006). And Neil Mercer looked at how children problem-solve through language(s) in science classrooms. Both of them talked about 'thinking through language' (Mercer, 2000).

Combining the multimodal and multisensory aspect of language learning and use, and this 'thinking through language' idea, I use *Translanguaging* to argue that we, as language users, think beyond language and use all available cognitive and semiotic resources in orchestration in learning and in social interaction. There is no such thing as a language-only part of the brain. It is the same part of the brain that is also responsible for memory, attention and affect. So *Translanguaging* is transcending language boundaries between named languages such as English, Arabic or Chinese, and transcending the boundaries between language and other cognitive and semiotic resources (Li Wei, 2018). Don't forget that the fastest growing new language that is fundamentally changing our everyday lives is *Emoji*. So from a *Translanguaging* perspective, language is a multilingual, multisensory and multimodal resource for meaning and sense-making.

It's also very important to remind ourselves that languages have their own histories and traditions and values, and also represent histories, traditions and values. *Translanguaging*, or allowing the learners to maximize their bilingual and multilingual potential is about respecting and utilizing these histories and traditions in the most positive and beneficial way. We must not forget that when we are dealing with adult learners, even if their English language skills may be disadvantaged compared to the advantaged native speakers of English, there are not knowledge-vacuums. As colleagues in adult literacy say, a beginner reader is not a beginner thinker⁴. Most of them will have learned knowledge in their own languages, and they may have richer life experiences than many of us do. So how best to make use of what they already know is the real question for us to think about when we conduct our professional practices.

Co-Learning

In our work with children of ethnic minority families, we constantly come across experiences where the parents, who don't speak much English, felt that the way their children are taught certain subjects in schools, was at odds from the way they learned when they were children, but did not know whether they should say anything to the school. Here's a short transcript of a Sri Lankan parent's view on the way their children were taught maths at school.

"I think the way they teach times is really odd. They don't ask them to memorize. They separate the numbers first. For example, if they do 12×7 , they tell them to

⁴ Thanks to Toni Lambe for providing this saying – originally from Frost and Hoy.

separate 12 to $10 + 2$, and then you first do 10 times 7 and 2 times 7 and then add them up. It's slow and you can make more mistakes. It's stupid, no?"

Rote learning has a bad reputation but it is about memory training. Nobody says memory isn't important in learning. It is a cultural tradition that we look down upon rote learning here in the UK, and it is an ideology.

There is research that shows that the way mathematical concepts are represented in different languages and cultures influence the way people learn these concepts and the proficiency in these concepts (Ngan Ng and Rao, 2010; Schleppegrell, 2007). Yes, we can use visual cues in teaching. But why can't we also utilize the multilingual and multicultural knowledge that our students have in their own languages and from their cultures? There are traditions and histories of knowledge construction in other cultures and languages – or Funds of Knowledge (González, N., Moll, L. C., & Amanti, 2006) - that we all can benefit from in learning.

This leads me to my key point: The Translanguaging approach aims to challenge the traditional power-relations in the classroom where the teacher provides the model of learning and the source of knowledge and information, whilst the learner learns the knowledge and information according to the model the teacher sets. The learners have their own Funds of Knowledge, and Translanguaging is about actively making use of those funds of knowledge in learning. And that implies not only 'recasting the learner as the expert', but co-learning!

The concept of co-learning has been used in a range of disciplines from Artificial Intelligence (AI) and computer simulation, to global security systems and business information management. But it is not talked about very much in educational research, where *co-participation* and *co-construction of knowledge* are more often discussed with a focus on equitable access to resources, equal contributions from individuals, and emergence of knowledge through the actual learning process. In essence, co-learning is a process in which several agents simultaneously try to adapt to one another's behaviour so as to produce desirable global outcomes that would be shared by the contributing agents.

Researchers of co-learning are interested in the emergence of conventions and the evolution of cooperation during its process. Brantmeier (2005) suggests that in the classroom context co-learning changes the role sets of teachers and learners from 'dispensers and receptacles of knowledge' to 'joint sojourners' on the quest for knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. The teacher would become a learning facilitator, a scaffolder and a critical reflection enhancer, while the learner becomes an empowered explorer, a meaning-maker and a responsible knowledge constructor. As Brantmeier says, 'a facilitator doesn't get in the way of learning by imposing information. A facilitator guides the process of student learning'. A scaffolder 'assesses the learner's knowledge and builds scaffolding to extend that knowledge to a broader and deeper understanding'. And a critical reflection enhancer asks the learner to 'reflect on what is being learned and the process of learning (meta-reflection about process)'.

In the meantime, an empowered explorer is ‘an independent or collective explorer of knowledge through disciplined means’. And a meaning-maker and responsible knowledge constructor is ‘one who engages in meaningful knowledge construction that promotes relevancy to her/his own life’. *Mutual adaptation of behaviour is the key to co-learning*. In order to achieve desirable learning outcomes, the teacher and the learner need to constantly monitor and adapt their actions and learn from each other. Co-learning in the classroom does not simply involve the teacher in developing strategies to allow equitable participation for all in the classroom; co-learning requires much unlearning of cultural conditioning because, as Brantmeier points out, ‘it challenges the traditional authoritative, dominant and subordinate role sets in schooling environments and the unequal power relationships in wider spheres of our world’. It empowers the learner, and ‘builds a more genuine community of practice’. It moves the teacher and the learner towards a more ‘dynamic and participatory engagement’ in knowledge construction. Co-learning therefore entails the sharing of ‘funds of knowledge’ between the teacher and the learner, both of whom are given the space to demonstrate their ‘symbolic competence’ through transformative acts such as Translanguaging to achieve desirable outcomes. And the desirable outcomes include linguistic knowledge, cultural knowledge and development of new identities (Li Wei, 2013).

In sum, Translanguaging is the process of making meaning, shaping experience, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of multiple languages. It is a different way of seeing language as a multilingual, multimodal and multisensory resource, using it in orchestration with other cognitive and semiotic resources rather than entirely on its own, and teaching language and literacy (and indeed other subjects) in a socioculturally sensitive and meaningful way that brings out the best of the learners’ potential and making the best use of their Funds of Knowledge. It has proven to be effective and transformative in many contexts. In particular, it recasts the teacher as ‘joint sojourners’ on the quest for knowledge, learning from our pupils as much as they do from us.

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Impact and Innovation

Stephen Evans

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We need a higher ambition as a country for adult literacy and numeracy. The case is compelling. How can we work together to make it happen?

Our country faces some big challenges. At Learning and Work Institute, we are clear that adult education, underpinned by widening access to help for adults to improve their literacy, numeracy and digital capabilities, can play a crucial role in tackling all of the challenges.

Challenge 1: Changing demographics. We have an ageing population – it's good that on average we're living longer, but it brings with it the challenge of more people living with long-term health conditions and rising pressures on health services. Yet we know that participation in learning has positive impacts on people's health and wellbeing, and that higher levels of literacy and numeracy are associated with a higher likelihood of health-improving behaviours.

Challenge 2: Participation in society and social inclusion. How do we ensure everyone can actively participate in society, and reduce social isolation and loneliness (for example, the government has recently appointed a minister responsible for reducing loneliness)? These are complex challenges of course. Yet we know that participation in learning is positively associated with likelihood of voting and that one of the key reasons adults learn is to meet new people and make new friends.

Challenge 3: Inclusive growth. Economic growth has been sluggish for the last decade – people's real incomes have barely recovered to 2008 levels, meaning we are on track for the worst decade for living standards growth since the Napoleonic Wars. Yet we know that improvements in skills, and in particular having good literacy, numeracy and digital capabilities, is linked to improved productivity, employment and earnings.

Recent decades are littered with reports showing this link and calling for improvements in learning and skills, and especially literacy and numeracy. For example, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation are working to tackle the 'poverty premium' whereby people on lower incomes tend to pay more for many goods and services (for example, pre-payment electricity meters are more expensive than online direct debit tariffs). They have recognised, based in part on

our research, that helping people to build their financial capability can be part of the answer to this.

Importantly, all of these challenges interact and are taking place in a changing context. For example, lengthening working lives coupled with a changing economy and labour market mean people will need to learn through their lives. Similarly, advances in technology and a more integrated global economy mean a rising bar for skills levels needed to get into the labour market – good literacy, numeracy and digital skills are increasingly a minimum bar to find and keep work.

How do we make the case and ensure we're heard?

At Learning and Work Institute we want more investment in learning that can make a real difference for adults, communities and society. We think one of the key challenges to achieving this is making sure people in positions of power and working in other sectors recognise the difference learning can make to the issues they seek to address. In addition, we think we need to build a greater groundswell among the public and wider civic society for action and ambition.

The question is how do we do this together, in order to reverse almost a decade of declining investment and participation? Some of you may feel that the case has been made and remade time and again. That's true.

In the meantime, there are three areas where I think we can work together and make a difference:

1. Telling stories of success

For the last 25 years, we've run Festival of Learning (previously Adult Learners' Week), which includes awards for adult learners. Each year I'm struck by how inspirational and moving the winners' stories are, and how improvements in literacy and numeracy are often central to their transformation. We showcase these through the awards, a Parliamentary reception, and winners' videos on our website, as well as helping winners and providers to showcase their stories locally.

There are other great adult learning awards as well. What more can we do to get these great stories in front of decision makers and influencers, for them to see the very real power of adult education?

2. Marshalling the evidence

There's a lot of evidence of the impact adult education in general, and literacy, numeracy and digital learning in particular, can have – I talked about some of this above. It's important that in using this, we speak other people's language. For example, there are some great instances of adult education providers using NHS metrics on depression and wellbeing to help demonstrate the impact of their work to health providers.

We've recently published a new report, *Healthy, Wealthy and Wise*, which attempts to gather together as much of the evidence as possible. It's available on our website, and we hope it will be a useful reference guide for everyone making the case for adult education.

3. Taking collective action

The stories and the evidence need to come together into collective action. This could be at national level – it turns out sometimes the government can move quite quickly when, for example, programmes like Blue Planet raise public awareness of an issue such as use of plastics and lead to media campaigns for action. Perhaps just as important is local change – for example, can we persuade a Metro Mayor in England to champion the cause of adult literacy and numeracy?

For me, and I'm guessing for many of you reading this article, the case for adult education, and literacy, numeracy and digital, is clear. Our challenge is to convince others and make sure deeds follow words. However, I'm optimistic that we can do this. I don't pretend that as an Institute we have all the answers – we're keen to work with practitioners, stakeholders and policy makers to form common cause. So, if you have ideas, please do contact us at the Learning and Work Institute.

One size fits all

Catherine Gray

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All students aged 16 to 18 starting or who have already started a new study programme of 150 hours or more on or after 1 August 2014 and who do not hold a GCSE grade A* to C, new GCSE 9 to 4 or equivalent qualification in maths and/or in English, are required to be studying these subjects as part of their study programme in each academic year. This also applies to students of 150 hours or more aged 19 to 25 that have a Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA) or Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Figure 6: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-funding-maths-and-english-condition-of-funding>

The decision to make training or education compulsory until the age of 18 has of course had an impact on FE colleges. It has meant that, along with the students who would have opted to come to college voluntarily, colleges also have students who have no choice but to come. This in itself is problematic, but all of these students are compelled to study English and Maths, regardless of past experience, learning difficulty, behavioral or mental health difficulty - without prejudice. They have no choice and the policy is to treat them all the same. One size fits all.

Our roles as English and Maths teachers in an FE college have changed beyond recognition: more time is spent dealing with challenging students, their parents, the paperwork and the disciplinary procedure; less time is spent on quality assurance, planning and marking, professional discussion. Those of us who opted to teach in FE because we wanted to work with 'students who wanted to learn' have had to either change career or hastily acquire a toolbox of behaviour management tactics.

Increasingly, the professional discussion has become reduced to moaning about disengaged students who stop others from learning. It has taken me 18 months of endurance to determine a way forward. Having had the privilege of observing a nurture group at a local middle school and learning of its success, I decided that if we are to become part of compulsory education, we will need to adopt similar methods. I wanted to avoid establishing a pupil referral unit or a 'naughty class'. On the other hand, my colleagues were

being worn down by disruptive students and being prevented from imparting specialist and valuable English knowledge.

And so, the nurture group began.

Eight 'switched off' students were hand-picked and asked to be part of a pilot that could have a significant positive impact on students in the future. Some were studying at GCSE; some were working on Functional English.

I asked them to make the rules:

- We would like two breaks with tea, coffee and biscuits as needed
- Mobile phones are allowed
- Do the work and then go, rather than keep to 3.25 hours each week
- We'll try not to swear in class
- We want to pass our English.

Breaking most of the college rules, I agreed.

Within the first three sessions, I realised that I no longer had to challenge them over using their phones, eating in class etc. which in turn meant that when I talked to them, it was either about English or about them. It was liberating. After a few weeks, they weren't swearing much, they weren't using their phones much and a relationship had been established relatively swiftly.



One of the first tasks I gave the group was to depict their journeys, educational and domestic. It saddened me deeply to listen to their horror stories of being abused, living in care, family members in prison, being bullied, being kicked out of the family home, being a carer for parents or even worse, having no family at all. Aged between 16 and 18, these eight students are still children who have been forced to grow up far too quickly. Once I knew this, my initial response was to

wonder how they managed to get to college at all, let alone learn. No wonder they had limited tolerance and had difficulty in trusting adults. Why had they been failed by all the services out there who are supposed to look after children? Rather than support them, they had been excluded from classes or from school entirely and nothing had been offered in its place. No one had asked the question why; they had preferred to get rid of them for an easier life. Maybe this sounds judgmental, but out of eight, there was not one exception.

I soon discovered that they wanted to learn: in a traditional, familiar classroom environment, they reverted to behaviour that had helped them survive. They instantly became the clown, the hard one who talked back to teachers, the introvert who refused to do anything. That made failure explicable. That sustained their persona to their peers. Let no one know the truth.

Our group has been running for two months now. We meet once a week for around three hours. There is no unpleasantness. We have established a reciprocal respect. Already, we have had some successes in terms of passes: discussions and presentations as well as passes in Functional Reading and Writing. The negative language I faced at the very start of the pilot from the students is gone. I'm more likely to hear, 'Can I carry on in this group next year and do GCSE?'

For me, this pilot has been a humbling experience. I feel in awe of some of the students who have no-one but themselves to motivate them to get up in the morning. They have shown me compassion, respect and patience as I have worked on creating an environment which is suitable for learning but also a place in which the students feel safe and valued.

If we are to continue with the initiative of keeping all young people in education or training until the age of 18, then we must be mindful that one size does not fit all, that they are continuing with their English and Maths because their educational experience up to now was not effective; also, that when you show them that you care, you might be the first person in their lives to do so.

An example of the impact of showing that you care was brought home to me on 18th November 2017 when an ex- student recognised me in the street as I was walking to my car in Lowestoft. He shouted

'Catherine!' 'Stop! Catherine!'

I turned to see one of my hardest nuts to crack running towards me.

'Hi! How are you?'

After fifteen minutes of talking about what he has done since leaving college, where he's living and reminiscing on some funny incidents in class, we parted company.

This student did not gain a grade 4 in his GCSE English, so some would regard the time he spent with me as a failure.

I walked into a classroom to undertake a learning walk. A student I recognised from our group beckoned to me. I said hello and the class proceeded. My student was engaged, in fact he was leading the contributions and talking in such a respectful, eloquent, focused manner that I had to hold in the emotion. This student passed his Functional English exams with me and is now a confident GCSE student.

I haven't seen DB since the group ended. He had the most traumatic story of them all. I did see his result though. Grade 5 at GCSE English. That's what he needed to move on.

As for my action research having an impact and exacting change, well, I feel encouraged that it changed the courses of most of the lives of the students involved. It certainly humbled me by giving me a privileged insight into what so many young people are coping with.

As for institutional change: I shared my report at a Quality meeting. I was not prepared for the harsh criticism I had inadvertently provoked – much of it around buying tea and biscuits

for them! Leaving the meeting disillusioned – a familiar feeling in FE – I knew that nothing would change at this college.

Here I am in November 2017, and teachers are struggling to cope with difficult students; I've found a solution, but no one is interested.

A few months later at the beginning of February 2018 the talk in the staffroom was of frustration caused by challenging students not being removed from classes so that teachers can effectively teach those who 'want to learn'. The same names come up from English and Maths teachers. The need for a nurture group is crying out, but the business of education cannot balance the books with a heavy staff-student ratio and extra resources. It's not cost-effective, but then neither is a system which mitigates against teachers engaging students positively.

Learners from Perth and Kinross

Renata Fraser



Renata Fraser and her amazing team invite you to meet some of the people whose lives have been changed through learning.



Daniel, meeting place: CommunityConnect@Rattray, near Blairgowrie

Daniel only attended primary school for a short time, and for most of his life lived in a household where others dealt with anything requiring reading or writing. However, Daniel's situation changed and he had to cope alone. Because Daniel had so little contact with formal education or any type of community provision, he was sceptical about the progress he could achieve. Nevertheless, he joined adult learning and set himself goals to improve his reading so he could understand job adverts, instructions on food packaging and using domestic appliances.

Daniel began learning to understand oven temperatures, operating his microwave and reading cooking instructions on food packaging. A short while later he went on to reading recipes and learning how to cook a variety of meals for himself. A few months later his learning had expanded to reading newspapers, writing letters, understanding punctuation and filling in forms.

Daniel is currently working on creating a CV and writing formal job application letters. He is amazed at his own progress and the enjoyment that comes with it.

"You've no idea how easy it is to read a form, dead easy, simple! It feels good to be able to do it and help my brother with forms as well"



Allan, meeting place: the Learning Curve, AK Bell Library, Perth

Allan's dyslexia has a big impact on his self-esteem and confidence, preventing him from moving forward with his life. For example, Allan maintains that he is not interested in having a go on a computer. This has proved quite challenging when trying to

engage with the Job Centre and he has been ‘sanctioned’ in the past, which had serious financial implications, which then impacted negatively on his health and well-being.

Recently however, Allan has come round to the idea that it may be advantageous to have some knowledge of IT and that there are benefits to it. He admitted that not knowing how to use a computer continues to be a barrier in many areas of his life including seeking and securing employment.

Allan came to the Learning Curve to get better at reading, writing and spelling... ‘just to make things easier and to stop me putting things off for another day’. He works on homophones, spelling crosswords, proofreading of various articles and letter writing. He enjoys being part of a group and has become quite confident sharing own ideas and suggestions amongst his peers.

Allan often speaks about inequalities and how he feels discriminated against – both personally and financially – especially when not complying with the rules set by authorities. But he works hard on achieving his goals and with that his confidence continues to grow. Thanks to his literacy support Allan says that ‘he is a good bit further ahead than he was’ and begins to feel valued and better about himself.

One year on – an update on Allan’s progress by his tutor Angela Mcinnes

Allan initially attended a computer group at the Learning Curve although he was very resistant to this and left a short time after. There had been pressure from the Job Centre to join.

Allan heard about the literacies group, which he attends on a regular and consistent basis. Although Allan was still feeling some pressure to join another group he did settle quickly into this new group and began to realise that he was making progress and feeling better about himself and his abilities.

He particularly enjoys the warm-up sessions at the start of each session and always contributes to the related discussions around the table. He often makes suggestions about activities we can participate in as a whole group, something that has always been encouraged and reflects the social practice approach we adopt.

Allan continues to be supported with a range of activities, which include number, grammar, punctuation, spelling and writing. He has and continues to make great progress in a group setting which he has described as ‘familiar and comfortable’.



Julia, meeting place: Mindspace, Perth

Julia was encouraged to attend the Connect course by the local Job Centre as a way to build her confidence, meet new people and form positive social relationships. Connect is a course designed to build confidence to participate in learning

and community for adults living with a mental health condition. Participants are often isolated and lack belief in their own abilities.

Julia left school at the age of eleven with basic literacy skills. She struggles with extreme anxiety and depression, which are compounded by mobility issues. She is also marginalised due to her cultural values and beliefs. Initially very resistant and even upset about the prospect of attending the course, Julia gave it a go, and to her surprise, quickly began to interact with others in the group. She recognised that others had similar experiences of prejudice and marginalisation, which encouraged her to share some information about herself without the fear of a negative response from others.

With time Julia's literacy skills began to improve and her confidence grew. She engages in debates and expresses her points of view and has an increased feeling of being valued. On her own initiative, Julia has asked for additional help with literacy issues outside the course. She is now keen to achieve qualifications and is considering offering her time to volunteer. For the first time in two years, Julia's carer accepted work away from home leaving her to manage well on her own.

"I'm really enjoying the course; it's good to see that other people need help too."



Andrew, meeting place: HMP Perth

Andrew is 43 years old and despite issues with his literacy skills, ran his own landscaping business with some help from his parents. Andrew wanted to learn, but didn't believe he could. He wanted to do things for himself and not have to rely on other people's help with his correspondence in jail. He was ashamed of the fact that he couldn't read and write. He joined a small learning group, initially once a week then progressed to twice a week, eventually requesting an additional one-to-one tuition in the hall. To begin with Andrew started off with learning the alphabet using picture cards with both lower and upper case letters and learned how to hold a pencil. He can read two and three letter words and hopes to progress to four and five letter words and stringing words together into sentences. He is working towards being able to write a letter to his mother. In his words 'he caught the bug' and constantly wants to learn more and asks for more practice exercises he can work on in between classes.

One year on - an update on Andrew's progress by his tutor Sandra Leishman

Andrew progressed well in his reading and writing skills until he was transferred to another establishment. Andrew returned to Perth and was back at square one with no reading ability. His inability to read is like a part of his identity that he doesn't want to lose. He presents with problems (needs new classes, the words are too small) and when we have solved these problems he responds with more problems as if he is afraid to lose this part of his identity. We continue to work with Andrew. He also attends Art therapy and it is hoped that this might help him to realise that learning to read and write is not a scary thing.

Volunteer Tutor's experience of how literacies learning changed one learner's life

When I first met Simon he asked for help to improve his handwriting. He introduced himself saying his hobby was solving puzzles. First impressions of Simon were of a young man, immature in many ways for his 28 or so years who was still being treated by his family as almost a teenager but becoming increasingly uncomfortable with being told 'what to do' whilst continuing to check with his parents before trying anything new.

It soon became clear that trying to improve his handwriting was a source of enormous stress for Simon and at that point, to give him a much needed confidence boost, we decided to explore his strengths instead. We looked at Quick Reads and discovered that Simon has an extensive vocabulary and a good standard of grammar. He completed the 'Six Book Challenge' – an annual project inviting people to read and review six books.

By mutual agreement we 'postponed' the handwriting practice – much to everyone's relief - and went on exploring how he could best be helped to acquire additional skills which would be useful in employment and grow his confidence to try new things, but most of all to encourage him to make decisions and trust his own judgement.

During a conversation with Simon it came up that his grandfather received an award for his service in WW2. We looked at a Local History section at AK Bell and he was so impressed to find the relevant newspaper article that he copied it to take home. At that point Simon decided to do a Family History search but before doing that he asked his mum if she was happy with the idea. It would, after all, be her history too. His parents responded by providing photocopies of all the relevant documents, which they held. This gesture reassured Simon of the trust they had in him and opened a completely new line of communication at home.

One year on.....

Simon is well known to the library staff and has written an article identifying some of the useful resources he used in the Family History section. He has proved to be a methodical and imaginative independent researcher. He shares his findings with his family, on a regular basis, and has succeeded in investigating some family lines back 300 years which has impressed all of us. He uses the internet and downloads with confidence, in addition he has improved his organisational skills by labelling and filing his finds and presenting them in a creative way. He overcame his initial negative attitude when things did not work out and now moves on when something is out of his control by saying 'well that didn't work we need to try something else'. AND the most important benefit to Simon – a new focus of interest and discussion to share with his parents and other family members.

Stephen Methven teaches Cigar Box Guitar Building at HMP Perth.



“Literacies needs of offenders are disproportionately higher than the rest of the adult population but supporting and encouraging individuals to improve their literacy skills can have a lasting impact on their ability to re-integrate into society and their families.

Men at the Edinburgh Road Prison face multiple barriers to engaging in learning; therefore, an innovative, project-based learning with a musical activity was offered as a hook - the Cigar Box Guitar building workshops.

Churches Action for the Homeless and Fife College have teamed up and delivered a series of workshops. Which saw learners set their own goals and explore the way they learn. Through keeping a journal, reading about the history of the Deep of America, writing up and following instructions, they put their skills into practice and built guitars using cigar boxes or biscuit tins.

Communication, presentation, numeracy and other practical skills were greatly improved and SQA accreditation was achieved, all through tappers into prisoners’ interest in music.

Learners’ self-esteem and confidence were much improved, so much so that the project ended with a musical performance and celebration of learning.”



Listen to one of the tracks performed by the cigar box group [here](#).

A Brief History of Cigar Box Guitars by Stewart Methven

The history of Cigar Box instruments can be traced back to the days of slavery and social injustice in the Mississippi Delta. Music was very important to African Americans, as it was a big part of African culture and in particular the stringed instruments from the one string fiddle to the multi stringed Kora and the Banjar – which would later evolve into the Banjo.

Slaves made guitars using items left over by the plantation owners. They wanted instruments to communicate and as an accompaniment to worship. It was a given that if you wanted to play a guitar that you would have to make it yourself and this is what Robert Elroy Johnson did, like many before and after him. If the Blues tells stories about life experiences revolving around race, love and social class then these instruments provide the background upon which these stories were sung.

As an [itinerant](#) performer who played mostly on street corners, in [juke joints](#), and at Saturday night dances, Johnson had little commercial success or public recognition in his lifetime. Wiki (Ed)

Although the exact date of the first Cigar Box guitars is almost impossible to trace, there is a commissioned painting by Edwin Forbes 1876 of two American Civil War soldiers, one of whom is playing a Cigar Box fiddle. A second painting by Daniel Carter Beard 1884 depicts a man playing a Cigar Box guitar.

Many greats started off their career on homemade instruments; Blind Willie Johnson, Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, BB King and Bo Diddley. Bo gained his name after the one stringed Diddley Bo, which is a one string cigar box instrument. A young Jimi Hendrix learned his early trade on a broom handle. Sadly, from the 1950s Cigar Box guitars dwindled as guitars became mass produced and readily available. The whole Cigar Box phenomenon has undergone somewhat of a renaissance in recent years with Seasick Steve and Justin Johnson really bringing the Cigar Box music to the fore once again. There are many Cigar Box festivals in Europe, Australia and U.S.A. The whole idea is going from strength to strength.



Who brings which literacy to the adult literacy classroom?

Sarah Freeman

Sarah is a long-standing (40+ years) adult literacy and ESOL practitioner who has mainly worked in London and Surrey. She has recently completed an Ed. Doc thesis based on research in the adult education field, using an auto-ethnographic approach. She can be contacted at azdak@runbox.co.uk.

Introduction

“I don’t want qualifications, I don’t want to use a computer, I want to be able to be competent on paper.”

I heard these words last week from a young man, George, who has decided to commute 44 miles from Hounslow in NW London to reach a pre-GCSE English class in Surrey.

George runs a martial arts centre but he prioritises learning English over spending more time on his business. It isn’t the first time that I have heard businessmen and women express this sentiment. Some in small businesses have earned enough money to become millionaires but they have still wanted to come to evening classes to make up for what they missed out at school.

In this reflective article I want to consider three kinds of literacies – functional, critical and digital - that we could offer in the adult literacy classroom.

Functional Literacy – its value for the students

Firstly, the functional are the approved qualifications e.g. Functional Skills or discrete stand-alone units such as the Ascentis awards which the exam board describes as [bite size pieces to help learners rebuild their confidence and understanding within English and Maths](#).

These assessments attract funding for English and Maths programmes and are characterised by employing traditional literacy syllabuses, developing SPAG (spelling punctuation & grammar) and traditional reading and writing skills. These functional types of English and maths syllabi are typical of those perceived by official government education services as the profitable way to develop basic education for adults.

Indeed, in my long experience as a literacy and ESOL teacher and assessor, these are the skills that students expect to improve. This is in part to improve their employment prospects but it is also so that they, for example, know how to write ‘properly’; in the UK those expectations have arisen because of what is taught at school. And for many people for whom English is a second language or was a medium of education but not the language they spoke at home, the idea that they can catch up on education is of great importance to them.

In my doctorate study research (Freeman, 2017) I interviewed 22 ESOL and literacy students in central and south London to learn more about what drew them to literacy classes. I noticed the word ‘properly’ used by quite a lot of the respondents in regard to what they

were aiming for – ‘I would like even to put - write something and to be able to put it in words properly.’ (Recorded English 1st lang. student during the interviews at Myrrh Centre in Brixton.)

Catching up with education was a predominant theme among both English 1st lang. and English 2nd lang. students. I heard how great the desire to become more educated was again and again. The following from the thesis (p148) is a typical dialogue I have had with students from Bangladesh and other Indian sub-continent countries, both in interviews and in other teaching contexts.

I asked Samira at Blackfriars if she had to give up other things to study. She replied: ‘I just do English. I ... English properly then I ... do any course or anything next’. Her whole life revolved around rushing to get to her English classes, getting everything else – housework, taking her children to school, serving breakfast to her mother and father-in-law, cooking and cleaning – out of the way quickly (Samira, INTERVIEW [6], May 2013: lines 71–82).

So, literacy, whether pre-entry or any level up to level 2, is indeed for our students what the DfEE called ‘Skills for Life’ (2001) in the minds of the students.

Critical Literacy – as a spin-off

But there is second kind of literacy, critical literacy, which is begging to be developed in our ordinary literacy classes. Critical literacy is a term long used by academics, education policy makers and practitioners who consider the intellectual potential derived from literacy to be pivotal in improving new readers’ lives. Hamilton, Tett and Crowther, for example, in the introduction to *More Powerful Literacies* (2012) remind us of the most fundamental facts about any kind of literacy:

Literacy is socially constructed and cannot be seen outside of the powerful interests and forces that seek to fix it in particular ways (2012: 2).

In the same volume Crowther and Tett explain how bringing a knowledge of this into the classroom adds more awareness to a literacy skills programme, taking the learning of mechanical literacy skills and of understanding of cultural context a step further, to being able to question the possible bias of texts:

(critical literacy) ...involves understanding how some meanings are selected and legitimated whilst others are not... (2012: 125).

In fact, the expression ‘critical literacy’ is now widely employed and Weninger quotes Janks to explain how far the net has spread in ways critical literacy may help students:

Critical literacy is a diverse field, united by its advocates’ desire to empower students “to read both the word and the world in relation to power, identity, difference and access to knowledge, skills, tools and resources” (Janks, 2013, p. 227) so that they may redesign these relations in a socially equitable way (2018: 85).

In this article I want to put critical side by side with functional literacy and digital literacy, not prioritising any one of them but indicating how they interact and help each other. In my opinion critical literacy is being developed when a student can recognise that they have a much fuller identity as, say, a valued member of a class, a family, a body of parents or employees because of the learning process they are undertaking.

So, by introducing any SPAG topic or reading development topic with a text that has immediate relevance and even poignancy for the lives of the students we can open discussions about things where both students and teachers are equals – a topic that can provoke us all into reassessing our everyday lives. Such literacy processes can animate students who anticipate that learning literacy is essential to personal development but hadn't expected possible spin-offs. Moje and Luke (2009: 415) drew attention to this in an article exploring how literacy matters to identity.

...research on literacy is well served by the reminder that humans are constantly in the process of identifying and making meaning of identifications. Indeed, the relationship between learning (in/of literacy or anything else) and identity is inevitable (Bloome et al., 2005; Wortham, 2006).

As a result, literacy-and-identity studies provide ample evidence for the need to include multiple text types and media in our literacy curricula, as texts and new media tools provide multiple opportunities in a classroom to engage generalized others, interpellate readers into particular kinds of relationships and positions, build *habitués*, provide tools for developing consciousness, or narrate oneself into the world.

Many good centres are still well equipped with resources that can provide that stimulation within a literacy class, but with cutbacks having to be implemented by programme managers this kind of literacy will become less reachable. At the present time I transport a basket with a wide range of *Quick Reads* and other reading material from classroom to classroom to encourage students to develop the reading habit. This is really worthwhile. There have been happy moments when students have reported back on finishing the first book they have ever read. But the fulfilment can seem greater; I recall in the auto-ethnographic part of my thesis (p196) a conversation with a student who had missed a great deal of school because of partial hearing loss as a child.

In the early spring of 2013, I completed a group reading of an abridged version of *A Christmas Carol* with a group of older women students at Sutton College. It proved quite an emotional experience for some of them, who found the text very effective and the story vivid. I was aware of some fear and wariness of the descriptions of Marley's ghost and the three spirits of past, present and future, so we talked a great deal about the underlying meanings. However, one student expressed only enjoyment of the book. I asked her if she had found the reading and other thought-provoking aspects of the lessons that year satisfying. Her response surprised me, but also made me very excited; she liked the studies, but felt she wasn't learning enough

and that there was so much more to stretch her mind. Looking back, I think her reply encapsulated the impression I got from so many of the people I interviewed.

A more mundane but significant interchange with a student, Gyaana, took place in 2011 when I had talked a class of less digitally literate students through the process of completing the census form online. Gyaana was in her late sixties, but following her husband's stroke 20 years previously she had stopped working as a technician in a specialist optical lens laboratory to become a carer. For her this turning point was an opportunity to make up for only having had one year of schooling during her childhood in Johannesburg, South Africa. But it was also important to her to become independent with the paperwork at home and after many years in adult education she was able to meet that goal. She told me that she had completed the census form alone with no family help, thus confirming her identity as an independent woman, as well as doing an essential paperwork task around the home.

The critical literacy and the functional literacy merge in this online-form-filling task which had, in my view, a key part in building an individual's self-esteem and opening her mind to the possibilities that literacy and/or the internet can bring. It also points to the third form of literacy that exists in the classroom – digital literacy.

Digital Literacy – liberating literacy

In those census days I imagined that I was doing a cutting-edge thing promoting the use of the internet for functional purposes. For many people at that time using a computer or a mobile phone was a new sensory experience so providing opportunities to practise navigating screens in class was relevant. At one point in 2007 a union leader who was severely dyslexic and had access to a great deal of software through work, was able to introduce some useful programs to my dyslexia support class that he attended. But what I hadn't expected first hit me in 2013/4 when I was teaching a family learning class in Norbury, South London. Students were interacting with their mobile phones as tools that not only kept them in communication with dependent family, but also provided an additional literacy resource for class. I recorded the following in a journal:

At the school in Norbury, South London, the students don't often get a chance to use laptops or the computer suite as it involves quite a lot of extra input by the school on a day which is already pressurised for everyone. I have a flip chart and a plentiful supply of flip chart board markers. However all the learners have smartphones close at hand which they use as dictionaries, to share pictures and of course, in many cases, remain 'on call' through text or e mail outlets to the wider family, friends and other agencies. While adjusting the phone to silent mode is expected, parents nevertheless find it hard to switch off connections to the school office, child-minder etc. (Journal, November 2014)

Photos below show students from the class with mobile phones always to hand, even if slightly concealed under a book or bag. See circles below.



And mobile phone literacy is rich in learning opportunities. Since teaching that group I have encouraged students to make use of dictionaries and predictive text to help themselves. They have continued to show me what their phones can do as well – ‘record’ for example, means that they or I can read a passage or list of words for pronunciation purposes or to provide their own spelling tests; ‘dictate’ will produce correct spellings of words or phrases for them. Once or twice students, despite my trying to discourage them, have done their homework on their mobile phones – and then email it through to me. They may ask me for help, which I do encourage, by email or text. Many of them don’t have any other form of computer at home, and a few, indeed, don’t connect with the internet on their mobile. But digital literacy and the independence it provides for many people is a fact that we cannot get away from.

I know that Y who I mentioned at the beginning of this article, may be able to run his business on his phone, during his journeys to and from Guildford, during a break in the lesson and on his way home. I know that other students who have people to care for at home will be in touch with those family members or professionals at break time or before/after their classes. And that knowledge gives me a sense that the classes, while traditional in some respects, are also attended by people who are already liberated by literacy in other senses.

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Difficulties with technology

Juliet McCaffery

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Any consideration of new technology is an enormous subject and ranges from our day-to-day use of different gadgets such as a landline phone, first used in 1876, to envisioning a world of the future in which human-like robots undertake many of our daily tasks. This short article focuses on some of the positive aspects of the technology and some of the difficulties people experience.

New technology has many advantages: some of which include rapid communication, communicating across vast distances like talking to a relative in Australia while on a train to London, online shopping, checking train and bus times, downloading a bus pass and working anywhere on the computer.

The technological revolution we are experiencing may be beneficial in many ways, enabling communication to be rapid and instant; it may save businesses, government and local councils money, but it also has disadvantages including online financial insecurity, malware, inappropriate content on social media, the need to protect young people both from bullying and 'adult' content. The majority of people in the UK probably have mobile phones, which are themselves expensive but have a variety of different uses. One person I spoke to had both a dictionary and a thesaurus on his phone. Many people have mobile phones but cannot afford computers. Others do not find computers or new technology easy to use.

In this article I highlight some of the difficulties people have experienced; I start with the mundane subject of parking meters.

Parking

A year or so ago you could pay for parking by putting a coin or two in a machine and receive a parking ticket to put on the car windscreen. A few days ago, I watched as a couple, probably in



their mid-forties had difficulty paying for their parking by credit card. Where I live nearly all the meters are 'pay by card' only. The couple were local residents in their mid-forties and it took them over ten minutes to pay £1.25 which included an administrative charge. The instructions require you put in your car number plate on one screen, insert the debit or credit card details on a different screen and finally put in your card security number. The print is small, and the sun can often obscure the screen. Poor eyesight, forgetting your glasses, not having a credit or debit card with you, inability to read English or having poor literacy skills all affect the ability to pay.

I suggest that these difficulties in paying by card to park a car are an equality issue, but it seems not be recognised as such. When I raised these issues with the responsible Councillor, I was told that 80% of people surveyed preferred to pay by card. I was not told how many people were surveyed. Was it 100,000 or 100?

Computers

The computer is now a main form of communication. Many people prefer to send an email, rather than talk to someone on the phone. Others just don't like computers. One person I asked just didn't use one. Another found the updating difficult to handle, as the update changed the settings she had got used to. Others find the numerous passwords required for different programmes very annoying even though they understand they are needed for security.

Computers are now extremely sophisticated and can encourage people to download programmes without realising it. Recently a small image came up on my computer suggesting I needed to press it. I did so, and as a result, it changed the whole set-up in my computer as it took me into a completely new programme, which I did not want, could not use and did not know how to cancel. It required help from a friend and eventually a visit to Apple to correct it and bring it back to the programmes I knew and was familiar with.

Official emails

Schools and other organisations are often required to use an official email, with a particular address and password to ensure security. This is fine if they are used frequently but if it is only required every few months it is easy to forget the special authorised email address and password and it can be very complicated to get back into it.

Buying online

The parking example is just one example of instances where technological literacy is required. Some of those in the groups referred to above will also have other difficulties. Many older people are not as familiar with computer technologies as their grandchildren. Buying a train ticket, booking a holiday, ordering groceries, getting a bus pass or paying

council tax are all tasks which are frequently required to be done online. Sometimes it can be quite straightforward, as was paying for my MOT; other times it can get very complicated such as completing tax returns on the government Gateway programme.

It can particularly difficult when you want to cancel an order. Often the company email doesn't accept replies or the company doesn't read the ones that do get through. Many companies will send you email messages to which you can't reply.

Local councils often prefer contact by email, as it presumably reduces the number of people they need to employ, which is advantageous when council budgets have been reduced. Sometimes a phone number is provided giving you the option of phoning but often it isn't.

Unwanted advertisements frequently appear and can be very difficult to cancel.

Advertising

Charities and political groups also use computers to advertise their organisations, asking you to sign petitions or support the organisation financially. More dangerous are the fake messages asking for money. After you have agreed, the original request can be followed up with a request for money be paid into a particular account for 'security reasons'. Many older people have lost thousands of pounds by these fraudulent messages. These can sometimes start with what appears as a desperate plea for school fees or medical expenses from someone in a poor country. They are sometimes difficult to ignore, but it is very unwise to respond.

Dropbox

Many voluntary organisations and some official ones use 'Dropbox' or similar online storage system, which in theory is an excellent idea, as it places all the correspondence and information for the organisation in one place. Theoretically this should make it easier for members of the organisation to access the information. People who are involved in several organisations may have several Dropboxes. If someone is not familiar with Dropbox and does not use it often, the different boxes can be confusing and difficult to access.

Training in computing and new technologies

Several organisations offer training in computing and new technologies, but they are normally for beginners in computing, or using Word, Excel or occasionally PowerPoint. These are very useful, but there do not seem to many advanced courses or courses that address the issues described above, which many people have difficulty with. This is possibly because it may be difficult to conduct a course when different websites may present very different difficulties.

Computer Buddies

Julie Collins

Julie Collins has embedded basic skills for 30 years using a social practice approach.
quilamena@hotmail.com

Computer Buddies, is a small shop offering advice and computer repairs. I popped in to ask Ben, Computer Technician, about his understanding of digital literacy and what types of questions he gets from customers. I thought his experience of day-to-day queries might indicate where we, as educators, should focus our attention to support the communities we live in to gain the skills they require to be confident users of technology.

Ben feels that being digitally literate is being competent in getting from A-Z, in any task you need to complete, skills in searching online and having confidence in looking for solutions. He acknowledges the variation of skills required to be digitally literate at home, versus the skills expected at work.

Branches of his own family have had two very different encounters with technology. His family exemplifies the 'digital divide'.

Three generations of the Ellesmere Port family have been unemployed;

"No computer between them, however they do have SKY, an X-Box and lower priced smart phones, which get swamped with adverts."

The second branch lives in Chester and is tech savvy;

"Of the two youngest members, one is a gamer and an intuitive user of technology, the other is digitally knowledgeable, but not as adventurous."

The customers who come for advice replicate this variation in experience. Barbara, an octogenarian, uses a Google book, streams movies, uses internet banking, books holidays and uses Facebook. Arthur, a nonagenarian, uses a web browser to locate his favourites, but focuses on location rather than the logo.

"He doesn't understand there are different routes to the same destination - muscle memory guides him to repeat the same actions."

The common issues are:

1) Being mis-sold computer equipment for the jobs they wish to complete.

"Purchasing an all-singing all-dancing laptop for basic needs."

2) Concerns about hacking - laptops are perceived to be safer.

“People don’t check for phishing scams or check the sender’s address if they receive an unexpected email.”

3) Death of partner, or family member, who had all the details to verify an account create a set of problems for the person grieving and trying to sort out family affairs.

4) Breaches of databases – BT and TalkTalk - have caused an increase in tricksters acquiring details, which, when they call and repeat passwords and your date of birth, suggest they are genuine.

“Advice on pass codes given 15 years ago has been proved to make us more vulnerable. Three disconnected words are safer, but I know that most companies still apply the industry standard, which still requires everyone to input a number.”

“We all carry debit cards, credit cards and mobile phones, and most of these items require a four-digit pin to unlock them. Shockingly, it appears that one in every 10 people uses the same pin – 1234.” *The Guardian Fri 28 Sep 2012 12.28*

Ben states that Data protection legislation is changing. GDPR regulations will mean no one can keep information without your consent. After four years of preparation and debate the GDPR was finally approved by the EU Parliament on 14th April 2016. The enforcement date is 25th May 2018 – at which time organisations in non-compliance may face heavy fines. (www.GDPR).

5) Misspelling or typos

Ebay sales.

Every day thousands of misspelled eBay items go unsold on eBay for one simple reason: buyers can't find them! Because sellers accidentally introduce 'fatfingers' typos into their listings, eBay's built-in search tools can't find these items. (www.missing-auctions.com)

“Spelling options are now given but the Fatfingers website allows people to take advantage of listings made by people who aren’t necessarily aware of their errors.”

Googel – on a PC

Cat, another employee of Computer Buddies, did a ‘Googel’ search (misspelling Google) on Bing on a PC to demonstrate how easy it is to be caught out. An unsecure site opened and asked her to download Flash. The image was a replica of Adobe’s logo.

“If I opened that download now the computer would have been infected and required repair.” **** Please do not try this at home.**

Most issues can be found in either scenario; home or work, so my last question to both of them was to reflect on how we need to engage with both current or future generations to change things for the better?

“Obviously employers have their own courses. I taught ECDL (International Computer Driving Licence) years ago but would never again want to have to teach students who are being forced to attend.”

“Encourage them to be intuitive and creative and to see the computer as a tool. Schools are the best place to inspire but they do not all start from an equal place.”

Digital journeys

Julie Collins

Julie Collins has embedded basic skills for 30 years using a social practice approach. In 1997 Julie wrote an article for RaPAL about her journey at the start of her M Ed in Literacy when theory met practice. Accepting the challenge of becoming a journal editor on Impact and Innovation and Digital Skills provoked this reflection. guilamena@hotmail.com



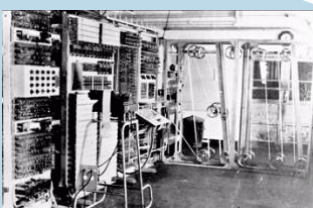
BBC Computer

1980s

- playing tennis - hooked up to an Amstrad
- typing short sentences on a BBC computer.



Donald Michie



Tunny at Bletchley Park

For a child born in the 1950s my introduction to a computer started in 1987 with a Model A BBC Microcomputer, which had 16 [KB](#) of user RAM. It was cumbersome. Connectivity was non-existent and programmes that encouraged literacy produced by the BBC would be considered uninspiring in today's world. The last item of technology that I have bought is a tablet (2013) with 500,000 times more RAM and limitless possibilities for encouraging literacies through its applications (apps).

In 2018, we are 100 years on from the milestone of the telegraph being replaced by the telephone. The change we continue to see in the way society uses technology to communicate is transformative. My mother arrived in this world just two days after the cessation of World War 1. Her preferred aid in communicating thoughts and information was a typewriter, which remained a constant choice until she died in 2004. Although she began using a mobile phone at the age of 80, she never embraced computers, which is strange, given her brother's contribution to the field of Artificial Intelligence. Throughout my childhood I had heard stories about my uncle, Professor Donald Michie, who after wartime code breaking at Bletchley Park was a pioneering researcher into artificial intelligence at Edinburgh University. On his death other stories emerged about the impact of his contributions.

While the wider ambitions of artificial intelligence research may not have been realised, the impact of work done from the 1960s onwards in machine learning, rule-based systems and computer reasoning has given us the easy-to-operate computers that we now use. Predictive text on mobile phones, realistic characters in video games and efficient call-centre systems all rely on the fundamental research done by Professor Donald Michie and his colleagues during his long and distinguished career at Edinburgh and Strathclyde universities.

July 12 2007, 1:00am, The Times

Like most families there are those members that embrace technology and those that prefer less intrusive ways to communicate. Reflecting on my experience of using computer technology at home and at work to make

1990's

- www dial-up internet
- first digital purchases
 - 1) photo of whale shark
 - 2) DSLR camera
 - 3) Nokia 5110 mobile phone

2000s

- National Voluntary Organisations Partnership Programme funding buys laptops



Stories on a Tile

contact, express ideas, design, record, collaborate and encourage students' narratives, I decided to explore my changing use of technology at work.

My first job in education in 1979 was as a Lecturer in Basic Skills. I knocked on doors to introduce myself to new students in the area. Classes were once a week and I would arrive to switch on the heaters in cold community centres. Resources were kept in bags in the boot of my car.

In 1984 I worked with Coventry Miners Wives to produce their book 'Mummy, what did you do in the strike?' Not a computer or photocopier in sight - just Banda machines, so the stories were sent to a printer to be returned as a roll of paper. Columns of text were cut and pasted onto layout paper using printed light blue guides. The women inspired me to focus on ways to encourage the sharing and telling of stories. Looking out for opportunities to fund ideas, working alongside community artists whilst developing my own creative skills and thinking about my practice. The opportunity to use **digital** tools creatively with students had to wait another 15 years.

Our first BBC computer, moved about on a trolley, paved the way for all the computer technology that followed. It wasn't however until 2001 that capital funding provided the chance to deliver IT courses that embedded English in word processing, the internet and digital photography. All OCN accredited courses written by the Basic Skills team at Warrington Collegiate. The only staff training available in computing was Microsoft Office / ECDL.

In 2003 we gained confidence in introducing different media to enhance the curriculum. Literacy and art combined in 'Stories on a tile.' By 2005 residents at the hostel were mostly competent users of computers and mobile phone technology and felt they didn't need to be taught IT.

Later that year B.B.C. journalist, Robert Fielding, taught me digital storytelling, along with staff at two other Cheshire F.E Colleges for a LSIS funded project called Travelling through Time. The form was introduced to the UK by Daniel Meadows, Cardiff University School of Journalism, after visiting the Center for Digital Storytelling in California, USA. Daniel is however better known for Photobus when he photographed 948 people in shopping centres and streets and years later returned to find them.

We worked through a series of creative writing ideas in a story circle, choosing one of the stories we had written to be honed and captured on audio; exploring pace, tone and expression. Our objective was to be competent in the process so that we could share our knowledge with the Gypsy and Travelling community, to encourage them to capture audio and video and use both mediums with original photos to create a short three-

- NIACE Camel programme buys replacements laptops

minute film. Whilst learning the skills I produced a film about my mother's life. *The students that share their stories recognize a metamorphosis of sorts, a changing, that makes them feel different about their lives, their identities.* (Lambert, 2007). There are no surprises when a piece is broadcast on the web or shown to their community, as they have created all of it - it is theirs.

Kress (2003) believes linguistic theory alone cannot give us access to the meaning of what literacy does or is anymore. He introduces semiotics as a way of accounting for, 'gesture, speech, image, writing, 3D objects, colour, music and no doubt others.'

An invitation to take part in the Borough Council's (Japanese) Arts Festival allowed for a more diverse approach where residents used computers as tools for their research, work and recording of their creativity. Taking digital photographs of nature inspired the writing of haikus and the group proudly displayed both. Some haikus were translated into Japanese script after researching for translation programmes and printed onto wall hangings. The work was displayed in the Arts Centre with other cultural art objects made by the residents - tea bowls, raku masks and rokaku fighting kites. A booklet was produced on the computer.

The Journeys Project

The image represents Brian's story

Read Brian's story [here](#)



Listen to Jon's story [here](#).

The following year the local council again invited us to take part – in the (Spanish) Arts Festival. This was an opportunity to experience a different culture and the steering group at the hostel decided to plan Journeys Project. The aim was to focus on providing a range of embedded literacy and art projects enabled by additional funding from North West Arts. The main objective was to travel to Barcelona to produce a series of metre-

- Orange business account for connectivity and access whilst travelling
- attend NIACE workshops exploring the digital divide

2010s

- short films made by residents entered in Italian Film Festival
- Lit-Tech Grundtvig LLP Germany, UK, Portugal, Slovenia

wide portraits that considered the physical, metaphorical and emotional journeys of the residents/participants. Inspiration for exploring ‘a journey’ was taken from researching Don Quixote’s journey across Spain. Miguel Navarro, photographer, set up his studio in Barcelona to allow the residents’ portraits to be captured in front of a blank window. That window space was theirs to tell a story. The task was to take digital images. They searched and travelled around Barcelona to find spaces that could be used as metaphors for their stories. Miguel worked with them on Photoshop to complete the composite image.

From 2007 – 2015 Grundtvig funding then gave us opportunities to work with partners across Europe and that provided the inspiration to develop digital skills to share ideas and present our work.

Voices Across Boundaries LLP (Lifelong Learning Partnership) explored how the different voices in our group could be presented in a format that engaged others. In the UK we told stories using a variety of media to capture their ideas – Family History, Ceramics, Mig Welding, and Silk Painting. We became more creative about using a camera and video camera to record the progress and outcomes of the work and edit films using Final Cut.

Our second Grundtvig LLP was Lit-Tech where the four European partners created questionnaires to be given to a range of educational institutions for students and teachers to reflect on the impact of technology on gaining literacy skills. We became a star EU project. Our student questionnaire allowed us the space to really discover our students’ preferences and reflect on our practice.

World Café
5 mental health Qs
Visual minutes

Colin, Ricky, Stephen
Oates & Julie Ward
M.E.P.





Radio Nikosia
Barcelona

The third foray into a LLP, Sounds and Voices, involved using recording technology and Skype to communicate with our radio partners and give voice to groups not usually heard. It opened up conversations about mental health and led to a 40+ stakeholder event using the World Café format, which was recorded both visually and through Garageband.

In a parallel world, in 2011, I was using computers to support 300 McDonald's Crew Members to get online to pass the National Test and in 2012 began marking Functional skills papers, initially paper-based but then digitised and offered on demand. Time has moved on and the impact in 2018 is that those papers are being outsourced and being marked abroad.

Harran University TV

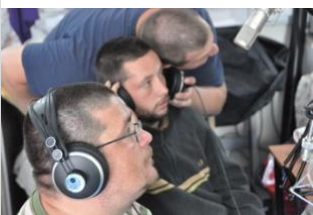
- Skyping colleagues
- Google translate enables conversations between Polish therapists and Turkish professors in Sanliurfa



From 2013 – 2015 Bridge Radio (Grundtvig LLP) developed the web radio idea further and involved three groups meeting once a month to prepare, interview and record the conversations between adults with learning disabilities and their therapists (PSOUU, Bytom), professors of Teacher Education (Harran University, Sanliurfa) and hostel residents and staff (James Lee House, Warrington).

The UK meeting of all partners looked at conflict / peace, a request from the Polish team whose students often experienced discrimination as adults with learning disabilities.

Session 1) Sharjan Miah (BBC/ Khulisa) took us through violent/ aggressive behaviours we can inadvertently commit each day. It was a challenge to reflect on family life. After all, who has never shouted, or sent a message in social media that they regret?



James Lee House

UK Partnership
Meeting
Recording
Changes Together

Listen to Changes
Together [here](#)



Session 2) We wrote and recorded a song about the ‘Changes’ we wanted to see in society.

Session 3) Curtis Watt led a session to reflect on stories of conflict that had impacted on the students’ and teachers’ lives. Behaviours that included violence, discrimination, oppression and bullying. Mike Coleman recorded the transcripts spoken by the authors.

Session 4) Professor Emin Usta presented us with a series of digital images. Zooming out in stages, the context became clearer and the process challenged us to stop and think and ask questions before making (critical) judgements about the initial image.

The final question to be taken away from the weekend was – ‘Who do I want to be? Reinventing ourselves in a positive way.’

From 1985 I have embedded basic skills into all programmes, focussing also on key skills and logging the connections to employability. I believe Sp&G is not the best way to inspire and hook someone back into education and ‘normal’ society after twenty years of using alcohol or drugs. The computers, tablets, mixing desk, phones, video cameras and cameras were used to develop research, creativity, reflection, development of skills and then to log their progress and pride in developing a wide range of transferable and critical thinking skills. It has resulted in raised self-esteem and confidence.

- digital signage encourages residents to join courses

Illich’s words still hold true. ‘Tools are intrinsic to social relationships. An individual relates himself in action to his society through the use of tools

- using Whols to ask owner of a website to take down a negative news story about a resident

- e book as a resource

- Universal Credit requires online access to Government Gateway services to prove and upload
 - job searches
 - C.Vs

that he actively masters, or by which he is passively acted upon. To the degree that he masters his tools, he can invest the world with his meaning; to the degree that he is mastered by his tools, the shape of the tool determines his own self-image. Convivial tools are those which give each person who uses them the greatest opportunity to enrich the environment with the fruits of his or her vision.’ (Ivan Illich, 1975)

Crowther, Hamilton and Tett (2001) suggest powerful literacies can provide the basis for reconstituting our identities and resituating ourselves in society. Using multimodal approaches, individuals can share their ideas, memories and lives and celebrate their identity or create ‘other’ identities. The process of recording and reflection empowers the individuals who participate.

I believe it essential to keep creative and embedded educational opportunities for vulnerable people to enable their future possibilities. Digital literacy is part of the future and should not just be hijacked solely for job searches, signing onto their Government Gateway account, the Work Programme, functional skills or training for CSS cards and Warehousing.

From an organisational perspective JISC argues the following digital capabilities should be developed:

- The use of ICT-based devices, applications, software and services
- The use of ICT-based tools to carry out tasks effectively, productively, and with attention to quality
- The capacity to find, evaluate, manage, curate, organise and share digital information
- The capacity to collate, manage, access and use digital data
- The capacity to design and/or create new digital artefacts and materials
- The capacity to use digital evidence to solve problems and answer questions
- The capacity to adopt and develop new practices with digital technology
- The capacity to communicate effectively in digital media and spaces
- The capacity to participate in digital teams and working groups
- The capacity to participate in, facilitate and build digital networks

- designing posters and newsletters using Adobe Illustrator, In Design & Photoshop

- The capacity to participate in and benefit from digital learning opportunities
- The capacity to support and develop others in digitally-rich settings
- The capacity to develop and project a positive digital identity or identities and to manage digital reputation
- The capacity to look after personal health, safety, relationships and work-life balance in digital settings.

It is time to train all teachers in a wider range of creative practices backed up by capital funding and ongoing CPD rather than leave teachers struggling without resources to enhance the curriculum.

On the day that Stephen Hawkins has died it feels appropriate to end by reflecting on the thoughts of another amazing scientist.

'Remember to look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see and wonder about what makes the Universe exist. Be curious. And however difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at. It matters that you don't just give up.'

(My thanks to the different teams who made all our projects possible.

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Is digital literacy a third basic skill? A reflection

Toni Lambe

Toni has over twenty years' experience in the adult literacy field in Ireland in various capacities including, tutoring, training, management and organisation. She is currently working towards a PhD through the School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, in University College Dublin.

Introduction

As society evolves, the multiple literacies required in order to make sense of our environment are constantly growing and changing (Lambe et al, 2006). However, it is not only evolution that influences how we define literacy; they are also influenced by the ideological perspectives of their creators and the cultural, social, economic and political environment of the time (ibid).

When I started tutoring in adult literacy in the mid-1990s the focus was very much on the basics of reading, writing, and spelling. When numeracy was included it was generally as part of a literacy session and was concerned with issues like money (working out change) and reading the time to help with understanding bus and train timetables. The results of the OECD's International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) published in 1997 included what was called *Quantitative Literacy* which was defined as:

the knowledge and skills required to apply arithmetic operations, either alone or sequentially, to numbers embedded in printed materials, such as balancing a checkbook, calculating a tip, completing an order form, or determining the amount of interest on a loan from an advertisement.

This conceptualisation of numeracy was much more comprehensive than simple computational skills and over time the term 'adult literacy and numeracy' replaced 'adult literacy' and numeracy became one of two basic skills.

The more recent Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) expanded the definition further and included 'the ability to solve problems in technology-rich environments' and the Life skills in Europe project (LSE) defines basic skills as numeracy, literacy, and digital (EPALE). Clearly, at international policy level, digital literacy is being embraced as a third basic skill.

On a practical level it is difficult to engage in society without having digital competencies. A significant amount of banking has moved out of the local branch (even if one still exists) and engagement with government organisations is practically impossible without using a digital platform. As Juliet has discussed in this volume, it is even difficult to pay a parking fee without engaging with technology.

At a personal and social level many of us are heavily dependent on technology. Sarah's article 'Who brings literacy' demonstrates how her students always have their mobile phones to hand both for class work and to keep in touch with friends and family. My own

84-year-old mother uses WhatsApp as a way of keeping in touch with grandchildren and exchanging photographs.

However, despite the very obvious impact of digital literacy on both individuals and the wider economy, its adoption as a third basic skill by adult educators should, I consider, be treated with caution. I offer two broad arguments in support of this position.

Adult literacy, in many countries, is not especially well funded. Adding an extra dimension could put pressure on available funds due to the expense involved in up-skilling tutors and providing the relevant technology (technology is expensive). Unless there is significant provision of digital literacy education at school level the situation could arise where those with strong literacy skills but a gap in their digital skills would be a 'better bet' for providers, who are often under pressure to reach accreditation or output targets. Such a development would leave those with the weakest skills further disadvantaged.

While international organisations may consider digital literacy as a third basic skill, their approach to adult literacy is quite often challenged by those in the field (see Hamilton and Barton, 2000; in Grek, 2015: 41; Hamilton et al., 2015: xxii; Street, 1984; Tett, 2014: 132) and their attempts at defining 'what counts' as literacy legitimises one way of defining literacy to the exclusion of all others (Hamilton et al., 2015: xxii) which serves to exclude many who do not fit the template.

Conclusion

Definitions and meanings of literacy change and evolve over time. Currently, digital literacy is having an impact on people's lives and is being highlighted at both a policy and a practical level. However, before we embrace digital literacy as a third basic skill it is important to be aware of both the theoretical and ideological perspectives of those who are promoting such a move as they may be in conflict with those that currently underpin adult literacy practice.

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Learning to Teach Reading in Multilingual Literacy Classes

Irene Schwab

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Introduction

At the time of conducting this research I was the course leader of a teacher education programme at the UCL Institute of Education, training teachers of adult literacy and ESOL. In 2013 we had created a new joint Literacy and ESOL course amid some trepidation among the team of literacy and ESOL teacher educators. How could a single course train teachers to teach both specialist subjects when the theoretical foundations and practices come from very different traditions? There was a concern that the increased breadth of focus would lead to less depth in both theoretical and practical knowledge. As an adult literacy specialist, my concern was whether, by broadening the course to include language teaching, there was enough detailed study of the key areas of reading and writing.

Yet, we were aware that in London, as in many other areas of the country, adult literacy classes were becoming increasingly diverse. Adult literacy groups now commonly include a high proportion of multilingual learners; indeed, in some cases, none of the learners had English as their first language. Clearly, many of these learners, while reasonably fluent English speakers, still need support with many aspects of their language.

Such groups seem to fit Vertovec's (2006) description of *superdiversity*, a term describing the increased diversity among the diverse groups settled in the UK, with many new, small and scattered communities, whose members also have variations in socio-economic and legal status.

ESOL teachers have always had learners in their classes who need literacy support, so the boundaries between the two specialist subjects are becoming ever more porous. In this research I was interested in exploring the ways in which literacy teachers responded to superdiversity in their classes. As teacher educators, how should we be helping them to meet this challenge? Is the training we offer appropriate for the teaching and learning contexts they will meet?

In order to investigate these questions, I explored adult literacy teachers' beliefs and pedagogic practices in relation to teaching reading, and considered how these were shaped by their Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and by the realities of the context in which they were working. The issues were explored through interviews with, and observations of, 12 adult literacy teachers in two Further Education (FE) colleges in inner London. The fieldwork took place between December 2013 and October 2014.

Theoretical orientation

In common with many other researchers, I see literacies use as a form of social practice which is always enacted within a particular context, for a particular purpose and with a particular audience in mind (1994; Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic, 2000; Street, 1984). The New Literacy Studies see literacies as an integral part of our society, 'located within broader social and political contexts' (Street and Lefstein, 2007, p. 35) as opposed to the conventional view of literacy as a discrete set of skills entirely separate from other aspects of daily life. The skills or 'autonomous' model is associated with a psychological or skills view of literacy in which readers are portrayed as engaged in individual mental processes, whereas in the 'ideological' view of literacy (Barton, 1994; Barton, Hamilton and Ivanic, 2000; Street, 2003) is regarded as multifaceted (New London Group, 1996); multimodal (Kress, 2003); dynamic and in a constant state of flux (Baynham and Prinsloo, 2009) as well as historically, socially and culturally situated. In this model, readers are engaged in social or cultural practices, where written language is integrated with the other social practices taking place in that context (Gee, 2010).

As a practitioner and teacher educator, my view is that literacies are dynamically and inextricably situated within their social, political, cultural and historical contexts, yet I am also aware that learners need some skills in order to progress. Recognising and valuing learners' current uses of literacy is a first step towards developing these through a learner-centred pedagogy (Reder, 1994; 2009). For me, nesting the skills development within an overarching sociocultural approach is a powerful pedagogical methodology. Amalgamation of the two paradigms offers the benefits of both to the learner (Green and Howard, 2007; Purcell Gates, Jacobson and Degener, 2004). According to Lave and Wenger (1991), newcomers can move towards full participation in the socio-cultural practices of a community as they acquire skills and build confidence.

In this study I have chosen to use the definition of reading used by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD, 2013) as one which recognises the breadth and depth of the reading process.

Reading literacy is understanding, using, reflecting on and engaging with written texts, in order to achieve one's goals, develop one's knowledge and potential, and participate in society. (OECD, 2013, p. 61)

This definition recognises that the reader's primary purpose is understanding (comprehension); that readers 'use' texts (they read for a purpose); that they reflect on what they read to create meaning (reading is an interactive process) and that they engage with texts (reading is motivated by interest and/or enjoyment). Reading is active, purposeful and functional, potentially fulfilling both personal and participatory goals.

Review of research on effective practice in teaching reading

What pedagogical practices are considered effective? 'Best practice' or even 'good practice' are contested terms. Coffield and Edward (2009) note how the stakes are continually being

raised and how policy makers have moved from striving for 'good practice' through 'best practice' to 'excellent practice' without clarity on what these terms mean or how they differ, let alone how they might be developed in the field. According to Alexander (1997), good practice is always situated within specific contexts and is a dynamic and constantly changing concept. What we understand by the term 'effective practice' can only be framed in terms of its particular context.

Consequently, the research on 'good practice' in reading must be viewed as provisional in that the contexts of previous research studies are different from those of my study. Much of the research is concerned with children or adolescents rather than adults (Fletcher, 2014; Wray *et al.*, 2002); it is situated in other countries (Benseman, Sutton and Lander, 2005; Fletcher, 2014; Kruidenier, MacArthur and Wrigley, 2010) or other parts of the UK (Brooks *et al.*, 2007); deals with ESOL learners only (Baynham *et al.*, 2007; Condelli, Spruck Wrigley and Suk Yoon, 2009; Roberts *et al.*, 2004) or took place at an earlier time (Kruidenier, 2002; NRP, 2000). Recent research with adults in multilingual metropolitan UK cities is lacking.

Some pedagogic practices recommended in the literature as useful for literacy development are likely to be good practice in teaching any subject, for example: collaborative approaches, independent learning, flexible groupings, a greater proportion of class time on topic, using a range of teaching approaches, which include those based on new technologies and multimodal texts (Brooks *et al.*, 2007; Fletcher, 2014; Kruidenier, MacArthur and Wrigley, 2010; Lesgold and Welch-Ross, 2012).

More specialist approaches include using comprehension strategies which enable readers to monitor their understanding of a text and repair comprehension when it breaks down. (Keene, 2002; Kruidenier, 2002; Kruidenier, MacArthur and Wrigley, 2010; McShane, 2005). The National Reading Panel (NRP) identified eight strategies with 'a firm scientific basis for concluding that they improve comprehension' (2000, pp. 4-5): comprehension monitoring, co-operative learning, graphic and semantic organisers, story structure, question answering and generating, summarisation. Most effective was seen by the NRP to be the combination of two or more of these strategies, as for example, through Directed Reading Activity (Betts, 1946) or reciprocal reading (Palincsar and Brown, 1984; 1986). Brooks *et al.* (2007) noted reciprocal reading was among several approaches suggested by the literature to be effective but rarely seen in their research.

Advocates of the social approach see engagement in literacy practices rather than the development of skills as a defining factor. Involvement in a broader range of literacy practices would not necessarily be assessable by examination, although it may well result in greater achievement (Green and Howard, 2007; Miller and Satchwell, 2006). A social approach to reading includes features not generally seen in the literature around effective literacy teaching which tends to focus on skills. Examples include the use of authentic texts and tasks, a critical reading approach, linking learning with learners' outside-college literacy practices and contextualisation of teaching to the lives and interests of the learners, for example by drawing on their 'Funds of Knowledge', the knowledge and skills acquired by learners in their life outside the college environment (Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti, 2005; Moll *et al.*, 1992).

Review of research on pedagogy for teaching literacy to multilingual learners

There is little literature on teaching reading to multilingual learners in a literacy class, but there is some on teaching beginner literacy to those in ESOL classes (Condelli, Spruck Wrigley and Suk Yoon, 2009; Spiegel and Sunderland, 2006; Vinogradov, 2013). Spiegel and Sunderland (2009) list a number of challenges for learning to read in another language: educational background, another script, the vagaries of English spelling, discourse organisation, different schemata and grammar. New teachers often focus on issues of grammar but the other challenges can be just as consequential.

In general, good practice in teaching reading to multilingual learners is seen as similar to effective literacy teaching approaches with monolingual learners, including those that begin with the whole text and its context and those that start with how words are constructed (top-down and bottom-up processing), varied activities, contextualisation and 'bringing in the outside' (Condelli, Spruck Wrigley and Suk Yoon, 2009). However, multilingual learners need additional language work in order to access and interpret texts. This involves a particular focus on oral communicative activities as an end as well as a means (Baynham *et al.*, 2007), vocabulary, multimodal instruction and the exploration of cultural issues that might hinder understanding of texts (Lesgold and Welch-Ross, 2012).

Vocabulary, one of the NRP (2000) four elements of reading, is naturally more challenging for those who are still in the process of learning the language. For a reader to be able to make sense of a text independently and without strain, the vocabulary needs to be 98-99% familiar (McShane, 2005). Vocabulary instruction that is 'explicit, systematic, extensive and intensive' is needed (Lesgold and Welch-Ross, 2012, p. 225).

Another important issue for reading comprehension is cultural knowledge and background (Lesgold and Welch-Ross, 2012). Learners raised in a different culture may be unfamiliar with some of the references in a text which are key to its comprehension and these need explaining by teachers.

Condelli *et al* (2009) conducted a study of ESOL Literacy students in 38 classes within 13 adult ESOL programmes across the USA. Several instructional strategies were found to be related to growth in student literacy and language learning, the most relevant to this study being 'bringing in the outside'. Students in classes where teachers made connections to the 'outside' or real world had more growth in reading basic skills development. The process engaged learners and enabled them to link new learning to what they already knew.

Lesgold and Welch-Ross (2012) have various suggestions for appropriate pedagogy: task-based learning, explicit teaching, formative feedback, rich and elaborated input, together with literacy instruction that is contextualized. They stress that language learners need to continue learning and using the language outside the classroom, which enables them to interact with English speakers and maximises their exposure to the language in a variety of venues. Technology is seen as a useful vehicle for this too.

Methodology

The research participants were 12 practitioners teaching literacy in a variety of contexts in two FE colleges in Inner London. The data was collected mainly through semi-structured interviews with participants and observations of their teaching. I interviewed each teacher twice; one lengthy interview, discussing their background, experience of training and teaching and their understandings of teaching reading. The second interview took place after the observation and we mainly discussed our reflections on the lesson they had taught.

I observed 12 classes (both daytime and evening), ranging in size from 4 to 23 and covering all curriculum levels from Entry 1 to GCSE level. The learners were aged between 16 and 60+, two thirds of whom were women and altogether speaking over 34 different languages (with several classes consisting of 100% multilingual learners).

The study had a flexible design which was qualitative and inductive. The methodology was descriptive and interpretative in that the participants interpret their world; I then interpret their statements. I observed participants in their everyday contexts doing their normal activities. The teachers I sought as participants in the study had trained since 2007 (when regulatory and curriculum reforms in teacher education took place), were working within FE, and were confident and experienced enough to be able to reflect on their practice.

For myself, there was a need for reflexivity throughout, bearing in mind the duality of my position as both an insider and an outsider (Mercer, 2007). I am an insider in the sense that I have been a literacy teacher for many years, have taught at both the colleges featured in my research and also trained some of the participants in teaching literacy. However, I am also an outsider as I am now working in the HE sector, no longer facing the pressures that the participants face as FE practitioners and, in this case, holding the position of researcher rather than practitioner. I have to recognise that I am not, and cannot be objective.

As an interpretive researcher, I recognise that there is no objective truth, only each of our interpretations of our experiences and I have to take into account the different roles, experiences and pressures sustained by myself and the participants and how these might affect their contributions and the way I interpret them.

Research Findings

Observations on teaching reading

The teachers involved in this study were experienced and committed and this came across in their actions. The Functional Skills syllabus that most were teaching was addressed with an eye to the exams ahead. Most lessons were carefully planned and delivered at an appropriate level for the learners. The teachers were conscious of those with learning difficulties and paid attention to Deaf learners and those with dyslexia, visual disabilities,

autism and other disabilities. They were particularly good at encouraging collaborative learning in their classes.

However, in the sessions I observed, there was a strong focus on skills rather than practices. Furthermore, the skills were heavily weighted towards sentence and word level skills and there was little sign of a holistic approach. Few comprehension strategies were taught, so when comprehension was covered, it was seen as a way of testing rather than teaching learners' understanding of texts. Comprehension was seen merely as another task, as for example when one teacher introduced an activity by saying: 'We are going to *do* a comprehension', as if it were just an exercise rather than the aim of the reading.

I had the expectation that whatever subskill they were teaching, they would start by looking at what meanings the learners created in the texts they read, but this was not the case. Content and approaches were driven by exam requirements and the subskills covered appeared unrelated to learners' experiences. So, aspects of good practice according to sociocultural theory such as drawing on learners' Funds of Knowledge and use of authentic materials were rarely utilised.

Although the teachers were sensitive to the needs of the learners with disabilities in their groups, there was less attention paid to other aspects of diversity, in particular, the language needs of many learners. To some extent this was a deliberate decision; some teachers chose to grade their language when talking to the group; others felt this was not necessary in a literacy class. They argued that 'this is a literacy class' and it should focus on developing reading and writing rather than language; others admitted that they were aware that some learners needed language help but were not sure how to provide it.

In fact, almost all the language work I saw was at word level, mainly consisting of vocabulary development and even then, there was little discussion of cultural references. In the few cases of sentence level work I observed, the grammar tended to be decontextualised.

Language teaching and learning

I found two key issues connected with the teaching of language in literacy classes: some teachers believed that in teaching a literacy class, their role was to concentrate on literacy rather than language issues; others recognised language needs but lacked confidence in their ability to teach what was required, especially grammar. Several of the teachers admitted that their own understanding of grammar was limited and they were aware that, in some cases, the learners had a greater knowledge of metalanguage (language terminology) than they did, especially those who had attended ESOL classes.

One might expect practitioners, trained jointly in literacy and ESOL would be more prepared for this than those who had only trained to teach literacy. However, they seemed to see their current role of literacy teacher as all-embracing, eclipsing any previous training and experience as a language teacher.

Beliefs v pedagogic practice

These 12 teachers started their career in education as mature adults. They came from a variety of backgrounds but the majority saw literacy teaching as a way of doing something worthwhile and improving or changing the lives of those who came to classes. Most of them believed that they could do this by providing lessons that were learner-centred, holistic and collaborative, which developed learners' independence and maximised their potential. A strong belief in Humanistic pedagogy where the teacher facilitates rather than imposes learning, was understood to be an effective way to achieve their goals. One participant said:

The development of the whole person is something that I like to see because it's not just about the technical achievement. (Maggie)

What I observed in this study, which confirms what I have noted in my observations as a teacher educator, is a system that is not attuned to this type of work. One of the teacher participants sums it up:

...because you've lost some kind of philosophy of the teaching about trying to help people change their lives, or whatever it might be, to a whole commercial 'get them in, get them out', and the heart's gone, and that's what I found quite difficult. (Justine)

The lessons were overwhelmingly content-driven rather than learner-centred. In addition, many of the texts and/or tasks chosen were inauthentic, devised for assessment purposes rather than relating to learners' everyday literacy practices. The focus on exam preparation made both teachers and learners acutely conscious of time limits. As a result, the teachers' knowledge assumed more validity than the learners' knowledge and experiences. The teachers had to focus on the content or skills needed to pass the exam, and there was not time to consider learners' everyday practices or even, sometimes, to relate it effectively to their lives. As one participant said:

So, therefore it seems that the driver is hanging on to our students and getting them through exams and the exam results therefore become disproportionately important rather than the learning. (Kathleen)

Students were thus reliant on the teachers' expertise to get them through exams. Accordingly, far from facilitating learning according to Humanistic principles, the teacher controlled the texts, the tasks and activities used to support learning. They focused on subskills of reading, rather than 'reflecting on and engaging with written texts' as we saw in the PISA definition above (OECD, 2013), which relies on the ability to link the text to one's own worldview and life experience.

Conclusions

While my own aims for this research were to improve teacher education, there are also implications for practitioners, institutions and policy makers

One issue begins at the point of screening or initial assessment. In some cases, a potential learner is clearly suited for either a literacy or an ESOL class, but for some multilingual learners, especially at Entry 3 or above, it can be somewhat arbitrary whether they end up in a literacy or ESOL class (Simpson, Cooke and Baynham, 2008). I would argue that teachers need to consider the interests, goals and motivational needs of whoever is in their class, regardless of what the class is called. The college might need to differentiate between literacy and ESOL classes due to funding requirements, but teachers should be encouraged to use their skills and knowledge to provide whatever support is necessary in their class, whether it is labelled literacy, English or ESOL. Teacher educators can play a role here in encouraging trainees to take account of the context and the learners rather than the title of the class. Novice teachers also need to recognise that an understanding of the English language is part of basic subject knowledge, necessary for teaching both language and literacy. It may be that language knowledge needs to be integrated more deeply into subject knowledge on ITE courses; CPD could also have a role in this as often the need is not fully recognised until employment has started.

However, for some teachers in this study, it was not so much that they did not know what to do as they were not able to do as they would have liked because of the challenges posed by their teaching context. The college funding methodology requires achievement to be assessed through exam success. Teachers feel under pressure to comply with this both for the sake of their learners and for their own job security. Whatever their feelings, the exams clearly affected what they did. Some learners were sitting six exams that year and time had to be put aside to prepare them. Many learners had never sat an exam before; others had only experienced failure in their previous attempts. Only certain literacy skills are assessed in an exam, so these are the skills that needed to be practised. Other, perhaps equally important, skills were ignored because they were not needed to pass the exam. Learners' own literacy practices, which are by their very nature, individualized, context dependent and associated with life outside the classroom are totally ignored by the exam system. The phenomenon whereby exams drive the curriculum, described as 'washback', (Cheng, 1997; Spratt, 2005) is well-known in EFL where exams have a longer history. When learners face six exams in a year, as in one of these colleges, the washback is practically continuous. In these circumstances it is unsurprising that teachers struggle to put into practice what they believe to be good practice.

There are two key lessons we can learn from this. Firstly, teacher educators need to incorporate the reality of current teaching contexts into their training programmes with discussions about how good practice can be maintained in challenging circumstances. While FE teaching operates within the current assessment-based hegemony, skills will always be seen as the answer to exam success, and thus teachers are likely to choose a skills model over a social practices model. Teacher education must take on this challenge and show how the two models can be integrated to benefit learners' progress more broadly, not just through exam success. We can learn from teachers like Karla, who believes that, whatever the circumstances, the learner comes first:

...finding out what people are interested in, or what their aspirations are, what they are going to be doing in their daily lives, and marrying that to what you teach, is still really important. So obviously passing a test might be part of that.

A second, more global implication is the need for FE to be a site of transformative education. Maxted argues that educators can reclaim space for alternative views 'through determined collaborative action supported by theoretical analysis' (Maxted, 2015, p. 46). She sees critical pedagogy as the key to maintaining spaces for dialogue, for engaging in critical thinking and for encouraging students to question everything they hear and read. A teacher who sees beyond the word to the world is likely to be a model to learners. Freire states 'Reading is not walking on the words; it's grasping the soul of them.' (Freire, 1985, p. 19). Teacher educators can help novice teachers formulate this praxis by embedding critical pedagogy into their own practice and by inviting trainees to continually reflect on their practice and to critique personal and institutional practices.

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Populism, Media and Education: Challenging discrimination in contemporary digital societies.

Edited by Maria Ranieri

Cost: £110 in 2016; paperback edition to be published January 2018 £36.99

Publisher: Routledge

Pages: 206

ISBN: 978-1-138-92984-5

Reviewed by Julie Collins

Julie Collins has worked in adult and further education for 35 years.

This book is based on a major research project funded by the European Commission: e-Engagement Against Violence. In the forward, Professor Renee Hobbs begins with a positive perception of the European community - exploring how digital media can help create and sustain communities that value and respect diversity. But it is not that simple, she argues, because digital media, mass media, popular culture, globalization and capitalism are converging in new ways that are destabilizing old forms of social power and creating new discourses.

My interest comes from work in the homeless sector and, as a coordinator of four Grundtvig Lifelong Learning partnerships, I possess a set of rose-coloured spectacles around European practice that values diversity. But, for me, it was also not that simple, because the realism was in knowing that I had members of the English Defence League attending workshops and travelling with us. I wondered how to challenge a world view that is so intransigent. Would it create further conflict by meeting with the 'others' of their world. Discrimination was, in practice, a two-way street, as the labels 'homeless' and 'addiction' were a challenge for some partners at some meetings.

In Part I, the book examines how media education and citizenship can help to explain the rise of the new populism. Part II relates to three complex studies. Part III explores the way in which the e-EAV modules they created can re-engage students in a meaningful way and includes reflections on the process.

Part I

Theoretical foundations: right-wing populism, communicative strategies and media literacy.

In the first chapter, the authors acknowledge that an analysis of populism as a concept can be difficult. There are some agreements, about hostility to an elite, or the establishment

and a tendency to seeing some groups as **out** groups, which is described as ‘othering.’ Populism as described here is seen as chameleon in nature, ever-changing and difficult to pin down.

To counteract this, the authors ask if we can conceptualise education, not as a curriculum but as ‘Bildung,’ (a unification of selfhood and identity within the broader society) with the capacity to build a worldview through informal and formal education, through art, social media and civic activism.

The second chapter looks at the use of critical frame analysis methodology to analyse policy debates, public discourses and media communication. The tool is seen as a way to detect the strategies of online right-wing populism, to examine how they construct societal problems, to raise antagonistic inequality and promote a ‘we’ and ‘them’ culture. If we, as educators, are to address discrimination through MLE (Media Literacy Education) how can we encourage change?

In chapter three, the authors note the gaps between the teachers’ critical perspective and the changing experience of students, where family life, peer groups and neighborhoods are prominent in affecting political understanding. They recommend creating multi-dimensional images/texts, which explore the tensions and contradictions between different kinds of identities without imposing a single authorised story line – an open dialogue taking into account students’ own interests and concerns.

Part II

Research study of online populist communication strategies in European societies.

This examines three areas in greater depth, focusing on:

- 1) Ethno- nationalism and radical capitalism (migrants as a threat)
- 2) Gendering ‘the people’
- 3) Anti elitism as a populist strategy.

Part III

Research on media analysis and production, online discrimination and engagement.

This opens with a scenario of the web as a colour blind, tolerant and democratic space and then looks at the dark side where concerns have been raised about reinforcement of stereotypes, of ‘others’. The opening chapter of this section presents the theoretical and methodological approaches that inspired the design of the educational materials used by 20 participating schools. It also discusses the results of the action research focusing on students’ reactions.

A reflective piece from France reveals a view that the e-EAV project met the initial demands of teachers because it provided new pedagogic tools in order to transform their educational practices. However, the results showed the necessity for further teacher training in media education and discriminatory discourse analysis.

The last chapter in Part III highlights the 5 modules created on the e-EAV platform. The project aimed to train teachers and educators to develop skills of participation and mobilization but encountered some issues around the online process and found some difficulties in collaborating in their new community of practice.

To conclude, I agree with Julien (1995:22) 'Teachers have to rethink their ways of teaching if they intend to form citizens, who, of course, cannot know everything, but who are better prepared to understand what is happening.' It is important that those 'citizens' master the tools and find their voice.

In a world it can be difficult to make sense of, this book has pertinence and relevance.

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Literacy and Multimodality Across Global Sites

By Maureen Kendrick

Publisher Oxon: Routledge (2016)

138 pages. 29 B/W Illus.

ISBN: 978-0-415-85979-0 (hbk) Hardback price: £110.00; Paperback price: £24.95

ISBN: 978-0-203-71355-6 (ebk) ebook price: £22.46

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In this accessible and scholarly book, Maureen Kendrick offers a fresh reading of her research over two decades in Uganda, Kenya and Canada. This reflexive approach enables her to re-interpret her work in the light of contemporary theory, particularly in the area of multimodality.

Kendrick writes from an interdisciplinary perspective, drawing on New Literacy Studies and multimodality/social semiotics, which she sees as overlapping theories and approaches to research and learning. Situating literacy studies within the field of multimodality, she argues for the use of visual methodologies, such as drawings, to uncover the 'often invisible, accretive layers of literacy practices' in the everyday lives of individuals, families and communities. The value of this approach is particularly evident in ethnographic studies where child participants were invited to communicate difficult knowledge such as issues related to family loss and bereavement, sexual violence and resistance to institutional norms.

Underlying all the studies is Kendrick's deep respect for participants and her commitment to collaborative literacy research with the children, young people and adults taking part in the research. She makes the case for researchers to extend multimodal research by engaging with under-represented voices in global contexts. At the same time, she argues that literacy studies in the 21st century must take account of relationships across and between communicative modes such as image, sound and word, where written language can no longer be privileged.

Kendrick has a strong interest in how we learn. She advances the notion of 'play' as inquiry-based learning which offers opportunities for both children and adults to construct and practise new identities. One study explores the situated writing practices of girls and young women in an after-school journalism club, where participants try out and perform new

identities as journalists. Another study looks at how adult women in rural Uganda reconstructed and rehearsed their identities as 'literate' women in their communities.

Whilst this book may not appear to reflect the immediate concerns of many adult literacy teachers within their classrooms in the global north, I would argue that there is much to ponder and use within these pages.

News from the sector

Tara Furlong

Tara is the Chair of RaPAL and can be contacted on webweaver@rapal.org.uk

There appears to be an avalanche of activity across the sector, supporting teaching and learning and research. We would love to hear more about the literacies (English, maths and digital skills) aspects to all this activity, as it is not always made explicit. Have a great spring (break) all!

English and maths Functional Skills Subject Content

The revised Functional Skills Subject Content is out

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/functional-skills-subject-content-english>

along with an analysis of the effect they will have on specific protected groups of people, 'English and maths functional skills content: equality analysis' here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-and-maths-functional-skills-content-equality-analysis>.

The Adult learners of English and maths: longitudinal survey

The results of a three-year study into learner profiles and the impact of English and maths study are also out <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-learners-of-english-and-maths-longitudinal-survey>

Wellcome Trust neuroscience events online: Supporting Teachers with the Science of Learning

The Wellcome Trust is running online activities for teachers wishing know more about neuroscience and psychology research relevant to the classroom. The following resources are designed to help teachers understand and utilise the evidence:

The Science of Learning Zone - [Registration](#) LIVE now. Running January – June 2018.

A 6-month online event between teachers / neuroscientists / psychologists and educational researchers, where teachers can engage in discussion with researchers on fortnightly topics relating to learning in the classroom.

The Learning Scientists – are [Podcasts](#) and monthly [Facebook Live events](#) on the Science of Learning. The podcast is enabling teachers to engage with our material in a new format that is convenient for those with busy lives. In our Facebook Live events, teachers are able to submit their questions both prior to the event and in real time and get answers based on up-to- date information from research. Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) - Registration from January 2018. Launch 16th April 2018. The National STEM Learning Centre is producing an open online course exploring how teachers can use the science of learning to improve student outcomes.

In addition to these, the Wellcome Trust are also funding primary and secondary initial teacher training modules on the science of learning, with the intention of sharing widely once completed, and also supporting teachers to [run their own randomised control trials](#). If you are able and willing to promote any of these opportunities please let Joe Miller J.Miller@wellcome.ac.uk know, who can provide copy and images.

TELL - Teacher Education in Lifelong Learning

MARJON PLYMOUTH - TELL Network Meeting - FREE as always Wed, May 16, 2018, 11:00 pm – 3:00 pm at Plymouth Marjon University, Derriford Road, Devon PL6 8BH

This is a free event for Teacher Educators, Researchers, Leaders and Practitioners in FE & Training. The event will share research findings from key research and interventions in FE & Training.

Keynote speakers:

Dr Vicky Duckworth and Dr Rob Smith, Project Leads of UCU funded 'Transformational Further Education'.

Speakers:

- Professor Tanya Ovenden-Hope, Project Lead of ETF funded 'Collaborative Pedagogy: school strategies applied to FE'.
- Jim Crawley 'Post-compulsory teacher educators: connecting professionals'.
- Peter Wolstencroft and Carol Thompson, research comparing the role of education and commercial managers.

Booking via Eventbrite on https://www.eventbrite.com/e/tell-network-meeting-free-tickets-42402437833?utm_term=eventurl_text

BOLTON - TELL Network meeting - FREE as always. Thursday 21st June 2018 11.00 am to 3.00 pm at the University of Bolton, Bolton

BRIGHTON - TELL Network meeting - FREE as always. Thursday 12th July at the Grand Hotel Brighton

To book a place email at either of these email Jim Crawley on j.crawley@bathspa.ac.uk

CEBE project: Leading Research Engagement in Education Workshop

Leading Research Engagement in Education is a project set up by CEBE (Coalition for Evidence-Based Education). A group of teachers in schools and colleges, together with people from universities and intermediary organisations, developed [a Guide](#) for schools and colleges on research engagement at institutional level. The challenges of sustaining research engagement in schools and colleges are being discussed in an open workshop aimed at research champions in provider organisations. The next workshop is at UCL Institute of Education on 27th June at 17.00 – 19.00. For further details of this or other project activities contact Ruth Dann at ruth.dann@ucl.ac.uk

Alex Stevenson on 'Why it's time to think differently about Entry Level English and maths'

'Blink and you may have missed it, but recently the Department for Education published a long-awaited (well, by me, anyway) longitudinal research study into adult English and maths...' More from Alex here <http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/2018/03/12/why-its-time-to-think-differently-about-entry-level-english-and-maths/>

Why not write something for the RaPAL Journal?

We invite contributions from anyone involved in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL education to write and share ideas, practice and research with RaPAL readers. This can be writing from learners, ideas linking research and practice, comments about teaching, training or observations about policy. Our journal is now produced online and so we welcome articles, reviews, reports, commentaries, images or video that will stimulate interest and discussion.

The journal is published three times a year and represents an independent space, which allows critical reflection and comment linking research with practice in the field of adult literacy, numeracy and ESOL nationally and internationally.

The RaPAL network includes learners, managers, practitioners, researchers, tutors, teacher trainers, and librarians in adult, further and higher education in the UK. It also has an international membership that covers Ireland, Canada, USA, New Zealand, Australia, South America, Europe and Africa.

Guidelines for contributors

All contributions should be written in an accessible way for a wide and international readership.

- Writing should be readable, avoiding jargon. Where acronyms are used these should be clearly explained.
- Ethical guidelines should be followed particularly when writing about individuals or groups. Permission must be gained from those being represented and they should be represented fairly.
- We are interested in linking research and practice; you may have something you wish to contribute but are not sure it will fit. If this is the case, please contact the editors to discuss this.
- Writing should encourage debate and reflection, challenging dominant and taken for granted assumption about literacy, numeracy and ESOL.

We want to encourage new writers as well as those with experience and to cover a range of topics. We aim to have three different kinds of articles in the journal plus a reviews section; these are slightly different in length and focus. We welcome illustration and graphics for any of the sections and now have the facility to embed audio and video files into the journal. The journal has a different theme for each edition but we welcome general contributions too.

Below you will see more details about the different themes and topics:

1. Ideas for teaching

This section is for descriptive and reflective pieces on teaching and learning. It is a good place to have a first go at writing for publication and can be based on experiences of learners and teachers in a range of settings. Pieces can be up to 1,000 words long.

2. Developing Research and Practice

This section covers a range of contributions from research and practice. In terms of research this could be experience of practitioner research, of taking part in research projects, commenting on research findings or of trying out ideas from research in practice. In terms of practice this could be about trying out new ideas and pushing back boundaries. Contributions should include reflection and critique. Pieces for this section should be between 1,000 - 2,000 words long including references.

3. Research and Practice: multi-disciplinary perspectives

This section is for more sustained analytical pieces about research, practice or policy. The pieces will be up to 4,000 words long including references and will have refereed journal status. Although articles in this section are more theoretically and analytically developed they should nevertheless be clearly written for a general readership. Both empirical work and theoretical perspectives should be accessible and clearly explained. Writing for this section should:

- Relate to the practices of learning and teaching adult literacy, numeracy or ESOL
- Link to research by describing and analysing new research findings relating this and any critical discussion to existing research studies
- Provide critical informed analysis of the topic including reference to theoretical underpinning
- Write coherently and accessibly avoiding impenetrable language and assumed meanings. The piece should have a clear structure and layout using the Harvard referencing system and notes where applicable. All terminology should be explained, particularly for an international readership.

Reviews

Reviews and reports of books, articles and materials (including online materials) should be between 50 to 800 words long. They should clearly state the name of the piece being reviewed, the author, year of publication, name and location of publisher and cost. You should also include your name, a short 2 to 3 line biography and your contact details. You can write the review based on your experience of using the book, article or materials in your role as practitioner, teacher trainer, and researcher or as a student.

Submitting your work

1. If you are responding to a call for articles via the RaPAL email list or directly by an editor you will have been given the email address of the editor(s) for submitting your work, together with a deadline date and the theme of the journal.
2. If you are submitting a piece of work that you would like RaPAL to consider for publication that has not been written as a result of a call for articles, please send it to journal@rapal.org.uk in the first instance. The journal coordinator will then let you know what the next steps will be.
3. All contributions should have the name of the author(s), a title and contact email address and telephone number. You should also include a short 2 to 3 line biography. Sections, sub-sections and any images should be clearly indicated or labelled (further guidance on image size is on the website www.rapal.org.uk).
4. All referencing should follow the Harvard system.
5. Articles should be word processed in a sans serif font, double-spaced with clearly numbered pages.
6. The article should be sent to journal@rapal.org.uk

What happens next?

1. Editors are appointed for each edition of the journal. They review all contributions and will offer feedback, constructive comment and suggestions for developing the piece as appropriate.
2. Articles submitted for the third category 'Research and Practice: multi-disciplinary perspectives' will be peer-reviewed by an experienced academic, research or practitioner in the field in addition to being edited.
3. The editor(s) will let you know whether your article has been accepted and will send you a final copy before publication.

If you have any questions, please contact the journal coordinator by emailing journal@rapal.org.uk

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