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Editorial: The Shapeshifting Nature of Children's Literature for ELT

Welcome to another issue of the *CLELEjournal*!

Since the cultural turn in the last decades of the 20th century, the understanding of literature has been re-conceptualized to become broader, pluralistic and fluid. We see this development strongly in children's literature scholarship, which encompasses the study of a wide variety of texts. Children's literature is notoriously difficult to define, as manifold as literature aimed at adults, and embracing a range of formats. These include multimodal formats, like the picturebook and the graphic novel for teenagers, interactive formats like play scripts for children, story apps, oral storytelling, poetry and playground rhymes, as well as formats for fluent readers such as verse novels, young adult novels and crossover literature (also appealing to adults). All formats – usually even including nursery rhymes and poems for children – tell stories. Many genres are represented in these narratives: such as biography, animal stories, refugee stories and realistic fiction, non-fiction, fantasy, love stories, ghost stories, historical fiction, dystopia, school stories and the *Bildungsroman*.

Particularly in the area of language education, attention has shifted from the literary product to the communicative process of reception: 'Analysis has been extended to all texts as cultural products, with the notion of culture seen as increasingly dynamic and co-constructed interactively, as an emergent and specifically linguistic process rather than as a completed product' (Carter, 2015, p. 316). Despite the availability of scholarship on children's literary texts as dynamic and shapeshifting artefacts, the move towards including children's literature in language education with young learners and teenagers is slow in comparison with the swift development over recent decades that Enever (2015, p. 13) calls 'a general trend worldwide towards introducing the teaching of additional languages from the very earliest phases of compulsory schooling'. In connecting literature and language education, there is still much work to be done in the area of theory building – bridging conceptual and empirical research in English language teaching (ELT) – in order to understand the affordances of literary texts, particularly in the primary and lower to mid-secondary school, where most compulsory ELT takes place worldwide.

Fortunately research into using literary texts in ELT is now expanding with children's literature scholars involved in education becoming ever more cognizant of the

plurilingual and pluricultural nature of classrooms across the world – where English is the vehicle of teaching, but many learners have a mother tongue or tongues other than English. Learning language through literature also sits well alongside the current focus on content-based teaching in ELT, the acquisition of intercultural understanding, multiple literacies and an initiation into the pleasures of literature. To this end, the ever-diversifying literary texts for children should be made accessible to a far greater extent than they currently are – conceptually through teacher education courses and materially through schools or local libraries – for all those involved in ELT with young learners and adolescents. The AILA Research Network in Early Language Learning – with the aim of raising the profile of research in language learning with children – has brought together researchers keen to develop this area. Among the members of the ELL-ReN (<http://www.ell-ren.org/>) are the editors of the CLELEjournal and the authors of the first two articles in this issue.

Several different text formats are in focus in this issue. Brunsmeier and Kolb in ‘Picturebooks Go Digital – The Potential of Story Apps for the Primary EFL Classroom’ report on a study that explores the opportunities story apps represent for reading in a foreign language. Their research investigates the nature of story apps in supporting autonomous reading with children between the ages of 8 and 11 in Germany. In ‘The Sounds of Picturebooks for English Language Learning’, Fleta examines picturebooks with regard to raising phonological awareness and learners’ aural and oral skills. She refers to picturebooks that are particularly creative acoustically – richly patterned in rhyme and repetition, rhythmic refrains, onomatopoeia and alliteration. Fleta demonstrates the pleasures and advantages of this material with the example of Spanish young learners.

Ortells Montón’s article is concerned with getting young people to read in ‘a world dominated by visual media and technology’. In her paper ‘Using American Coming-of-Age Stories in the ELT Classroom’, she describes her promising experiences with a project on multicultural coming-of-age stories – graphic novels and popular young adult literature – in secondary-school ELT in Spain. We hope with our series ‘Recommended Reads’ to provide further glimpses into the rich opportunities of the various children’s literature formats – in this issue there are recommendations for three picturebooks and a graphic novel. Finally, Gonçalves Matos reviews Delanoy, Eisenmann and Matz (eds) *Learning with Literature in the EFL Classroom* which, in keeping with the theme of this issue,

attempts to cover the very wide range of formats: picturebooks, poetry, plays, young adult fiction, short stories, graphic novels and even video games.

As always, we wish to thank all who have contributed to this issue.

Happy reading,

Janice Bland and Sandie Mourão

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