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## Editorial

Janice Bland, Christiane Lütge and Sandie Mourão

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to the first issue of *Children's Literature in English Language Education*, our bi-annual *CLELEjournal*. The motivating drive behind the creation of this open-access online journal is our belief in the significance of children's literature – in its many manifestations – for English language education. This belief was fuelled by the shared enthusiasm of almost 400 participants at an international conference held at the University of Hildesheim, Germany, in 2010 – where leading scholars and teacher educators from all continents presented recent research and new perspectives on the uses of children's literature in second language teaching for children and young adults.

It became clear that a platform was needed for publishing papers focusing on children's literature and second language learning, to serve as an important source of information on this vibrant, fast-emerging research area. The two academic fields, teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), and children's literature scholarship, are traditionally seen as quite separate; apparently little overlap occurs. It is our hope that this journal can become a bridge to connect scholarly debate, encompassing both children's literature scholarship and TEFL. Literary texts form an empowering gateway to new perspectives and intercultural awareness, and the imaginative scope of children's literature contributes to broadening our students' (and our) understanding of humanity and the world.

The *CLELEjournal* solicits papers that cover all forms of children's literature: fiction and non-fiction, oral storytelling and picturebooks, fairy tales, poetry and rhymes, comics and graphic novels, children's films, educational drama and plays for children and young adults, as well as language learner literature. We are interested in contributions that cover the theory and practice of using children's literature in the English language classroom, encompassing the sharing of research projects and results, in-depth textual analysis and interpretation, teaching ideas as well as discussion around writing and adapting literature for second language education.

This is clearly an international field, with English as a Second Language (ESL) and as a Foreign Language (EFL) reaching ever wider circles and younger children, and thus it

is no surprise that the articles in this first issue of the CLELEjournal reflect a rich diversity of teaching contexts. There are perspectives from Poland, Germany, Lebanon, India and Portugal, offering perceptive and innovative ideas, suggestions and shared experience with students from primary through to secondary education. The literary texts referred to include picturebooks, nonsense literature and an alternate history written for young adults.

Justyna Deszcz-Tryhubczak and Mateusz Marecki, with their article 'The World Turned Upside Down: Exploring Alternate History with Young Adults', report on a project in which 17-year-olds worked on Terry Pratchett's *Nation*. The aim was to study the 'effectiveness of literature as a frame of reference for a critical assessment of potentialities', exploring ways that the students might develop as creative agents of change. The project offered the students both the opportunity to discover history, and to consider alternative, utopian visions.

In 'From Reading Pictures to Understanding a Story in the Foreign Language', Annett Kaminski describes a study designed to show whether EFL students in the young learner classroom can be prepared 'to tolerate extended input in the foreign language'. Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler's *The Smartest Giant in Town* was the picturebook chosen for this empirical study, with interesting results showing young learners' sense making when the verbal text is still beyond their command of English.

Irma Ghosn provides an introduction to the wealth of research on children's literature in education. Her chosen focus is 'Humanizing Teaching English to Young Learners with Children's Literature', and from this perspective she suggests using classics of children's literature, and introduces numerous picturebooks. These, she argues, are texts that have stood the test of time, to become 'a particularly suitable and developmentally appropriate medium of instruction in the young learner classroom'.

Urmishree Bedamatta contributes with an article entitled 'Playing with Nonsense: Toward Language Bridging in a Multilingual Classroom', in which she draws upon theoretical perspectives of language awareness, language play and the theories of nonsense. She discusses how language play might be used to support linguistic connections and discoveries, with the potential to bridge the 'linguistic and cultural distance' between the teacher and first generation school-goers in the Indian classroom.

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Sandie Mourão's paper describes a project that investigated the use of a postmodern picturebook with advanced secondary-school students in Portugal. Shaun Tan's *The Lost Thing* was employed to 'foster students' appreciation of the visual during their interpretative discussions'. The resulting critical reading of the picturebook, and the activation of the students' interpretation skills, are interestingly compared to how the students experienced and interpreted the film of the book.

We hope you enjoy reading Volume 1, Issue 1, of the *CLELEjournal*. We rely upon you, the readers, to support the launch by promoting the journal amongst colleagues and students. We also encourage you to contribute, to share your ideas and experiences in this exciting new field.

We wholeheartedly thank our exceptional advisory board who have supported our initiative from the outset, both by playing a key role in our selection of articles making up the first issue, and by providing detailed, insightful and informative feedback for the contributors. We look forward to continued collaboration on the *CLELEjournal*. We also acknowledge the important contribution of our helpful and patient webmaster, Ina Meyer-Wehrmann.

### **The Editors**

**Janice Bland** (PhD) is a teacher educator in the Department of English and American Studies, University of Paderborn. Her main interests are children's and young adult literature, EFL education in the primary and secondary school, visual literacy with picturebooks and graphic novels, creative writing, children's drama and drama processes.

Prof. Dr **Christiane Lütge** holds the Chair of Teaching English as a Foreign Language at the English Department of Münster University, Germany. Her main areas of interest include literature and culture in the EFL classroom, media literacy, children's literature in language education, teaching Shakespeare and foreign language teacher education.

**Sandie Mourão** (PhD) is a freelance teacher educator, author and educational consultant based in Portugal. Her research interests include early years language learning, picturebooks for language learning with all ages and classroom-based investigation.