

Preface to 30(1)

In this number of *Per Linguam* the articles are presented in terms of the age of the research participants, starting with a very interesting study by Charlyn Dyers on the effectiveness of texting as a tool to acquire literacy. Her research participants are a number of women between the ages of 50 and 80, many of whom had their schooling interrupted and in one case, the participant had not developed literacy at all. The study shows how these women “are participating in collaborative learning” (Dyers in this number) and develop literacy in social settings, where their grandchildren, friends and family support and encourage their learning.

The articles by Rambiritsch, Wildsmith & Steinke, Nkhomo, Gasiorek & Van der Poel and Mhlahlo & Chacha-Mhlahlo, focus on university level language learning, with the inclusion of secondary school education in the case of Mhlahlo & Chacha-Mhlahlo. Rambiritsch and Wildsmith & Steinke both focus on the development of academic literacy, in the case of Rambiritsch in a test of academic literacy for postgraduate students. That such a test can be valuable to identify possible weaknesses is undeniable and Rambiritsch traces the development of the test as well as students’ perceptions of the accessibility of the test. She suggests ways in which the developers of the test can support students to prepare for the test and so enhance their possibility of performing well. This article dovetails very well with that of Wildsmith and Steinke, who describe a course to improve higher education students’ writing. As Rambiritsch points out, both reading and writing are problems experienced by graduate and postgraduate students, and the *Read to Learn* approach, as described by Wildsmith and Steinke, is shown to have a positive effect on writing too. In the article by Gasiorek & Van der Poel a complex situation of re-developing academic literacy for continued medical training is described. In terms of a special governmental agreement, medical students from South Africa spend the first six years of their training in Cuba where they first spend twelve months learning Spanish, followed by five years of medical training (undertaken in Spanish). Their re-integration into South African society and problems with medical terminology are investigated and the authors show how a lack of appropriate language learning materials exacerbates these students’ entry into their chosen profession, with the resulting frustration and lack of confidence.

NKhomo describes the development of a module in lexicography at graduate and postgraduate level At Rhodes University. The importance of lexicography as a necessary element in the curriculum is underlined in this article, particularly in view of South Africa’s multilingual language policy and the increasing use of African languages in higher education. Coming from a completely different angle, Mhlahlo & Chacha-Mhlahlo consider higher and secondary education level students’ perceptions of English language teachers and lecturers from African countries outside South Africa. This study touches on aspects that South Africans are very willing to ignore, which is the alienation experienced by academics from neighbouring countries. They show that South Africans’ perceptions of multilingualism as a national resource need to extend beyond our borders and that learners and students “should also be intentionally prepared to expect to be taught using multilingual methods by multicultural educators” (Mhlahlo & Chacha-Mhlahlo in this number).

In the first of our two articles on language and literacy development at primary school level, Le Cordeur and Basson discuss in their Afrikaans contribution an intervention to develop the Afrikaans language proficiency of isiXhosa speaking children whose parents choose to enrol them at a school that uses Afrikaans as a language of learning and teaching. By using the local context, the researchers developed a programme to engage learners in interactive meaning-making activities that serve to improve their language proficiency in Afrikaans. Nathanson’s

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article is also concerned with the improvement of language proficiency at primary school level, but her focus is on a sustainable framework that includes a partnership with schools, student teachers and teachers at the school. The framework is intended to integrate language teacher training, particularly with regard to school practicums, in-service teacher education and training and the improvement of literacy at such a school.

I am sure that this rich variety is evidence of the increasing interest in publishing with *Per Linguam*. The journal is growing with each number and we are very happy with this development! For those of you who are interested, we now also have a presence on Twitter and you can follow us on @PerLinguam.

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SPECIAL CALL FOR PAPERS

We would like to invite authors to submit papers on aspects of literacy in the widest sense of the word. Barton & Hamilton (2000: 8) note that “Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices: these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts”. However, the term is used increasingly to refer to specific kinds of interpretive knowledge that may have little to do with reading or writing in the conventional sense; for example media literacy, financial literacy, scientific literacy, cultural literacy, workplace literacy, to name a few. Is there a shared understanding of what we mean by these uses of the term ‘literacy’? What do they have in common and what, if anything, do they have to do with literacy as a ‘set of social practices mediated by written texts’?

Please submit your manuscript by 30 September with a view to publication this year. This number of *Per Linguam* will appear electronically only. All the requirements for articles published in *Per Linguam* apply.