

Looking back and moving forward: supporting practice and critique in international conversations about the teaching of English

As we begin our term as editors of *English Teaching: Practice & Critique* (ETPC), we reflect back on our first experiences with the journal over 10 years ago. We were both early career professors at the University of Pittsburgh, eager to establish ourselves nationally and internationally as English educators. In the US context, we quickly found homes in our national literacy organizations and discovered key journals where our scholarship could make a contribution. In common, however, we both hoped to find a space to engage with scholars across the globe about international issues related to the teaching of English. We found that place when our colleague, Tony Petrosky, introduced us to *ETPC*. Having been on the ground floor of the journal's inception along with Terry Locke, Brenton Doecke, Andrew Goodwyn and Hilary Janks, Tony encouraged us to not only read and contribute to the *ETPC* but also become part of the international community of English educators that served as the journal's epicenter.

Through Tony's introduction, we had the tremendous opportunity to work with *ETPC*'s longstanding editor, Terry Locke. Although we were early-career scholars, Terry – and the *ETPC* community – welcomed us and immediately put us to work. Terry provided us with the occasion to work with a senior scholar from outside of the USA as co-guest editors of issues related to our areas of expertise. Amanda Godley worked with Alex Kostogriz (Australia) on a themed issue related to academic literacy and difference. Amanda Thein worked with Terry (New Zealand) on a themed issue focused on gender and literature. These experiences allowed us to develop relationships with scholars outside of the USA, to explore international perspectives on the teaching of English and to learn about the process of writing and publication from the perspective of an editor. In short, these experiences were central to our development as scholars committed to international engagement in English education. We are deeply grateful to Terry and the *ETPC* community for welcoming, encouraging and trusting us with the future of the journal.

In developing our vision for *ETPC*, we asked Terry to reflect on the 15-year history of the journal. Terry's reflections and insights on the history of the journal remind us of the collaborative, international context of its beginnings and the unique role played by scholars from various institutions:

The original *ETPC* vision was in fact the product of a conversation, and different members of the original Editorial Board (as more or less established at the 2002 convention of the American Educational Research Association in New Orleans) had quite specific contributions. Brenton Doecke and I shared a hotel room at this conference, directly above Bourbon Street, so getting to sleep before 3 a.m. was well-nigh impossible. We had a number of conversations about this possible journal. We had both been editors of professional journals in our respective countries, *English in Australia* in Brenton's case and *English in Aotearoa* in mine. I already owed Brenton a huge debt as an editing mentor. His particular interest was comparative education and he would have written the original sentence in the first mission statement to that effect. Hilary Janks, who was also at that conference, made it quite clear that she would not be involved in a journal that did not have a social justice orientation. Andy Goodwyn brought to the famous meeting in our hotel room his long association with the NATE journal *English in Education*. His vision for the journal all along was that it be associated with IFTE (the International Association for the Teaching English), which was



struggling to establish itself as an international forum. A number of us hoped that *ETPC* would help in this struggle by encouraging global conversations about what it meant to teach English, especially in Anglophone settings. Tony Petrosky was a key participant in this New Orleans conversation also, and was an important player in helping the journal combat an inclination in many American scholars to be somewhat insular. I was remarkably privileged to be trusted by these people, and it would be fair to say that they all “took a punt” on my doing a reasonable job.

Building on this collaborative beginning, Terry attributes much of the journal’s early success to the establishment of a strong, core editorial board that worked with scholars across the globe to cultivate innovative themed issues. He explained:

The Board was always a small group. Unlike some journals, it was not an attempt to bring together a kind of *Who’s Who* in the field. Rather, it was a group that operated as a little community of practice that really did share common goals and worked very hard as friends as well as colleagues. In the early years of the journal, it was personal networking that led to scholars from far and wide submitting. Right from the start it was our practice as a Board to bring together 2-3 guest editors per issue from different national settings. Often these people had never worked together. Sometimes, they did not even know each other. However, I’d say that with a couple of exceptions, this arrangement was remarkably productive and generative. Guest editors played a key role in attracting quality submissions. I would attribute the success of *ETPC* in gaining Thomson Reuters accreditation to this *modus operandi*.

As the Editor, Terry fostered the development of a global community of scholars committed to studying English teaching across international landscapes. A central goal of our editorship is to continue to expand this global community. We will continue to encourage multinational guest-editorial teams to facilitate issues on themes of global importance. We will look for opportunities to further diversify *ETPC*’s editorial board. Finally, we will seek articles representative not only of an array of contexts but also a range of theoretical and methodological traditions that allow for a wide variety of perspectives on the teaching of English. Our goal is for each issue to represent a diversity of global perspectives and for every article to speak to English educators across national and cultural contexts.

Our vision for *ETPC* is also grounded in two key terms found in the journal’s title – *practice* and *critique*. In [Locke’s \(2015\)](#) retrospective article on the journal’s first 12 years, he emphasized the importance of both of these terms in distinguishing *ETPC* from other journals, explaining:

As a journal concerned with “practice”, it wanted to embrace a focus on what actually happens in classrooms, teacher education institutions, and other learning sites – what [Eisner \(2002\)](#) calls the *operational curriculum*. The word “critique” in the title underlines the journal’s critical orientation ([Locke, 2015, p. 3](#)).

In reviewing articles published in the first 12 years, Terry highlighted several “enduring emphases”, that we think pinpoint what *practice* and *critique* have looked like thus far in *ETPC*:

- The need to maintain critical vigilance at a time when the state and powerful stakeholders are exercising enormous influence on the shaping of English/literacy as a learning area and on the work of English/literacy teachers.
- The potential of high-stakes standards regimes to straightjacket subject English and to construct teaching as a technicist occupation rather than an art

- The need to relate literacy/ies to the whole person, embracing that person's emotional life and the places and spaces that constitute his/her *habitus*.
- The need for English/literacy to recognize and critically evaluate the many forms literacy takes and the representational resources – both digital and non-digital – available to the contemporary *rhetor* (Locke, 2015, p. 12).

In our first issue as editors, we have selected articles that reinforce and build on these enduring emphases, and, in the spirit of *ETPC*'s history, include voices of teachers, teacher educators and literacy researchers working toward generative theoretical and empirical critique of English teaching in real-world contexts. In "Multimodal exploration of civic stance in the English Language Arts classroom", Doerr-Stevens describes how multimodal media production provides opportunities for urban youth to engage audiences with social issues. In "Educational innovation as re-mediation: A sociocultural perspective," Beck provides a powerful response to hegemonic notions of "innovation" in literacy education, arguing for a reimagined concept of innovation, learning and teacher-research through socio-cultural theory. "Seeking rhythm in white noise: Working with whiteness in English education", by Tanner and Berchini, contributes to scholarship that values the whole person in English teaching. Using narrative analysis, they analyze a story from Tanner's personal experience to rethink resistance and to imagine new pedagogical approaches for confronting and challenging white supremacy in the English classroom. "Telling stories: Engaging critical literacy through urban legends in an English secondary school" by Jones and Chapman pushes back against narrow definitions of the subject of English by describing how urban legends and students' stories represent some of the resources that young people bring to critical literacy learning in current classrooms. "Reassessment of sentence combining and decombining: the effects of sentence manipulation activities on reading comprehension" by Lee and Lee contributes to research on grammar and language instruction across L1 and L2 contexts and speaks to the increasingly multilingual nature of English language and literacy classrooms. Cole, Dunston and Butler's article, "Engaging English language learners through interactive read-alouds: a literature review" considers the intertwining linguistic, literacy and cultural dimensions of English Learners' (ELs) learning through interactive read-alouds and offers practical advice for teachers. In another critical review of the literature, Hutchinson and Hadjioannou's "The morphing assessment terrain for English learners in USA schools" examines recent research and public policy documents to expose trends in the assessments of ELs in the USA. The authors find that such assessments often do not support ELs' academic learning or contribute to a vision of democratic, diverse schools. "Classroom based action research with secondary school students of English Literature: a teacher-researcher's reflection" makes the case for supporting an institutional culture of small-scale action research projects to support improvements in pedagogy and teacher professionalism.

Our first themed issue (to be published in December 2017) will also speak to *ETPC*'s enduring themes by focusing on "Teaching Politics". In the wake of the current international refugee crisis, anti-immigration rhetoric in countries such as the USA, climate change and a rise in hate crimes, our first themed issue will consider the role of politics, the political and ideological nature of literacy and the teaching of politically charged texts and topics in literacy education.

In closing, we are honored to lead *ETPC* in the coming years and indebted to Terry Locke for his vision. We encourage all readers to contribute to the international conversations about literacy research engendered by *ETPC* by submitting their scholarship, registering as reviewers and proposing themed issues as guest editors.

Amanda Haertling Thein

College of Education, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, USA, and

Amanda Godley

University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

References

- Eisner, E. (2002), *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs*, 3rd ed., Merrill Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ.
- Locke, T. (2015), "International perspectives on English teaching: English teaching: practice and critique 2002-2014", *English Teaching: Practice & Critique*, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 2-17.