

Message from the Editors

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San Francisco, California, was home to the Ninth Annual Low Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition (LESLLA) for Adults Symposium, August 7–9, 2013. The symposium brought nearly 170 practitioners, researchers, and policy makers from 12 countries to City College of San Francisco, Mission Campus, in one of San Francisco’s most celebrated and culturally vibrant neighborhoods. If you were able to join us for the symposium, then you may recall a large ceramic disc hanging over the entryway of City College of San Francisco, representing the Tonalmachiotl (La Piedra del Sol, or Sun Stone, an Aztec calendar [see photo on back cover]). Early Mesoamerican culture is thought to have viewed time as circular: by recording events of the past, one could predict the future. And there lies the spirit of our LESLLA 2013 proceedings, which aim to document themes from the 2013 conference in an effort to better understand where we in LESLLA are heading as a subdiscipline within the fields of literacy and second-language acquisition.

The 14 articles in the 2013 symposium proceedings represent a diverse sampling of the more than 52 presentations, which took place over three days. This collection includes original research and descriptions of practical strategies for teaching LESLLA adolescents and adults. As highlighted in works from Canada, Finland, the Netherlands, and the United States, the authors of our proceedings emphasize that our educational policies must account for the diverse learning pathways that LESLLA learners follow as well as be flexible in the way in which they support learners.

The theme of the 2013 symposium—“Expanding Emerging Literacy Practices”—aimed to embrace multiple but complementary perspectives on the learning experiences and needs of LESLLA learners, including

well-established psycholinguistic views as well as less-established sociocultural views on the enterprise of learning to read, write, and speak a second language for beginning-level learners and those with limited schooling. The focus on emergence acknowledges our shared focus on incipient growth in LESLLA learners. This word also implicates our role as educators who must be patient but alert, ever mindful of what emergent growth looks like. The focus on practices emphasizes the need for our LESLLA scholarship, pedagogy, and policies to account for literacy as a social achievement. Through this lens, our policies are better able to account for learners' changing patterns of participation—inside and outside the classroom—as they develop an expanding repertoire of cognitive skills. This expanded view of literacy development hopefully brings together the best of what we have gained from psycholinguistic/cognitivist theoretical orientations and sociocultural theoretical orientations.

Many of the groundbreaking LESLLA studies of the past decade have sought to replicate language acquisition studies of learners with years of primary language education and schooling experience, and to disentangle the effects of schooling, literacy, phonemic awareness, and second-language development. Less common have been LESLLA studies motivated by the findings of the last 30 years of work in literacy studies, which demonstrate that reading and writing, far from being universal processes, vary profoundly across situational contexts. These literacy studies point to the critical role of social context in interpretive processes, and the extent to which meaning-construction is a sociocultural as well as a mental process. It is our hope that future research will take on the sociocognitive dimensions of literacy practices in ways that benefit from both strands of research.

As you read this year's proceedings, we are confident that you will have an opportunity to reflect on these themes of emergence and expanding theoretical orientation.

Maricel G. Santos and Anne Whiteside, Editors
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