

which jumps between authors in the main body of the text. Expert contributions are generally offset in blue and are a highlight of the book. Indeed, they reflect the diversity that the authors are promoting.

The book also offers some novel emphases differentiating it from other recent books on linguistic diversity, including consideration of the diversity WITHIN languages, and the challenging question of why transmission is NOT occurring despite positive attitudes. The inclusion of recommendations also sets this publication apart, although many appear as oversimplified ideals or principles rather than concrete plans for action (the need for local adaptation of suggestions is a limitation the authors acknowledge).

*Words and worlds* is unapologetically engaged and ideological. The authors transparently acknowledge their agenda, and in many ways, the book's clear activism is as much a strength as a weakness. The authors' goal of a book "of use to all citizens" (xiv) has been largely achieved. The book is highly accessible and fully indexed by subject, by expert contributor, and by language, language family, and variety. Although the authors have not included a glossary, linguistic concepts are generally clearly explained in the first chapters or where they appear. Furthermore, the use of color throughout, with glossy maps, gives the look of accessibility. *Words and worlds* will be appreciated by specialists, and it is highly readable for students at all levels, policy makers, and lay readers. It promises to be an effective tool in the pursuit of the authors' goal to give rise to a "linguistic ethic" (xii) and to broaden the debate around the preservation of linguistic diversity.

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RANDALL HOLME, *Literacy: An introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004. Pp. xii, 272. Hb. £18.99.

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This text is not just an introduction to literacy; it is an argument for a particular way to understand literacy. For the author, literacy is best understood through a combination of approaches that address its complex and multifaceted nature. These approaches encompass the socioeconomic nature of literacy, literacy understood as visual and linguistic sign usage, and literacy as mental construct. Within the book, each approach is outlined in detail and critiqued. In each case, the critique is integral to the author's claim that single perspectives provide partial accounts of literacy. Together, these approaches are said to enable literacy to

be more fully understood as “the interaction of social practice and mind through the medium of sign” (p. 239).

The overall structure of the book is shaped by the author’s approach to literacy. The Introduction establishes “the elusive nature of literacy” (1) and gives a brief overview of the four approaches drawn on by the author. The rest of the book is organized into five parts. Part 1 focuses on what the author terms “the socio-economic nature of literacy” (3). Individual chapters address functional literacy, critical literacy, literacies, and issues of language choice for literacy instruction and use. Part 2 encompasses considerations of “literacy’s sign systems” (5). The first chapter in this part introduces understandings central to the study of sign systems. In the second chapter, various writing systems are examined, drawing on the semiotic perspectives of Peirce and de Saussure. The third chapter tells the story of the development of writing as sign use and incorporates considerations of the cognitive processes that were integral to this. The last chapter in this part focuses on issues to do with the nature of writing systems. Part 3 considers literacy as language and “the extent to which literacy promotes different methods of language use” (6). Chapters address the differences between spoken and written language, use of “dimensions of difference” (178) to explicate aspects of spoken and written texts, and examination of the relationship between written text and context through a focus on genre. Part 4 presents the final perspective for understanding literacy: literacy as mind. Vygotskian theory is outlined in its first chapter and is applied to the relationship between literacy practice and cognitive structures in the chapter that follows. In the last chapter the author outlines three cognitive theories that inform his view of “the literacy practice and its cognitive effect” (220). His “literacy vision” (239) is outlined in full in the final part of the book.

The text also includes a glossary and exercises that follow the conclusion section of each chapter. The exercises range from activities that require the direct recall of concepts, theories, and analytic tools introduced with a chapter, the application of these to the analysis of literacy practices or texts, or the use of these to inform the planning and conduct of more extended projects for formal presentation. An example of the latter, found in chap. 3, scaffolds the preparation and conduct of an interview in order to examine a subject’s literacy practices. The intended outcome is a short case study based on the interview. The inclusion of exercises enhances the text’s appeal for use with students, although its content makes it of interest to a broader audience.

The author’s discussion of literacy and his argument for a particular way of understanding it are focused largely on written texts. His use of historical materials and semiotic analyses of these provides clear models and an interesting read. Links are made to contemporary practices through reference to new technologies such as mobile phones and text messaging, and analyses used to establish that text practices “represent solutions to the problems of sign-creation which are based upon fundamental and enduring cognitive processes” (129). The au-

thor makes the point that today's text practices around new technologies would be easily recognized by those who study ancient writing systems.

While Holme makes use of some contemporary examples, an omission in the text relates to consideration of the burgeoning body of academic literature that addresses the impact of new technologies and new literacies associated with these. This work would have specific relevance to the chapter on literacies and to the discussion of the evolution of literacy practices and written texts. While the book addresses some new technologies and new social practices, its value is more for what it suggests for the understanding of these than for an actual examination of a wide range of new literacies, or research that examines these. For example, the discussion of categories and metonymy appears to be relevant to understandings of the practice of "folksonomy" currently dominating discussion of blogging practices and the use of Flickr. Ultimately, there is a plethora of new literacies that are not addressed in the book but are of increasing focus for those who seek to understand literacy at this time of rapid technological change and equally rapid evolution of new social practices.

Apart from the use of historical material, the text includes an international and multicultural perspective. The chapter on "Literacy and language choice" is an important inclusion in a book about literacy. This is particularly so given the development and implementation of national literacy strategies that have subsumed attention to the specific needs of minority students' literacy learning. In Australia, for example, significant funding has been shifted from programs that supported English as Second Language students to funding for mainstream literacy programs. The chapter is a salient reminder of social, political, and educational issues related to bilingualism, biliteracy, and dominant and minority language practices. It highlights that literacy learning is not the same for all.

Holme draws on his knowledge of a range of educational contexts: national whole-scale literacy campaigns, school and adult education, and the sociocultural practices of particular societies. In some cases, comments related to specific contexts are provoking. For example, the discussion of the UK National Literacy Strategy suggests that decontextualized instruction in reading and writing skills is appropriate for young children and makes sense in their case. While the author promotes the need for "engagement in how it [literacy] is practiced" (31) in the case of older children, his acceptance of the relegation of young children's literacy learning to "the isolation of literacy as skills with their own timetable slot" (31) would draw criticism from many early childhood educators.

A balance between different approaches is claimed to be necessary to understanding literacy, but the author's focus on balance comes at a cost. In places the text glosses over details in the quest to make the case that approaches can "sit" together. Two examples serve to illustrate. Discussion of Gee's perspective (68) fails to acknowledge his distinction between big D and little D discourse, nor does it capture his concept of Discourse as encompassing ways of being, doing, and thinking. The author makes his point but does not capture much of what is

distinctive in Gee's work. The same absence of detail is evident in the consideration of aspects of critical literacy in practice (54–57). Freebody's collaboration with Luke, in the development of the four roles of the literate person, is overlooked. Discussion of the genre approach does not delineate the core genres for instruction, the role of the genre teaching cycle and the centrality of explicit teaching as a defining aspect of genre pedagogy, and critical practice. An introduction to literacy cannot be expected to address everything, but at the same time work discussed here has been highly influential.

As Part 1 of the text illustrates clearly, literacy has increasingly become the focus of attention for social, economic and political matters. Within the context of school education, attention to literacy might well be described as an obsession that results in considerable time, thinking, and money being spent on working out "What is literacy?" and "How should literacy be taught?" And we still can't agree. If literacy is as complex as this book suggests, requiring the incorporation of several theories to understand it, then there are pressing implications for curriculum developers and pre-service teacher educators. But if literacy is so complex and requires this combination of theories to understand it, how is it that young people in the Literacy Campaign in Nicaragua were able to teach others to be literate?

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RAYMOND HICKEY (ed.), *Legacies of Colonial English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Pp xx, 713. Hb. £90.

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This copious volume deals with the development of English at various overseas locations (the "New World," the Southern Hemisphere, and Asia) during the heyday of British colonialism between the early 17th and late 19th centuries. The 21 studies in the volume demonstrate the legacies of both standard and nonstandard varieties of English from this period. At the same time they show how 17th to 19th century linguistic forms remain influential in characterizing "transported" Englishes to the present day. Not that the volume attempts to straitjacket its contributors: As Hickey emphasizes in the Foreword (p. xix), there are as many scenarios as there are locations in the study of transported Englishes, with each variety arising from different degrees of exposure to different English dialects, and differential influences from indigenous languages and cultures. The main area to which this book belongs is therefore historical dialectology, though it is