Call for Abstract Submissions to a Special Issue of *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*

**Literacy and language as material practices: re-thinking social inequality in young children’s literacies**

**Guest Editors:**
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The aim of this special issue is to bring together work that explores how posthuman and new materialist approaches to early childhood literacies can address issues surrounding social inequalities. The application of such theories is showing a lot of promise in terms of understanding young children’s literacies in a much broader way (e.g. Kuby et al, 2017). Nevertheless, it could be argued that posthuman and materialist approaches to early literacy have yet to fully address issues of social inequalities. Braidotti (2018) reminds us that posthumanism is neither progressive nor regressive in itself, and that critical and transformative practices need to be developed. In response, this special issue seeks to contribute to a generative bridging of the concern for inequality manifested in the New Literacy Studies (e.g. Henning 2018) and a non-human-centric account of literacy (e.g. Kuby, 2017). Until these two orientations are bridged, the field will be unable to offer an adequate account of relations *between* inequalities and materialities in early childhood literacy.

The special issue is concerned therefore with ways in which materiality and the body can be conceptualized within literacy practices. We invite papers that critically engage with how the mind/body split, inaugurated by the Enlightenment, has played out in early childhood literacy research, dividing mind from body, language from materiality and human from nature. As long as meaning making is conceptualized as exclusively or mostly within the brain (as separate from the body), the mind-body split continues to produce inequalities for young children and families, through the continuing erasure of bodies, sensation and affect in literacy research and policy, in favour of a focus on vocabulary, grammar and fixed meaning. This aversion to the materiality of language has historically manifested itself in disapproval,
bordering on revulsion, towards the language habits of marginalised groups. With regards to young children this revulsion expresses itself in the tendency to view certain children as more like ‘animals’, which characterises them as non-human or pre-human. Such disapproval continues to be expressed today, for instance in aggressive ‘school readiness’ policies in the UK.

This special issue seeks to bring together scholars who are rethinking the relation of language and materiality, and thus contributing to a reconceptualization of early childhood literacy. A reconceptualization of this kind begins with the need to refuse the separation between body, mind and language, and to explore the complex relations between language, materiality and inequalities of class, race and gender.

We invite proposals for papers that address one or more of the following questions;

- How can we take seriously the affective and the inarticulable in young children’s communication? What happens to literacy as a category when we take affect and the body as a starting point?
- Literacy is sometimes described as a humanist project, in the sense that it contributes to mastery, ordering and a particular kind of orientating towards the world by humans. How can we think literacy otherwise?
- How can posthuman thinking on young children’s literacies and language provide an adequate account of, or critical position against, the positioning, pathologisings and inequalities that families and young children live out in their daily lives?

Timeline for proposed manuscripts

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<td>Submission of title and abstract for proposed papers.</td>
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<td>15th Jan 2019</td>
<td>Decision from guest editors</td>
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To submit a proposed paper for the special issue
Please send a title, 500 word abstract and short bio from each author to a.hackett@mmu.ac.uk. Guest editors will review the abstracts and invite selected authors to submit a full manuscript.

Questions
For any questions concerned this special issue, please contact Abi Hackett a.hackett@mmu.ac.uk

References


