

**Cracking the conventional: Journeying through a bricolage of
multiliteracies in an international languages school in Canada**

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Literacy is aesthetic, material, and multimodal... it is digital, immersive, and networked... it is felt, sensed, and associated with people.

(Pahl & Rowsell, 2015, p. 1)

I am .. calling for opening up the curricular landscape to enable both curriculum-as- planned and curriculum-as-lived to co-dwell in dynamically tensioned interplay of doubling...where we slip into the language of 'both this and that but neither this nor that'.... to recognize that textured site of lived tension—so often ambiguous, uncertain, and difficult—but nevertheless a generative site of possibilities.

(Aoki, 1999, p. 181)

ABSTRACT

Multiliteracies theory extends the notion of literacy well beyond the traditional linear text-based definition of reading and writing (New London Group, 1996). It addresses the saliency of cultural and linguistic diversity and the multiplicity of communication channels and media available in our rapidly changing world. Multiliteracies involve engagement with multiple design modes, linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial, and multimodal being a combination of the different modes. This research emerged from the need to open a space for students in an international languages school teaching Arabic language to engage in creative, aesthetic, alternative, and multimodal forms of literacy that involve the integration of the various semiotic resources in their meaning-making and design of texts. It is about a lived teaching-learning journey that draws on the concept of living pedagogy and dwelling in the in-between spaces of curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-live(d) (Aoki, 1991). In this research journey, I share the possibilities that opened up when students between the age of eleven and fourteen years old engaged with multiliteracies in an international languages classroom that teaches heritage language.

This research journey also presents how the participative type of inquiry and collaboration between the researcher and classroom teacher contributed to the enhancement of their knowledge and learning about multiliteracies practices. After listening to and discussing a literary text presented by the teacher, students responded by creating their own texts to show their understanding of the narrative genre. They produced multimodal arts-based (Barton, 2014; Sanders & Albers, 2010) and digital based texts (Knobel & Lankshear, 2013). Through a multiliteracies/multimodalities theoretical, epistemological, and methodological perspective (Albers, 2007; Jewitt & Kress, 2008; Morawski, 2012; Rowsell, 2013), and drawing from approaches such as participatory action research (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013), and bricolage (Kincheloe, 2004), I developed this research story through a process of braiding and interweaving of various modes of texts and genres to produce a *métissage* (Hasebe-Ludt,

Chambers, & Leggo, 2009) of the live(d) narratives of my research praxis. This inquiry offers a glimpse as to how opening the space for creative approaches in the teaching of literacy engages students in the design of texts using both linguistic and non-linguistic semiotic resources and incorporating multiple modes of representation from which they produce arts, digital, and multimodal texts.

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I am overwhelmed with gratitude....

Houda

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this doctoral thesis to:

Every scholar in this world who is working toward bringing creative, innovative, and transformative research and pedagogies into literacy teaching and practice.

It is also for every educator who believes in opening the space for students' lived curriculum... their narratives.... stories....and any other multimodal literacies to be present in their classroom.

And to

My awesome three young men, Ahmad, Mike, and Ali who lived with me all moments of excitement, times of challenge, stress, worry, and sometimes discouragement.....

You were the source of my motivation that kept me moving forward ... I love you so much!

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.... [E]ngaging in arts processes can provide children and youth with unique opportunities to imagine and create tangible products, focus on emotional expression, live with ambiguity, and make connections with others in collaborative environments.

(Jensen & Draper, 2017, p. 2 citing Davis, 2008)



My participation at the 2017 Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies (CACS) 'Provoking Curriculum conference' at McGill University

This is the literacy text that a group of colleagues and I created out of loose parts of various materials (straws, clips, crayons, small tins, small boxes of different shapes, wool strings, artificial branches of small trees, clothes' hangers, ... and many other materials that we usually get rid of in our homes)

Our produced artwork presented in the two pictures initiated a lot of conversations and multiple literacies in the one room.

This spontaneous activity engaged us in using all learning modalities (aural, kinesthetic, visual, and sensory) in addition to integrating our literacy skills.

We also had to use our oral language abilities and our vocabulary to tell the story about our produced artwork. Each of us described the final artwork from a different perspective, which showed our multiliteracies. It was a bricolage of literacies through the arts.



Preface

A dis(e)rupting situation... a provocation... al'hafez (a motive, prompt) in a heritage/ international languages school

I picture the [students'] room as one widening crater, loud with the sound of erupting creativity.

Sylvia-Ashton Warner, Teacher

A provocation to cracking the conventional

With my long teaching, school administration, and teacher training experience; I land in my new home, Canada

A few years after, a friend introduces me to her school of heritage/international languages after knowing about my educational and professional background.

She brings me her school textbooks and says, "Here is our curriculum. We would be grateful if you do a revision and check if there is anything we need to modify in it?"

Her request opens the door for other school principals of heritage/international languages to reach out to me.

I start receiving phone calls to discuss possible cooperation.

One of the school principals spends more than an hour explaining to me that their main challenge now is assessment of students' language abilities.

"We are striving to develop good readers and writers. I hope we can bring good evaluation tools for measuring our students' oral and written skills", one principal expresses.

I start visiting some schools... providing support in various ways... I decide to volunteer in one of them

Days and days pass So many observations on ... curriculum, pedagogy, and students' motivation

I frequently hear,

We are trying to do everything possible to develop

linguistic skills. It is our main concern and we'll continue doing the drills

We're teaching reading and writing from this curriculum...this is our textbook. Students just need to practice reading what we teach them in class.

I spend my days supporting teachers in classrooms and staying around students in the gym

Students' lack of engagement...

Teachers' reading and writing approach to teaching dominates my observations

My volunteering
days expand to
months trying to
understand and
support the school
literacy teaching
process

Monomodal ... didactic ... prescribed curriculum ...
textbook... all provoked a desire to make an attempt

Can we rethink literacy? ... Can we bring the new? ... the multiple
and multimodal? ... and not only focus on
Reading, writing, spelling and grammar
rules.

As a literacy
educator I lived in
tension

I spend days wondering, "What type of experience those
students would live if we do not limit them to the
singular, print-based type of literacy education?"

Collaborating to change this monomodal literacy
perspective and situation...became like an obligation
A dis(e)ruption ... a provocation...

A push to engage in a journey to the space of creative
literac(ies) and multiple modes of communication

Heritage language schools were established in Ontario in the year 1977. The term ‘heritage’ was changed later to ‘international’ as the term ‘heritage’ could reflect learning about cultures, traditions, or historical lives while ‘international’ reflects a more global focus. It is more open to students from various backgrounds which consequently wouldn’t limit students within the International Languages Program to be of a particular language.

International languages teaching in Ontario is run under the International Languages Program. It is usually offered in a rented day school during the weekend or evening outside of the regular school days. Students are of various language levels because they are grouped in the international language teaching classes according to their age rather than their language ability (Cummins, 2014). The term international language will be used throughout this thesis to refer to the students’ heritage language.

International languages schools are considered an invaluable source for building students’ language and cultural competence in a multicultural and multilingual society (Liu, 2010a). Those schools play a significant role with communities of various heritage/international languages to preserve and develop their linguistic and cultural traditions. The linguistic function of international languages schools is of a paramount importance to school stakeholders including parents. Liu (2010b) argues that principals, teachers, and parents firmly believe that the main role of heritage language schools is to help students learn their heritage language and culture. Though they believe that it is highly challenging for children to become fully proficient in their heritage language by studying it two hours per week, they still perceive heritage languages schools to be a vital space for them to learn their language systematically. In this regard, international languages schools are emphasized as places for the teaching and learning of the language rather than developing literate learners.

Language, both written and oral forms are still taking dominance and privilege over other modes in educational institutions (Barton, 2014). Some schools promote the teaching of literacy using oral and written language as the main and sometimes sole mode of learning because they consider language as central to all aspects of human development (Candlin, Hall, & Crichton, 2016). They view language as cognitive or as “... a set of rules in our minds or brains that tell us how to speak grammatically” and as

material or “something physically present in the world... in the form of speech, audio recordings, and writing” (Gee & Hayes, 2011, p. 6).

The Oxford English Dictionary defines literacy as “The quality or state of being literate; knowledge of letters, condition in respect to education, esp. ability to read and write” (Simpson & Weiner, 1989, p. 1026). Up till now many people do not situate literacy within present-day realities; as multimodal, and as culturally and linguistically plural (Rowse & Burgess, 2017). They rather think of literacy as monomodal focusing mostly on words. So, *literacy* has been traditionally understood as the ability to read and write. It was also referred to and associated with those who have the skills of the 3 Rs: reading, writing, and arithmetic (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012). As for its antonym *illiteracy* which has always been synonymous with disadvantage, it was defined as the lack of ability to read and write.

This conventional understanding of literacy is anchored on two main perspectives: cognitive and linguistic. The linguistic perspective of literacy focuses on features of print-based texts such as vocabulary, grammar, mechanics, orthographies, rhetorical organization, and genres. The cognitive perspective of literacy focuses on learners’ individual cognitive development and processing when they engage with a reading or writing activity. However, both the linguistic and cognitive perspectives fail to consider the social dimension or the contextual factors which shape how each person engages with literacy (Kumagai & López-Sánchez, 2016) and multiliteracies/ multimodalities (Jewitt & Kress, 2008; New London Group, 1996).

Snapshot of the school context

When I asked one of my students about reading, she wrote, “I am not really interested in books, pages, and words.”

(Kelly Gallagher, 2009, p. 5, *Readicide*)

It’s been more than two years not teaching

Feelings of nostalgia, affinity, and longing fill
my heart

Thoughts about how to relive
my teaching practice fill my
head

Actions to take and to proceed to my never-ending
passion guide my hands

I fill out the application for volunteering in an
international languages program school

A few weeks later, I find myself walking eagerly into
the teacher's class

I see students sitting still
with eyes staring at the
whiteboard.

Hello everybody, I say

Hello and Sabahoul Khayr (good morning)

I receive the reply

An Arabic morning greeting that they all
cheerfully say in one loud voice

I sit on a chair at the back of the class

Waiting for the teacher to ask me
for the support she needs in
running the class

The bell rings announcing the
recess time; students
immediately rush to the gym

My injured knee which is slowly recovering causes me to
stay in class

Some students decide to stay with me... curious to know
why I am there and what my role will be

Are you a teacher? Are you going to teach us?

I start telling them about my teaching background and my
previous Arabic-learning students

I open a folder from my laptop and start sharing some
memories and pictures with them

They stop me at one of the pictures with a blast

*Those children look very serious....
....and focused on
their reading and
writing task.*

*You know, I hate reading such
texts....
Especially if accompanied by
writing exercises, one student
says. Are we going to do the same
in our Arabic class?
I laugh and tell them,
“Maybe we will do something completely new.
We will see.”*

My childhood language learning experiences which almost exclusively relied on the textbook, my new perspective to the notion of literacy in our global, multicultural, multiliterate, and multimodal world, as well as my observations in an international languages school in Ottawa have all contributed to the emergence of this research project. The project was implemented in a week-end Arabic teaching school that is under the International Languages Program funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education. The school which teaches Arabic for two and a half hours every Saturday has a population of around 150 students spread across the regular school levels from kindergarten to grade nine.

Students between the age of eleven and fourteen years old were grouped in one classroom. They and their literacy teacher, Naziha decided to engage in this participatory action research project (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013). Students' abilities in the oral and written Arabic language are highly disparate. Some of them can speak and write the language, others can minimally speak the language, and still a third group can speak but hardly understand or read any literary text. Students' low achievement, slow language development, and the absence of curriculum learning activities that address their interests, needs, and different learning styles led to their disengagement from their class literacy activities. They frequently complained about the difficulty of the texts they were asked to read. They described their literacy learning experiences as challenging and stressful because they had to do weekly reading and writing of Arabic texts. Thus, they showed regular absenteeism. Parents of this international languages school are committed to preserving their familial languages and cultures. They continuously communicate with their children's teachers and have regular discussions with the school administration. Their main focus of discussions are on how to develop their children's heritage language

and how to motivate their children to come to school on weekends in order to learn their heritage language. They are highly concerned about maintaining their heritage language especially that their Arabic courses are ‘competing’ with other more attractive extra-curricular activities, such as sports, arts, and entertainment.

The teaching and academic support staff is of diverse cultural backgrounds, experience, expertise and educational philosophies. The school is characterized by conventional approaches to literacy teaching. The language textbook is their main tool for language learning. Their textbook is designed for teaching native speakers of Arabic with a focus on drill and skill strategies. Students are heavily burdened with memorizing and accurately reproducing Arabic characters, decoding unfamiliar characters and learning new vocabulary words. Thus, the school’s expectation of literacy is highly focused on alphabetic encoding of the language, grammatical conventions, standard spelling, and writing sentences with appropriate structure.

The collaborating teacher in this project follows a “competency-based” approach trying to satisfy the school parents’ community who demand having their children get sufficient training on the basic principles and applications of reading and writing the language. Since she does not receive regular professional development opportunities and she has not been enrolled in a teacher education program, she follows the rationalist approach by doing teaching as instructing, telling, explaining, informing, and directing (Davis, 2004) to help students learn their heritage language. Teaching is conceived as logical, carefully planned movements with linear lesson plans, which are developed around topics detached from connections to students’ lives and experiences.

Before engaging in this research, my observations during my volunteering period to support the school teachers’ literacy instructional practices and developing the school curriculum, revealed a significant emphasis on literacy teaching in its print-based form, on books, pages, and words. The teachers place a great value on the curriculum-as-plan (Aoki, 2003) and on the textbook as the main curriculum tool. The classroom is driven by a prepackaged curriculum. It is a classroom that has very minimal opportunities to engage in a live(d) curriculum (Aoki, 2003). The Arabic language course in the class involved in this research is structured around standard instructional textbook, which doesn't provide chances for the students’ diverse cultural knowledge and linguistic

abilities to exist through the various forms of literacies. This structure and teaching approach consider the students as a homogenous group in terms of language ability level, learning needs, interests, and experiences.

When a class is seen as a homogenous group, the textbook becomes as the main, if not the only, pedagogical tool / technique. Gee (2013) argues that a textbook is one of the worst ever invented technology because it is usually designed to be one-size-fits-all and all-purpose solutions to learning. The textbook adopted in this school is designed for students who are studying in an environment where the main language of instruction is Arabic, who live in a medium where the first and official language used is Arabic, and whose curriculum expectations are based on the needs for developing Arabic as a first language. Texts used in this textbook are supplemented by linguistic information like new vocabulary with Arabic glossaries and sentence-pattern examples, as well as comprehension exercises. Heritage language for students in the context of this international languages school, which is located in the multicultural and multilingual environment of Canada whose official languages are English and French, cannot be considered as their first language anymore. So, teaching literacy in this international languages school by relying on a textbook that is designed for native speakers and by using the traditional genre structure or the print-based approach in the teaching of literacy would not be the viable way for preparing students to our 21st century world of ‘multis’ (Serafini & Gee, 2017).

Embarking on the research trip An open inquiry

We believe that all forms of inquiry, but particularly qualitative inquiry, necessitate openness to make its practice viable, that is to say, to make it capable of growth.

(Eisner and Peshkin, 1990, p. 365)

Bergof, Egawa, Harste, and Barry (2000) argue that ‘inquiry’ has multifaceted meaning. It means learning driven by the learner’s personal questions. It is also considered a way of knowing, a readiness to go through a journey, to understand and deal with uncertainty, and to welcome multiple perspectives. Those understandings and insights restructure and transform inquirers knowledge and lead them to take action based on what they learn. The authors use the word inquiry to refer to the social process

of collaborative inquiry. Eisner (1998) argues that teaching is a form of qualitative inquiry. Greene (1982) describes the teacher of literacy as, “an inquirer who is ready to engage a subject matter or a created form as an open possibility” (p. 84). Clarke and Erickson (2003) explain that inquiry is embedded in professional practice. Eisner (1998) elaborate that “inquiry is a broader concept than research because research is an example of inquiry, but not all inquiry is an example of research” (p. 6).

This project is an open inquiry represented through narratives, stories, lived experiences, telling of memories through various arts-based, digital based and multimodal forms. It is an inquiry that happened through an improvisational collaborative journey in which I as the researcher, the collaborating teacher, and the students co-created the knowledge and in which the lived experiences were presented narratively, artfully, poetically, aesthetically, through images and other means and not through tables, graphs, and statistics. In this inquiry, participants’ voices and knowledges were present as much or maybe more than the presence of the researcher. I was more decentered but collaborating with the participants over a period of time in the setting of the school/classroom. Since this work is focused on multimodality, arts-based and digital-based generation of field texts rather than collection of data (Clandinin, 2020), my collaborating teacher and I were active in creating this data through our inquiry process rather than just collecting it. So, this work was more than being a research.

Though I perceive my research as an open inquiry, in the writing of this research journey I alternate in using the two terms between *inquiry* and *research*. Eisner and Peshkin (1990) contend that qualitative inquiry is performed in all forms of human activity and the art of teaching exemplifies the use of qualitative thought.

This inquiry which is on students’ engagement with multiliteracies as a living pedagogy was greatly influenced by my own personal and professional life as a student and a previous teacher and school principal. My experience through my PhD journey, the many struggles I encountered as an immigrant due to many challenges including mainly the cultural drove me to the concept of multiliteracies/multimodalities and how to promote learners’ multiliterate/multimodal skills. For me all my previous lived and currently living experiences highlight the need for a type of education that can support learners in interacting effectively using multiple language forms and multiple

communication channels that extend over cultural, social, and national boundaries. The New London Group (1996) confirms, “[new] communications media are reshaping the way we use language. When technologies of meaning are changing so rapidly, there cannot be one set of standards or skills that constitute the ends of literacy learning, however taught” (p. 64). In our vastly changing and technologically advancing world, multiliteracies as a theory and a pedagogy becomes a significantly needed educational concept (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015; New London Group, 1996). Additionally, as discourses of plurality, equity, diversity, multiplicity, and complexity are entering the academic circle and societies, the need to support the development of multiliterate people becomes essential (Bull & Anstey, 2010). Kumagai, Konoedo, Nishimoto, and Sato (2016) state, “It is vital to expand the idea of literacy linguistically defined, with a view of multimodal, multimedia, as well as multilingual multiliteracies. The need to develop multiliteracies, particularly multimodal literacies, then becomes an important part of any educational endeavor” (p. 135).

Students’ literacy curriculum needs to be loaded with lots of opportunities for their own inquiry using not only reading and writing but also other sign systems and modes of communication like art, music, drama, and technology of the 21st century (Harste, 2003) so they can engage fully not only in the in-school but also in the out-of school literacies (Smith & Moore, 2012). They need to experience literacy in its multiple forms. This enriched perspective and understanding of literacies practices and teaching and my growing theoretical and practical understanding of multiliteracies is anchored in and directed to the messy, ambiguous, and conventional reality of this international languages school literacy approaches. As teaching inquiries are of unlimited possibilities, I sought to open venues for diverse and multiple forms of literacy teaching and practices in this International Languages Program school. I approached my inquiry with the understanding that students’ meaning making is multiple, complex, and contextualized. It is collaborative and active; guided by the principles of participation which emphasize multiplicity and plurality of knowledges that can range from arts- based, print-based, or technology-based ones and embrace both cultural and linguistic diversity (Kindon et al. 2007). In this work / thesis, I describe the journey itself, my lived experience with the students, their teacher, their parents, other school staff and the school principal. I also highlight and describe the students’ experience, as well as their diverse ways of

engagement with the world and multiple modes of communication and meaning-making forms they developed over the course of the inquiry.

In the context of this international languages school that teach heritage language for the Arabic community group, I worked with the school administration and a collaborating teacher, Naziha, to engage students between the age of eleven and fifteen years old with multiliteracies as a living pedagogy through a participative type of inquiry (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013). For the purpose of this inquiry, I articulated two main research questions:

1. What happens when learners in an international languages school (Arabic Language) engage with multiliteracies as a living pedagogy?
2. How would the ongoing interaction between one participating teacher and myself contribute to the enrichment of our knowledge, perspectives, approaches, and practices of multiliteracies?

The students, my collaborating teacher, and I entered the tension between the planned and the live(d) curriculum (Aoki, 2003) which generated a lot of possibilities in the classroom. This project is an endeavor to crack the traditional conception and practice of literacy to let in the light of a creative type of multiliteracies. Thus, digital, visual, artful, and multimodal literacy texts (Barton, 2014; Jewitt & Kress, 2008; Lankshear & Knobel, 2013; Morawski, 2012) occupy a central place in our lived teaching- learning experiences and practices. In this inquiry, I try to push the boundaries of literacy teaching and attempt creating a classroom in which multiple literacies, new literacies, and multimodal literacies are welcomed in theory and in practice. Lotherington (2017) reminds us, “Without theory, practice is undirected; but without practice, theory is just that: theory” (p. xii). This Arabic school that is under the International Languages Program was a suitable vessel for developing a theory–practice interface.

Musings...Thoughts... Contemplations into the way ahead

The way we do educational research ought not be restricted to a few traditional, institutionalized procedures and...a willingness to explore the possibilities of forms of inquiry that typically do not appear in the conduct of educational research is precisely what creative scholarship requires.

(Eisner & Peshkin, 1990, p. 366)

Moving

With a no strict recipe or plan, I move forward to an adventurous but rigorous journey of my research inquiry. I travel into a multiliteracies/multimodalities land of inquiry. I move with a no exact sense of the possible paths that my train will take. I carry no predetermined procedures but a willingness to navigate through the possibilities and to use whatever is at hand in order to piece the various patches together and weave the story of a multimodal literacies journey in an international languages school in Canada.

Though I am unsure of what might emerge during my research journey, I do not attempt to predetermine a specific structure or focus because I do not want to block the emergence of creative material. In this journey, I am a traveller... traveling while searching or as Linds (2008) explains it in French “parcourir en cherchant” (p. 18) which makes my research a dynamic process of knowledge production.

Knowing that the route could be chaotic rather than orderly forces me to remain open to the possibility of new directions unplanned and unanticipated. Chevalier and Buckles (2013) illustrate this point stating that “[researchers] must learn rules of navigation, prepare [themselves] to cope with uncertainty and tame the unknown. Still, when in troubled waters, only fools let rules and plans navigate the ship” (p. 77). This attitude to research made the path of my inquiry fluid, non-formulaic, and far from rigidity and allowed my navigation to be flexible and non-robotic.

Reflections on the research journey, May 2017

I understand the multiplicity of the different complex worlds, the multiplicity and diversity of our perspectives, the multiplicity and infinity of meaning making, of understanding, and of possible experiences in this world. Cooper and White (2012) state, “the starting point for the understanding of any matter rests in the ability to view it from a multiplicity of perspectives” (p. 122). Multiplicity of ways of meaning-making and varieties of research methods are significantly grounded in multiliteracies theory and pedagogy which welcomes diverse perspectives and supports multiple ways of knowing and being. Multiplicity as a main theme in this multiliteracies inquiry was the driving force for the use of multiple methodologies in my journey; participatory action research, bricolage, and multiliteracies.

Using participatory action research (PAR), bricolage, and multiliteracies, I am moving away from a narrow scientism and toward an expanded notion of scientificity. I

am situating myself methodologically in the realm of ‘epistemological diversity’ (Lather, 2006, p.36) marked by multiplicity and plurality of voices, knowledges, and discourses that is outside of consensus models (Pallas, 2001). I am working with multiple qualitative methodologies to create new knowledge and to “cultivate multiple ways of seeing . . . in a world where nothing stays the same” (Greene, 1995, p. 16). I am entering the creative tension of living the in-between space of curriculum as-planned and curriculum as-live(d), the ambiguous, uncertain, hybrid place that is charged with life... the space of generative possibilities and hope.... the space of a living pedagogy. With the collaboration of my collaborating teacher, Naziha, we opened spaces for creative expressions, multiple and diverse meaning-making, and understandings of a literary narrative, autobiographical text from the students’ planned curriculum. Visual, arts-based, media and digital-based, and print-based forms are just some of the ways that students produced to show their understanding and their connections to the world.

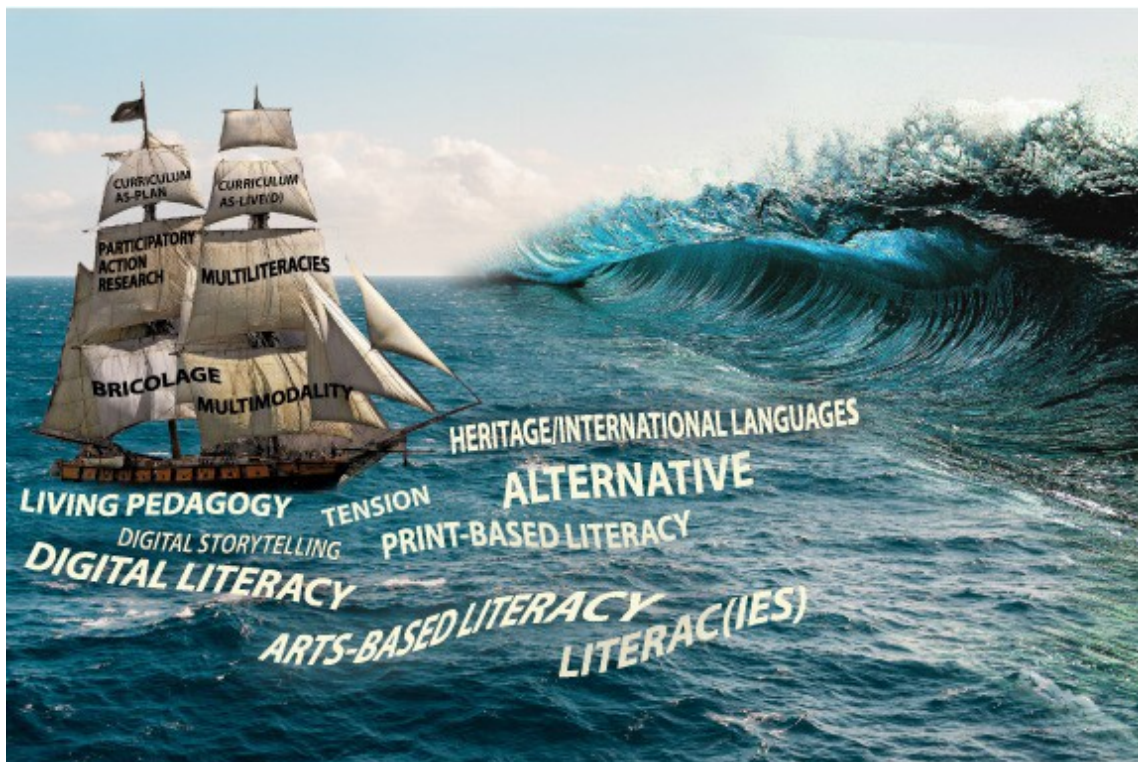
In writing my research journey text, I decided to “go against the grain to write a dissertation that is not a dissertation” (Watt, 2016, p. 235), and to write a messy and non-linear text. I interwove various writing forms (including literary and artistic ones), which challenge the orthodoxies of academic research and writing requiring readers to experience an alternative and innovative way of regarding research. Kouritzin et al. (2009) argue that it takes much more time to write in innovative ways, not less time. It is just like making chocolate chip cookies with your five-year old child following a recipe on the back of a package, versus allowing your child to discover making the chocolate chip cookies on his own from a set of ingredients you have placed on the kitchen counter. Knowing this about writing research in an alternative way did not discourage me to write differently or ‘rhizomatically’ as Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 15) express. Thus, I present a text that is performative, poetic, personal, and artistic. This dissertation attempts to subvert the status quo where I swim against the current of five chapters, literature review, research methodology and research questions. It “breaks out of the chapter-by chapter mold in which definite findings are pronounced and finite conclusions are offered” (Norman, 2009, p. 121) putting myself under a higher responsibility.

Kouritzin et al. (2009) suggest,

Challenging the orthodoxies in qualitative research and in the writing of academic texts is more about being true than about being truthful. Being truthful is important in the sense that lying is unethical, but being true—to yourself, to the data, to the textual forms, to the research process—is the greater responsibility. (p. 80)

In challenging the conventional type of academic writing, it is my responsibility to be true while storying my research. This makes the description of my lived research journey as the dominant voice.

CHAPTER ONE
THE LAUNCH: A MULTILITERACIES INQUIRY EMERGES IN AN
INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGES SCHOOL



Drawing is the most basic choice for children's illustrations.
It is a good place for children to start before moving on to more complex techniques...
The connections between drawing and writing are intertwined as children create their own symbols.
(Thompson, C. 2005, p. 22)

Literacy of the heart; a turn... turned down

Write how you spent your summer,
was the teacher's first request

I walk into the classroom so proudly and gracefully to
show my first text.

She approaches me and gets fixed beside my desk
What did you do?
was her first furious comment
*Am I teaching you art and drawing or English language to pass
your test?*

*How do you dare using your English language copybook for
drawings and this non-sense?*

I felt guilty for what I had done and
turned my head down with muteness

I still can hear her yelling,
Answer my question and tear off that paper next

I just wanted to show
the beach I went to
when I wrote my
sentences and full text

*This is a serious class where you should
learn to read and write and perform at your best
Keep your drawing, scribbling, and other non-sense stuff for your
free time and recess*

I wish she had asked me about my drawing and what it represents
But her reaction was enough for me to keep the literacy of my heart, in my
heart
And develop my reading and writing competence giving other stuff complete
ignorance

Nothing can compete with lived experiences especially if they influenced our paths and choices in life. I chose to open up my dissertation with a poem that represents my lived experience to paint what Leavy (2015) terms a “feeling-picture” (p. 78). I use the words, the rhythm and the space to be able to create an evoking snippet of my experience and a scene where meaning emerges from the construction of my language and silences. Eisner (2005) states, “We have poetry, that linguistic achievement whose meanings are paradoxically non-linguistic: poetry was invented to say what words can never say. Poetry transcends the limits of language and evokes what cannot be articulated” (p. 175). Pain was the starting point for the poetry above, which made this personal experience a powerful source of inspiration (Reis, 2016).

A plethora of literature now emphasize the role of visual arts in literacy development (Albers, 2007; Barton, 2014; Cornett, E., 2011; McDonald & Fisher, 2006). Susan Conklin Thompson (2005) explains:

Illustrations, whether they are done in rebus (using images to represent words), collage, chalks, or other media, enrich, highlight, and help tell a story. Illustrations can convey thoughts, actions, events, emotions, and experiences to a reader that words may not be able to (p. 21).

Students’ reading / producing of visual images or pictorial symbols is an essential step on the path to literacy development. Drawing and writing are examples of semiotic resources and forms of text making. When students produce texts, they interweave forms and meanings in their text designs (Mavers, 2011).

My poem on my experience in my language class depicts how children connect spontaneously, art with literacy and language. As a student in a literacy class, I was trying to combine symbols and text without even knowing why I did that. I used a lot of words to tell the story but I also used some drawings to illustrate pieces of the story. It was a combination of both text and images/drawings. I recall this incident now while reading Russell Freedman’s book *Immigrant Kids* (1995) that is told through the words on pages but also beautifully illustrated with images, a powerful medium for expression about the personal experiences and interests, journeys in life, and worldviews (Thompson & Williams, 2009).

My teacher's reaction to my print and visual text suppressed any future trials of bringing my art literacy or art texts alongside the conventional and highly desired word based literacy texts that my teacher demanded. From that day on in my school, the teacher's red pen became "like a whip, a rod of fire, that left red welts and bloody wounds, marks of shame that I could not play by the rules, did not know the rules, broke the rules without end" (Leggo, 2016). From that day on in my school, I learned that I had to abide by the teacher's rules to learn reading and writing. I learned that I should entirely focus on developing my reading and writing skills; that is I should be able to decode and encode the letters, to use phonics and spelling correctly, to utilize the proper grammatical rules in my writing, and to comprehend the literary texts. This was the only way then that I would be acknowledged as literate. This is how I was unintentionally oppressed, controlled, and put in a specific rigid frame / definition of literacy. This vision of literacy was and is still considered as another way of regulating students "through tightly scripting their literacy experiences so that their earliest 'lesson' is that literacy is about following orders, [...] getting the correct answer" (Collins & Blot, 2003, p. 173), and learning the words.

Words on paper are first and foremost drawings. Words on paper can be transformed in sounds. In one of the bestselling books titled *Why Johnny Can't Read*, a journalist wrote that all that is needed is to teach a child the sounds that the letters make so the child learns to read (Flesch, 1956). It is unquestionable that learning sounds and their letter representations is necessary, yet becoming literate is a much more complicated process that involves a lot more. Advances in multimedia and communication channels due to technological changes, in addition to the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity have impacted human understanding and practice of literacy (Walsh, 2011). Meaning is now made through various forms and multiple modes. This requires a new and innovative perspective to literacy that is not solely focused on the linguistic print-based mode (Anstey & Bull, 2006).

Unfortunately, many teachers are still unaware that reading and writing skills are not synonymous of understanding the world, reading the wor(l)d (Freire & Macedo, 1987), communicating purposefully within multiple social and cultural contexts, and engaging with the social, economic, cultural, and political issues in the world (Gee, 2013). In the present era, there are many ways to "read" and "write" the world

(Templeton & Gehsmann, 2014, p. 4) and being literate in contemporary society means much more than mastery of the mechanics of reading and writing composition (Saudelli & Rowsell, 2013). In our increasingly globalized world, educators need to support students in engaging with literacies that are beyond the reading and writing but literacies that would let them view the world through a new lens. Students need to explore “the terrain of transcultural literacies” (Magro, 2019, p. 125) in which themes of social justice, identity, belonging, and citizenship are connected (Magro, 2019). This means that students engage with multiliteracies/ multimodal literacies (New London Group, 1996), New Literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2013), critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), and critical literary theory (Greene, 1995).

Many years after the disheartening lived experience described in my poem, after many readings on literacy, given the significant changes in means of communication and the advancements in new technologies as well as the globalizing shifts in local contexts, I have developed a much wider perspective / point of view on literacy and literacy education. I have also developed an understanding of the tension that still exists among the various perspectives toward the meaning of literacy.

Tension leading to a crack...

I spent more than two decades of my life as a language arts teacher, subject coordinator, and teacher trainer. The lens through which I taught literacy was focused on books. I worked with parents, students, and teachers attempting to convince them that there is nothing more important for developing literacy than a curriculum that is full of worthwhile books as this is what prepares students for their future living.

As a language arts teacher, I was always focused on developing my professional skills to learn new strategies that would promote my students' reading and writing abilities. I viewed reading and writing as a cognitive (Farrall, 2012) and developmental process (Templeton & Gehsmann, 2014) that I should learn and implement in class in order to enhance my students' reading and writing abilities and achievements.

I was focused on the planned curriculum (Aoki, 1986/1991) and made everything possible to align all class activities to fit the curriculum expectations that are usually measured through the ministry of education standardized tests. So, as an educator coming from a highly structured, linear, and performance-based teaching and learning environment (Berman, 2008), it was hard for me to believe or to adhere to any educational philosophy that was not founded on evidence-based approaches.

To me this was the only viable, effective and meaningful approach to the teaching of literacy.

In direct contrast with my student experience of “literacy of the heart”

With this conception to teaching and learning, I got into the PhD program.

In my literacy course, I submitted my first paper and then my second paper focusing on my experience in teaching literacy in its didactic and functional approaches (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012) and its print-based mode. I got my papers back with a comment,

How would our classrooms change if we engage students with multiliteracies?

This comment disrupted and troubled me. It provoked me to read more on teaching, curriculum, pedagogy and literacy. Literacy in its singular and plural forms occupied a main space in my readings. I got hooked to and fell in love with the topic of ‘Literacies’ when I read about critical literacy (Freire, 1970), multiliteracies (The New London Group, 1996), multimodal literacy (Jewitt & Kress, 2008), and New Literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2013).

My readings created a problematizing stance toward the notion of literacy which made me reflect on and question my static assumptions about my own teaching approach and my own literacy perspective. It also created tension, questions, and a crack which let the light get in (Cohen, cited in Aoki, 2003, p. 425) and generated creative and multiple possibilities.

Memories from Language and Literacies course, Spring 2014, University of Ottawa

Davis, Sumara, and Luce-Kapler (2007) state, “we are framed by where we are from. And, because we are never still, our frames are constantly evolving” (p. 4). Our perceptions, understandings, views of the world and interpretations are tangled with experience. My experience as student and teacher was bittersweet and evoked many contradictory images. While I am very proud that I succeeded in developing my own reading and writing skills and in being able to transfer those skills to my students, I realize now that some main forms of literacy were missing from my literacy education and teaching. If I had the chance now to go back and teach my previous students, I would definitely completely change my whole approach to literacy. With the recent findings and information on new literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2013), multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996), and multiple literacies (Masny & Cole, 2009), I would want each student to be able to read whatever texts they encounter, to produce their own multimodal texts, and to approach texts confidently, critically, and from a multiple perspective. When I say texts, I don’t mean the print-based texts only. Morawski (2012a) reminds us:

Texts can be anything: from a discussion to a musical score, from a film to a piece of sculpture, from a road sign to a magazine article, from a poem to a computer game, and from a painting to a footprint.

Today, learners make sense of their worlds on a daily basis via multiple means of expressions and representations. This clashes with the linear agendas of many school curricula. Literacy in these curricula is almost exclusively centered on language only and singularly associated with the written word as a stable system based on grammatical and phonetic rules (Cole & Pullen, 2010). Nilsson (2010) states, “literacy in educational contexts is most often approached as a motor skill and not as a complex social, cultural and creative activity” (p. 2). Larson and Marsh (2015) argue that literacy education has long been centered on the cognitive psychological approach in which the learner’s individual development is the main focus. It has been assumed that literacy promotes higher-order cognitive abilities such as analytic and logical thought (Gee, 2015). The teaching of reading and writing which are conceptualized as literacy, was and still is based on the repeated practice of discrete skills taught in isolation. It is a type of

teaching based on traditional transmission models that focuses on individualized learning usually measured through specific types of print-based tests. Without a doubt, reading and writing or print based literacy is the dominant mode of literacy in schooling (Joyce & Feez, 2016).

This dominant mode goes back to many centuries ago. Christie and Misson (1998) explain that from the fifteenth century on, a literate person has been one who is acquainted with letters or with literature. The status of ‘an educated person’ was usually given to the person who knows the alphabets that open the path to familiarity with the literature. Thus, the ‘illiterate’ is the person who does not know the alphabets and hence the literature. The authors explain that though the terms ‘literate’ and ‘illiterate’ were known and used for several centuries, the term ‘literacy’ was not commonly or widely used. Teaching of literacy was understood to be about the two separate skills of reading and writing.

In the last part of the twentieth century, O’Neil (1970) put forward the idea of a distinction between being able to read and being literate. He explains the former as the ability to follow words across a page and getting what’s superficially there. The latter, being literate, means the person can bring his knowledge and experience to bear on what passes before him which he considers as proper literacy. He contends that one doesn’t need to be able to read to be properly literate. This perspective to literacy confirmed the idea that literacy is not only a linguistic system of reading and writing print-based texts. Gee (2015) elaborates this idea stating:

Literacy surely means nothing unless it has something to do with the ability to read. At the level of meaning 'read' is a transitive verb, since it always implies that the reader can read something. So literacy must have something to do with being able to read something. And this something will always be a text of a certain type. (p. 57)

In the first two decades of the twenty first century, the ability to read had to take into account the technological advances and the wide terrain of semiotic systems that can be used to make meaning as well as the tools available to humans. The notion of “text” to read has changed in nature. Texts can be paper, electronic, or live support that comprise using digital, nondigital, language, art, material, or spatial semiotic resources to make meaning (Jewitt & Kress, 2008). Semiotic resources can be defined as “the

actions and artefacts we use to communicate, whether they are produced physiologically – with our vocal apparatus; with the muscles we use to create facial expressions and gestures, etc. – or by means of technologies – with pen, ink and paper; with computer hardware and software; with fabrics, scissors and sewing machines, etc.” (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 3). Thus, semiotic resources can be used as the umbrella to refer to the cultural tools created by people to represent and communicate meanings through various types of texts. They can be sculptures, music, paintings, colors, images, and typography (Serafini, 2014). Arts educators view the body, the musical instrument, the canvas, or the stage as a text (Jensen & Draper, 2017). In this sense, texts can be multimodal, interactive, linear, and nonlinear. Different types of texts call for different and multiple forms of literacies. Furthermore, Eisner (2002) argues that acquiring literacy in one form does not predict literacy in another. He states:

Literacy is broader than language because the meaning systems ...are broader than language. Meaning is conveyed in the visual forms we call art, architecture, film, and video. It emerges in the patterned sound we call music. It appears first in human experience in movement, then gesture, and then dance. It emerges in the ways in which social relationships are constructed Becoming literate, in the broad sense, means learning how to access in a meaningful way the forms of life that these meaning systems make possible. (p. 12)

Inevitably now, the very idea of literacy has changed in response to cultural, social, economic, and technological globalisation and evolution. The skills required to understand the world, engage with life issues, respond to the twenty-first century demands, and for success and mobility becomes increasingly complex. Thus, becoming literate is no more only a matter of being able to read and write. It is a matter of transcending the conventional and entering the field of multiplicity, creativity, and alternatives.

Many students in heritage/international languages schools can hardly read or write using their heritage language but they still like to share their stories in their own ways and to make meaning through their preferred modes. The conversation below happened with one of the heritage language students. She is ten years old but she wasn't formally registered at the heritage language school and wasn't attending class at the time of this project. However, she still wanted to participate in this project even if her work won't be included.

Below is a whatsapp conversation between us explaining to me her story



Heritage/International language: Between school-parents aspiration and students' minimal engagement

I go to the international languages school on Saturday as I do every week. I stand beside the main gate chatting with the school principal and his administrative support staff. We greet teachers and parents, and receive students as they arrive.

Several conversations go on in these few minutes before the beginning of the actual teaching time. Parents drop off their kids with many encouraging statements for them: *to 'pay attention in class', to 'follow teacher's instructions, and to 'behave properly'*. The school principal introduces me to parents while promising them to continue working on developing students' heritage language. Suddenly, one parent who is a well-educated woman approaches me and asks for few minutes of private conversation:

"Can you tutor my kids to help them develop their Arabic language?" she asks.

"I apologize. I can't. I am a researcher at the school right now," I answer.

"I know that my kids should learn the language in their classes here, but they, as many students from our community who come to international languages school, have very minimal concern to improve their language skills. They consider themselves responsible for improving the language that is offered in their official curriculum (English or French). Also, they don't like the fact that they come on a weekend day."

"You know, they want to hang out with their friends on weekends and to finish their regular week day school stuff, which is more important to them than doing something related to heritage language. They tell me that they don't need to learn reading or writing in Arabic because they won't use it in their work or life later on."

The lady finishes with a sigh, *“They always complain about the difficult level of their textbooks and their reading texts”*.

Our conversation continues....

We continue the conversation on school and parents’ aspiration to develop, retain, and preserve the students’ heritage/international language, on the challenges of students learning their heritage language, and on the possible ways to motivate them to attend their weekend school. The conversation ends with her asking for a favor, *“Please can you do an assessment for my kids’ written and oral Arabic language abilities.”*

I agree, but with the condition that I do that after I finish the project with the students because the only role I need to maintain now is being a researcher of a participatory action research and I need to keep my focus on this collaborative and non-authoritative type of inquiry in class.

Anecdotes from my research journey

Though we can't ignore the principal role of language as one of the main modes of communication, it is still one aspect of the multimodal nature of meaning-making. In addition to language, people use other modes of representation, communication, and meaning-making such as visual, aural, spatial, gestural, kinesthetic, and multimodal (Jewitt, Bezemer, & O'Halloran, 2016). Thus, oral and written language is only one of the delivery systems of literacy (Gee & Hayes, 2011).

The conventional view of literacy that has long been limited to the mastery of “page- bound, official, and standard forms of the national language” (The New London Group, 1996, pp. 60-61), is changing rapidly in our contemporary globalized world which is consequently affecting our lives and ways of communication. Due to huge social changes, cultural and linguistic diversity, and advances in the field of technology

particularly multimedia and the World Wide Web and the forces of globalization, the traditional/conventional understanding of literacy becomes outdated (Cope & Kalantzis, 2012). Literacy is no longer exclusively reading and writing and it can no more be perceived in its singular form because words are no longer the only means by which students can express and represent their thoughts (Albers, Helbrook & Flint, 2014). Kress (2003) states, “it is no longer possible to think about literacy in isolation from a vast array of social, technological and economic factors” (p. 1). We need to consider that huge movements and radical shifts have influenced the concept of literacy and moved it from its singular to a plural and multimodal perspective called multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996).

From literacy to multiliteracies

Multiliteracies which was coined in 1996 by a group of ten researchers and educators from the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia (New London Group, 1996), aims to make classroom teaching more inclusive of cultural, linguistic, communicative, and technological diversity. From a multiliteracies perspective, there is a shift from the dominance of writing to the dominance of various forms and modes of communication and meaning-making. This shift affects literacy uses and ways of representing and communicating meanings. Inevitably, the current landscape of communication is characterized by a significant multiplicity of channels and venues for providing meaning and sharing knowledge in our global world (Bezemer & Kress, 2016).

Ng-A-Fook, Radford, Yazdanian, and Norris (2013) state:

Today, the social, cultural, and technological contexts of our lived experiences are quite different. Students are bombarded daily with print, visual, and digital media... youth culture is hardwired into multiple forms of communication. And yet, the daily life and respective experiences of students are often still subordinated to the conventional delivery of school curriculum. (p. 39)

As educators and teachers, we understand that there is a multitude of literacy forms, meaning-making modes and formats that fill our lives through art, dance, music, and many other symbol systems like language (both oral and written) which is known to be as one of the historically main constituents of those symbol systems (Booth, 2013).

Thus, we can no more think of literacy or teach literacy without considering the myriad forms of literacies that are prevalent in our world and everyday lives. This new understanding of literacy led me to team up with one participating teacher in the elementary school of the International Languages Program, to engage in a teaching experience of literacy that involves

the aesthetic,

the creative,

the innovative, and the multiple

to create a multiliteracies/ multimodal class.

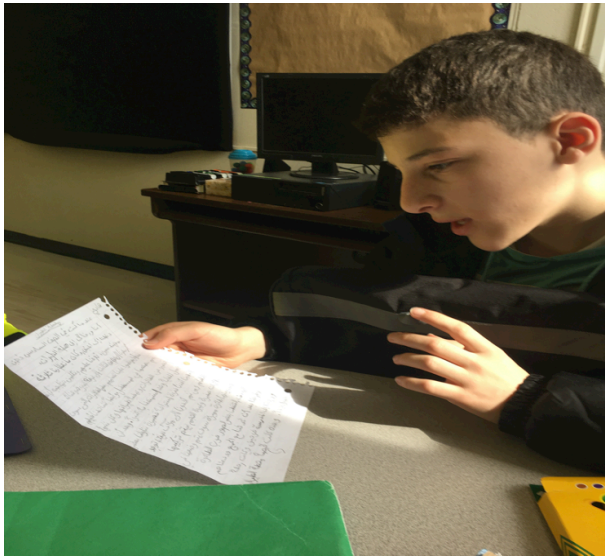


Stepping into the alternative, multiple, creative, and multimodal

What we ought to be developing in our schools is not simply a narrow array of literacy skills limited to restrictive range of meaning systems, but a spectrum of literacies that will enable students to participate in, enjoy, and find meaning in the major forms through which meaning has been constituted. We need a conception of multiple literacies to serve as a vision of what our schools should seek to achieve.

(Eisner, 2002, p. 12)

During my volunteering period with the school that teaches Arabic under the Ontario International Languages Program (Cummins, 2014), I visited most of their



classes to support teachers in their teaching-learning process of literacy or reading as they describe it. I spent time with students during their recess at the gym and at the end of the school day while waiting for their parents to pick them up.

I attended school staff meetings and after-school events. I had the chance to chat with the principal and his academic support staff whenever they had a few minutes to discuss their school plans for developing students' literacy skills and practices. All of this made me notice that the school's expectation of literacy is focused on supporting students to achieve their reading and writing curriculum outcomes; to learn their language vocabulary, use standard spelling, and write well-structured sentences.



As a literacy educator, I believe now that reading doesn't matter anymore unless we expand our definition of literacy and we start thinking beyond the learning from a textbook only by including comics, magazines, poems, songs, manuals, novels, and technology, viewing writing as literacy, turning printed texts into active and creative learning projects, and opening the space for literacy in the arts (Barton, 2014). This perspective to literacy highlights its creative, innovative, and multiple forms. Literacy learners nowadays need to learn how to engage with in-school and out-of school literacies (Smith & Moore, 2012). They need to experience a literacy curriculum that is loaded with lots of opportunities for not only reading and writing but goes beyond that to incorporate other literacies, other sign systems, and modes of communication like art, music, drama, and technology of the 21st century (Harste, 2003). To be able to do that, Morawski and Palulis (2009) argue that we need to "shift...from the treatment of language arts as a canned study in nightly chapter questions, daily pop quizzes, clinical character descriptions and plot summaries to asking and keeping open the question: "What is a text" (p. 14)? The authors state that according to Short, Kauffman, and Khan (2000), "text refers to any chunk of meaning that...can be shared with others...a novel, a piece of art, a play, a dance, a song, or a mathematical equation" as well as all those other daily forms of meaning-making (p. 165).

This broad meaning of literacy teaching, education, and texts seeped into my work as a teacher and researcher steering me toward inquiring about how students engage with literacy if it is open to them in its multiple forms that include various modes of communication and meaning-making. Gee (2013) argues that we, human beings can learn from our experiences and we use them for our future actions.

My previous lived experiences as a student, a teacher, and a volunteer at the international languages school, oriented my research choice and drove me to attempt, in collaboration with one of the school teachers, cracking the conventional practices of literacy teaching through a participatory action research (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013). I wanted to bring in the broad perspective to literacy education through engaging one-classroom students who are between the age of eleven and fifteen years old, with multiliteracies/ multimodalities theory and pedagogy (New London Group, 1996).

Bohm (1983) argues, “the word ‘theory’ derives from the Greek ‘theoria’, which has the same root as ‘theatre’, in a word meaning ‘to view’ or ‘to make a spectacle’ . Thus, it might be said that “...a theory is primarily a form of insight, i.e. a way of looking at the world, and not a form of knowledge of how the world is” (p. 4). Considering that looking is always based on a point of view or a position implies that each person can look differently, see differently, and accordingly act or perform differently. This is the essence of multiliteracies theory, which is founded and grounded on the need to see the world in its multi perspectives, multi readings, multi cultures, multi languages, multi semiotic systems, and multi communication channels. Multiliteracies focuses on broadening the range of literacies. It has a central idea that there are many types of literacy: “a burgeoning variety of text forms” (New London Group, 1996, p. 61). It “challenges the dominant emphasis on a single, ‘neutral’ ‘Literacy’ with a big ‘L’ and a single ‘y’ advocating the multiple literacies people engage with in various spaces, times (Street, 1995, p. 2), and modes (Bezemer & Kress, 2016). Thus, from the perspective of multiliteracies, exclusively focusing on linear text-based literacy denotes a narrow conception that lacks a comprehensive understanding of the realities of our current globalized, technologically advanced and sophisticated knowledge-based society (Cummins, 2009). Harste (2010) contends, “a Language Arts program ought to expand our communication potential not just in language but in all the ways there are to know and mean” (p. 29).

With these advancements and new perspectives to the notion of literacy, literacy educators need to think now about the possibilities that transcend the dominant print-based mode to forms that support the development of multiliterate learners and active participants in this world: literacies of the 21st century (Lankshear & Knobel, 2013), multimodal literacies (Jewitt & Kress, 2008; McLean & Rowsell, 2015; Morawski, 2012), and artifactual literacies (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012). A lot of researchers and literacy educators have attempted to experience literacy in its alternative and creative forms. Morawski (2012) for instance, engaged her student teachers in novel study using scrapbooks and Mills (2010) engaged her students in the making of Claymation movies employing multiple forms of expression and representation. The technological developments and advances in our contemporary world with the proliferation of, and easy access to, those technological tools puts us in a privileged situation for developing

our literacy education approaches and practices. It opens spaces for digital story telling (Crowder et al. 2013), for socio-dramatic plays (Charles & Boyle, 2014), in addition to many other modes of communication channels that support creating multiple meanings.

With all of these possibilities, I, as an educator, researcher, and teacher who observed and lived what literacy education means in one of the international/heritage languages schools, decided then to embark on working with one classroom teacher and her students to experience the development of literacy from the multiliteracies perspective by opening the space for students to engage with literacy in its multimodal forms and multimodal designs of texts.

Multiliteracies in a heritage language context

Cummins (2014) illustrates the definition of heritage language by stating:

...as it has been used in the Canadian context, the term *heritage languages* usually refers to all languages other than the two official languages (English and French), the languages of First Nations (Native) and Inuit peoples, and the languages of the Deaf community (American Sign Language [ASL] and *langue des signes québécoise* [LSQ]). A variety of other terms have also been used and these terms reflect broader struggles around status, identity, and rights of societal groups. The terms *ancestral*, *ethnic*, *immigrant*, *international*, *minority*, *non-official*, *third* (after English and French), and *world* have all been used at different times and in different contexts. The term used in Quebec is *langues d'origine* (languages of origin). In other countries the term *community languages* has been used (e.g. Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom) and the term *mother tongue* is also common in some contexts. (p. 2 italics in origin)

Cummins (2014) explains that indigenous and deaf communities resisted the inclusion of their languages within the categories of 'heritage' or 'community' languages. So, definitions of 'heritage language' are not static but dynamic reflecting the cultural and political context to which the term refers.

Canada can be described as an increasingly diverse and complex society that is formed of a pluralistic fabric of linguistically and ethnically different groups. It is a multilingual nation which positions Canada as a leader in nurturing the language wealth of its society (Lotherington, 2011). There is a continuous growing number of immigrants whose mother tongue or heritage language is neither English nor French. For children who were born in Canada, their parents' heritage language becomes in reality their second language. Some of those children don't have any kind of basic proficiency in

either speaking or writing their heritage language, others barely speak their heritage language, while still others can speak the language with minimal use of vocabulary but can't write their heritage language at all (Egbo, 2008).

Since this study is implemented in a Canadian context where French and English are the two official languages (Canadian Education Association, 1991), I use the term 'international/heritage language' to refer to the Arabic language which is considered one of the international languages in the Canadian context (International Languages Resource Guide, 2012). Arabic and other international languages in Canada are referred to in most of the literature as the mother tongue, first language, home language, or international language in which they are described as the language of an ethnicity, ancestral, or non-official (Cummins & Danesi, 1990).

Since the late 1960s, Canada has always protected and supported the linguistic duality of its two official languages and also implemented a lot of legislative support for the non-official languages or heritage languages (Duff et al. 2008). Heritage Languages Education in Ontario is under the title International Languages Program (International Languages Resource Guide, 2012). Back in 1977, the Ontario Ministry of Education released a memorandum, which read in part:

The Ministry of Education will implement a Heritage Languages Program to be effective as of July 1, 1977. For the purposes of this program, a heritage language is any language other than the two official languages of Canada. Under this program, any group of parents will be able to approach its local school board with the request that heritage language classes for elementary school children be given under the Continuing Education Program. Such classes maybe offered after school, or on non-school days, or where numbers justify an extension of the required 5-hour school day. Under this program, no student may receive more than 2 ½ hours instruction per week, or more than 2 ½ hours per day in the case of summer school classes. (Canadian Education Association, 1991, p. 27)

Thirteen years later, in 1990 the Ontario provincial government changed the term 'heritage languages' to 'international languages' because the term heritage could reflect learning about their cultures, past traditions, or historical lives rather than acquiring significant language skills for the children's overall educational and personal development. Currently, international languages teaching to school- aged children is offered in Canada through three major educational contexts; public schools in which

classes are administered by school districts but taught either after school day hours or on weekends; private or independent schools which are funded by the province and follow curricular content and language of instruction according to provincial guidelines where international language can be used for 40 to 50% of instructional time; or community supported out-of- school programs which usually take place on weekends and are sometimes coordinated with provincially supported programs like Ontario's International Languages Program (Cummins, 2014).

Cummins (2014) argues that lack of proficiency or competence in the children's heritage language causes them to lose any kind of motivation, interest, or engagement in learning their language and makes them withdraw from putting good effort to learn it.

The interaction with a parent described above (p. 25-26) represents a good example of this low level of engagement of children. Many times, parents add to the problem of their children's disengagement in learning their heritage language by continuously speaking one of the two Canadian official languages with their children at home instead of challenging and motivating them to try to develop and maintain their heritage language. Parents feel that it is easier and less time consuming for them to communicate with their children in either English or French rather than their heritage language as their children show better understanding of one of the two official languages. However, we can notice that those parents keep on sending their children to the weekend heritage/international languages schools (Cummins, 1993).

Cummins (2014) explains that Canadian public schools in most provinces provide little encouragement to students to use their home languages within the school. Some school boards even imposed formal restrictions against the use of any language other than French inside the school premises. Thus, children have minimal chances of learning, practicing, and developing their heritage language except during the weekend community-based schools.

This poses a lot of challenges for heritage language learners, their parents, and their communities (Liu et al. 2011). Parents shift their focus from supporting their children to learn and maintain their heritage language to striving to do everything possible in order to have their kids acquire and academically perform well in the dominant language. They view the official dominant language as a key to education and

progress (Aravossitas, 2014). Children also challenge themselves to gain the dominant language in order to be accepted in their new societies. Karchenko (2014) states:

Children think that their first language is quite useless in their surrounding, so they treat language maintenance as a boring task initiated by the parents, especially if the bilingual programs or tutors do not inspire any interest in language learning. When [children] face a choice of dominant language versus heritage language, they tend to favour the mainstream language. (p. 5)

Cummins and Schetcher (2003) argue that when students develop their fluency and literacy in their home languages in addition to either of the two official languages they become more educated than students who lose their home language competence in the process of acquiring their English or French. Consequently, schools that fail to develop their students' linguistic talents usually fail also to fully educate them. This perspective is supposed to provoke educators to think of education and literacy from an international and global perspective (Tarc, 2013). Thus, developing students' linguistic skills apart from the global cosmopolitan view would not help in developing educated learners (Pinar, 2009). Students' developed abilities in two or more languages would allow them to be more internationally oriented and engage in conversations at the national and international levels. They would be able to move "across borders, mix and meet and mingle, and engage with words and the world in new ways" (Orellana, 2017, p. ix). They will not be conforming to any one dominant culture (Fleming, 2019). Wong-Fillmore (2000) argues that the loss of a child's heritage language has a negative impact on their cultural identity development, the continuity of their relationships with parents and grandparents, and their academic performance. Conversely, the maintenance of a child's heritage language produces many positive attributes. Developing students' bilingualism will not only help in keeping them connected to their cultures but also facilitate their connection with the world, interaction with global issues, listening and understanding alternative narratives, and engaging with the lives and experiences of the other (Honeyford, 2019).

Guadalupe Valdés (2000) noted, "the pedagogies and practices currently used for teaching heritage languages are essentially atheoretical" (p. 389). McQuillan (1995) states, "Most of the methods currently advocated for HL classroom focus on traditional grammar and skills instruction, yet there is little evidence that such methods are effective

in HL language and literacy development” (p. 56). With the new perspective and understanding of literacy and language teaching and development, a focus on studies about literacy acquisition, literacy forms and practices grabbed the attention of educators and researchers. For example, some studies and projects involved the engagement with and development of heritage language through a multiliteracies perspective (Giampapa & Sandhu, 2011; Marshall & Toohey, 2010; Naqvi et al. 2012; Norton, 2011; Prasad & Dykstra, 2011). They described how educational, social, cultural, and identity related issues are positively influenced when students use their heritage or first language. Those multilingual, multimodal, and pluralistic projects also demonstrate the feasibility of engaging students to use their heritage language as a cognitive and academic resource. Multiliteracies pedagogy has also shown to be particularly relevant and useful for resolving the vast disparities at various levels, between learners of different linguistic abilities, cultural backgrounds, and learning engagements (Pei-Ling Tan, 2010). It has the potential of engaging heritage language learners in an alternative and creative type of literacy bringing in their multilingual, multicultural, multiliterate, and multimodal understandings, perspectives, and conceptions to their literacy learning. It also opens spaces for them to bring their lived experiences to the learning process, which makes it more meaningful and engaging.

Aoki (1987/1991) argues that a good foundation of mother language makes it possible for learners to understand the world of the second language and to look deeply into another perspective of the world. However, he criticizes the instrumental understanding and teaching of language programs because this makes education itself understood instrumentally. He argues that the aim should not be to teach for transmission of codes only and learning for the achievement and employment of those codes or for standardizing and testing. In this respect, teachers should not be “trapped by test requirements, community surveillance, and the fear of accountability” (Greene, 2009, p. 1). Moreover, it should not be reduced to instruction and “understood as a mode of doing ... but rather as a mode of being” (Aoki, 1987/1991, p. 245). Based on Aoki's perspective on instruction, while it is very important for teachers to open opportunities for students to develop their literacy skills in their home languages, it is of the same importance to develop it also as a living pedagogy, as a way of being, as a way of looking into their own lives and others' lives too. This requires teachers then to bring to their beliefs of

teaching and education the notion of “curriculum-as-live(d) not only think of the curriculum-as-planned” (Aoki, 2003, p. 426). Bringing the lived curriculum into aliveness opens the space for students’ subjectivities, identities, narratives of all kinds and forms, and stories to be present in the classroom.

**Dwelling in the in-between spaces of a neither/nor curriculum
Bringing aliveness to the classroom through a living pedagogy**

When I was the principal of the elementary school in 2007, I received a letter from the school quality management office informing me that my division will undergo an external audit. I was informed that this is a regular and continuous practice at school to ensure that all school processes and procedures are being applied as described in the school’s written documents.

The quality management auditor arrived early and stepped into my office with a big file in his hands. He asked for several documents, among which was the division’s subject matter yearly educational plans. Those plans which we used to prepare at the beginning of each school year are comprised of unit expectations, detailed descriptions of activities that will be implemented in- and- out of class for fulfilling those expectations, educational materials that will be used, class work and homework that will be performed by students, and the formative and summative evaluations required.

The auditor did his job very accurately. He went over each unit, lesson, and sub- lesson in the subject matter educational plans requesting a proof from students’ work that this unit was implemented as it is described in the curriculum documents. I answered all his questions and provided proof of how my division is adhering to the curriculum as it is exactly described in the curriculum documents. I was proud providing all the evidence he wanted. My main goal was to read in the audit report that my division is performing very well in the curriculum implementation. To my surprise, the audit report recorded many nonconformities regarding the implementation of the curriculum and the execution of the activities as described in the curriculum documents.

This put my division at need of corrective actions. A nonconformity is “non-fulfillment of a requirement” (ISO 9001:2005) – this basically means that a nonconformity is when you do not fulfill what is required by the standard, by your own documentation, or by a third party (Natarajan, 2017).

The auditor finished his task with a last comment, “I am sorry to tell you that your division is not applying the curriculum as it is planned and as it is described in your school’s curriculum documents. You will need to do a review and take some corrective actions otherwise your school Quality Management Certification will be at risk of denying renewal.”

*Reflections written in spring 2014 for
‘Language and Literacy’ course assignment*

Quality Management Certification (Purushothama, 2011) for school educational processes and procedures require regular audits to ensure that they are being applied as described in the school’s documents. Though this is a favored practice for controlling types of management, it is still a bureaucratic control (Vinni, 2007). This undermines teaching and learning and emphasizes accountability which according to Pinar (2012) “is not about ‘learning’, but about controlling what we teach to our children. It is about controlling the curriculum.... Teachers are reduced to technicians, ‘managing’ student productivity. The school is no longer a school, but a business” (p. 36). Shipp (2000) compares the school then to a factory where “teachers are reduced to automata and administrators to managers” (p. 37). In this position, the teacher is conceived as a technologist or a manipulator of environmental variables just as the outside researcher who observes someone’s class and who focuses on behavioral responses to visible occurrences in the environment (Greene, 1973); and the teaching situation is fraught by descriptions and prescriptions and governed by predetermined rules and directives.

Lankshear and Knobel (1998) advocate viewing learners as lifelong *trajectories* and as *stories* with multiple twists and turns (p. 165). They argue, “As [learners’] stories are rapidly and radically changing, we need to change our stories about skills, learning, and knowledge. Our focus, as well, should be on multiple learning sites and their rich and complex interconnections” (p. 165). Thus, we need to “abandon traditional notions of predetermined abilities and predetermined fulfillments... [We] need to recognize that human beings are protean, with innumerable modes of self-expression and various lifestyles” (Greene, 1973, p. 84). Thus, teachers need to consider opening the space for those multiple modes and forms of meaning-making to be present in their classrooms.

The story presented above brings me back to Aoki’s (1990) warning of the danger of making teaching become the language of implementation of others’ objectives instead of becoming an occasion for creativity and questioning and, above all, the cultivation of erudition and intellectual independence. Aoki (1991) asks for ‘curriculum improvisation’ instead of ‘curriculum implementation’ (p. 369). He articulates his thoughts saying, the word “curriculum typically conjures forth a conventional landscape of school curricula dotted with school subjects” (Aoki, 1996, p. 417). This curriculum has its origin outside the classroom and is usually the work of curriculum planners. Eisner (2002) refers to this conception of curriculum as curriculum *in vitro* which is intended to enable teachers to promote the quality of their programs by following a specific set of designed activities and prompts (p. 149). Aoki (1993) states, “external curriculum planners are condemned to plan for faceless people, students shorn of their uniqueness, ... teachers who become generalized entities... The other curriculum is ... the lived curriculum, a world of face-to-face living” (p. 211). He argues that in a class there are many lived curricula, a multiplicity of curricula, as many as there are teachers and students, and possibly more. So, he wonders why educators seem to be confined to a singular meaning of the word curriculum.

Aoki's (1986/1991) language of curriculum is situated in the midst of two worlds, curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-live(d). The world of curriculum-as-plan is usually a prescribed curriculum by the Ministry of Education that is loaded with the language of “goals, aims and objectives” versus “intent and interest; ends and means versus education” (Aoki 1986/1991, p. 160). In this scheme teachers are regarded as “installers

of the curriculum, implementing assumes an instrumental flavour” (p. 160). Low (2014) argues that teachers are forced “to conform to particular ways, insisting on a particular curricular life in school (school literacy practices) and how it should be lived (taught/learned)” (p. 109) because assumptions about education continue to reify an epistemology of packaged learning that come with predefined content and skills. Aoki (1990) argues that the curriculum-as-planned is a curriculum of sameness that “diminishes and extinguishes the salience of the lived situation of people in classrooms and communities” (p. 362). While every child’s face is unique, the curriculum-as-planned doesn’t take into consideration the uniqueness of each student and how this influences the teaching pedagogy. Max van Manen (2002) argues that educators need to develop “attentiveness to the unique: the uniqueness of children, the uniqueness of every situation, and the uniqueness of individual lives” (p. 8). Thus, students need to experience being seen by the teacher and “being confirmed as existing, as being a unique person and a learner” (Max van Manen, 2002, p. 31).

Carl Leggo (2002) states:

For too long curriculum has been equated with textbooks and teacher's guides and teacher's resources; in other words, curriculum is conceived as a noun, but curriculum needs to be conceived as a verb, an action, an ongoing process, shaped and influenced by the dynamic relationships of students and teachers. Curriculum is not static; curriculum is dynamic. Everything that happens in a school is curriculum. (p. 8)

Aoki (1996) calls for legitimating the live(d) curriculum as “the situated image of the live(d) curricular experiences of students and teachers” (p. 418). He touches on the split character of ‘curriculum as live(d) experiences’ indicating that the word “*experience* is a hybrid including notions of ‘past experiences’ (*lived* experiences) and ‘ongoing experiences’ (*live* or *living* experiences)” (p. 418). Lucy Calkins (1991) describes how a school should be established by stating, “The way to establish a School for Children in each classroom is not to rush about filling the room with a variety of paper, bulletin boards, conference areas... but instead, to fill the room with children’s lives” (p.11). For Aoki (1994) “the important thing is to understand that if in my class I have 20 students, then there are 21 interspaces between me and students. These interspaces are spaces of possibilities. So, what we allow to happen, what can be constituted and reconstituted in

those interspaces is what we mean by life in the classroom” (p. 10). Pinar (2012) contends that a school curriculum that is scripted and disconnected from students’ lived experience will not permit teaching to be a process of “a communicative action and reflection” (p. 133). So, teachers who concentrate their efforts searching for the most effective means to achieve ends defined for them by others, can lose sight of the fact that their everyday reality is only one of many possible alternatives.

Aoki (1986/1991) states, “When the pupils arrive, things and pupils arrange themselves... The environment ceases to be environment, and in its place comes into being a pedagogic situation, a lived situation pregnantly alive in the presence of people” (p. 159). Interpreting Aoki’s theory, we understand that there are two worlds inside and outside the classroom. He reminds us that there are deep and insightful spaces in-between which are “marked by the cracks in the words” (p. 321). In this in-between space of a curriculum-as-planned and a curriculum-as-live(d), a place of tensionality exists. Teachers, who are held accountable for what and how they teach, get caught in implementing the mandated curriculum that assumes sameness, ignores uniqueness, and reduces the live(d) experiences as new pedagogical possibilities. They find themselves in need for managing this tensionality. Aoki advocates dwelling in the zone between these two curriculum worlds stating, “indwelling in the zone between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-live(d) experience is not so much a matter of overcoming the tensionality, but more a matter of dwelling aright within it” (p. 163). Dwelling in the in-between spaces of curriculum as-plan and curriculum as-live(d) brings aliveness to the teaching situation which does not keep the teacher calm but puts him/her in an appropriate and live tension that allows the students to live the curriculum and to become a curriculum that is charged with life and learning (Aoki, 1986/1991).

A state of being in-between space – in the Aokian sense – provokes us to live/teach differently and in ways that can be planned, and open, given the unfolding in the space between teacher and students can never be anticipated fully beforehand (Rotas, 2016). In that middle space of the curricular landscape a polyphony of lines of movement open up to allow experiencing pedagogy as a mode of being and becoming, for the student and the teacher. It is in that middle space which allows multiplicity to grow and offers possibilities to live stories of people who dwell within that landscape to be brought

up. It is the space that allows for stories, anecdotes, and narratives that embody the lived dimension of curriculum life.

Ted Aoki's (1986/1991) powerful concept of dwelling in the in-between spaces of curriculum-as-planned and curriculum- as-lived, inspired my study of students' engagement in multiliteracies in a classroom that involved various language abilities, different cultures, and diverse learning styles. I am inspired by Ted Aoki's philosophy, I consider his insights regarding curriculum, pedagogy, and tensionality to be invaluable points for my inquiry.

In this study, I attempted as a researcher/participant teacher to live this tension that exists between the two curriculum worlds... To experience the "Neither this nor that, but this *and* that" (Smith, 2003, p. xv) which leads to a form of intertextuality and brings forth the other kind of life... the life that lies in-between. Though living in-between is challenging especially in a task-oriented and performance-driven culture, I persisted on taking on this endeavor of shying away from the binaries of either/or. I experienced with my collaborating teacher that hybrid, dynamically tensioned, in-between space of a curriculum-as-planned and the curriculum-as-lived that is charged with life. I attempted an experience in living pedagogy. Aoki (2003), reading other scholars, describes a living pedagogy in a way that emphasizes messiness and hybridity. He suggests:

...the site between representational and non-representational discourses is the site of living pedagogy. This is the site that post colonial scholar, Homi Bhabha calls the Third Space of ambivalent construction: the site that Trinh Minh-ha, a post colonial feminist, calls, "a hybrid place". It is a site that David Jardine, University of Calgary, calls a site of original difficulty, of ambiguity, ambivalence and uncertainty, but simultaneously, a site of generative possibilities and hope--a site challenging us to live well. It is a site that David Smith, University of Alberta, writes about in his book *pedagon, pedagogy in the site of agon(y)*. It is the site that Marilyn Low and Pat Palulis describe in their article "Teaching as a Messy Text: Metonymic Moments in Pedagogic Practice". For Bill Doll, it is the site of chaos in which dwell transformative possibilities. (p. 429)

Articulating my inquiry on the principles of open spaces, multiplicities, possibilities, and uncertainties, made living pedagogy a needed and compatible option to go with. In this collaborative project, teaching was practiced as a mode of being and becoming (Aoki, 2003). It was a journeying together with students. Berman (1991) states:

The journey metaphor helps us fasten on curriculum as nonlinear, as recursive, as geared to the emerging interests of travelers. It helps us see the unforeseen not as something to be ignored or abhorred, but as something to consider as a possibility. (p. 8)

In this research I experienced “teaching as a messy text” (Low & Palulis, 2000, p. 67). I experienced hybridity that emerges from the third space (Bhabha, 1994). Sim (2013) reading Bhabha suggests that migrant experience provides the basis for hybridity to develop. The ‘students travelers’ with whom I was involved represent a small group in the large, diverse, multicultural, and multilingual reality of Canada. Some are caught in the hyphen, in the middle, in a third space. Ng-A-Fook, Radford, and Ausman (2012) state:

Being in a (third) space (at least for hyphenated or hybrid subjectivities) includes experiencing constant change inside one self, with multiple contradictory feelings of belonging and not belonging, of appropriation and alienation, by the differing representations of being a hyph-e-nated Canadian. (p. 100)

These researchers drawing upon the concept of ‘transnationalism’ and ‘third space’ carried out a social action curriculum research project in which students from multiple ethnic and migrant backgrounds interacted via the mediated apparatus of social networking. In addition to the many influences that the program had on students, the researchers’ project inspired students to bring up their hyphenated lived experiences, which located them in “multiple” and “between” spaces and places simultaneously. They learned about multiple literacies, third spaces, and the hyphenated curricula that the immigrant students live.

Being a new immigrant myself to Canada, I lived and experienced this tension of the third space. I constantly wondered how has my identity, my feeling about where is home, and my language changed or shifted. When I visit my country of origin and people there know that I come from Canada, they start addressing me with [You]. But that is not the ‘you’ that means me as an individual. They use the [You] in its plural form which denotes ‘othering’. I become in their conversations like a foreigner or a stranger. On the other side, when I once was returning back to Canada after a visit to my family and waiting at the airport in London for my flight to Ottawa, a woman sat beside me and started a chat. After she knew that I live in Canada, she spontaneously asked me, “Where

are you from?”. I remember how much I was surprised of this question which annoyed me that I didn’t want to answer and wasn’t sure of how to answer. Many questions started spinning in my head. I asked myself, “How should I answer?, Where am I really from?”. I am a veiled woman with an accent when I speak English. I was born outside Canada, but I live with my children in Canada now, I got my higher education degrees from Canadian universities, I work in Canada, I have friends in Canada, and I am a Canadian citizen who is involved in the Canadian economic, social, and political life. Yet, I also have my parents, my childhood memories, my relatives, my cultural beliefs and understandings, and my heritage language that I still use with my children; all from my country of origin. So, where am I really from? Am I from here or there ... or maybe I am crisscrossing the borderlands, and negotiating between a here, a there, and an elsewhere. This probing of questions about my ancestry raised by the woman at the airport made me feel that I, in the perspective of some people, will be forever foreign and forever an immigrant to Canada.

Max van Manen (2002) argues that the world contains many possibilities of living and being. Maxine Greene (1998) expresses, “[we] can only live... with a consciousness of possibility, of what might be” (p. 253). Students experience their worlds through various mediums like their schools, media, communities, friends and many other possibilities. As students are in the process of becoming, teachers act pedagogically when they open spaces for them to bring in their lived experiences and to show possible ways of being and becoming in this world. Teachers need to watch them, listen to them, and learn from them. Through a living pedagogy, my participating students in the international languages classroom were offered the opportunity to creatively engage with multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996) and produce their own multimodal literacy texts (Jewitt & Kress, 2008) that innovatively represented their hyphenated-identities (Ng-A-Fook et al. 2012; Nixon, 2013; Raghunandan, 2012; van Dyk, 2005), their longing and belonging (Hooks, 2009) to what they perceive as home and their entanglement to the in-between space or third space (Bhabha, 1994).

Defying the conventional.... Seeing the possible



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<https://www.uottawa.ca/gazette/sites/www.uottawa.ca.gazette/files/dtcmainsizedgazette.jpg>

In the process of preparing for and writing my research proposal, I get immersed in so many pedagogical, philosophical, theoretical, and research-based books and articles. I get hooked on the book of Sylvia Ashton-Warner (1963) titled “Teacher.” I read about creative teaching, organic reading and organic writing among other topics. I get more passionate about the Tolstoy schools (1857) experience and how Tolstoy’s philosophy of education which was based on non-coercive subjects, allowed for students’ freedom of choice, and considered their concerns and interests as fundamental to the learning process made the school remarkably successful. While this might sound obvious nowadays, I was impressed with Ashton-Warner recounts of her experience which goes back to the 1940’s.

During reading this book, the University of Ottawa’s campus becomes filled with attractive posters marked with ‘Defy the Conventional’ which is a slogan for a campaign that supports innovative projects. The campaign aimed at telling the story of the University of Ottawa as an academic place rooted in innovation and where

unconventional thinking has always thrived. It draws my attention and leads me to juxtaposing the image I have in mind from Ashton-Warner book and the call of the University of Ottawa through the campaign of 'Defy the Conventional'. I wonder then, are we, as teachers, sufficiently opening spaces for our students' creativity, innovation, diversity, and critical thinking/literacy to take place in our education approaches? Do we need to liven up our positions in the education of our students? As a literacy educator myself, how do I "Defy the Conventional?"

My perspective to literacy teaching and education along with the University of Ottawa's slogan of the campaign 'Defy the Conventional' had an influence on me to stand firm and proceed in my attempt to experience the creative, alternative, and innovative approaches to literacy teaching and education guided by the framework of multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996). I wanted to disrupt the long-standing notions of literacy practices in one of the International Languages Program schools. Albers, Holbrook, and Flint (2014) explain, "disruption, by its very definition, an unsettling process, does the productive work of creating cracks, opening fissures, breaking up packed soils" (p. ix).

Given the sparseness of literacy studies on international languages learners (Lo-Philip, 2010), it is not surprising that any research examining international languages learners' engagement in multiliteracies, especially multimodal practices in a weekend community school does not exist. I wasn't able to locate studies conducted in those schools in the diverse, multicultural, and multilingual Canadian context. Considering the call for multiliteracies and multimodality research in the teaching of literacy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015; Lotherington 2011; Rowsell & Pahl, 2015) and for more language teachers to adopt multiliteracies in their curriculum (Cloonan, 2010; Unsworth, 2001), I was provoked to perform this study where I opened the space for international languages' learners to incorporate their multiliteracies (The New London Group, 1996) and use of multimodal resources (Jewitt, 2008) in the development of their literacy practices. I encouraged them to release their imagination, pursue their interest and bring in their lived and living experiences through multimodal forms of meaning-making, through various semiotic symbols and sign systems, and through multiple ways of representations. I wanted to open the space for them to engage with multiliteracies as a living pedagogy.

I entered this research journey with my understanding about the nature of literacy in today's world: "complex, multimodal, multimedia, and digital" (Sanders & Albers, 2010, p. 3). Thus, as a researcher collaborating with the classroom teacher, I was aware that I have the responsibility to open the space for students for a range of opportunities to help them expand their communication repertoire and their ways of showing understanding. Since a multiliteracies approach to teaching and learning requires teachers to plan for "literacy activities that value students' lifeworlds and subjectivities-their interests, experiences, abilities, insights, needs, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, physical and cognitive abilities, learning styles and intelligence" (van Haren, 2015, p. 271), I worked with my collaborating teacher to offer a teaching/learning experience that was of interest to students, close to their learning styles, and to the way they make meaning in their lives. We opened the space for students to show their understanding of their literacy unit by creating their own literacy texts and to construct meaning through a broad range of modalities, various semiotic symbols, and multiple ways of representations (Rowse & Pahl, 2015; Sanders & Albers, 2010; Walsh, 2011).

After students listened to and discussed a literary narrative autobiographical text in Arabic, we opened the space for them to show their understanding of the narrative genre by creating their own print-based, art, digital, and multimodal texts incorporating both linguistic and non-linguistic modes of meaning making and designs. As students' language abilities vary in this classroom, they were given multiple options to show their understanding of the text and the genre. Some of them decided to create a text of a narrative genre just as the one that they listened to in class. Others decided to do a vocabulary book incorporating art, visuals, and print. Some also decided to create and tell their stories through non-linguistic forms. Students' work included scrapbooks, digital stories, picture books, and arts-based multimodal texts. While all twelve students participated in producing their own multimodal texts, however only seven of them showed interest in having their texts presented in this thesis. This project could be described as a collaborative inquiry that sought multiple and alternative perspectives, innovative possibilities, and multimodal literacy practices. Multiliteracies theory and pedagogy encouraged us, the researcher and the collaborating teacher to engage with classroom practices that are built on students' knowledge, experiences, and interests (Jewitt & Kress, 2008). This opened the opportunity for us to attempt bringing students'

knowledge of narrative print-based, visual, spatial, critical, material/ artifactual, sensory, and multimodal literacies into our classroom literacy practices.

The lived inquiry

In this project, I attempted to live the inquiry for two main purposes. My first purpose was to provide students with a range of venues to let them express themselves using a wide spectrum of possibilities different than what is usually offered in the culture of conventional teaching and schooling. I tried to break through the frames of custom and to touch on students' creative literacies that would allow for a multitude of opportunities of innovative expression and meaningful literacy learning (Gustavson, 2013). I also tried to provoke students to react, reply, or respond and bring in their lived experiences and their various perspectives using their preferred, or unexplored multimodal forms. At the same time I wanted to support them in presenting their multiple ways of understanding and in expanding their linguistic talents and creativity if possible. I tried to treat students as people with "desires still to be tapped, possibilities to be opened and pursued" (Greene, 2003, p. 111).

This inquiry aimed to see whether multiliteracies has the potential to act as a positive pedagogical approach, particularly for heritage language students who are facing challenges with school curriculum that often fails to acknowledge their lived experiences. Thus, in this kind of literacy teaching and learning; multiple forms, new meanings, various knowledges, and creative modalities emerge. Fullan (1993) argues that teachers often become so focused on their students' learning and engagement that they forget or neglect their own leaning and the new knowledge they gain through their teaching/research practice. Thus, another purpose of this inquiry was also to learn how collaboration with my participating teacher and engaging with multiliteracies as a teaching approach in this multicultural and multilingual classroom contributes to the enhancement of our theoretical and practical knowledge of literacy perspectives, approaches, and practices. As I mentioned previously, the following two research questions directed my inquiry journey:

- 1- What happens when learners in an international languages school (Arabic Language) engage with multiliteracies as a living pedagogy?

- 2- How would the ongoing interaction between one participating teacher and myself contribute to the enrichment of our knowledge, perspectives, approaches, and practices of multiliteracies?

Leggo (2016) suggests, “knowing is not constrained by the borders of the linguistic; language is not a closed system with a beginning and an ending” (p. 60). In this project I, like Leggo, sought subverting, even escaping the constraints of certain traditional ways of knowing that are loaded with conventional understandings of logic, reason, grammar, and rhetoric and a linear alphabet that runs from A to Z. I developed this story through a process of braiding and interweaving of various modes of texts and genres to produce a *métissage* (Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers, & Leggo, 2009) of the live(d) narratives of my journey in this inquiry. I use the word journey recalling Gardner who believes that the role of the doctoral program is to train competent journeymen (Eisner, 2005).

The journey of this inquiry would not have been possible without the school community collaboration, aspiration and commitment for innovation in heritage language teaching and education. Thus, I weave from the fabric of the school community, which comprises the teacher, the school principal, some other non-participating teachers, educational assistants, parents, and students; their perspectives and lived/living experiences of any related issues that they shared with me during the journey of this project. In this inquiry, I consider our journey as the blooming of a participative project for cracking the conventional in an international/heritage languages classroom in an attempt to change the ‘how’ of viewing literacy and the ‘what’ of literacy teaching and learning. I think what we engaged in was a grassroots project that grew into a beautiful, multidimensional, innovative, and broad project that influenced not only our classroom but also inspired other classrooms in this school and might extend to other similar schools teaching the international/heritage languages.

Up to now in the text I have used descriptions of lived experiences and significant anecdotes in my inquiring journey, in different modes. The text will build on these first pages and offer a mingling of texts and genres and voices including my own. My presence, the researcher, is evident even though the research is not specifically about me. I weave into the fabric of my text self-reflective pieces of thoughts, emotions, understandings and meanings of teaching literacy as a living practice, and of perceptions

and applications of literacy teaching and education in this project. While trying to make sense of my lived experience, I don't hide from the readers and I don't disappear, as conventional research writing style would require researchers to do. This allows you to know my participants and myself through the stories of our lived experiences during the research journey. I understand that as you read, you are rewriting and reinventing the text, which lets you read us through your various lenses, perspectives, and understandings of the world.

In weaving the story of my research journey, I use various genres and modes of texts and braid them to produce a *métissage* (Hasbe-Ludt, Chamber, & Leggo, 2009) of the live(d) narratives of my research praxis. I use memoir (Chambers, 2003; Goldberg, 2008) to capture significant or memorable events in my life, or during the research, or about my personal experience in the field. I also use poetic prose (Leggo, 2016) where I “live with and in and within the rhythms of the heart, to know the heart’s thinking and feeling and imagining” (p. 52). Butler-Kisber (2010) states, “Poetry has forever had the power to attract humankind because of its ability to convey poignancy, musicality, rhythm, mystery, and ambiguity. It appeals to our senses and opens up our hearts and ears to different ways of seeing and knowing” (p. 82). Thus, in weaving the story of this inquiry, I use poetry (Faulkner L.S., 2016) which helps me reach more diverse audience and which I utilize when I feel that other modes of representation do not capture what I want to show about our work in this research, and also when my story intersects or entwines with my participants’ lives (Behar, 2008). I also use stories/narratives which is a form of living, a way of life that aim at understanding and making meaning of experience – of myself, of the participants, and of our research journey (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This opens the space for our learning and growth. I also use critical incidents, anecdotes, situations, events, insights, questions, and uncertainties which help me in describing the research process and in making meaning of critical events related to the topic of our project. This project is a *bricolage* (Kincheloe, 2004) where I become “[a] bricoleur, [a] quilt maker and [a] producer of pictorial montage” (p. 85), doing inquiry in a living context and creatively making use of whatever is at hand to complete the task. In this inquiry I employ multiple methodologies; in addition to participatory action research (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013), I use the *bricolage* (Kincheloe, 2011) and *multiliteracies/multimodalities* (Albers, 2007; Jewitt & Kress, 2008; Morawski, 2012; Rowsell, 2013) to

engage students who are in the community based week-end school of the international languages program in the experience of multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996) as a living pedagogy (Aoki, 2003).

CHAPTER TWO
EXPANDING LANDSCAPES.... NAVIGATING LITERAC(IES).... NEW
PERSPECTIVES IN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE



source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/oqMTLQwQixkPLYGz5>

A socio-cultural model of literacy experience... Living in the virtual world of a video game



I hear loud voices filling the hallway during recess. I follow the sound path until I land in one of the school classrooms. The scene of a group of boys lying on the classroom carpet, crowded around each other, and totally consumed by something being played on one of their phones freezes me for few moments. I want to understand what is going on.

I hear various cheers and loud requests to each other, “click on the dialogue window, ...

check out the vent cover, there's still something missing, let's reread the hints, ... grab the coin, ... you should exit now because the color is red, ...

we need to activate the life transferring machine, ... let's think a little before we move to the next step,...

Read... read here... there is a notification popping up for a hidden door...”.

I approach them to understand what is going on. I find them cooperatively playing a video game online and trying to figure out how to pass the challenges and finish all stages of it.

They have to read the hints they receive on the screen, they analyze the situation to come up with a decision to be able to move on to the next step of the game.

I am suddenly realizing the entertaining, spontaneous, digital, multimodal, cultural and social nature of literacy in this game.

These students are engaged in a type of literacy not bounded to a textbook; a new experience that makes them totally immersed with literacy in its creative and multimodal forms.

From a mental and cognitive achievement ... to a social and cultural practice

Literacy is primarily something people do; it is an activity, located in the space between thought and text. Literacy does not just reside in people's heads as a set of skills to be learned, and it does not just reside on paper, captured as texts to be analysed. Like all human activity, literacy is essentially social, and it is located in the interaction between people.

(Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. 3)

This gaming activity that took place between students in a natural social environment illustrates the embedded nature of literacy that Gee (1996, 2004), Street (1995), and Barton & Hamilton (1998) refer to as literacy as social-cultural practice. Those literacy theorists view literacy as social practice, and approach literacy from a cross-cultural perspective in which they show the richness and diversity of literacy practices and meanings. They emphasize the social nature as opposed to the autonomous, skills-oriented perspective of literacy. Literacy use and acquisition is characterized as contextual, situated, and ideological. Street (1984) avoids perceiving literacy as a merely cognitive process. He contends that literacy is not a neutral technology that can be detached from the social context. It is ideologically and culturally situated and it cannot be treated as merely 'technical' (p. 1).

The social perspective to literacy highlights the fact that learning and knowing are not limited to individual skills but the outcome of various social, cultural, and ideological interactions and relationships (Street, 2009). In this regard the claim made by some

literacy educators about literacy as a cognitive activity describing literacy as an ‘abstract context-free thought’, ‘rational’, ‘detach[ed]’, and [a] kind of logical process is opposed by the social-cultural perspective to literacy (Street, 1984, p. 2). Literacy in this sense is not viewed as the property of individuals but rather becomes a resource gained through relationships and communications with the community, realized in social interactions, and utilized according to the different cultures, contexts, and ideologies. This proposes the idea that literacy is multiple and there is no one universally applicable form of literacy. The multiplicity of literacy practices requires us to think about reading and writing in any domain beyond their print-based forms as they are not just ways of decoding print but rather “ways of doing things, thinking about things, valuing things, and interacting with other people—that is they are caught up with different sorts of social practices” (Gee, 2003, p. 18).

Another socio-cultural perspective to literacy is proposed by Gee (1996) who also avoids the narrow definition of literacy and considers it a social practice that is embedded in socio-cultural, historical, and political contexts. Greene (1995) explains, “...it takes an effort for us to realize how deeply literacy is involved in relations of power and how it must be understood in context and in relation to a social world. It is evident that people are born into a culturally defined literacy” (p. 110). So, people's D/discourses vary according to the medium, the purpose, and the audience of a particular communicative event (Kumagai, Konoedo, Nishimata, & Sato, 2016). Gee (1996) uses the term Discourses (with a capital D) to refer to literacy. He introduced the notion of D/discourse and distinguishes between the two terms by stating:

A Discourse is a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and artifacts, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or social network. (p. 131)

Given this definition, language is viewed as one of the constituent elements of Discourse. He defines discourse with a lower case d as:

[A]ny stretch of language (spoken, written, signed) which ‘hangs together’ to make sense to some community of people who use that language... [M]aking sense is always a social and variable matter: what makes sense to one community of people may not make sense to another. (1990, p. 103)

According to this definition, language “always comes fully attached to ‘other stuff’: to social relations, cultural models, power and politics, perspectives on experience, values and attitudes, as well as things and places in the world” (Gee, 1996, p. vii). Literacy, in this socio-cultural perspective, which represents one form of language use, reflects all of the ‘other stuff.’

Gee (1996) argues that children become literate through a cultural process in the context of engagement with a social group where the less experienced receive, on demand, model literacy activities from the more experienced members. He tends to reduce literacy learning to a social activity that involves a type of apprenticeship or modeling. However, this perspective de-emphasizes the multiple ways learners engage with multiliteracies where they become creative and independent learners while consuming and interactively producing multimodal texts and meaning makings. Barton and Hamilton (1998) state:

Reading and writing are things which people do, either alone or with other people, but always in a social context—always in a place and at a time. To make sense of people’s literacy practices we need to situate them within this context. (p. 23)

They identify reading and writing as social practices that are always embedded in socially and ideologically constructed epistemological principles. According to this view, literacy is the ability to use the skills of reading and writing in socially appropriate situations, within appropriate social and cultural frameworks, and it is acquired in the social situations in which the individual uses the language. Thus, literacy is means and not only the ability to read and write.

Gee (2003) states, “school is a key place—though hardly the only one—where learning takes place” (p.4). He advocates using videos games for learning in and out of school contexts and considers this as a social practice since players will be inside the virtual world where they act and interact within and on the simulation using words, images, movements, and sounds— all are caught up with different sorts of social practices.

Students’ engagement with the video game and the conversations that took place among them embedded a socio-cultural type of literacy practice. It provoked, ignited, and

excited their interest in using their school literacy skills to an out of school social context. To play this game, students had not only to talk, read, and use the game's social and cultural language but also they had to engage with the socially and culturally suitable actions, responses, and interactions with their other co-players. Thus, they enacted their various social identities. The way they read and interpreted the texts in their video game was contextually situated in their social setting. This game was a suitable context to capture a moment of social literacy practice in which interactions around the game took place. The basic elements or constituents of social literacy practice offered through this game were: the participants, the setting, the artefact which is the game itself, and the actions performed. Also, through this game, students were involved in multiple forms of literacies. In addition to their main print-based literacy practice through reading the hints that were popping up on the screen, they had to understand ways of doing some steps in the game, to think about things, to analyze the game, to share information about it, to modify some of its steps, to discuss, critique, and reflect through a process of interaction with their co-players. This is how they were caught up with different sorts of practice-based social literacy that required them to read some type of technical literacy stuff. Abrams and Rowsell (2017) describe how Minecraft players use the video game resources to create social structures from their communities like homes, castles, and stores. One player for example, built her Minecraft world focusing on the bakery structure, its components, how it works, the people and their roles in it. Thus, imagination, critical thinking and social literacy skills were all at work through this video game.

Literacies have always been in evolution. In the 1980s a number of scholars from different disciplines advocated a practice-based approach to literacy (Gee, 2015; Abrams & Rowsell, 2017). This perspective emphasizes the idea that some students who do not have the ability to read at appropriate grade level in school, show sometimes very good reading ability when they read technical material about a video game or engage in 'friendship-driven' practices, such as Facebook and Twitter, or other online practices that extend beyond their academic settings (Mills, 2016, p. 29). In the late 1980s, this approach was referred to as the 'New Literacy Studies', 'NLS' for short (Gee, 2015, p. 54). NLS is described as the new alternative to the previously established paradigm that was based on psycholinguistics (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). It emphasized the

Knobel, 2011). Nowadays, we read in video games, apps, searchable web pages and from the multitude affordances of the computer or other technological devices screen. We communicate and make meaning using various channels, different sign systems, and semiotic resources. Written text is integrally juxtaposed with image, sound, video, drawings, and many other linguistic and non-linguistic modes; a practice that Serafini and Gee (2017) refer to as a remix of modes and meaning to form new kinds of creative blends of literacy texts. This emphasizes the reality that literacy is multiple, plural, and multimodal.

Ethics approval 1

A linguistic and linear view to literacy.... some parents' initial reactions to a multiliteracies project

I receive the ethics approval to proceed with starting off the journey of my multiliteracies research project. The first stage required meeting with the parents of the classroom students who, with their teacher, showed interest to be engaged in this project. After sending information letters about the project to the parents and inviting them to a meeting to present, explain, and discuss more about their children's potential participation, I received positive replies for attending the meeting from almost all of them.

I held the meeting with the parents, school administration, some of the school teaching staff who were interested in learning more about the project. One of my thesis supervisors, Dr. Pierre Boudreau, was also present to support me in my attempt to bring an innovative and broader perspective to literacy and the teaching of literacy in an international languages context/ heritage language.

I present the new perspective to literacy and the demands for our 21st century literates.

I emphasize the fact of technological advancements and their huge influence on our ways of communication and meaning-making explaining the need for our children to learn how to be literate in our multiliterate, multimodal, multicultural, and multilingual world. I end the session opening the space for parents' reactions or questions about the work that will be done with their children and any other concerns.

Some parents' reactions were very positive and showed a high interest in bringing the new, the creative, and the alternative to the teaching of heritage language. They enthusiastically consented to having their kids in our project and informed me that they will support their kids in every possible way hoping that this project engages them in learning their heritage language. Yet, I was still faced with some doubtful reactions and comments about the advantage of this approach to literacy teaching.

Some of those comments were:

"After all, I am bringing my daughter to this program because I want her at the end of each school day to read for me something from her reading book. If she doesn't do so, this is a waste of time."

"I don't mind having my son in this project, but is he going to learn grammar?"

"Does your project include learning phonics and spelling? Is my son going to have a spelling assignment every week?"

"I heard you saying that our children might choose working on videos, digital stuff, art, and other ideas. Don't you see this as a waste for their class time? Where is literacy here?"

I answered all their questions and brought examples from many studies on literacies. My supervisor also intervened and tried to show the shift in the paradigm of literacy education and teaching. We ended up that while those parents have some doubts about the advantages of this project, they are still interested in having their children involved in it.

Some of the parents' initial reactions to the project showed an emphasis on the linguistic and linear perspective to literacy. They wanted their children *to learn the written language and be able to read* from their textbooks. This created some tension for me as I was concerned to let them see the broader perspective of literacy. I wanted to share with them how the huge movements of migration and economic integration all over the world have increased cultural and linguistic diversity, multiplied the diversification of discourses, and shifted the perspectives toward literacy (Kumagai & Lòpez-Sánchez, 2016). In addition, how the social, cultural, economic, and technological conditions in our global and interconnected world are rapidly changing which have also affected the array of our communication and media channels and uses. I felt that more meetings will be needed with them to open discussions about how those changes are influencing our children's lives, facilitating their connection with the world, and imposing dramatic shifts in the way they will have to make-meaning and communicate using various types of texts with the support of the wide range of digital and media technologies and platforms.

While we can't ignore the importance of words and print-based texts in literacy education, we nowadays have to respond to the challenges and demands of our contemporary world. Thus, thinking of literacy only in terms of reading, writing, and speech is no more sufficient and even problematic as literacy is no more singular but increasingly plural and multiple. All of these changes to literacy practices and education made me wonder how to let those parents understand that reading and writing is important but that there are other forms of literacy taught differently than what they themselves have experienced.

New entry points to literacies teaching, education, and research ... multiple forms, approaches, and trajectories

Literacy has shape-shifted and mushroomed over the ages with communicative purpose, political expectations, learning opportunities, textual accessibility, media and changes in the social fabric. As the nature of literacy has changed, so have the needs for appropriate literacy education.

(Lotherington, 2011, p. 27)

The evolving perspectives to literacies have greatly been influenced by the work of the New London Group (1996). This group of literacy scholars met several times in

London in 1996 to plan for new approaches for literacy teaching and learning for the 21st century. They described literacies as multiple in two different ways. The first idea emerged from the fact that our current societies are linguistically diverse and exist within a world of interconnected cultures. The second mention of literacy as multiple referred to the growing ways in which communications and texts are now represented due to technological advances. These facts were the driving force for coining a new term for literacy, “multiliteracies”. This new conceptualization took into account the multiplicity of literacy designs, genres, and languages. Multiliteracies represents both a theory and a pedagogy. The theory of multiliteracies encompasses six design elements in the meaning- making process; linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial, and finally the multimodal patterns of meaning which relate the first five modes to each other. Mills (2016) recently also added the sensory, which attends to the senses in literacy practice. Jewitt and Kress (2008) consider the multimodal design as the most significant among the designs proposed by the New London Group, since it concerns the interrelationship of different modes of meaning making.

Multiliteracies pedagogy, as defined by the New London Group, considers four components: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. The critical framing or critical analysis component is known as critical literacy and is considered to be the most important aspect of multiliteracies (Anstey & Bull, 2006; Cope & Kalantzis, 2015; New London Group, 1996; Sandretto & Klenner, 2011). Critical literacy moves students beyond reading the word to also reading the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Students become dialogical in relation to all types of texts they encounter by reflecting, problematizing, disrupting, and questioning the normative or dominant assumptions. Greene (1995) states, “...literacy has often silenced people and disempowered them”. The critical literacy approach enables students and future citizen to find their voices, to open their spaces, and it gives them agency and power to critique the status quo and to try to transform their situations. Luke (2012) argues that critical literacy refers to the use of various types of print, digital, and media-based texts to analyze, critique, and transform the norms and practices of the social, educational, political, and economic dimensions of our everyday life. That said, students become agents of texts rather than victims of texts (Harste, 2010).

Thus, “multiliteracies theory moves educators from a curriculum-as-neutral stance to a critical pedagogy stance” that encourages living a critical multiliterate life and “encourages learners to take on a social justice identity” (Crafton et al. 2009, p. 1).

Ultimately, critical literacy has been a main focus and central to work on multiliteracies from its beginnings (Bull & Anstey, 2010). Engaging students with multiliteracies requires schools to prepare them to become critical, active, and creative consumers and producers of various types of texts. This highlights the need for teachers to open their classrooms to the logic of non-conventional reading and writing and to engage learners in multimodal literacy where they use multiple semiotic resources utilizing the diverse communication, cultural, and linguistic resources for textual composition (Jewitt et al. 2016).

Ethics approval 2

Opening *multimodal literacies* doors

Unlocking arts, digital, and media literacy productions of texts

Moving to the next step of the research project required having the assent of students. I, after agreeing with the classroom teacher on a date for providing students with all the details about the project and their potential participation, prepared a list of options and possibilities which they can choose from or maybe add to in order to show their learning or understanding of their literacy lesson topic.

As I was at the very beginning of my presentation of the project, I received questions that conveyed hesitant attitudes...

“are we going to memorize anything in Arabic?” ... “do you give spelling every week?”... “are we going to do grammar rules?”... “what happens to me if I fail reading the lesson... do you exclude me from the project?”

Students’ questions reflected their experiences and their understanding of a literacy classroom.

I answered their questions emphasizing the fact that we will experience literacy using a variety of forms. I also told them that our aim, their teacher and I, is to support them in extending their imagination and in considering alternative ways to show their understanding using other forms of literacy than the reading and writing only.

I opened all possibilities to them like digital forms and the many other arts-based forms of communication.
As a quick reaction, I get the consent from almost all students to participate. They said, “it seems we’re going to have lots of fun in this project”.



*I love those two photos as they represent the attentiveness and engagement of students while I was showing some examples of arts-based, digital based, and other forms or possibilities opened to them if they decide to participate in our project.
Some students got hooked in the idea of producing digital stuff. They insisted on seeing examples of digital storytelling which is shown in the bottom picture.*



As this project is theoretically, epistemologically, and methodologically oriented by multiliteracies/ multimodalities, I use the term '*multimodal literacies*' (Sanders & Albers, 2010, p. 5) because it encompasses all arts-based, digital-based, media-based, multimodal oriented, and many other linguistic and non-linguistic literacy texts.

Multimodality informs how we make meaning and multiliteracies as a theory gives us tools for doing so (Rowse & Walsh, 2011). Kress (1997) explains:

...in learning to read and write, children come as thoroughly experienced makers of meaning, as experienced makers of signs in any medium that is to hand. The wide range of media which they employ as a matter of course—toys and constructions of various kinds; Lego blocks; cardboard boxes; blankets; chairs; corners of rooms; pens and paper; scissors, paste and paper; and so on, are not taken up in schooling in a serious fashion. In school there is instead a focus on the single medium of lettered representation: literacy (p. 8).

Kress (1997) emphasizes that in some classrooms, other forms such as drawing, painting, sculpting, crafting, building, performing, and engaging in other arts-based activities need to be encouraged and given strong attention. However, in many instances even if those forms are used in classrooms, they are usually considered and treated as ways of expression of students' feelings, interests, desires, emotions, rather than as forms of meaning making or communication. These forms usually diminish from students' literacies as they move up through their school years in favour of the demands of the prescribed, one-dimensional school curriculum. Accordingly, this might explain the reactions, comments, and questions that I received from students when I presented the project to them. Though they showed great interest in experiencing literacy in new forms using multiple modes of meaning making, they were still skeptical whether this is going to be considered a learning or a fun activity. They asked several times about the text that will be assigned to them for reading which shows that they had a one-dimensional view of literacy texts; the print based one.

The multiliteracies approach to literacy teaching and education recognizes the multimodal nature of texts using multiple semiotic resources (Mills, 2016). Reading and writing practices using print-based text formats are still present but not the exclusive forms of communication. As multimodality has stretched its wings to include various forms, texts are becoming increasingly multimodal. According to multimodal literacies,

there are multiple ways in our contemporary society for creating literacy texts which use various modes and resources for meaning making (Bezemer & Kress, 2016). Kress (2003) argues that communication “occurs through different but synchronous modes: language, print, images, graphics, movement, gesture, texture, music, sound” (p. 51). These synchronous modes form what is described as multimodality, “a multimodal approach that looks beyond language to all forms of communication” (Jewitt et al. 2009, p. 11). Bezemer and Kress (2016) state, “modes always appear in combination—in *ensembles*: of image, writing, and layout, for instance; or of gesture, speech, posture and spatial positioning” (p. 9). Words, images, and sounds are often welded together through various technological methods or even traditional types of texts. The processing of a variety of modes like print, image, and sound together within the same text changes the way a text can be perceived and opens up new possibilities for a variety of meanings to be conveyed as well (Kress, 2003). Thus, multimodality opened up for radical changes and advancements in our communication and meaning making channels through media, digital, and arts-based approaches. This suggests that schools need to be centrally concerned with “creating the learning conditions for full social participation” (The New London Group, 2000, p. 9) by working to expand conceptions of literacy and include more complex multimodal repertoires. Research suggests that students like engaging with multimodal texts more than exclusively printed texts (Bearne et al. 2012). This also requires literacy educators to engage students in the process of experiencing, comprehending, critically analyzing, and creatively transforming all types of literacy texts in their local and global environments using a range of digital, linguistic and non-linguistic modes and resources.

Literacy for the digital age.... Literacy embraced by L(IT)eracy

There’s a fallacy that kids aren’t reading and writing anymore. They are, but they just are reading and writing differently than what we’ve traditionally done in schools.

(Lorna Collier, 2007, p. 8)

Literacy and technology have always been intertwined but with changing complexity over the years (Perry, 2013). Gee and Hayes (2011) refer to literacy as ‘technology’ which has helped humans do the work that was done without the technology

but less efficiently or at least differently. However, people nowadays view this technology (literacy) as old and traditional since new digital technologies like social media, video games, digital photography and movies, and myriad computer applications are available and proliferating in our media and communication medium. These technologies starting from lead pencils and slates to iPads have had a great influence on literacy practices and texts in the classroom. In traditional literacy texts we usually see headings, subtitles, print of all types, bullets, pictures, and diagrams. Today, in digital texts we see videos, audios, hyperlinks, interactive images, and many other technological semiotic resources and sign systems. This shift from a page-based to a screen-based society caused a drastic change in literacy and new perspective emerged called 'multiliteracies' (New London Group, 1996).

The New London Group (1996) took into consideration these advancements in technology and communication channels when they put forward an approach to literacy teaching, education, and research oriented by the concept of multiliteracies. They focused on the burgeoning impact of new communications technologies and its demands on learners in our vastly changing world of communication. Facing these dramatic changes and preparing students to fully participate in our modern social and cultural life was the driving force for the New Literacies theory to emerge (Sang, 2017). The most significant characteristic that distinguishes New Literacies from other literacy perspectives is that New Literacies focuses on a modern fast change and advancement of everyday technologies (Coiro et al. 2008). It emphasizes new digital-electronic media and includes meaning-making practices using affordances of digital technologies like computer applications, ipads, ipods, video games, weblogs, mobile texts, wikis, social networking platforms, and many other countless tools and browser-based applications of Web 2.0 (Lankshear & Knobel, 2013). It is truly the sky is the limit (Perry, 2013). These new perspectives to literacy affected both in and out-of-school literacy teaching and practices.

Today, learners need new operational and cultural knowledge in order to acquire new languages, with much of it focused on new ways of technology-based communication channels and digital media like Facebook, Twitter, text messaging, chat rooms, and wikis. They need to learn reading, writing, inquiring and calculating using not only books, but also computers, smart phones, tablets and smart-boards and many other technology and media based forms. Thus, our digital, media-driven, globalized world,

forces us to creatively engage our students with new and ever-emerging forms of communication and meaning making technology and new media. Students can use new technologies in ways that seamlessly meld both traditional and digital practices. New technologies in our contemporary world, which make a whole range of multimodal possibilities for students' productions of literacy texts allow also for the production of hypertexts. When students use multimodal computer applications, they work with multiple resources and they engage with all modes present through the screen. They have the chance to move through texts not only linguistically but visually and multimodally also. The range of modes that are afforded by new technologies to students has a great influence on their engagement and construction of their own literacy texts (Jewitt, 2009).

Students of the 21st century need to experience the digital and media along with the classical literacy approaches. Teachers need to support learners in engaging with new literacies and the various forms of technologies. In the digital space they need to engage students in opportunities to employ “web-based applications, internet-based tools, and repository sites” (Jacobs, 2014, p. 7). They also need to create spaces for them to go beyond the classical formats of written or print tradition to the experience of responding to and creating media forms of communication. Whether students engage with films, videos, audio cast, or radio, this necessitates opening spaces to them to read the media critically (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2006) and to create their own media texts which allows them to be creative literacy learners (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015). Takayoshi and Selfe (2007) argue, “in an increasingly technological world, students need to be experienced and skilled not only in reading (consuming) texts employing multiple modalities, but also in *composing* in multiple modalities, if they hope to communicate successfully within the digital communication networks” (p. 3, emphasis in original). This highlights the need for literacy learners to change their roles “from passive information receivers to active knowledge developers” (Hur & Sah, 2012, p. 324). Thus, they shouldn't be treated as empty vessels waiting to be duped with information from the ‘expert’ and knowledgeable teachers (Freire, 1970; Zacher et al. 2013).

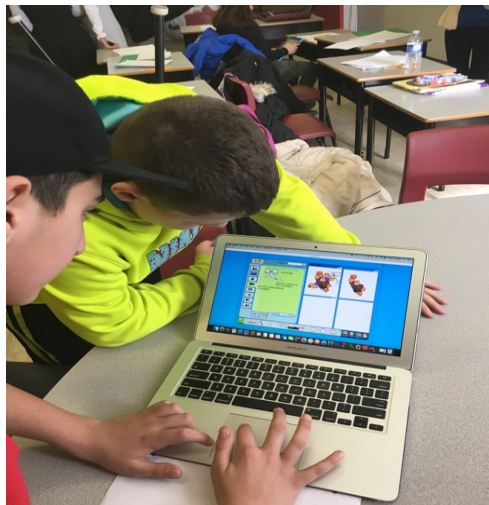
Students need to be given the chance of producing the knowledge and meaning making texts in any mode, combination of modes, and semiotic resources. Creating their own digital literacy texts and artifacts can be one of the myriad forms of meaning making and communication resources available. The ease of using digital video recording apps

on mobile phones like iMovies and Movie Maker has encouraged a lot of learners to record and upload videos to their Facebook pages, other online mediums, or share them with their friends and families using other instant messaging tools and apps (Gee & Hayes, 2011). This connects students to the main principles of multiliteracies theory which emphasizes giving students more than one mode in which to respond and create. Research suggests that enhancing literacy and developing multiliterate learners depends on opening the space for students to engage in creating their own learning using the literacy modality and form that they are interested in (Perry, 2013), or that they want to learn. Thus, all forms of digital, electronic, technological, Internet based, and arts-based texts' productions should be open to students. Digital literacies' approaches which emerged from the New Literacies Studies are some of the main modalities prevalent in literacy education, teaching, and research.

Ethics approval: spin off

Towards a digital order of knowledge production ... hooking digital storytellers

The two photos on this page are but one of the examples of how students were trying to find free online applications that they could use for creating their digital texts. They were so happy when they found the Pixton application, which allows them to create their comic. But then, they were disappointed when they found out that this application is incompatible with Arabic characters.



The information session I presented to students about the project was crowded with students' various interests, aspirations, and ideas on how they would like to show their literacy work. Digital literacy texts, their affordances, and modes occupied a substantial space of our discussion.

However, engaging with digital technologies required a good command of the digital literacies necessary to use these technologies effectively for communicating ideas and making meaning. In later weeks, I agreed with my participating teacher to show students examples of digital tools that are open to them. We also talked about various apps that they can utilize to show their learning and literacy. One of the students asked,

"If I make a video for my assignment, are you going to ask me to submit a written paper also?"

Students respond to a literacy text

The lesson that the students were supposed to respond to was a narrative autobiographical text about one of the Arabic literary authors. This was a text included in the class planned curriculum. My collaborating and I presented the text to them and opened the space for discussion. However, we noticed that students are not engaged and their interaction was not as expected. This observation provoked us, the researcher and the collaborating teacher to change the topic of conversation and open the space for students to tell us their stories, whether about themselves or any other character. To our surprise, we noticed that all students started bringing up their own stories and recalling happy and sometimes sad memories from their own lives. They also talked about their relatives, their friends, and their connections in both Canada and their original countries.

Upon reflection on our classroom observation and how students reacted, my collaborating teacher and I decided to replace the literary autobiographical text that is in this class curriculum by another text that we both developed and called "The Immigrant Kid". In this text, a child told his story of immigration with his family to Canada.

Polina Vinogradova (2014) who is an advocate of using digital stories in the language and literacy classroom describes “digital stories as multimodal personal digital narratives [that] can address the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse language learners as well as the needs of educators looking for innovative, transformative, and student- centered teaching” (Para. 5). Educause association defines digital storytelling as “the practice of combining narrative with digital content, including images, sound, and videos to create a short movie, typically with a strong emotional component” (Educause learning initiative, 2007, p. 1). A digital story begins with a script. The storyteller then uses rich media to accompany the script and support the ideas and emotions. So, producing a digital story does not exempt students from using the print-based literacy form, as they will need to think of and write their scripts first.

Students in this research project created their digital stories using the two apps available to them, iMovies and Windows Movie Maker. They produced dynamic and exciting multimodal texts through their videos of stories that told about their communities and life experiences. Using their own smartphones, ipads, or borrowing their moms’ phones was the way for some of them to produce digital stories and present them through the small screens of their portable electronic devices. They narrated their stories that incorporated a range of representational modes including image, movement, gesture, voice, and sound tracks. They constructed their identities in a new, multimodal, and hybrid form of textual production avoiding the exclusive use of passive reading and writing format.

Digital storytelling in the classroom connects students to their interests in technology and develops their ability to expand the range of tools they can use for their personal expression (Lambert, 2013). Kervin and Mantei (2017) explain that the breadth of applications, softwares, sharing, and dissemination opportunities at hand provokes learners to be the authors of their own digital stories that convey their worldviews, perspectives, or present their lived experiences. In their research, students between the age of 12 and 13 years old viewed a short film, then they connected its messages to their own worlds by creating digital, multimodal stories using the iPad technology. The use of digital technologies afforded new ways to represent meaning in an innovative and exciting form for students. Literacy learning was present through students’ work by combining language, image, sound, and movement to communicate their meanings.

The creation of digital texts was also present in Pirbhai-Illich's (2011) participatory action research. This researcher provided marginalized students with opportunities to speak to the inequities in their lives by creating their digital videos. Through their digital texts, students demonstrated their understandings of racism, identity construction, discrimination, and stereotypes. They drew on their knowledge and used their technological expertise and interest in computers and the Internet to communicate their ideas. This process required students to create their narratives, complete a storyboard, write a script, act, and film a scene while considering all technical aspects of producing a digital story through a short video. Students' use of computer technologies to tell their stories and use of their lived experiences to construct meaningful messages created an engaging environment in the literacy classroom. This enhanced students' attendance, and dramatically improved their literacy levels.

The uses of digital storytelling extend to supporting meaningful dialogue around sensitive issues of identity, race, ethnicity, and gender. Children from Latino, African American, and Pacific Islander backgrounds in an urban after-school club created digital stories about their lives and interests and provided narrative descriptions of themselves (Nixon, 2013). This multimodal practice provided them with the opportunity to be expressive using not only written or oral modalities but also incorporating multiple media resources to reflect on their identities, present their interests and share their life experiences around some critical issues like race, gender, and ethnicity. The multiple resources they incorporated in their digital stories like images, music, voice, and text enriched and deepened the discussion of their produced digital stories.

Burke, Hughes, Hardware, and Thompson (2013) argue that digital texts can also engage discourses of social justice and inspire students to take action. In their study in two middle schools in Canada, teachers and learners were engaged in creating and integrating digital texts representative of social justice issues into the school curriculum. The adolescent students used programs like Glogster and Bitsrips to produce digital and print texts that focused on the impact of war on children. In their digital texts, students incorporated text, images, video, and audio clips. Then, they shared them with the wider community as a way of taking action. The diversity of design and applications engaged the learning capacities of students with a variety of learning competencies.

Digital storytelling and digital video productions can be the medium for promoting not only multimodal literacies but also multilingual multiliteracies (Angay-Crowder et al. 2013). It provides learners with the opportunity to use authentic communicative purposes and to include elements that go beyond the textbook discourses. A video production project on various topics assigned to a novice-level Japanese language classroom showed how students who had very basic skills in the Japanese language, creatively used this language to communicate messages (Kumagai et al. 2016).

The grammar learned in the classroom such as simple expressions, questions' structure, interactional sentence-end particles and functional phrases were part of the multimodal video productions. Students drew on their life experiences and remixed genres while orchestrating various modes of communication such as images, music, movement, and written texts, which enabled novice Japanese language learners to express what they could not with language use alone. They were able to create meanings beyond their linguistic level through their produced entertaining videos.

The support of digital stories in multilingual environments was also present in Oskoz and Elola (2014) study. The two researchers worked on the integration of digital stories in their Spanish writing class with a focus on culture. This opportunity made students excited about the opportunity of using Spanish in a different way. They explained that this motivated them to try hard and gave them confidence to express themselves in Spanish. Thus, the integration and combination of multimodal resources in complex layers in their digital stories moved the learners beyond conventional oral and written expression forms to more innovative forms of presentation. It also promoted students' linguistic and writing development.

The multitude uses of digital storytelling in literacy teaching expand to creating digital comics. Wissman and Castello (2014) present how engaging students in creating digital comics in response to literature using Comic Life program helped them learn new skills in using the technology and induced their creativity and imagination to share their own perspectives on the novel. Students' digital compositions provoked them to reflect on the process. They described their choice of scenes, spoke of characters who captured their attention, of language choices that engrossed them, and of any other emerging

feelings. This allowed them to transact with the new text they created in ways that added to their understanding.

Numerous studies found in the literature on multiliteracies/multimodalities approach and the integration of New Literacies through digital storytelling in first and foreign language education describe how this approach influenced learners' engagement and expanded their literacy learning and education (Koelzer, 2017; Radford & Aitken, 2016; Reyes et al. 2012; Willet, 2009). All these and the preceding ones cited challenge the belief that nonprint-based literacy activities are less valuable or even irrelevant. This belief appears at least inaccurate (Benson, 2008). Nowadays, literacy educators, scholars, researchers, and policy makers all strive for extending literacy consumption and production beyond print modalities to include not only digital literacies but also arts-based literacies in addition to the many other forms of literacies (Sanders & Albers, 2010).

Ethics approval: spin off 2

Creative aesthetic literacy... Art-full texts

I continued the information session about the project with the students and opened the discussion with them about other visual or arts-based forms of meaning making. I told them that we will see some examples of arts-based forms like scrapbooks, posters, and the like on various websites. Enthusiastically, a group of boys volunteered to help me in the set up of the technology equipment needed. They ran to the administration office to borrow the projector and connected it to my laptop. They did all necessary seating arrangements to facilitate having all students' accessibility to the presentation.

I showed many examples of the various forms to the class; some got very immersed in the idea of doing artwork like creating scrapbooks.

This presentation became like the provocation for their hidden art talents and for showing their artful skills. They gave plenty of examples about what they would like to do for their literacy task.



I am not a fan of technology and I don't have the patience to learn its techniques. I like to present my own work using pictures, colors, and drawing. One student said.

Can I present my work through a clay sculpture?
Do you accept a poster? Another student expressed.

I will make a canvas book. Is that possible for our literacy assignment? A third student commented

Can I make my storybook in two languages? Another student loudly proposed.



I stood still for few minutes wondering how creative students could be if they have all possibilities opened to them. I looked at my collaborating teacher, Naziha. We both smiled and nodded to each other.

Then we both said, “It is your choice. You can do whatever you want and produce your text in the way you like to show your understanding. Choose what is of interest to you and you feel comfortable with to communicate your ideas.”



We want, if you like, to expand the range of literacy: offering the young new ways of symbolizing, new ways of structuring their experience, so they can see more, hear more, make more connections, embark on unfamiliar adventures into meaning.

-- Maxine Greene, p. 50

Arts is a language through which we can communicate and be understood (Albers, 2007). It can play a powerful role in showing our learning and how we make meaning (Prasad & Dykstra, 2011). It provides ways for students to present their experiences without limiting them to communicating through words only (Diaz Soto & Swandener, 2005). Artwork provides children with a way to record events and helps them in understanding their experiences (Thompson, 2005). Kieff and Casbergue (2000)

state, “[students’] paintings, drawings, collages, songs, stories, and constructions reveal what they see and understand about the world around them” (p. 172). Creative arts-based literacy work encourages students to express themselves in linguistic and non-linguistic ways, and enables them to develop their potentials in dealing with the multiliteracies in their world (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009).

Albers (2007) states, “humans communicate not only through written and oral language but, as semioticians suggest, through *languages* such as: art, music, math, dance, and written/oral language” (p. 5). Students’ multiple intelligences (Gardner, 2011) and their interests guide them to find their ways into the form of communication, meaning making or preferred literacy text productions. They use various forms and modes which spread across the spatial, material, sensory, digital, and arts-based literacies. Many scholars and literacy educators advocate integrating the arts across the curriculum and in the teaching of literacy as they nurture a creative learning environment (Cornett, 2011; Greene, 2000; Jensen, 2001). They argue that there has always been a debate on arts integration because some still consider it a luxury or just an addition to the curriculum. Thus, the arts have historically been diminished and marginalized in the curriculum due to the traditional schooling structures and systems (McArdle & Wright, 2014).

Eisner (2003) argues that focusing on the linguistic aspects of literacy limits meaning making, “Literacy itself can be thought of not as limited to what the tongue can articulate but what the mind can grasp.... in this sense, dance, music, and the visual arts are languages through which both meaning and mind are promoted” (p. 342). Caughlan (2008) contends that in an age of multiliteracies, we should advocate for the arts to become a natural partner with literacy teaching and learning. Visual arts, theater, music, dance, or creative writing are art forms that can be used to engage with the human and natural worlds and extend the meanings that can be expressed through language. Cornett (2011) explains that literacy nowadays is greater than competency with the language arts. She advocates integrating the arts into the curriculum and to the teaching of literacy as they have the power to uplift, elevate, unite, combine, and orchestrate learning. Through the arts, the message can be expanded with visual images, give emotional context through music, and bring words to life through dance and drama. It can also give voice to those whose voices and words are muted or never heard. Teachers who made the arts the

"fourth R" in their teaching practices produced impressive learning results (Cornett 2011, p. xviii). The arts enhanced students' engagement in phenomenal ways. They became intrinsically motivated to develop important cognitive, social, and emotional skills.

A lot of research studies demonstrated how the use of various creative forms of arts have influenced students' identities, understandings, perspectives, meaning-making, and literacy practices (Albers & Sanders, 2010; Leigh & Heid, 2008; Robertson, 2010). Short, Kauffman, and Kahn (2000) documented how 4th- and 5th-grade students who struggled to understand various literary texts were able to subsequently make sense and engage with their meanings after responding to the texts through art, drama, music, or movement. Thompson (2005) demonstrated how students could tell their stories through art, whether in collage, drawing, paint, or other media. Illustrations or other artwork reflected their thoughts, experiences, actions, events, and emotions that words could not express. Prasad and Dykstra (2011) whose collaborative project used the art of quilting, had students design squares of the quilt in a way to tell the story of their community. Students not only used different fabrics and a variety of embellishments to assemble the square quilts, but also had to spend time thinking, talking, and working through the stories of their quilt squares. Then they wrote down and recorded their community stories and their artistic choices. The recording of students' reading their stories was transformed into a multimodal electronic book which showed students as creative artists and co-constructors of knowledge. They were able to hear their stories played back with their own voices.

Arts can also serve as the venue for facing the challenge of teaching students of widely varying language and literacy skills. Zoss, Siegmund, and Patisaul (2010) presented through their participatory and multidimensional research study, a portrait of ways in which visual arts, language, and literacy inform each other. In their study, students had the chance to practice moving from drawing to writing. They had to draw and then write about material and metaphoric items they carry in their school bags. Drawing provoked students to pay close attention to the tangible and intangible objects that they carry in their backpacks. They established a new-felt relationship with objects that were intimately tied to their daily lives through visual and written details. The produced arts-based and print-based literacy texts, especially in the work of the students classified as poor academic performers, were aesthetically connected and amazingly

emotional. The inclusive notions of literacy (Gee, 2003; New London Group, 2000) that incorporate visual thinking and arts-based strategies for reading and writing were illustrated through students' productions of drawing and writing texts. Visual arts supported the writing process. By linking the visual and linguistic parallel pathways for creating meaning, students were engaged with both nonverbal learning objectives found in visual arts and verbal literacy objectives from the language arts curricula.

Many researchers recounted how the arts informed and expanded ways of meaning making in literacy learning and how they were a viable catalyst in comprehension and representation (Albers, 1997; Albers & Murphy, 2000; Flynn, 2002). Albers (2010) study on how students respond to the literature through visual representations, showed their creative imagination in producing aesthetic, narrative, and metaphoric texts. After reading the *Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 1959), some students used canvas to produce their multi-phasic texts (Sonesson, 1988). They used the structure of collage incorporating many individual signs and large numbers of objects in a dense relationship to tell a story. The physical construction and message represented phases or events, actions, and details in the literary text. Students used cut out magazine images as the primary signifiers. The position, size, and arrangement of the objects on the canvas showed the difference in value for some signs. For example, visual objects that identified the setting of the novel covered the canvas surface and the written text layered on top of visual objects strengthened the author's intended meaning. Close reading of the visual narrative canvas text created by the students shows how students included various aspects of a literary text such as details, themes, characters, and so on through a lovely art object to be enjoyed by the viewer or reader.

Cornett (2011) argues that arts integration in classrooms can transform learning, actively engage learners, create better understanding, and expand communicative abilities. In a project underpinned by theories of materiality (Burnett, Merchant, Pahl, & Rowsell, 2014), Kervin and Mantei (2017) explored the ways children enact their personal experiences and knowledge of language across various contexts in the development of their literate identities. Using the analogy of being in a helicopter flying over the school from a picture book, the children were introduced to the concept of a bird's-eye view map. The children worked with various art materials like large sheets of papers and colored markers to create a bird's-eye view map. They also created two-

dimensional puppets to represent themselves on their map as they told and shared their stories recalling familiar events and practices while moving the characters around the map space. Students experienced and moved across and between various sign systems; art, spatial, in addition to oral and written language. Thus, art making and verbal/written composition are good partners since both require experimenting and organizing ideas using various literary and arts-based tools and materials.

Leggo (2008) maintains that narratives can be told in many different genres, from cartoon to clothing, from memoirs, journals, short stories, sketches and songs to scrapbooks, from waxworks to yarn. Human communications or stories that are conveyed in artful ways promote innovative forms of expression. One of these creative forms used for telling one's own stories, personal thoughts, and feelings are scrapbooks. Delacruz and Bales (2010) note:

Scrapbooks are ... repositories, filled with objects and memories from the scrapbooker's everyday life: photographs, memorabilia, newspaper clippings, magazine cutouts, drawings, any manner of decorative embellishments, and, importantly, writing.... Scrapbookers collect objects, write stories, and creatively assemble photographs and other symbolic signs about people and events through an aesthetic process of artistic design for page layouts and additions of visual embellishments. (p. 4)

Making scrapbooks has been historically used in encouraging students to talk about their own lives (Mulvey & Cullen, 2009). The use of resolution scrapbooks as a reflective and multimodal chronicling of an individual's response to trauma or a distressing event, was the focus of Morawski and Irwin's (2011) study of two women who composed and shared autoethnographies about their harrowing experiences that were the result of uninformed and unnecessary medical procedures performed on their bodies. The two women represented their experiences using colored papers and fabric, shapes, an assortment of media and visuals, and the expressive potential of any other easily found and stocked materials at hand (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004) in addition to the written words. Scrapbooks may seem a little old-fashioned in our contemporary digital world in which students use the Internet and media affordances very creatively. However, in at least one study learners have shown enthusiastic and positive attitudes about learning English through scrapbooks (Mulvey & Cullen, 2009).

Creating scrapbooks, the making of graphic or picture books, or even the making of artful dual language books have been largely experimented in literacy classrooms. In the context of a superdiverse language classroom, Sneddon (2014) advocating Cummins (1986, 2000) framework for encouraging heritage students to use their home languages and incorporating pedagogical strategies to support students' bilingualism, recounts his observation of heritage language students composing their dual language narratives. Students created well-designed and illustrated dual language books accompanied by recordings of the text on CDs in both languages: English- Albanian and English-French. While students were reluctant in using their home language at school, creating the dual language books provided them with the opportunity to enjoy playing with words and sounds across their languages, motivated them to bring their language and cultural knowledge into the classroom, and helped them regain their confidence in using their language at school.

Another initiative that aimed at developing students' awareness of language and promoting their multiliteracies and multilingual skills was the project of Marshall and Toohey (2011) using the production of picture books. The two researchers documented an intergenerational, bilingual storytelling project. Students interviewed and audio-recorded their grandparents telling stories about some aspects of their lives in India. Then they typed, illustrated, and translated these life stories into artful picture books to serve as cultural resources in their school community. Finally, students recorded themselves reading their stories in both English and their home language and made these available on CDs that were included with the hardcopy story. This project helped students use hybrid semiotic resources through the production of artful dual-language books for their monolingual school.

Classrooms . . . need to be places that allow—even encourage—code-switching, translating, and other dynamic bilingual practices to thrive.

Palmer and Marinez, 2016, p. 382

Groman (2015) argues that a creative arts-based approach to teaching supports communicating thoughts, beliefs, and understandings. In her project, pre-service teachers

used clay to physically sculpt their personal and professional beliefs in education. They grounded themselves into the clay putting their ideas in specific forms and structures. To be able to produce their sculptures, the teachers had to explore many facets of the profession and the various philosophies in education. The sculptors presented their sculptures that embody their education philosophies for other colleagues. This helped them in forming a solid image of their education beliefs. The creative sculpting artwork was not only a nice alternative to writing papers, but also a different way to bring out knowledge about self and profession, which is not simply possible through other more traditional methods.

The above examples of literacy teaching-learning infused with arts, digital, or other aesthetic and creative modes and approaches emphasize the understanding that the forms through which meaning, knowledge, and communication can be constructed or expressed have become significantly wide, broadly various, and greatly essential to literacy teaching and education.

In this chapter I presented the history and evolution of literacy conception, practices, education, teaching and research starting from the view of literacy as socio-cultural phenomenon that Street (1993) promotes and calls the ideological model of literacy to the New Literacy Studies which names a body of work that started in the 1980s (Brandt and Clinton 2002; Gee 2000b; Hull and Schultz 2001; Pahl and Rowsell 2005, 2006; Prinsloo and Breier 1996; Street 1993, 1997, 2005) and then to the movement of the New Literacies Studies which denotes literacy as plural and emphasizes the literacies of the Internet, the digital and media hypertextual world, and Information Communication Technologies (ICT) and their influence on the meaning of the concept of literacies. I moved to presenting the emergence of the concept and theory of multiliteracies/ multimodalities through the introduction of my research project to parents and students. To elaborate on the theory of multiliteracies/multimodalities that underpins my research, I presented the literature and research done on digital literacies including digital storytelling, arts-based literacies, and multimodal literacies in various contexts while also introducing my research project to parents and students.

In the next chapter, I continue interweaving my live(d) experiences through a *métissage* performance (Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers, & Leggo, 2009) to situate the story of

my research journey on multiliteracies/multimodalities in one of the International Languages Program schools in Ontario focusing on the methodological, epistemological, and theoretical frameworks of participatory action research (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013) and bricolage (Kincheloe, 2011).

CHAPTER THREE
ENTANGLED IN A MÉLANGE OF THEORY AND METHODOLOGY



Image by Robert Adrian Hillman

...the path which any research project follows is necessarily both constitutive and contingent; that it is under the control of nothing and no-one, and represents nothing and no-one – certainly not Reality or Rationality. Instead, the research process must be seen as a matter of formally arbitrary 'decisions' among incommensurable possibilities. Here, we are as far as we could be from the idea that research involves following the procedures of scientific method.

(Hammersley, 2004, p. 6)

I think metaphorically of qualitative research as an intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colors, different textures, and various blends of material.

(Creswell, 2007, p. 35)

Do not monopolize your knowledge nor impose arrogantly your techniques, but respect and combine your skills with the knowledge of the researched or grassroots communities, taking them as full partners and co-researchers.

(Fals-Borda, 1995, p. 194)

Challenging the quanti/quali(tative) dichotomy

Embracing the alternative, fluid, formless, chaotic, and unconventional

Now... I want to challenge my comfort zone...to challenge the orthodoxies, I want to take a slow walk so I can think my way into an alternative form of research inquiry.... which I have always perceived as non-research, invalid, uncredible, unreliable, deficient, and “not real research.”

(Personal Reflection, May, 2016)

Coming from the educational psychology, management, and evaluation space

To me ... Research is “hard science”

Experiment ... the gold standard

With a positivist ontological and epistemological viewpoint

Where numbers, big data sets, a rigorous, robust and tightly designed methodology

And objective methods only, can reveal the truth and the value-neutral facts

Knowledge should be tied up with verification

Statistics, measurement, and experimentation
Objectivity and quantification

To me... had the greatest valuation

Validity and reliability assertion ...

OR my research loses recognition and meaningfulness

Linear and structural

Generalizable

No soft, wrong, or illegitimate approaches

A psychometric model OR

I face rejection

What we hold dear most likely will change,
transform into something else,
and will eventually inform the fabric of our lives.
(Celeste Snowber 2012, p. 72)

The dominant paradigm into which I was socialized as a student at my undergraduate university studies was strongly positivistic. The experiment was my gold standard (Eisner, 2005). What is measured to me was treasured or as Galileo stated “whatever cannot be measured and quantified is not scientific” (Capra, 1989, p. 133). While I have done a mixed methods research before, I tended to be more valuing numbers and quantitative research. My research view followed a systematic, rigid, and structured procedure with a well prescribed design and a step by step process to ensure producing knowledge that is based on good evidence. My education and research theory was based on rationality and deductive reasoning. I had very little exposure to ways of conducting research that do not conform to this traditional scientific and experimental mold. This facilitated my enrollment in a post graduate program that had quantitative approaches as central to its work.

Studying ‘program evaluation’ required the knowledge and use of a lot of statistics. I felt the joy of doing number-based reports and running data on statistical softwares. Farran (1990) argues that statistics construct rather than mirror the social. Eisner (1997) argues that many think that research work should be theoretical to count as research and many think that the way we do research is to reduce what we have learned into text and number and to do experimental type of research. Dick (1999) contends that this type of research is difficult and can be unethical in some field settings. Looking back at one of my undergraduate research proposals that I wrote during studying for my psychology degree, I notice now that my text is lauded with terms such as ‘evidence’, ‘scientific rigor’, ‘objectivity’, ‘reliability’, ‘measurement’ and ‘sets of data’. It looks clear from my research proposal that I was searching for truth through a scientific, rigorous, evidence based, and tightly designed methodology that would yield real outcomes.

Denzin (2009) describes the evidence-based model of research as an elephant in the living room; an intruder who we can no more ignore. The scientifically based

research has been given more value via the “evidence-based” movement of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Marilyn Cochran-Smith (2002) explains that this act “virtually mandates” that educational research be evaluated “using experimental or quasi-experimental designs . . . with a preference for random-assignment experiments” in order to be funded (p. 188). A lot of federal mandates call for some form of “scientifically based” research in education. They all highlight the need to train education researchers who can conduct scientifically based studies. Federal funding initiatives encourage university departments of science and social science to train graduate students for scientifically based education research (IES, 2004).

Lather (2004) criticizes the USA Federal government’s incursion into legislating scientific method in the realm of educational research. She also criticizes the call for “a new generation of methodologically rigorous and educationally relevant scientific research that will provide solutions to pressing problems and challenges facing American education” (Lather, 2006, p. 24). Lather explains that this call which is based on the need to make education research contribute to the solution of educational problems and provide reliable information about the education practices to support learning and improve academic achievement, emphasizes adopting psychometrics and a rigorous training in research methodology and statistics. This type of approach, which is indicated as having a solid research base, is viewed as the way to transform education into an evidence-based field putting qualitative methods in a challenged and non-desirable state and counting it as non-research (Denzin, 2009).

Lather (2006) speaks about paradigm proliferation and calls for ‘epistemological diversity’ outside of consensus models (p. 3). She argues that in our specific educational context where one-best-way thinking is being reasserted, we need to advocate educational research that supports locating us in the tensions that characterize the multiplicity of knowledges and that are marked by competing discourses which do not map tidily onto one another. Thus, she advocates messiness in educational research practices that interrupts and exceeds tidy categories. Gheradi and Turner (2011) state, “[The] social reality confounds our simple armchair theorising: it is more messy, more convoluted and more surprising than we thought it would be” (p. 17).

Life as we live it is fluid and context-bounded. It is not static to allow for certainty.

Measuring in some contexts and situations is difficult and is not the suitable approach to know our world better since this world is too complex, irrational, non-linear, and unpredictable to be perceived exclusively in positivistic and rationalistic methods. Thus, we can't strive for a definitive truth of human actions and behaviors using exclusively positivist, quantitative methodological procedures. Dale Spender (1985) argues that there is "no one truth, no one authority, [and] no objective method which leads to the production of true knowledge" (p. 5). Glenn (2016) states, "knowing itself is a fiction; it is a liminal, threshold space that is ripe with possibility" (p. 102). Thus, knowing is not the last word, nor should it be the destination. We should consider learning to un-know which keeps us moving and growing. Kincheloe (2005) argues that our world is complex and unpredictable, thus we should have an open view to the object of inquiry. He explains that the object of inquiry is always part of many contexts and processes and it is culturally and historically situated. Observers view the object of inquiry from their vantage points in the web of reality which produces various and diverse portraits of the social phenomenon. Researchers also produce different descriptions of the object of inquiry depending on their ontological and epistemological beliefs and based on what part of the larger fabric of life they have focused on.

Ontology and epistemology are inextricably linked in ways that shape the task of the researcher. My epistemological and ontological insights which have dramatically evolved since the time I used to do research during my undergraduate studies, alerted me to the "multidimensional, socially constructed, polyvocal, ever-changing, fractal-based nature of the social world" (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 11). Thus, in this research inquiry,

I challenged and
rejected the linear way of knowing. I sought juggling many divergent
paths of knowing,
walking down many paths at once, walking in the maze, the labyrinth that lies
in the multiple,
plural, and diverse ways of
knowing and being in the world.

In this inquiry, I attempted fracturing linearity and

disrupting conventional ways of knowing.

Traditional quantitative researchers place a high value on the concept of validity which occupies a lot of discussions in the literature. Miller (2008) notes:

From positivist to postpositivist perspectives ... validity is often broadly described as being dependent on the degree to which a study actually measures what it is supposed to measure – whether ‘the truth’ is accurately identified and described. For the positivists and postpositivists, validity is guaranteed by a close adherence to method. (p. 909 cited in Butler-Kisbler, 2010, p. 14)

The findings are assumed to be valid if and only if there are no flaws in the design and implementation of the method. Yet, validity has been a debatable and debated concept for qualitative researchers to the extent that some wondered whether the question of validity is even valid (Kvale, 1996, cited in Lather 2006). Silverman (1993) disregards validity as an issue in qualitative research and Morse (2012) considers validity and reliability of no concern to qualitative research.

Since multiliteracies/multimodalities theory recognizes the diverse, multiple, various and different perspectives, views, and understandings of our global world, in addition to the multiple language forms, the myriad communication and meaning-making modes, the vast range of literary forms utilized nowadays in societies, I approached my research inquiry with the attitude that truth is subjective, contingent, contextual, and multiple (Saldña, 2011). So, validity as an indicator of a truth-value was not of significance or meaning to me. Focus on and close adherence to a specific design and implementation of a definite method in order to guarantee validity was not of concern to me. My research is based on an alternative method of observing reality. I recount the lived experiences to explain a different way of learning. So, validity doesn't fit into this model. I consider validity a ‘limit question’ (Lather, 2006, p. 19) that should be disregarded in qualitative research. I understand that art, dance, writing, as well as science are some of the multiple ways of knowing the world. The use of dialogue, the conversational nature of my research, the telling of stories and the recounting of the lived experiences, the co-creation and co-construction of new knowledge is what makes this research as valid.

Derrida (1974) contends that we live in a ‘decentered universe’, which makes all attempts of validation personal and subjective. Our knowledge is a constructed form of experience and a reflection of our mind as well as nature (Eisner, 1998) and knowledge building is generative and process-oriented (Leavy, 2014). Thus, I did not position myself having the central authoritative voice. Meanings and knowledges generated from my research text were varied and multiple as many as there were participants and as many as there will be readers (Rolfe, 2004).

Living my research journey through this perspective exempted me from defending its validity. This doesn’t mean that I wasn’t concerned about ensuring rigor of my study. In my open qualitative research inquiry, I was always worried about my own biases. I was always concerned about selective observations and selective recordings of my research journey. Galvin and Prendergast (2016) state, “if qualitative inquiry is to succeed then it must be adequately descriptive, reflect the thickness of living and communicate its processes and findings in rich and in- depth ways” (p. xi). I tried to ensure the rigor of my research study by showing prolonged engagement, consistent observation, presenting thick and rich description of the entire research process, and practicing reflexivity to be always aware of my own biases and avoid their intrusion in the research process (Cypress, 2017). The journey rather than the destination was always what interested me. *Living this inquiry was what mainly concerned me. Mainly.*

Chenail (2008) argues that the strange dichotomy and debate between quantitative and qualitative approaches in research are now in the process of eroding as we can realize that more “researchers [are] conducting narrative, poetic, musical, performative, dance, and visual forms of inquiry” (p. 8). More dialogue between paradigms is taking place (Denzin, 2008) which is paving the way to new ontological and epistemological assumptions about the nature of reality and the ways of knowing it (Mura & Sharif, 2015). There is now an expanding interest in qualitative means of inquiry (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990), in arts-based research (Leavy, 2015), in post-modern efforts (Cooper & White, 2012) given there are better understandings of knowledges and realities of the world. Since my inquiry is based on the methodological principles of (multi)literacies/ modalities, bricolage, and PAR which call and allow for broadening our ways of knowing, provoked me to employ alternative forms of data representation which I describe as ‘evocative, aesthetic forms’ (Piercy & Benson, 2005). This type of data

representation engaged my participants and me in creatively reflecting and innovatively bringing in our own different meanings and literacies.

Skeptical views...

This is not research You should really worry....

We all enter the academy wanting to do work that is engaging and of some value to others. However, operating within a context of institutional pressures of tenure and promotion clocks, coupled with publish-or-perish dictates and funding agencies that reward “hard-science” practitioners, many academics soon become disenchanted.... Sometimes we need to go at things differently.

(Leavy, 2015, p. 1)

Talking about my research occupied most of the conversations with my children and colleagues. Opening up to new epistemological ways of seeing and saying and writing a non-traditional dissertation was not welcomed by them.

My son who is doing his Masters in Economics, my other son who is doing his Masters in Engineering and my colleague whose main interest is in Program Evaluation were unhappy when they heard me describing how I will do my research and write my dissertation.

I remember once having a discouraging conversation with them where I had to strongly defend my work.

“BUT THIS IS NOT RESEARCH”, said the three of them in one voice.

1st son (Engineer): You should worry mom. Are you really thinking of doing this? This is fun, but are you sure this is research?

2nd son (Economist): Who do you think will accept your work and give it any attention? No instruments: surveys or questionnaires, no interviews, no variables ... then how is this a doctoral study and what are you studying?

1st son again: You are wasting all these years to produce a story like dissertation! Do you consider what you write is of any value if not based on a scientific criteria? People like to see numbers, experiments. This is what reveals reality and brings new knowledge... not opinions, stories, and what's based on subjectivity.

2nd son again: I think your work will be described as aesthetic.. but it is not necessarily to be realistic.

Colleague: Think long term Houda. What is this data and knowledge that you will produce? What findings and evidence are you going to present?

Listen, publishing is a main factor for your career advancement and continuation, so how many journals do you think will accept your work and give it any attention.

As your sons say, "I think YOU SHOULD REALLY WORRY". You can still change your approach ... think about it seriously.

Lee and Gouzouasis (2008) argue that it is important that students who choose to move in the direction of alternative research and dissertations find the support they need throughout their arduous and challenging journey of their inquiry. To me, making this radical shift to an alternative form of qualitative research that is not even considered a research by some scholars was a big challenge. Piercy and Benson (2005) wonder if it is safe to divert from the accepted standards of research. Richardson (1997) was described as exploitive, deceptive, and antirationalist when she used poetry in her research. My sons' and colleague's skepticism about my research confirms the reality that alternative forms of research inquiries and data representation are still not desired and that traditional and conventional types are still dominant and more accepted. A few years ago, I was so surprised when I read Eisner and Peshkin's (1990) call for accepting dissertations in education that are written in the form of novels. At that time with my belief that educational research should be defined in a sense of science-based evidence, I was wondering if I can ever trust research yielding knowledge in that type and form. I realize now that from the very old times, novels have had a great influence on helping us understand the world in which we live. Quinn-Hall (2016) explains this saying, "stories are the threads, the in- between that keep us afloat in the complex cosmos of whatever social organism we are performing in.... The stories are what we tell ourselves to keep us woven into the fabric of the existence we have enacted with everything around us" (p. 119). The multiple stories of all of us living in the world make up a very complex story of no singularity but only intersecting plains of spaces where we might share part of the

story. They open spaces between the narrative and the reader which enable us to (re)shape our understanding of how the world exists around us and how we are fastened within it. We realize that there is never a great singular story to narrate the world neither is there a single story about any place or anyone but multiple stories of all of us in this world.

Though I wasn't shining in my early school years of education in writing stories, poems, or memoirs, being attached to numbers, I found myself treading enthusiastically into an alternative form of research inquiry. I wanted to experience the potential of other forms of representation. I use the phrase *form of representation* to refer to the expressive medium I use to describe my research journey (Eisner, 1994, p. 45). In this sense, my forms of representation are influenced by the theme of my inquiry which is multiliteracies/multimodalities. I engage with the poetics of language bringing various writing genres, visual and auditory modes of representation into my text.

The desire to open up alternative ways of seeing and saying was motivated by a new epistemological and ontological view of research, which drove me to the edge of methodological inquiry. Eisner (1998) refers to alternative paradigms as “views of mind and knowledge that reject the idea that there is only one single epistemology and that there is an epistemological supreme court that can be appealed to settle all issues concerning Truth” (p. 104). This refutes the idea that there is only one dependable way of knowing which is usually referred to as the scientific method. It problematizes the assumption that real knowing is valid only through experimentation. It also implies a broader and pluralistic view of knowledge and a multiple view of intelligence (Gardner, 1983). This understanding and appreciation of multiple ways of knowing influenced the educational practices of teachers and influenced me as an educator and researcher. Broader spaces were opened for engaging learners and multiple forms of representation and meaning-making were made possible which resulted in productive diversity.

In this research inquiry, I was in the space of alternative practices of research as a site of being and becoming. I aimed at producing multiple knowledges and producing knowledge differently. My data representation is not confined to the printed form that usually gains the highest value in publication systems. I use the affordances of technology and the arts, and other multimedia approaches for capturing the experiences

in my journey. I combine texts, images, symbols, and drawings to provide a better meaningful picture of my research. I am now more committed to a serious qualitative form of inquiry which makes me resist a type of method that cuts off the deeper sources of meaning (van Manen, 2006). I am pushing the borders of the traditional multi-methods qualitative research by embracing multi-methodological approaches through Participatory Action Research (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013), Bricolage (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004), and Multiliteracies/Multimodalities (New London Group, 1996). I situate myself as a *bricoleur* borrowing from many different disciplines (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3) and soliciting unconventional, alternative, creative, innovative, and aesthetic type of data to capture and represent students' understandings, meaning-making, and lived experiences through their literacy texts. Students' productions of diverse knowledges ranged from various modes of print-based, arts-based, and technology-based texts of their own innovation and creation.

Sailing with uncertainty: complexity, messiness, and improvisation

In the following section, I continue unfolding my research story through weaving a colourful narrative of my journey. I present my experience through a pastiche of methodologies bringing threads of participatory action research, bricolage, and multiliteracies into a practical lived experience.

Dwelling with Participatory Action Research

Reason and Bradbury (2008) write that participatory action research “is not so much a *methodology* as an *orientation* to inquiry that seeks to create participative communities of inquiry in which qualities of engagement, curiosity and question posing are brought to bear on significant practical issues” (p. 3).



Source: google images. <https://images.app.goo.gl/NERWKmCstnq6QjEM9>

According to them:

[A]ction research is a participatory process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (P. 8)

As a researcher who views research as a way to bring up the diverse, multiple, plural, and various perspectives on reality through cooperative and collaborative approaches, I engaged with participatory action research (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013). Participatory action research is known to be a polyvalent concept as it accommodates various theoretical approaches (Drummond & Themessl-Huber, 2007). The polyvalence of the concept opened the space in this research for drawing from various theories/ methodologies that speak to the main theme of this inquiry which is multiliteracies /multimodalities. The choice of this approach emerged from my epistemological belief that research is inseparable from the lives of students, practitioners, and communities. It is inextricably tied to the complex relations that form the various layers of communities, which conflates epistemological and ontological concerns and eliminates the tiresome theory/practice problem (Carson & Sumara, 1997). This orientation to research is adopted by Chevalier and Buckles (2013) who question the split between theory (epistêmê) and technique (technê) or the notion that inquiry divides into substance and process. They argue that this conventional perspective of inquiry as division of substance and process describes substance as the subject matter of thought which has real content and feeds into theoretical or empirical bodies of knowledge. On the other side, process is the path to advancing knowledge in the world guided by the small methods or technical ways to gain a solid grasp over phenomena that are believed to be real. Thus, process speaks to the journey not the destination. Unlike the positivist approach to science which uses techniques to discover things that are true in substance, PAR, as presented by Chevalier and Buckles (2013) uses and develops techniques, crafts, or methods of knowing to support the art of collaborative inquiry and thinking about the world and the experience of being. This approach to research puts forward probabilistic models of reality and acknowledges uncertainty, indeterminacy, and the unknown of our plural

world. It also provides a way for learning, personal transformation, and individual and collective change.

Drummond and Themessl-Huber (2007) explain that participatory action research has some connections to Deleuze's philosophical ideas. They elaborate this idea by drawing on Deleuze's notion of 'apprenticeship to signs' to argue that all learning is basically a direct apprentice-type engagement with the problematic nature of the material under consideration. The concept of 'apprenticeship' refers to the educative aspect of the participatory action research project, or the essential characteristic of learning that usually occurs in the researchers for the project to develop. Henderson (2010) believes that participatory action research can also be positioned within the Deleuzian framework of 'becoming'. Deleuze theorizes that in our becomings, we become-other when various affects act on us. He argues that there is no predetermined limit on what we may become or how we may engage with problems and create events. This implies that the process of participatory action research should be always open to the new, the unpredictable, and the unknown. There should be openness so bodies are able to affect and be affected, to becoming other than what one was before.

Chevalier and Buckles (2013) explain that PAR is grounded on three pillars. It is founded on the principle of participation that perceives an engaging research as bringing people together to inquire into situations and act on them, as opposed to treating people and society as problems to be investigated and re-engineered from above. The people involved in a PAR project are not subjects but rather partners who become engaged in the inquiry. The learning process of researchers and partners in PAR is both fluid and grounded in creative action (Drummond & Themessl-Huber, 2007). Thus, as Deleuze (1994) states, "our only teachers are those who tell us to 'do with me', and are able to emit signs to be developed in heterogeneity rather than propose gestures for us to reproduce" (p. 23). This perspective to the research activity opens spaces for research collaborators to think of problems as series of potentialities. A problem in Deleuzian terms is not the insufficiency or lack of knowledge, nor an obstacle to be permanently overcome. A problem is always more than a realm of possible solutions. It gives rise to thinking which creates a new form of knowledge.

PAR is also founded on the principle of action (engagement with experience), which emphasizes using methods and techniques that work for people and has meaning in real settings. This is a significant principle of PAR as we are living in a complex and messy world that is in a constant flux, evolution, and change. Chevalier and Buckles (2013), drawing from Deleuze (1994) and Guattari (1995), describe it as a “world of differences that is controlled by chance and multiplicity, a ‘chaosmos’ governed by the eternal return of dissemblance and disparateness, the repetition of that which keeps differing” (p. 103). It is as Derrida (1973) refers to it “the groundless milieu constantly evolving” (cited in Chevalier & Buckles, 2013, p. 103). From one moment to the next, nothing ever returns the same. This requires acting with people to cope with change, uncertainty, or complexity and avoiding all instrumental and mechanical views of technê that might sometimes be without life (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013).

Lastly, PAR is founded on the principle of research (soundness in thought), one that rejects the one-way representation of the world where one finds the narrow views of causation and the illusions of quantitative methods. Hawkins (2011) argues that PAR pushes boundaries and moves beyond binaries. It encourages sifting through many sites and sources of knowledge, technology, and methods of inquiry to help bring out the multiple voices or the pluralistic and multi views to the situation or the world. This view intersects with Derrida’s concept of ‘decentering’ and ‘dissemination’ (1992), where “meaning is floating, dispersed, multivalent, and where *different* understandings of the *same* text is a non-reducible plurality” (Glendinning, 2011, p. 58, emphasis in original). This highlights the idea that lines and flows of knowledge and communication overlap and are entangled in so many places and directions that they resist and challenge any attempt to singularity.

Mutual reflections-in/on-action

You should therefore cease from practice based on intellectual understanding, pursuing words, and following after speech, and learn that backward step that turns your light inwardly to illuminate yourself.

– Eihei Dogan (1200-1253)

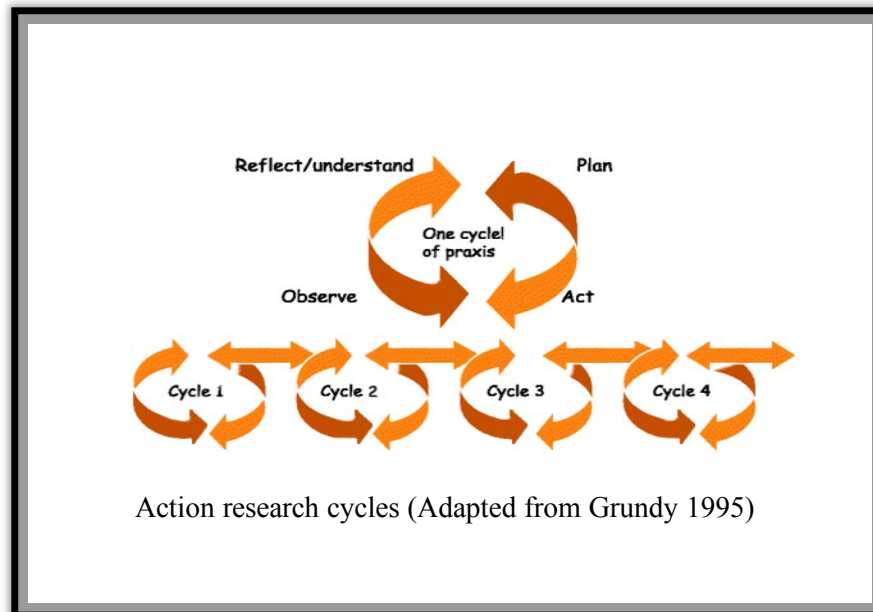
Engaging with participatory action research meant that my collaborating teacher and I learn from our practice through an open process of research, action, and reflection (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013). While Dogan speaks above to one of his students to advise

him on ways of thinking that lead to enlightenment, I liked to borrow this quote which comes from the ZEN philosophy of ways of thinking because I found part of it is relevant to our situation of doing the reflections in and on our practice. Though my collaborating teacher and I were not really doing deep interior process of thinking as Dogan suggests or a kind of self-inquiry to learn the path to enlightenment, the backward step that turns our light inwardly to illuminate us was something that my collaborating teacher and I practiced. We moved in various directions and we were taking that backward step and reflecting on the situation, on our actions, and our students' reactions. This reflection was helping us to turn our light inwardly to illuminate ourselves of the nature of things we're experiencing, of understanding our actions, and of thinking on how to move forward. I also found it relevant because it was just like Zen's meditation process which involves bringing attention to breath and then returning attention to the breath which improves the ability to focus (Olson, 2000), we were also doing our reflections by bringing attention to our actions so we can act again according to the twists and uncertainties of our journey.

This non-linear process emphasizes dialogic engagement with participants, creates change, generates action, produces new knowledge, and develops professional growth through reflection on practice (Pine, 2009). Schön (1991) offers an approach to epistemology of practice that is based on an examination of what practitioners do which he refers to as 'knowing-in-practice' or 'reflection-in/on-action' (p. ix). He distinguishes between 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' by explaining that 'reflection-in-action' is the reflection we do during the doing stage like during the lesson, while 'reflection-on-action' usually involves reflecting on how practice can be developed after the lesson has been taught. Chevalier and Buckles (2013) explain that 'reflecting on action' is one of the participatory action research features that researchers do to understand situations and act on reality. It is a step in the PAR non-linear, non-orderly, flowing and spiral cycle that leads to new knowledge and learning.

Kemmis and McTaggart (2014) describe the participatory action research in terms of a spiral of self-reflection which involves non-linear steps of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. They explain that those steps are not static but rather moments in the action research spiral process. The authors argue that learning is embedded in this self-reflection process as it involves reviewing what has happened, reconsidering the

opportunities and constraints of the situation, making sense of the processes, problems, and various issues and developing a new understanding.



Even though the cycle of PAR is understood as a sequence of stages, this isn't the case in how it is lived or proceeds in the living practice. My collaborating teacher and I were implementing an idea or taking a specific action, reflecting, then going backwards, and implementing an action in a different way or maybe taking a completely different route. The principle of participation and collaboration detaches PAR from any uni-directional or linear process in research. I was doing my research with participants and not on subjects like what happens in the traditional type of research. Since I wasn't the expert, being the doctorate student who is considered to know it all, this didn't give me the authority to do the research implementing what I wanted. It was a reciprocal process of shared knowledge between my collaborating teacher and I which again contributed to avoiding a linear process of research.

My research process had a lot of twists and turns to be able to respond to the complexity and uncertainty of our lived experience in the classroom. It was very messy, unpredictable, emergent in nature, in continuous evolvment and responsive to the changing circumstances. It was participatory and both my collaborating teacher and I understood that there is no singular direction in our work, no one method to follow and

certainly no prescriptive recipe that I came with which would result in any logical ending. We were co-producers of knowledge. The metaphor of jazz (Brydon-Miller et al. 2011) works well in our PAR which involved a lot of improvisation through a collaborative process in which each participant's experiences and skills were critical to the outcome of our project.

Since my collaborating and I conceived the classroom as a place for learning about our literacy teaching, about students' interests and learning styles, and about our live(d) curriculum and since we wanted to avoid a narrowly technical practice; 'reflection-in/on-action' was a practice that we adopted in several formats during our inquiry process. We chose muddling through the 'swampy lowlands' (Schön, 1991, p. 15), involving ourselves in messy but crucially important problems, living the tension of a curriculum as-planned and a curriculum as live(d), living the twists and turns of our research journey, and facing the various uncertain and unpredictable issues in order to develop and learn from our personal experience of practice. We did our reflection-in/on-action through preplanned times of meetings, through our daily reflective journals, through quick discussions during our class teaching, through anecdotal observations, and through conversations using the whatsapp (a free app that uses the Internet to send messages, images, videos, or audios); all of which made our reflective episodes and our tools for professional growth. Our collaborative teaching gave us the chance to build upon our various experiences, pedagogies, and practices. We practiced our reflection-in/on-action during and after our teach/learn(ing) sessions or encounters with students, parents, school staff, or people from the community. The participative approach in our research inquiry helped us grow personally and professionally. We developed understandings, insights, and various skills in our research and literacy teaching-learning practices. The complexities, difficulties, tensions, and challenges we faced throughout the entire research process developed our skills of coping with stress and uncertainty, and enhanced our understanding of the different boundaries that affect the implementation of new, creative, and innovative approaches in the teaching process.

Collaborators ... Learners through and from practice

Collaboration between researchers and teachers is key to success for the creation of new interpretive meaning and knowledge.

(Chevalier & Buckles, 2013, p. 29)



Doing a participative type of research within the framework of multiliteracies/ multimodalities meant co-working with my participating teacher, Naziha to plan for our teaching unit. We had our first meeting in which we decided on the text that students were supposed to read, comprehend, and apply its writing genre; the 'narrative'. The autobiographical text which was designed for native Arabic speakers was about one of the literary scholars. Naziha informed me that according to her academic yearly plan, students are supposed to show their understanding of the text by producing their own narrative or autobiographical texts. Thus, we had to decide on how to make students show their understandings of the narrative literary genre while also incorporating the principles of multiliteracies/ multimodalities. We agreed that we would not restrict students to produce their narrative texts using the print-based mode only but to open the space for them to create their texts in the form/mode they like.

We also decided that we would open all possibilities and let them choose the way they like in order to show their understanding of the writing genre of this text. Recognizing the complexity and uncertainty of the teaching situation, we intended not to produce a fixed and detailed plan as we believed that we can not anticipate the outcomes and results of each activity with great confidence and certainty.

Our participatory planning phase was followed by action. We entered the classroom, which had a delightful bunch of students with various learning styles and interests. They had different heritage language abilities and various language competency levels. We proceeded in presenting our lesson activities. The first one was a pre-reading activity for building background about the topic of this text. Though this activity was implemented in a dynamic group work mode, it was a challenge for us to keep students' attention and interest or engage them. Many were completely withdrawn from the discussion and participation. They did not show any interest, reactions, or engagement. Class time ended and we failed in implementing the activities for presenting this narrative text.

This left Naziha and I in a frustration mood.

(Anecdotes of reflections, April, 2017)

Chevalier and Buckles (2013) explain that one of the main principles of PAR is the flowing and non-linear cyclical process of action and reflection. They argue that challenges and disruptions of this cycle are expected in any PAR research journey. Routes could be chaotic rather than orderly which forces the inquiry to remain open to the possibility of new directions unplanned and unanticipated. In their discussion about managing complexity and coping with uncertainty in PAR they state, “we must learn rules of navigation, plan our journey, prepare ourselves to cope with uncertainty and tame the unknown” (p. 77). A lot of distinguished researchers report the disruption that

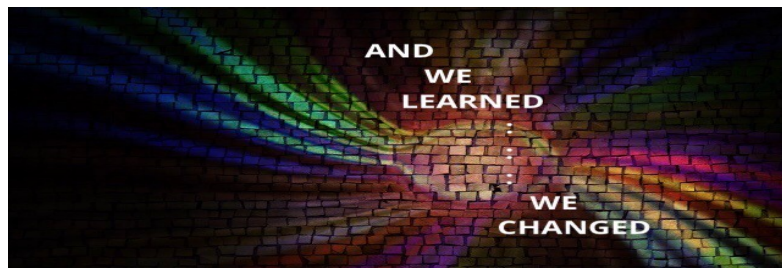
happens to their original plan and the unexpected situations that required them to reflect and proceed in a different plan in order to attend to new situations (Gherardi & Turner, 2011). An action-oriented inquiry based on the principles of PAR, means the participants including the researcher are involved in a learning process that is both fluid and grounded in creative action (Drummond & Themessl-Huber, 2007). Chevalier and Buckles (2019) refer to it as “the art of creating a careful action-learning process” (p. 3). Laroche and Roth (2009) argue that human knowing evolves out of shared experiences and participation in community-related activities. John-Steiner (2000) claim, “Generative ideas emerge from joint thinking, from significant conversations, and from collaborative work” (p. 3).

As a PAR researcher my focus was on creating dialogue and generating knowledge through a participative, non-authoritative, fluid, and flexible learning process that incorporates reflective action for practical ends (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013). Brydon-Miller and colleagues (2011) emphasize the collaborative process in PAR by drawing on the metaphoric image of jazz music. They explain that both PAR and jazz music need a collaborative process in which participants share their diverse experiences to produce a whole piece of music or new knowledge. The authors also compare PAR to a banyan tree which is a symbol of learning, meditation, reflection, and enlightenment in Hindu and Buddhist traditions. It is also a gathering place for people where community discussions and decision-making take place. Gee (2013) states, “a good deal of our success in acting depends not just on how we reflect before we act, but on how we reflect after we act” (p. 12). In this sense, reflection and action are not two steps in a linear procedure but a practice that moves in a cyclical and spiral process (Koshy et al. 2011). The spiral feature affirms the fluidity, uncertainty, messiness, unpredictability, and evolutionary characteristic of PAR (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Cook (1998) celebrates uncertainty and considers messiness as a way of seeing toward deeper knowing and Lather (2010) argues “complexity and messiness of practice-in- context is the strength of qualitative research” (p. 10).

Reflection leading to a new action

If we can perceive research as a journey into the unknown, uncertain, and unpredictable rather than a task to be accurately determined and planned in advance, then disruptions, tensions, and modifications become acceptable during the research journey and any new ideas, changes, and additions become the injection of a creative element into the process.

(Personal reflection, April 2017)



Our first collaborative activity which did not receive any attention from students made Naziha and I decide to have a quick meeting to try to understand what had happened. We sat and recalled all our observations during the implementation of our first attempt of collaboration. Naziha mentioned that she was surprised how passionate students were when they talked about themselves; their lives, their vacation stories, their families, how they spend their times, their immigration journeys, and their feelings toward their two homes; their home of origin and their second home (Canada).

I added to her observations and started telling her about my surprise of how enthusiastic I saw them when they were having conversations about their lives. Then my collaborating teacher wondered and asked,

“Why didn’t they interact in the same way when we presented the text that narrates the life of this well-known Arabic author then?”

Our conversation got into the many interesting details of our observations during our first class. Aoki (1986/1991) and his notion of living pedagogy and curriculum-as planned versus curriculum-as live(d) became present and brought more aliveness into our discussion. We both wondered, “should we stick to our plan or allow ourselves to live the in-between spaces of the planned and live(d)”.

We decided that we did not want to be just “installers of the curriculum” (Aoki, 1986/1991, p. 160). We wanted to be more open to creative possibilities and less chained to the textbook. We decided then to replace the text suggested in the curriculum document with another narrative text that emerged from students’ life stories.

What helped us open spaces and various possibilities to students according to their interests and needs is our understanding that students in multiliteracies projects are not required to study the same material in the same way, at the same level, or reach the same end outcomes (Healy, 2010). Recognizing how they interacted with life stories and their beings between their two homes; Canada and their country of origin, we agreed to bring a story that looks like them.

We developed a narrative text about an immigrant kid, presented it in class with a set of images/visuals, discussed the story’s elements, and opened the space for students to show their connections with the story and their understandings of the text and its genre in the modes/ forms that interest them.

(Anecdotes of reflections, April 2017)

Berman and colleagues (1991) compare education to a journey where joy, problems, dilemmas, and detours cover portions of its path. This journey metaphor helps emphasize the idea that curriculums cannot be linear but recursive and geared to the emerging interests of travelers. And that in some instances the travelers have to walk back and open another trail, like we had to. Teachers focus then on the meanings the student - travelers bring to the journey. In this research journey, it was not possible to predict the flow of events as they unfolded, so Naziha and I had to adjust the course of action based upon emerging conditions that could not have been anticipated. I was constantly wandering and wondering in unexpectedness and uncertainty. We observed and lived the

complexities of our classroom teaching. As our teaching process unfolded we were further and further away of the linear and deterministic plan of teaching the curriculum.

I recalled with Naziha a book that I was reading called “Life in Classrooms” in which Philippe Jackson (1990) presents his image of teaching and learning stating:

“Teaching is an opportunistic process. Neither the teacher nor the students can predict with any certainty exactly what will happen next. Plans are forever going awry and unexpected opportunities for the attainment of educational goals are constantly emerging... Although most teachers make plans in advance ...[t]hey know, or come to know, that the path of educational progress more closely resembles *the flight of a butterfly than the flight of a bullet*” (emphasis added, p. 166).

Although many teachers and scholars are still convinced of the idea that teaching is a planned type of activity that should be implemented in sequence to achieve educational goals and implement curriculum plans, Davis, Sumara, and Luce-Kapler (2000) state, “teaching isn’t something that is done. Teaching is lived as one encounters self and other, individual and collective, past and future, actual and possible” (p. 226). Living teaching means learning to regularly shift our focus from the pressure of the plan, the objectives, the goals, the expectations, and the prescribed content of the curriculum and to the lived teaching moment, to the various curriculums, and the various openings, spaces, and possibilities present in the classroom, in each child/student. We indwell in this earthy place where we experience daily life with our students and colleagues. According to Aoki (1992), this is where pedagogy is located. It is a tensioned space between the lived and planned curricula; between the planned, unplannable, and unpredictable. It is in this space that our curriculum evolves and opens up generative possibilities. This is the space where we experience the multiple and various curriculums in our classrooms. Aoki (2005) explains that in this in-between space of a curriculum-as-planned and a curriculum-as-live(d), there are deep and insightful spaces which are “marked by the cracks in the words” (p. 321).

Though living in-between was challenging for both Naziha and I since we lived in a task- oriented and performance-driven school culture, we decided to take this endeavor of shying away from the binaries of either/or, and to live this tension that exists between the two curriculum worlds... to experience the “neither this nor that, but this and that”

(Smith, 2003, p. xv) which leads to a form of intertextuality that brings forth the other kind of life... the life that lies in- between. Our teaching, then, became a dynamic process that celebrated diversity and opened up new spaces of possibility. Our plan was an endeavor for expanding the space of innovation, and creativity and for creating conditions of the as-yet imagined.

Collaboration and work for a multiliteracies/multimodalities attempt for teaching literacy actively continued with an (un)planned plan. Eisner and Peshkin (1990) wonder about the extent that any planned method is actually employed, as real-life events require creativity and flexibility that allow for responding to new circumstances and coping with uncertainty. Our evolving plan or set of actions became more and more flexible and our participative research inquiry was following an iterative cycle that did not follow any structural or linear path (Kemmis et al. 2014). We knew that there wouldn't be anything 'absolute'. We expected a 'messy' not 'tidy' and a 'usually' not 'always' process that allowed for continued creativity and reflective thinking (The Alberta Teachers Association, 2000, p. 36). We ended up having a dialectical movement that went from action to reflection and from reflection upon action to new action (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013); an approach that is well illustrated in Freire's adult education method (1970).

Our thinking and acting were always in the middle of ongoing events. We were often required to go back and forth between steps in an iterative fashion until reaching a satisfactory understanding. Progress regarding what to do next had to wait for the results of our prior activities. We were undecidedly moving through a process of interpretive mediation or dialogue between me as a researcher and my participating teacher – between two knowledge systems (theoretical and practical); meshing science and experience and uniting theory (epistêmê) and technique (technê) (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013, p. 1).

As PAR is distinguished by a collaborative ethos and its theoretical and methodological underpinnings “resisted traditional models of knowledge construction which privilege expert knowledge” (McDermott, 2007, p. 405), I was always in tension of not falling into what is called the ‘one great expert’ trap. I was very careful not to act as an external consultant transmitting expert knowledge and advice. This position which

rejected the hierarchical structure between the researcher and my collaborating teacher helped me eliminate any bias that might arise from my position as a researcher.

The collaborative teaching approach made our teaching-learning experience an important touchstone for us, embodying vital lessons about language and literacy teaching and learning. It also laid a foundation for our thinking about innovative and creative literacy education. Together we learned that teachers can adjust their plans in the moment and take advantage of the unexpected. Our teaching observations and practices and our continuous conversations and reflections helped us develop new ideas and approaches of multimodal literacies.

To be able to show the complex context we live in, the multi-dimensional, socially constructed, polyvocal, ever-changing nature of our social world and to respect the complexity of our lived world, I needed to seek research approaches that are grounded on an epistemology of complexity and reject a unidimensional view of the world ‘bricolage’ was one of these approaches.

Tapping the spectrum of multimodality

A bricolage approach for creating multimodal compositions in a resource-constrained context

Much as an artist brings to the canvas a suite of concepts and techniques drawn creatively from a variety of sources, the bricoleur brings to the research design space a suite of epistemes, concepts and techniques drawn from multiple paradigms and combines them in a uniquely creative way.... In the process of creating a bricolage, [the] bricoleur employ[s] a range of alternative logics and genres to represent multiple ways of knowing and knowledge production.

(Luitel & Taylor, 2011, p. 194-196)

We are continually enthralled at the intensity with which young people immerse themselves in arts, multimodality, and 21st century literacies. ...As teachers, we have the responsibility to provide students with a range of opportunities that enable them to expand their repertoire of ways in which they can communicate what and how they know... and try out different digital, visual, musical, spatial, dramatic (and so on) tools and techniques.

(Sanders & Albers, 2010, p. 2-3)

Our presentation of the ‘immigrant kid’ story received students’ full engagement and motivation to show their understandings and how they connect to this life story. A lively and creative environment permeated our discussion on what and how they will make meaning and represent their understanding of the story and how they will produce their own literacy texts.

Sabrine: I like to work with clay. I have the characters of my story ready in my mind. I just need to mold it. I can tell you the story orally but I can’t write it all in full sentences and paragraphs.

Dana: I like to make my own book. I like to work in arts and crafts. I can present my story in an artful way. But I don’t know how to start in Arabic. I can write my story in English and then translate each paragraph into Arabic. I might use the Google translate to do it or I can ask my mom for some help in finding the suitable words.

Joumana: I like to show a scene of my old place of residence in my village back home. Can I do a ‘maquette’ something like a model. I can tell my story about this place.

Leya: I have done a book in my English class. Can I make my own book here? I can present my story through drawings and other materials.

Then another group of students showed a high interest in doing digital based stuff. This is what some said,

Adnan: I don’t like artwork. Ouuf (an Arabic expression that shows dissatisfaction), I have no interest at all in drawing, painting, and doing arts and crafts. I like to work with technology. You can get to what you need easy and fast. There are a lot of options on the Internet.

Can I do my story using the application of Animoto? I will try it but I am not sure if it is possible. If it doesn't work, I will see if I can find something else. But I will look on the Internet for something that I can use for free.

Ibrahim: I also have no patience on doing arts and crafts. I can show my story using the iMovie or Windows Moviemaker applications. I don't have a good camera for recording and editing my story, so I will try to use my mom's phone or my sister's computer.

Our conversation continued ... Students' multimodal forms that show their understandings and meaning-making expanded more and more bringing their multiple perspectives and resources to the complexity of our inquiry process. Naziha and I got surprised by the level of creativity and novelty of students' hybrid arts-based, digital based, and print-based ideas that they suggested for producing their literacy texts. It became a bricolage of multi-methods and multi-genres that represented students' multiple ways of knowing and knowledge production.

Bricolage is a term that is used to express a research approach and a method (Denzin & Lincoln, 2001). Kincheloe (2011) states:

As bricoleurs recognize the limitations of a single method, the discursive strictures of one disciplinary approach, what is missed by traditional practices of validation, the historicity of certified modes of knowledge production, the inseparability of knower and known, and the complexity and heterogeneity of all human experience, they understand the necessity of new forms of rigor in the research process. (p. 179)

Thus, bricolage is perceived as a critical, multi-perspectival, multi-theoretical and multi-methodological approach to inquiry. It is grounded on the multidimensionality of the research act (Kincheloe, 2004) and draws on uncertainty, on the complexity and multiplicity of discourses and perspectives in the world, and on indeterminacy of

situations. Lévi-Straus (1962/1966) in his book *The Savage Mind* uses the term ‘*bricolage*’ to describe make-do activities a handyperson employs while working. He describes the ‘*bricoleur*’ as someone who tinkers with the materials at hand explaining that “the materials of the bricoleur are elements which can be defined by two criteria: they have *had a use...and they can be used again*” (p. 35, italics in original). Thus,

...a bricoleur is someone who works with his hands and uses devious means compared to those of a craftsman... (he) has nothing else at (his) disposal. ... The bricoleur is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks...the rules of his game are always to make do with ‘whatever is at hand’. (Lévi-Strauss, 1962/1966, p. 17)

Denzin and Lincoln (2001) refer to bricolage as an improvisational process and an approach that encompasses both materials and tools and to the bricoleur as someone like the handyman/woman who creatively makes use of whatever is at hand. Kincheloe (2011) states, “the bricoleur views research methods actively rather than passively and actively constructs the research methods from the tools at hand rather than passively receiving the “correct”, universally applicable methodologies” (p. 168). In this sense, bricolage doesn’t seek out and apply specially designed or standardized techniques and the bricoleur does not approach knowledge-production activities with specific methods, tools, plans, or checklists of criterion. It is rather a fluid, flexible, and open-ended process (Rogers, 2012).

The use of multiple methods, ideas, and perspectives are some of the central features of bricolage (Hammersley, 1999). Kincheloe (2004) states, “objects of inquiry are far too mercurial to be viewed by a single way of seeing” (p. 73). Bricolage also provides a space for new genres to represent multiple ways of knowing and knowledge production. Some could be arts-based modes of representation, including narrative which brings forth the complexity of human understandings through lived stories and storytelling; poetic that go beyond the clean, linear, and realist text to the messy, complex, and impressionistic texts; performative that opens space for an engaging dialogic quality with the help of ethnodrama and ethnotheatre; and non-linguistic genres such as photographs, paintings, cartoons, collage, creative models, and digitized productions which can richly portray the visual dimension of knowledge claims (Luitel & Taylor, 2011).

As a bricoleur, I sought multiple epistemologies and avoided the monological, objectivist, and reductionistic knowledge of externally imposed methods and the standardized ways of knowledge production (Markham, 2005). Students' various productions of multimodal literacy texts were some of the examples that showed the multiplicity, plurality, diversity, and the multidimensionality of reality and of how we make-meaning of our world. This required Naziha and I to be creative bricoleurs encouraging students to innovatively use whatever is available, the various but scarce resources, methods, and materials to produce their multimodal literacy texts. Students' final products of multimodal literacy texts were similar to something that Kincheloe (2004) describes as a 'pictorial montage' (p. 85).

Tinkering with multiple methods, tools, and resources

As an action researcher-bricoleur who understood the complexity of our lived teaching situation, I did not approach knowledge-production activities with specific methods, tools, or a step-by step plan of what it 'has to be'. It was always what it 'could be' (Kincheloe, 2004, p. xi). It was based on an emergent construction that changed and took new forms as I added new tools, techniques, and methods. My daily class observations, my self-reflections and introspections, the informal conversations with students, parents, the teacher and the school principal, and the various conversations I had with students during and after class were some of the methods that influenced the final image of the puzzle of knowledge-production. Thus, the process of my research inquiry was fluid, flexible, eclectic, creative, and open-ended. Improvisation and contemplation were two of the main principles for engaging with bricolage (Witell et al. 2017). I tried to combine my imagination with whatever tools or artifacts available in my context in order to meet the diverse knowledge-production tasks.

Mary Ann Reilly (2009) argues that creativity is lessened when living is understood as "the mere unfolding of an already completely determined sequence of steps to a ready-made conclusion" (p. 383). As a bricoleur, I had to be creative during the unfolding of my lived curriculum, to improvise, to trace multiple possibilities, new visions, and revisions. It was a bricolage that opened spaces of possibility, not a destined certainty. Hase (2014) explains that engaging in bricolage means learning through

creative improvisation and using whatever materials are at hand in a creative and resourceful way.

My collaborating teacher and I had extremely few educational resources to use in our teaching classes. Resource scarcity provoked us to be creative and employ the tools and materials “at hand”. We didn’t have much materials or crafts tools to support students who decided to produce arts-based literacy texts. From a bricolage perspective, I viewed scarcity as an opportunity. So, I encouraged students to find any materials or items that they or their home members do not need anymore, any accumulated tools or artifacts, any materials that they collected without a specific purpose, or any ‘left overs’ from their previous projects (Dron, 2014). The purpose was to repurpose those artifacts in order to produce their arts-based, digital- based and multimodal literacy texts.

Turkle and Papert (1992) write, “the bricoleur resembles the painter who stands back between brushstrokes, looks at the canvas, and only after this contemplation, decides what to do next” (p. 13). Kincheloe (2011) explains that bricoleurs understand that interactions with objects of their inquiries are unpredictable, uncertain, complicated, and mercurial. Thus, bricoleurs do not enter their research with a strictly defined set of preplanned strategies, procedures, and tools. They view their research process as complex and elastic allowing circumstances to shape the methodological processes as they are needed in the unfolding context of the research situation. Thus, bricolage is founded on the concepts of uncertainty, complexity, improvisation, adaptability, intuitive sense, and tinkering with whatever existing resources and materials together in new ways.

The school situation in terms of availability of resources and materials made bricolage a suitable approach to my multiliteracies research inquiry. The classroom was fully equipped with the technology needed for facilitating an engaging teaching/learning environment, yet program- related administrative factors prevented us from having access to this technology. Operating in this situation, I had to employ ‘any means necessary’ (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 31) to respond to circumstances and perform the task at hand (Harste, 2014). This made me think of other handy available options and resources. I remembered that this school is also associated with a community center. Inquiring about the availability of an LCD projector in the community center, I was told that they

could lend us their LCD projector for the hour/hours needed for use in the classroom. I borrowed the LCD projector from the community center for several days during our teaching sessions. Students who were technology oriented helped me connect it to my own laptop, then I presented the videos that students requested about digital storytelling and other media related stuff. During the presentation, the LCD disconnected and we couldn't know how to fix it. Students decided that they wanted to continue watching the digital story from my laptop. That was the only available way for them to enjoy watching and learning through the videos of digital storytelling.

I was a bricoleur continually cobbling materials together in the course of my research work with students (Mary Ann Reilly, 2009) while also working with a set of tools and materials that is heterogeneous, that looked sometimes with no relation to the project but that contributed, at the end of the project, to producing multiple pieces of knowledges. The students were also bricoleurs working with whatever is available and cobbling various materials, unlimited pieces and items from here and there in order to create/produce their multimodal literacy texts. They were like crafts-people creatively constructing their new artifacts using materials left over from other tasks or projects (Rogers, 2012).

Moving forward.... Capturing my research journey

The journey events continue to unfold...
an unplanned journey that embraces uncertainty,
unpredictability,
and fluidity...
a journey that is opened to all possibilities ...
to different interpretations ...
to various meaning makings ...
to multiliteracies and multimodalities
while using whatever available resources...

The living practice of my participatory action research journey (Carson & Sumara, 1997) provoked me to keep a journal of the description of every detail or event pertinent to my research inquiry. It also provoked me to keep a record of all interactions between students, between my collaborating teacher and myself, with students' parents, and during our teaching sessions. I documented my day-to-day interactions and

happenings in this journal. I recorded my journey events as field notes during and straight after each interaction, thus building a layered 'picture' of the context, the teaching process, and students. I used shorthand during our class interactions with students, chats with their parents at the end of each school day, and informal conversations with the school principal. I wrote more elaborate and reflective passages at the end of each day to avoid missing any main details. My reflections were meant to describe the whole process of this inquiry and to convey the deep-felt emotions in these moments of interactions between the students, the classroom teacher, and myself. My collaborating teacher also kept a journal in which she recorded our conversations and her own reflections on/during our collaborative research process.

My research journey evolved through a process of immersion, reflection, action, and innovation where my collaborating teacher, the students, and I were active and creative participants. In the coming chapter, I continue narrating my journey turning now mainly to the students' journey. I proceed in presenting students' productions of multimodal, arts and digital- based literacy texts while also describing my literacy teaching process and approach which captures the essence of my research inquiry as an embodied lived experience.

CHAPTER FOUR

WEAVING THROUGH WORDS: A MOSAIC OF CREATIVE MULTIMODAL AND "ARTFULL" LITERACY TEXTS

..... literacy [is] greater than competency with the language arts... all communication forms are vehicles to understand and express thoughts and feelings with the arts... From an arts-based perspective, literacy *is* the arts. The arts expand the message with visual images, give emotional context through music, and bring words to life through dance and drama. The arts give voice to those whose words may never be heard. The arts give life to learning; the arts give life to life!

(Claudia E. Cornett, 2011, p. xviii)

Now it seems clear enough that, of all human creations, the arts have the greatest potential for stimulating or releasing imagination.

(Maxine Greene, 2007, parag. 2)

Art can be an emotional and immeasurable space for anyone to explore ... Understanding can be alluring. The infinite limitations of language can be resisted through the process of art and the creation of representative and symbolic work.

(Angela, in Morawski et al. 2014, p. 17)

One way of thinking about the arts is as a language—a means for communicating, expressing. In this sense, the arts are loosely analogous to reading and writing, however the processes are based on different symbol systems.

(McArdle & Right, ch. 2, p. 23)

Learning *through* the arts ... an invitation into creative multimodal forms of literacy texts

Research on multiple ways of knowing show that children naturally make meaning through various modes and that their encounters with literacy is multimodal (Dyson, 1986; Rowe, 1994). Eisner (2002) argues that knowledge cannot be reduced to what can be said only. Some ideas are better expressed through certain modes and sign systems that go beyond the limits of language. Albers (2010) states,

The forms through which knowledge and understanding are constructed, remembered, and expressed must be wider than verbal or written language alone. What one can learn and be able to experience through an artwork cannot be known in a discursive form and vice versa. (p. 180)

Thus, a multimodal approach to literacy teaching encourages students to construct meaning using various forms— through language, art, music, paintings, drawings, drama, and many other print- based, arts-based, and technology-based mediums.

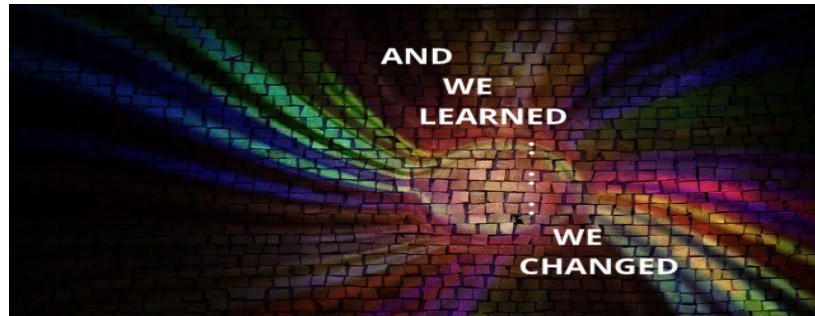
Goldberg (2001) defines arts through a wide spectrum that embraces both the performing (e.g., music, dance, drama) and the nonperforming (e.g., visual arts, photography, literature, sculpture) types of art. She views the arts as humanity's expression of life itself. Viewed in this manner, she calls for broadening the potential of arts in the classroom and using it as a *methodology* for learning and for the teaching of subject matters. Using the arts as a method of learning encourages students to express their understandings of any topic through an art form. This opens the space for literacy through the arts to take place. The arts then become a venue and a catalyst for students' literacies to emerge.

Barton (2014) who advocates the teaching of literacy through the arts argues that there is minimal dialogue in the research literature between the arts and literacy. Most of what exist tends to privilege one over the other. Thus, she offers an encouraging relationship between the two concepts by providing an advanced definition of literacy. She defines literacy as the interpretive and expressive fluency through symbolic forms (aural/sonic, textual, visual, embodied, written or a combination of these) within the context of a particular art form. Through this definition, literacy is viewed as inherently multimodal which allows for the communication of ideas and feelings through multiple semiotic resources and sign systems. Barton (2014) continues her argument explaining

that in the arts, expression and the construction of meaning can be represented in multiple ways including dance, drama, media arts, music, visual arts and using various symbolic forms, different modes and techniques, “as through the written word; visually through images and use of color, shape, shade and form; via movement and the use of the body; or through the manipulation of sound natural or synthesized” which allows for the demonstration of knowledges, understandings, and literacies in multiple forms (p. 9). Thus, arts and literacy are dependent on, and interrelated with the other. They ‘stretch each other’ (Barton, 2014, p. 271). Similar to Barton, many literacy researchers look broadly at literacy describing it as “the use of language, art, music, movement, and other sign systems to explore and expand our world”, which opens the space for multimodal, hybrid, artful, and aesthetic forms of texts to emerge (Short et al. 1995).

The term ‘text’ is usually used to specifically describe, “any communication made up of an interwoven combination of modes” (Bearne & Wolstencroft, p. 3). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) describe texts as units of meaning in various forms. According to Short et al. (2000), “a text ... can be a novel, a piece of art, a play, dance, a song, or a mathematical equation” (p. 165). Thus, texts can be produced through multiple modes, sign systems, and semiotic representations. Jensen and Draper (2015) call for opening the door to exploring a ‘broad notion of *texts* and their accompanying *literacies*’ (p. 6). They argue that we need to shift our conceptions and discussions of literacy from the traditional reading and writing print texts only toward discussions that address a broad range of digital literacies (Mills, 2016), multimodal literacies (Bezemer & Kress, 2016), and arts-based literacies (Barton 2014; Morawski & Rottman, 2016). McArdle and Wright (2014) argue that opening the space for students to create their own arts-based texts provides them with an opportunity to express their conceptual understanding and imagination in a way that goes well beyond what they can communicate through language, in narrative form and through written language.

Moments of teach/ learn(ing).... Doubts and interruptions



After our presentation of the story of the ‘Immigrant Kid’ to students in class and a discussion of the elements of narrative writing, we told students that they will respond to this text by creating their own narrative or biographical texts in order to show their understanding of this writing genre. We also told students that in producing their literacy texts, they are free to choose the forms or modes that are of interest to them. We were opening the door to the alternative and creative modes of literacy in our classroom

.....

Hoping.....

We wanted to avoid instrumental or functional teaching of literacy so, we began by asking students to consider expanding their definition of literacy texts to include drawings, visual images, sculptures, symbol systems, signs, and other hybrid media and digital texts. We also asked them to start thinking of forms other than the print-based to show their understandings of the concepts, the topic, and the genre of the presented literacy text ‘The Immigrant Kid’. Our aim was to help students step through these progressively more arts-based, digital-based, multimedia, or multimodal forms.

We tried to tap their full range of potentials. Our teaching process involved opportunities for the personal and cultural narratives to emerge through multiple ways of representation. Students were very excited of the openness to new ways of showing their understanding. Their interests were split between arts-based texts and digital-based productions of texts.

Students' differences created a challenging atmosphere for my collaborating teacher and myself as we strived to open the space for each student according to his/her own interest. Students' various styles and modes of learning required us to do some self-learning in arts and technology to be able to support them throughout the process of their literacy texts' productions. On the other side, this freedom of choice and power provided to students over how they would like to present their understanding, their meaning-making, and their connection to the literacy text positively influenced their creative options for producing multimodal literacy texts.

A group of students expressed that they hated writing and that they were very much willing to present their understanding of the narrative genre in multimodal artful ways. They wanted to do arts-based forms of texts like the scrapbooks, the dioramas or what the student called a 'maquette', the sculptures, the storybooks with hand drawings, the fabric books, the artful dual language books, and the posters. Students said that their narrative/biographical text representations would be accompanied by a small written piece of their stories.

To help, accompany and support students in the production of their texts with whatever was at hand, we encouraged them to bring any materials or tools that they may have at home; materials that they have used before but that can be used again to creatively produce their texts. We wanted them to think how they can repurpose the unpurposed materials and reuse them to make a bricolage of artful literacy texts. Students showed high interest and creativity while cobbling with the materials that they brought.

For several weeks, we worked one on one with students. We also sat with small groups and individual participants as they designed and produced their texts. We engaged them in talking about their texts and posed questions about their processes. Our dialogues helped establish meaningful connections while producing their creative multimodal texts. Yet, the road to the new and alternative, was not always soft and nice.

At the end of one of the school days, I met some parents who were picking up their kids from school. Those parents had some comments that they wanted to share with me about what we were doing in our literacy classroom:

“Doing art work at school is nice and fun, but I didn’t expect it to be done instead of something else like learning the language. I think students should do some real work in their literacy classes.” One parent said.

Another expressed her thought saying, *“The arts are like any kind of other outside/extra activities, like sports for example. They can’t be interfering with what’s required in the students’ literacy curriculum.”*

And a third one said, *“My daughter has her Arabic literacy classes once per week hoping that she gets a good foundation in learning the reading and writing of the language. I didn’t know that the teacher has the privilege to waste time on doing arts in her class. I will be happy for my daughter to do art work in her literacy class if that is going to count toward her grades.”*

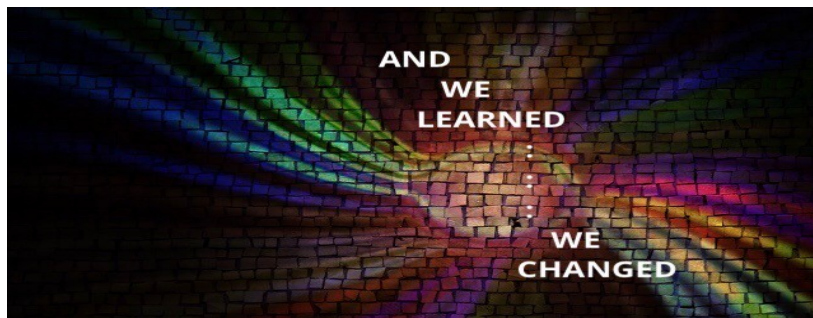
I listened to the parents’ comments and remembered the engaging learning environment that I had with students on that day. I remembered how they were striving to think of new forms to portray and communicate their ideas, concepts, feelings, and their lives through innovative and aesthetic literacy texts and artefacts. Those parents’ reactions toward our ‘literacy through the arts’ approach returned me back to when I was in my primary and middle school years. During those years, I was displaced several times due to war. I had to move to an afternoon school, which was not usually the norm for studying in the primary and middle school years. The school administration had to manage our timetable in a way to include adequate time for finishing the curriculum. When they came to the decision about what gets included or eliminated from the daily learning timetable, the arts and the physical education were the first to be crashed to the cutting room floor. Arts-based activities were always considered for extra-curricular settings. They were marginalized or squeezed into very short time slots and sometimes even off the entire curriculum. The focus was often at the expense of the arts. Teachers

even used to stop doing any activities outside our workbook pages that was filled with skill and drill exercises.

Reflections Moments of teach/ learn(ing) and becoming as teachers

... the way of teaching demands a long journey that does not have any easily identifiable destination ... It is a journey that I believe must include a backward step into the self and it is a journey that is its own destination.

(Tremmel, 1993, p. 456)



The participative and collaborative approach of my inquiry was founded on the principle of a non-linear, non-orderly, and flowing cyclic process of research, reflection, and action (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013) that my collaborating teacher and I engaged with. Reflection was a significant step in the process from which new learnings, understandings, and knowledges emerged. As we worked together through cycles of action and reflection, we engaged in an ‘extended epistemology’ of various ways of knowing, in making sense and drawing conclusions, and in developing our understandings of the reality (Heron & Reason, 2008).

The above-narrated teaching-learning episode along with the parents’ comments was a very meaningful and important lived situation for both of us: holding a meeting for reflection on action was in order. The research journal I was writing regularly is full of bittersweet recollection notes on this episode.

We discussed how students reacted and interacted with the story presented to them about ‘The Immigrant Kid’. We tried to understand why they weren’t engaged in the same way with the story proposed in the curriculum (the planned). Even before listening to parents’ comments, Naziha and I were already living the tension of a curriculum-as-plan and a curriculum-as-live(d). The planned curriculum was always

present in our conversations. Naziha was always concerned about finishing what was required in the students' textbook which is referred to at school as the curriculum. Many times she commented, "if we continue in this open teaching strategy with students, we won't be able to cover what they are supposed to learn in their textbook." This concern was always understandable because she was under the pressure of accountability for teaching the curriculum and what's in the textbook as planned. She was also living the tension between the desire of engaging with something more creative and the desire of stability by just implementing what is in the plan of the prescribed curriculum. This feeling of ambivalence and uncertainty made us recall Ted Aoki's notion (2003) of a living pedagogy. We realized that we were living in the tensioned space of the two curriculum worlds..... It was difficult. We reminded ourselves that we were dwelling in the site of generative possibilities and the first sign for us of these numerous possibilities was the multiplicity of students' creative suggestions for producing their literacy texts. We decided that we didn't want to be technical implementers of the curriculum and comply with it as planned. We want to 'inspirit' our curriculum (Aoki, 1987, p. 357) by bringing our students' lives and lived experiences into it and opening it to the fullness of possibilities in our literacy classroom.

For us, parents' attitude toward what was happening in class and how their children were experiencing literacy was an important topic of discussion and reflection. Their skeptical opinions about the teaching of literacy in their children's classroom helped us realize that their understanding of literacy was still limited to reading and writing the language. This made us feel responsible of educating the school community on the concept of literacies and how the demands of our contemporary life and the various communication channels have shifted literacy from a singular to a plural form (New London Group, 1996). We wanted them to understand that since their children naturally move between art, music, movement, drama and language outside their schools, our role becomes more than teaching how to decode, encode, and make meanings using the written text and symbols (Larson & Marsh, 2015). This demands preparing their children to be multiliterate learners who are able to engage with the multiple sign systems, to engage with arts-based, digital based, and print-based literacies.

Our reflection provoked us to think of possible means to develop parents' perspectives of literacy teaching and education. We brainstormed ways that we can

implement with the parents throughout our project and after its completion. We agreed that to help broaden parents' perspective of literacy, we needed to engage them with literacy practices beyond reading and writing only, to let them experience with their children the various ways of meaning-making using the multiple modes other than the words and the written texts, to involve them in future meetings and school conferences on what we mean by the new and alternative ways of teaching literacy to their children, and to discuss with them the reality that there is no one way or mode and no single route to being literate.

Our reflection, which was full of comments, notes, critiques, and generative ideas made us realize that our teaching-research journey was not without bumps, difficulties, challenges, and tensions. Yet, it was a great opportunity for our learning. We proceeded with a higher determination to break through some of the crusts of convention, to live in-tension, and to learn how to dwell aright.

A need not an add- on

Saubern (2010) argues that language and verbocentrism have always been privileged over other ways of knowing. The climate of a steady diet of worksheets and workbook activities have always been dominant in literacy teaching. Literacy classrooms are also dependent on the pencil or the keyboard. These tools were favored over the paintbrush and other arts-based tools, techniques, and methods despite research that shows what can happen when we include the arts in our school literacy curriculum (Cown & Albers, 2006) and integrate it as a method and approach to teaching and learning (Goldberg, 2001). McArdle and Wright (2014) state, “art and literacy are complementary – they enrich and inform each other and should be comprehended and applied as ‘a package’ (i.e., as parallel, symbolic forms of learning and knowing” (p. 31). Though research reveals that a lot of teachers and parents value the arts and see them as important to student education, we can notice that the arts have always struggled to have a place in the curriculum (Davis, 2008).

The parents' comments in the above vignette about our literacy class work showed a disjuncture between appreciation and need. They care about the arts but they want their children to learn the language, specifically reading and writing. Parents could not recognize the influence of these arts-based activities on their children's subject-based

learning. They could not also realize that doing literacy through the arts can be a venue for enriching and expanding their children's experience, development, and productivity across the curricula.

Albers (1997) states, "if the function of art is to see, . . . , then art as literacy becomes a powerful element of language arts curriculum. Through engagement with making, viewing, and talking about art, students become more familiar with, articulate about, and reflective upon their own meanings and the meanings of others" (p. 11). Witherell (2000) describes the effective infusion of the arts into the teaching practice by arguing that teaching should be done through the arts in order to achieve good learning outcomes. Language development can be then a process accomplished through the various forms of the arts. According to Respress and Lufti (2006), "the arts pay off most expansively in basic reading skills, language development, and writing skills. Increase in general academic skills also show up and appear to reinforce these specific literacy-related developments" (p. 26). Thus, students' engagement in arts activities promotes their vocabulary and fluency skills and competencies. Dawn (2013) explains how integrating the arts through the curriculum promotes students' cognitive development and enhances their intellectual abilities. Some scholars and philosophers like Maxine Greene (2001), who is a luminary in the field of aesthetic education contributed in developing programs at the Lincoln Center Institute for the Performing Arts to help teachers employ works of arts that enrich students' experiences in learning and life in their classrooms. Greene uses the word "awakening" to describe the effect that the arts have on our imagination and on our ability to notice what is happening in the world.

Albers (2007) states, "... art strengthens learning skills, increases a learner's attention to detail, incites the imagination, and encourages new perspectives on the world" (p. 13). Engagement in the arts also helps students meet the challenges and opportunities of our highly advancing world and our twenty-first century life and workplace (Hayford & Kattwinkel, 2018). A lot of literature advocate integrating the arts into literacy teaching because it provides students with opportunities to use various forms of modalities which would be the means for a more creative type of learning (Carney et al. 2016). In her book, Alida Anderson (2015) presents a plethora of supporting literature and research that show how providing students with opportunities to show their arts' potentials influenced their linguistic, cognitive, and/or affective skills. They also influenced their

content area and literacy (oral and written) learning. Rebecca (2015) presents how her student who discovered visual art as a way of knowing developed a greater appreciation for her love of writing and enhanced her sense as an artist. Opening the space for her to respond to a variety of class engagements through writing and drawing allowed her to broaden her understanding of what it means to be a writer. The student had the chance to experience the unique meaning and potential of art to create and express meaning in ways other than the verbal and the written only which moved her beyond the limiting barriers of traditional views of literacy.

Albers and Cowan (1998) argue that despite all the advantages of teaching through the arts which is documented in the literature, this did not encourage all teachers to adopt arts-based pedagogical approaches. Many teachers still avoid opening spaces for students to use the arts in their learning process. They avoid offering arts-based teaching opportunities for their students because they feel that they are inadequately prepared in the arts. They work with the arts in limited ways reducing them to “formulaic, crafts-like activities” (Eisner, 2003, p. 29), or to iconic symbols and images that are created to decorate classrooms and hallways (Collins, 1995). Cowan and Albers (2006) explain that very few efforts have been put to help students develop their literacy in art in subject areas outside of the arts. Zhao (2011) discusses the danger of depriving learners from education and literacy through the arts in an era that considers artistic capabilities and creativity highly valued assets and arts-based approaches are significantly engaging for some students. In their book *Transforming Education through the Arts*, Caldwell and Vaughan (2012) provide findings of research from around the world that show how the arts have transformed learning for disengaged students. Also, Pearman and Friedman (2009) discuss how the arts can be a powerful way to unlock literacy for students of diverse backgrounds, intellectual and cognitive abilities, and learning styles. According to Droessler (2013) the arts connects them to their own cultures in addition to exposing them to various perspectives of cultures from around the world.

Arts related research meaning making... learning through the arts

Cowan and Albers (2006) who had no formal training in the visual arts were both committed to a personal inquiry into the role of arts and literacy. They believed that opening spaces to students to experience learning through multiple sign systems enables them to perceive their world in new ways. They engaged students in creating artful

semiotic texts that showed their imaginative creativity in addition to their precise and clear writing. The semiotic texts that students created in their classes were deeply rooted in their lives and their stories reflected their understanding of the world around them. Using familiar and simple materials like cardboard boxes, shredded paper, tempera paints, and glue mixture; students built a three-dimensional (3-D) papier-mâché mask that captured in color, line, and texture the essence of the focused experience the students wished to portray. Then they drafted personification poems that related to their masks. The authors argue that when students represent meaning using communication systems including visual arts, drama, dance, music, photography, films, and language, they develop more interest in literacy learning and richer and more complex literacy practices.

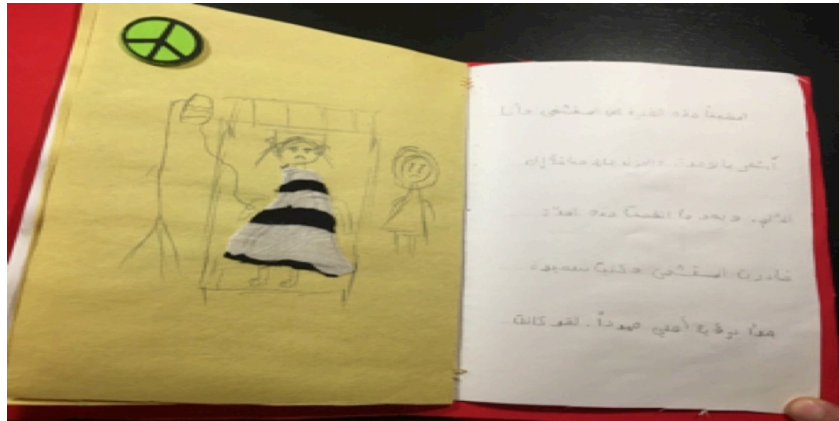
Dawn (2013) argues that “the arts contribute to, and enrich, our lives in ways that go beyond the three “R’s” of education” (p. 2). Klein and colleagues (2015) present how handcrafts incorporated into science instruction engaged students and enhanced their science learning. Students’ creation of handcrafts required the use of tactile modality. They used their hands and senses to produce movable books of animal skulls with exciting cover art and figural transformations. They also responded to an assignment of creating an animal skull from items found at home. To create their handcraft science object, students did drawing, coloring, painting, cutting, folding, gluing, and sewing, which connected practical, real-world knowledge to more abstract concepts and improved memory through physical actions (McNeil & Jarvin, 2009). They had to reorganize ideas, make connections between new and previous knowledge, dig deeper into the content to be able to creatively convey their ideas through their handcrafted objects. Arts and crafts integrated with science added depth and personal interpretation to the curriculum, thereby reaching a larger classroom audience for science (Schneider & Boody, 2013).

Student: Leya

Swinging and singing ... sketching... writing my story of a sad ending

Illustrations, whether they are done in rebus (using images to represent words), collage, chalks, or other media, should enrich, highlight, and help tell a story. Illustrations can convey thoughts, actions, events, emotions, and experiences to a reader that words may not be able to.

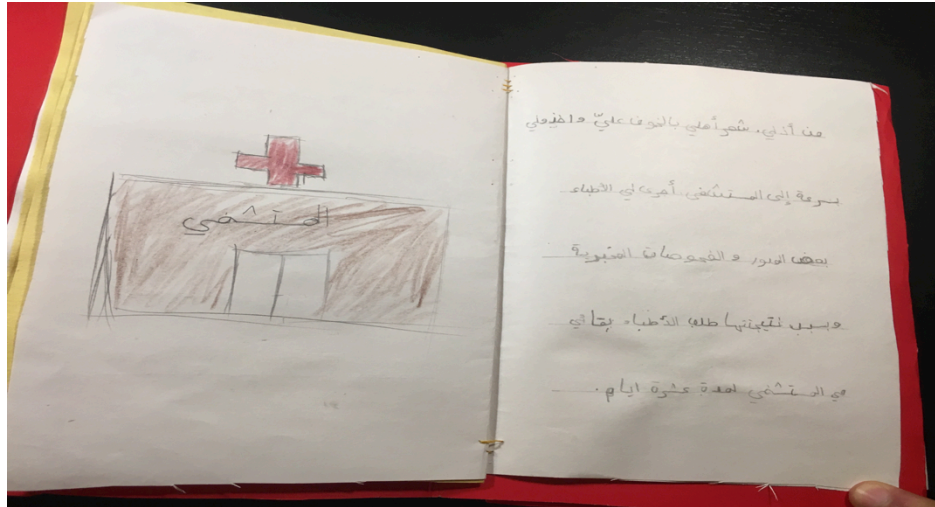
(Thompson, 2005, p. 21)



Through drawing and other art tools and materials, Leya wanted to represent her understanding of the narrative writing genre. Using visual arts, she illustrated her story in an aesthetically decorated book. The little highly energetic girl experimented with combinations of symbols and a written text. She used her own way of sketching/drawing of her story and supported her images with the written sentences.

Her drawings, which were her preferred means of communication to present her inner thoughts and feelings involved memory, experience, and imagination to show her understanding.

Leya's visual narratives combined with the written sentences told the story of her injury while she was swinging and singing happily with her cousin during one of the summer vacation days in her country of origin. She used her illustrations to express her evocative story about what happened to her and how she felt when she had the injury which made her stay at the hospital for ten days.



The illustrations she used were not only a decorative appendage but also a text by themselves. They were as much an intellectual process as writing was because they required her to creatively research whatever materials she had available and to think and feel with an artist's eye.

Leya looked for any recyclable materials that could be found around at her home. She used any found materials such as junk or product packaging for her work. The simple art materials like pencils, crayons, and markers were some of the available tools she used to do her drawings and express herself through the story presented in her book. She also used the fabrics of some of her old shirts to make the clothing for some of her characters in the story. Through sketching and drawing Leya responded to an inward feeling through an outward mode of expression. The inward feeling was her aesthetic response and the outward expression was the form of representation, which is drawing.

(Researcher journal, April 2017)

Theo van Leeuwen (2006) discusses the importance and influence of visual communication in our lives. He argues that visual forms of communication like the images should be treated as seriously as linguistic forms. van Leeuwen's highlight of the importance of visual communication was clear in Leya's representation of narrative writing through her story. Leya started her drawings and developed her images even before thinking about her written text. She explained,

"I feel like I can't write my sentences if I don't tell my story through my drawings and images first."

Olshansky (2008) maintains that creating visual images can drive narrative writing and students' use of descriptive language is far greater when they create pictures before they write. Sunday (2017) argues that drawing continues to be examined as a precursor to writing. This explains Leya's feeling of comfort starting with the illustrations and then moving to writing her story.

Leya's drawings of the story greatly contributed to her self-expression and writing skills. Sanders's (2010) study on the relationship between artistic and written composing presents how one academically resistant student's composing experience showed favour of creating artwork first on which the writing was built. Similarly, Leya constructed her story by drawing her pictures first and then using these images to scaffold her writing. After organizing her thoughts through the drawings, she used her oral language skills to explain her work to me. When drawing and talking intertwined, her meanings emerged and expanded. She wasn't completely using the standard Arabic language, but the vocabulary and sentence structure in her oral expression were good enough compared to her level in learning her heritage language. Despite making many spelling and grammar mistakes in her written text, she was still writing with confidence. Her main focus was on the pictures that she was trying to draw in order to illustrate her story. Narrating her story through an artful book demonstrated her ability to interweave written words, spoken ones, and pictures together. She practiced reading the images and viewing the words. Her languages intertwined.

Leya was able to make me live her experience and understand the story from her own perspective. The drawings were not an add-on activity, but a clear rehearsal of her writing. There was a harmonious interrelationship between her written narrative text and the drawings/ illustrations. The written text that described the setting, the character, and the events in the story were dependent and interdependent on the pictorial text or illustrations. Leigh and Heid (2008) state, "the nucleus of language is the word; respectively, the nucleus of art is form" (p. 7). Drawing was the form of representation that Leya used to express her knowledge, understanding, and herself. Using drawing to present her story was the opportunity for her to show some of her literacy strategies. The representation of her story through the arts like drawing, the use of art and craft tools along with her written and oral text and other symbols and signs showed the multimodality of her literacy learning.

Literacy through the book arts



Johnson (1993) encourages doing literacy through the book arts. He states, “when children plan and design a book of their own, integrate handwriting, lettering, illustration, layout, and binding as a vehicle for the communication of ideas, a superior kind of mental activity comes into play” (p. 13). When I asked Leya about what type of book she would like to create for her story, she replied, *“Just a book that is designed and decorated in the way I want.”* To illustrate her idea, she showed me pictures of a set of various books that were made through the arts. She said, *“I am not sure I can do some of them because they are complicated but I can attempt doing one simply designed for this time. I can take the challenge of doing other more advanced ones later.”*

Leya planned her book one page at a time. She described her plan for the pages saying, *“Since I will be writing in Arabic, then I will use the right-side pages for writing and the left-side pages for drawing.”* She drew the sequence of pictures of her story on plain small papers of different colors. To add her written text about each of the pictures, she wrote the text on draft papers first, *“I don’t want to make mistakes in the story. Can you review my sentences and correct any grammatical or spelling mistakes before I write my text in the book”*, she said.

Though I helped her edit her sentences, she still wanted to write them in pencil on the pages of her book. She seemed to trust her drawing and art abilities more than her written language ones. She said, *“I know that everybody will evaluate my language based on the text of my story.”* Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) state, “unlike writing, illustrations are not ‘corrected’ nor subjected to detailed criticism . . . They are seen as self-expression rather than communication” (p. 16).

Without noticing Leya was performing the drafting, writing, and editing stages of a good writing process (Sokolik, 2018). She felt good about herself as an artist and a meaning maker which facilitated crafting her written text. The bonding and the decorated book cover were the last steps in her process of making her book. To make her book cover, she used some leftover cardboard material that she was using for a project in her regular day school. On the book cover, she wrote the title at the top, glued some craft purpose butterflies and flowers in the middle to illustrate the summer time of her story, and finally she added her name as the author of the story. Through her few pages of the book, Leya lived the experience of authorship (Fisher, 2006). The pictures and the text were inextricably tied. The artistry of her words and visual images were a nice aesthetic experience for her (Greene, 2001). Leya’s pictures not only made her words look better; they also showed her imagination and passion. When she finished her book, she thanked me for letting her do the story in this format saying,

“I like the idea of making an art book story. I felt comfortable to create what I wished and to make mistakes without the fear of grading . . . It was hard to draw myself falling off the swing but I am happy that I tried to show what happened to me as much as I could. I think my illustrations are clear. . . . Maybe I could work more on the clothes that the characters in my story wear. The fabric that I used was not enough . . . I am quite happy with my story, but if I do it again I would make a giant book with some more real materials that I can glue on the pages of my book or maybe I can do a big poster . . . I am proud of my end product. Also, being able to make my book from found objects or discarded materials at home was very exciting for me. I think this is one of the wonderful activities I have had in my literacy classes.”

The hands-on and manipulative nature of the arts and craftwork that Leya was engaged in such as the cardboard cutting and folding, choosing and positioning pieces of various types of papers, spreading glue and glitters, drawing, coloring, and painting allowed her to use various kinesthetic, cognitive, and artistic skills which maintained her attention on the task and the content (Lilliard, 2005; Sobe, 2004).

Doing literacy through the arts evoked Leya's imagination for exploring new possibilities. When she felt that art as a sign system was valued in our class and could be used to convey meaning just as written languages, she enthusiastically proceeded in showing her understanding and learning about narrative writing through the production of her story in a multimodal artful book. Leya's visual text/drawings structure is described by Albers (2007) as the narrative text or artwork organized in the manner of a story. Through the drawings there are narratives that tell the story. With this narrative visual text, Leya organized her visual story that represented recognizable captured moments or actions from her narrative story. The two language systems that she used; art and writing, worked symbiotically in tandem with each other and expanded the meaning of a literacy text (Eisner, 2002). This experience not only enhanced and expanded Leya's thinking, writing, and meaning making abilities but also her multimodal reading of the world. Her multimodal artful literacy text can be thought of in relation to theories of cognitive pluralism and multiple intelligences, which support the multiple ways of meaning making, the diverse modes of communication, and the expanded view of human intellect (Gardner, 2011).

Providing Leya with the freedom to work according to her own areas of interest and to link the different pathways to creating meaning— visual arts and the linguistic had a big influence on her creative and innovative approaches to literacy. Leya's experience of composing an arts-based literacy text and presenting it in a book makes a compelling argument for the motivating and engaging power of arts integration in literacy teaching. Magro (2016) argues, "we must also use the 21st century tools and modalities and encourage our students to do the same in their explorations and representations of learning (p. 202). Therefore, teachers are encouraged to support creative ways of showing understanding in their classrooms by opening opportunities for students to bring their individualities and multiple literacies into their curriculum and to experience the full possibilities of literacy through the arts (Sanders, 2010).

Student: Sabine

My autobiographic scrapbook... and ... My bunny

Education can learn from the Arts that the limits of language are not the limits of cognition. We know more than we can tell ... we need art forms to say what literal language cannot say.... what schools need to attend to is the cultivation of literacy in its many forms. Each form of literacy provides another way to be in the world, another way to form experience, another way to recover and express meaning.

(Eisner, 2002, p. 5)

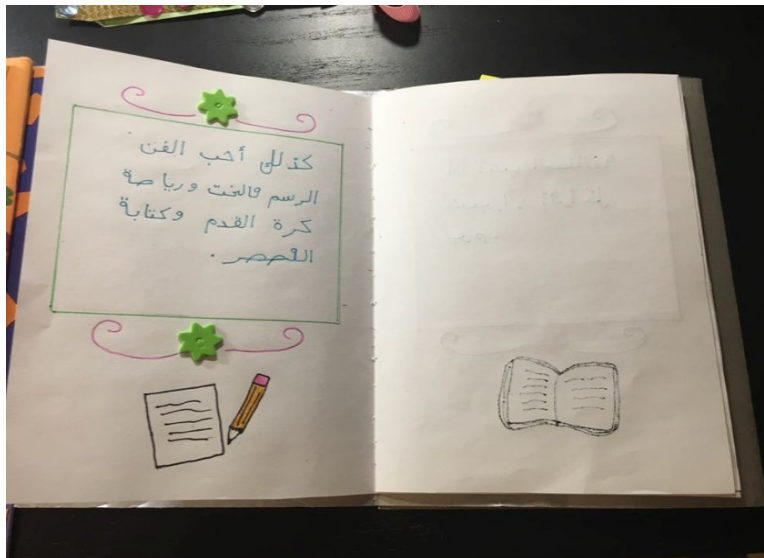


Expanding the possibilities of communication, representation and meaning-making into the world of the visual arts made Sabine decide to produce a sculpture of her favorite animal and to write about herself and her hobby of clay work and sculpting in what she called an “autobiographic scrapbook”. She explained that she likes working in the arts and doing craft work using various types of clay and paint. Leavy (2014) argues that our visual arts-based representational forms are broad. They can include photographs, graphic novels, collages, paintings, drawings, 3-D art, knitting, quilting, doll making, ceramics, and sculptures. Serafini (2014) comments on the multiplicity and variety of visual images that we usually encounter stating, “the visual images we encounter are most often experienced as *multimodal ensembles*, a type of text that utilizes various *semiotic resources* [like] sculptures, painting, music, photography ... to convey

and represent meaning in particular ways” (p. 2). She explains that sculpture is a mode that has the potential of expressing and communicating meaning. It can simply be referred to as a 3-D visual embodiment of something or someone that can be used to tell a story or express any particular concepts (Albers, 2007).

Producing a sculpture made of clay was Sabrine’s preferred way to show her understanding of the narrative genre of her literacy lesson. She used her creative artistic and aesthetic abilities to sculpt her favorite animal, the rabbit, and to briefly write a text about herself in an artfully and aesthetically designed book. The written text that Sabrine developed as a companion to her rabbit sculpture was a short narration about her describing her position in the family, her love for her mom, and her hobbies that highlighted arts (drawing and sculpting) as the two main art forms that she loved. Sabrine explained to me that she was happy with what we did in our literacy class. She loved making a sculpture of her rabbit and enjoyed writing the few sentences in her scrapbook that accompanied her sculpture.

“While I was doing my sculpture, I felt that I am doing something meaningful to me. I felt that I am learning because as I was moulding the clay, I was also thinking about what I wanted to say about myself after I finish it. I felt like an artist, not a student in a literacy class. I knew that when I do something in art, I could grab everyone’s attention. It is not like just writing a dull small text.”



This activity tapped into Sabine's emotions and was a profound source of learning for her. She effectively communicated her understanding and emotions through her arts-based text; the rabbit sculpture and the scrapbook. The experience of creating an expressive artifact and living the depth of meaning helped Sabine develop her affective and aesthetic ways of knowing and being in this world. She inscribed her thoughts, made them concrete, and learned to give form to her ideas and feelings through her sculpture. The artful written text and the sculpture were the two different modalities that Sabine used for the purpose of representing her understanding of the narrative genre.

Margot Grallert (1992) comments, "by communicating a personal experience through artwork...students discover that their hands know a lot that their heads didn't know they knew" (p. 88). Sabine used her hands to express her love of doing artwork through clay and to show her hobby of sculpting. She explained, "*I find clay is as easy as using crayons for drawing. I like working with clay to make my sculptures.*"

Callaway and Kear (2012) argue that students like working with clay because it is easy to manipulate, very responsive to touch, and can be the medium for representing a multitude of various characters, shapes, and forms with an infinite variety of decorative features. When Sabine presented her rabbit sculpture to other students in class, she told them about the different textures of clay and how she usually treats it to make a rough, smooth, or silky finished sculpture depending on the character or model she is trying to build.

Sculpting and writing developing cognitive and motivational skills

Sabine's skill in art and craft used to show her understanding of the narrative literary genre reinforced her cognitive and motivational skills (Baker, 2013). She experienced using her creative thinking, imagination, aesthetic sense, and artistic skills. Working in clay to make a sculpture of a rabbit required her to use her various life experiences in order to develop the concept of a bunny. She had to think of concepts related to dimensions like the shape and the size in addition to concepts of physical features like the color, body parts, and other elements that would show her ability in integrating the various elements that made up her bunny. Her rabbit/bunny sculpture along with the small written text about herself was also a good representation of her creative expression, innovative thinking and her language abilities.

Wiebe and Smith (2016) state, “when one is creating art, one is also in an analytical mode of thinking”. Barton, Sawyer, and Swanson (2007) who worked on art representations with third- graders to reinforce new ways of thinking were able to use visual arts and sculpture as a bridge to abstract concepts about reading comprehension for them. Using clay, each student chose a strategy and designed a figure to illustrate it and share it with the class. Students’ arts-based responses through sculptures involved their connection of both kinesthetic and cognitive skills. Similarly, Sabine creatively exhibited a harmonious connection between her hands and her imagination through her literacy learning process. Her artful sculpture was a natural partner to her written text (Caughlan, 2008). It gave her something to write and speak about. It extended the meaning that she expressed through her written text. The artful literacy sculpture engaged Sabine’s head, hands, and heart and made her bring her excitement about it home to share it with her family. Her mom said, “I felt enthusiastic and happy as I was observing the growth in her passion for the literacy activities and for learning.”

Sculpting and writing Tapping interest and developing language skills

Post (Date unknown) who advocates work in clay in schools states, “ ... kids are starving to death for something of value to make or build and call their own; they want a sense of belonging and ownership”. Sabine expressed her love of creating her own artifact and doing direct hands-on activities using concrete materials. This seemed to address her interest and learning style (Goldberg, 2001). When I asked her why she chose making a clay sculpture of her favorite animal, she said, “*Clay is magical ... I can choose to do with it whatever I want ... I usually use clay of different colors and shapes to represent my characters, ideas, or models in a fun way.*”

Creating a sculpture appealed to her artistic and aesthetic senses, and the accompanying written text delighted her and deeply engaged her in the learning. Sabine practiced what Blecher and Jaffee call ‘bridging’ (1998, p. 168) by using her experiences from the arts discipline to think of concepts and representations in her linguistic literacy discipline. Winterbourne’s (1996) art project for developing a creative connection between art and literacy show how one student’s sculpture of a whale and a giant squid prompted him to use descriptive language and advanced his writing abilities when he constructed a short description about his sculpture. Sabine also used her sculpture as an inspiration for producing a short written narrative text (Bearne & Wolstencroft, 2007). She was highly

engaged, so she thrived because she found a place for her preferred learning style and utilization of her preferred modality. Knowing that all possibilities are open for her on how to show her understanding of a narrative genre stimulated her imagination. Thus, she used artwork of sculpting to make meaning of the more traditional sign systems. Her literacy artifact showed her great love and passion for doing artwork and producing something of her own.

Sculpting and writing Developing creativity and artful multimodal literacies

Seeing Sabine's real-world exemplar of an alternative, arts-based literacy text and her creative production of an artful literacy artifact was very promising. Naziha and I felt that we were nurturing the creative process, developing creative productivity, and providing an environment conducive to the creative medium. Sabine's and other students' capacities and creativity were encouraged through the act of meaning making in artistic forms. Wright (2010) describes this saying, "every instance of representation through art is new and creative ... children never just mechanically apply rules when they make an artwork... This is why composing through art is such an important and fundamental form of creativity" (p. 2-3).

In her research, Goldberg (2001) presents how one of her student teachers reflected on the meaning of being a learner through an artful sculpture representation and a written statement that described her art expression. The student explained that since she proclaimed herself a "nonartist", she was surprised by her imaginative and creative sculpture that represented the meaning of being a learner. The student teacher explained that she didn't know she might be able to come up with something creative like her sculpture. She wasn't also sure that she would be able to embed all the ideas she had about the meaning of being a learner in the design of her sculpture.

Barton and Freebody (2014) argue that an arts-based approach to literacy learning support students' production of multimodal literacy texts. They present how students who participated in a drama and a dance activity did a self-reflection on their learning by making a self-portrait as a clay sculpture. One student chose clay and incorporated photos stuck onto the clay, similar to decoupage. The student sculpture was a good presentation of her multiple modalities literacy text. Similarly, Sabine's literacy artifact

showed her great appreciation of doing literacy through multiple forms which opened the space of bringing the arts into her text. Ernst (1996) argues,

When multiple forms of expression are honored, when teachers observe and listen to their students, when students become the informants for change, the connection between reading, writing, and art are powerful and ever changing. The frame of learning widens. The picture of learning in that wider frame includes more children, more success, more learning—and endless possibilities. (p. 24)

Sabrine's production of a multimodal, artful, and aesthetic scrapbook that accompanied her sculpture showed the complex but harmonious relationship between the different modes and sign systems she used in producing it. She had the chance to transact with texts that communicate through multiple modes and to express her own multimodal message. Delacruz and Bales (2015) argue that among three kinds of artful human communications that appeared to them, as a special kind of storytelling is the scrapbook. In her scrapbook, Sabrine conveyed her message by interweaving words and images to tell her story, which illustrated also her understanding of the narrative writing genre. The visual images that she developed in her scrapbook were brought into a dialogue with the narrative text. They became more than "illustrations"—a way of capturing what could not be said in words (Yardley, 2008, p. 6). As she integrated both visual art and writing together, she had the chance to engage her imagination and creative thinking to produce her unique form of artful and aesthetic literacy text (Sanders, 2010). She had the artistic freedom, which allowed her to use creative illustrations and make an attractive graphic design to her scrapbook. Constructing her book, decorating it, adding the images, and the written text made Sabrine experience the spirit of literacy through the arts. She saw her scrapbook as a 'sculpture or [a] mini-architecture' (Johnson, 1993, p. 2). When she joined her words and pictures in a book, everything switched into a new gear. She experienced with the two symbolic systems simultaneously and the surface that gave life to those systems (Johnson, 1993). Her scrapbook was an inspiration to her writing. While she had always avoided writing in her native Arabic language, she enthusiastically wrote what she wanted to say about herself in her scrapbook.

Sabrine's expression which was represented in various symbolic forms and modalities embracing both the arts and the written word to produce an artful literacy product or artifact (Wright, 2012) was her form of communication for expressing herself,

illustrating her understanding, and showing her adeptness of making-meaning through the arts. This provoked my collaborating teacher and I to proceed in our approach and just open more possibilities and wider spaces for students' creative ways of showing their understanding of the narrative writing genre.

Student: Joumana

I have very basic competence in Arabic ... Can I make my diorama and tell my story?

[W]hen ... children create art, they can be expressing astonishing conceptual understanding and imagination, well beyond what they can communicate through language, even language in narrative form, and much earlier than can be communicated by them through written language.

(McArdle and Wright, 2014, p. 22)

Joumana, who enrolled in school in the same week of my project commencement, was very enthusiastic to participate in our work. She said, *"I can't write Arabic but I can make a diorama and orally tell my story through it."* I welcomed her idea and encouraged her to go ahead with her creative production of her visual story. Joumana used whatever materials she found available in class and at home. She made a diorama that represented her other land, the place where she and her parents used to live before her family immigrated to Canada. When Joumana finished producing her diorama, she said, *"This is the only place I stay in when I go to my other country. I love this place as much as I love my place here. I still visit it every summer or every other summer."*



Joumana's diorama embodied her place of residence in the village in her country of origin. It was a representation of the connection between the narrative and the visual in an artful and creative way. It told a visual story that was a manifestation of multimodal literacy meaning making beyond the printed text.

Cornett (2017) explains that students can show their understanding of concepts and ideas “by creating a sketch, painting, sculpture, song, poem, dance, pantomime, or skit” (p. 287). Brooks (2017) argues that forms of meaning making such as works of art, drawing, symbols, writing, sculptures, images and diagrams are considered forms of language and a way of communication. McArdle and Wright (2014) state, “[A]rt and literacy are complementary—they enrich and inform each other and should be comprehended and applied as ‘a package’ (i.e., as parallel, symbolic forms of learning and knowing)” (p. 31). The arts are a language for communicating, expressing, and meaning-making. Thus, they are highly similar and greatly connected to reading and writing. However, their processes are based on different symbol systems. While reading and writing use the visual representation of the verbal system—the alphabetic notations; the arts might require using cognitive, kinesthetic, auditory, spatial, and many other sensory systems in addition to the reading and writing (Mills, 2016). Rolling Jr. (2017) argues that what we mean can be conveyed as a text and the vehicle of conveyance can “be as complicated as a novel, as embodied as a choreographed dance, or as simple as a crayon scribble” (p. 46). Humans produce and consume various forms of texts, which range from multimodal texts in both print (e.g., newspapers, magazines, picture books, novels, information books) and nonprint forms (e.g., paper and cardboard structures, sculptures, films, videos, presentations, sound and visual media, emails, and Internet websites).

Students' structuration through the arts can be the way for showing their knowledge and presenting their understanding about various topics and about themselves. In his research, Rolling Jr. (2017) showed how second grade students depicted their understanding of the abstract idea of the term ‘sacred’. Students used any materials that they had available or supplied by their teacher in order to build their structure of a cathedral. They used various symbols like shapes, colors, and numbers in addition to elements of architecture to represent the special meanings they wanted to convey. When I encouraged students to think about their literacy texts in a creative way and attempt

meaning making through various sign systems and modalities, their responses were further from what I expected. Opening the space for multimodal and artful productions of texts allowed them to bring in their individualized interests and to move beyond the recall and memorization levels of learning to a higher stage of creating; a level that is described by Bloom (1956) as the highest level of thinking. Through arts-based literacy development, I was able to creatively engage students in finding new forms of communication to share their ideas like (visual arts, handcrafts, sculptures, images, drawings, in addition to reading and writing) while using their preferred modes of communication (Harste, 2005).

Beyond words ... Re-envisioning literacy through creative non-linguistic artistic texts



Joumana's diorama was the creative and innovative outlet she used to express her inner thoughts and her life and to show her understanding of the narrative genre. Her visual, non-verbal, non-word, and arts-based text, the diorama, expanded her communication to include her ideas and feelings that were beyond words. When I asked her to talk about her diorama, she was highly emotional. She explained every piece of it and told me about its meaning to her. She also described how this work has evoked her emotions. Her expressions were mostly connected to her life back home and her childhood memories with her grandparents and her cousins.

Joumana felt at some point that she needed to develop her artistic skills and look for more tools in order to be able to convey her message through her diorama. She explained

that she wanted to use some wires, wood, and small boxes under her crêpe paper as a basis to support her structure to show the steadiness and rigidity of the earth where her house is built. However, she was only able to use any available mouldable or rigid materials to build her structure or diorama. The left overs of the cardboard pieces, the popsicle sticks, the crayons, some glue, and other pliable materials like the plasticine, play-dough, and crêpe paper were the main tools or materials that she used to build her diorama.

Joumana's structure was a representation of her identity as well as her society. It was her story, her own curriculum creation that showed the emotional connection to her home of origin and deepened her understanding of her previous place of residence back in her country. Doing this artful visual form to show her understanding allowed her to reimagine her childhood places and her nice childhood memories. Through her diorama, Joumana showed me how literacy learners can easily absorb and use new languages offered to them and to bring their multimodal ways of knowing into their learning.

Kress and colleagues (2014) present how a group of students produced a three-dimensional model as a response to an introductory science lesson on cells. Students used the available resources for their meaning-making purposes. This process of producing artful 'scientific' representations showed students' learning, creative thinking, and aesthetic potentials, as it demanded a lot of decision-making in ways which a purely linguistic approach would not have. The students' development of their three-dimensional cell reflected and extended their understanding of this scientific concept. Similarly, when Joumana was working on her diorama she once expressed to me,

“Because I was allowed to show my understanding through modes other than the reading and writing, I was able not only to present my understanding of the narrative genre, but also to tell more about myself, and to communicate my ideas more easily. I also felt that I have the authority over my choices. I was the one who could decide what and how to produce my text. This time, it was not what the teacher wanted me to do exactly, but what I liked and wanted to do. Though it took me some time to think of the things that I wanted to have on my diorama, how to position the different things, and what colors and materials to use, it was worth all the thinking, rethinking, and the change I have done several times to my diorama.”

The details of Joumana's diorama represented the parallel processes of the arts and literacy. What she considered essential to the process of writing was also essential to the production process of her diorama like focusing on generation of ideas, drafting, revising,

presenting, and reflecting. They also showed how reading, writing, and art mediated her understandings of her identity, her connection to the world, and the meaning of narrative writing genre (Crafton et al. 2017).

Creating artful literacy texts ... Prompting language communication skills

Richards (2017) states, “art experience ... drawings and illustrations have assisted ESL and immigrant children to develop language skills... [Their] spontaneous art and graphic narratives... can provide powerful insights into [their] complex social and linguistic worlds” (p. 144). Joumana’s visual narrative represented through her diorama required the use of multiple ways of expression. She used the visual, auditory, kinesthetic and/or tactile sensory modes which opened the way for developing her print-based language skills. When she was given the chance to talk about her diorama as an art form itself, she gave a detailed description of all the artistic elements that she used in her diorama such as shapes, lines, textures, colors, kinds of paper, cardboard material, and all other arts and craft materials that made the overall composition of her structure. She told the class why she chose having those elements and how they contributed to the overall comprehension of her text. This reflected the depth of her artistic and aesthetic skills and creative imagination. It showed also her deep engagement in the literacy classroom. When she was asked to verbally present her story through her produced literacy artifact, she composed her story in relation to every detail in her diorama. The farmland on which she lived, the trees, the bridge, the animals’ barn, the small river, the leaves, the colors, her everyday activities, and her emotions and feelings all emerged and her story came to life. She described the position of each element on her landscape and their spatial relationships. When she made her 3-D bridge on her diorama, I asked her to tell me more about it: *“This bridge has helped us survive many difficult days. It was like a blessing for us. It helped us cross the river to reach the other end of our village.”*

Joumana used both language and art communication systems. She utilized verbal and visual symbols and employed multimodal forms of expression like talking, drawing, painting, and other non-linguistic arts-based forms of meaning making in order to express her ideas and feelings and to communicate her personal narrative. Engaging with the arts expanded Joumana’s expressive language outlets and gave her the opportunity to build

her vocabulary, her construct of sentences, the use of syntax and semantics and an overall richness of oral expression ability (Barroqueiro, 2010). It helped her communicate her story and feelings in a way that she might not have been able to express as freely and fluently as through her spoken language aided by her artful visual diorama. Developing her visual arts mode through her diorama was parallel to developing her cognitive and language domains (Narey, 2017).

Creating artful texts... a path to literacy ... a way to empower

When Joumana started producing her own literacy text that represented a narrative piece, her activity became as a catalyst that motivated her sense of agency and advocacy (Goldberg, 2001). She felt that she did not have to repeat learned information. She rather had the agency and power to show her deeper understanding of her literacy lesson content by creating her own literacy text through the alternative and creative form that she liked. Joumana felt that she is empowered (Robertson, 2010) as she was an active designer of her own arts-based diorama. She showed her appreciation for the opportunity that was given to her in this literacy class,

“I am very happy with my final product for this class. I hope that I get this opportunity another time. If I have another chance of doing literacy in this way, I will do a 3-D structure of my story and I will use more tangible materials to show a more lively representation of it. I will add more characters to show my family members and I will dress them using real fabric.”

The art and literacy activity provided Joumana with an engaging and memorable connection to her literacy lesson content and her previous life in her home country. As proposed by the multiliteracies framework (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015), the diorama offered her the chance to integrate both formal (i.e. the academic) and informal (i.e. experience) kinds of learning that permeated her personal life. Her artful diorama text did not only contribute to her literacy, but it was literacy in its own right (Albers, 2007).

Stretching imagination continued... More creative literacy texts emerged

As this research inquiry was founded on the theoretical underpinnings of multiliteracies theory which calls for developing multiple literacies and embracing multiple forms of communication and meaning making modalities such as linguistic,

auditory, visual, artistic, sensory, kinesthetic and others, I continued opening possibilities for students to show their understanding of their literacy lesson on narrative writing genre using their linguistic and nonlinguistic skills. Recognizing the multimodal ways in which communication is now taking place and building on the diversity of students' linguistic and cultural resources were some of the main premises considered to continue my work for this inquiry. Promoting students' heritage language capabilities through developing multimodal, artful, and digital text forms was also a main consideration throughout my journey. I continued offering the chance for students to stretch their imagination and creativity, and to produce literacy texts and artifacts that would support their language development. This approach to literacy learning allowed for more forms of meaning making to creatively emerge opening the space for one student to show her interest in creating her multimodal artful dual language book.

Multiliteracies and the advocacy of dual language books in heritage language teaching

If we agree that maintenance of students' home language is important for family communication, students' cognitive and linguistic development, and their future contributions as Canadian citizens within a global community, what steps do we take to encourage students to take pride in their linguistic accomplishments and to expand their first language and literacy skills?

(Cummins, June, 2007, p. 3)

Heritage languages scholars advocate developing, nurturing, and maintaining heritage language of the various communities in Canada due to the many positive influences they have on heritage language learners' identities and their cultural and linguistic development. Cummins (2014) argues that when students are given the opportunity to learn and practice their home language in addition to English and/or French, they become more fluent, literate, and more educated than students who lose their home language competence in the process of acquiring one or both of the official dominant languages. He documents the increase of meta-linguistic awareness that bilingual students experience as the result of processing two languages. McLaughlin (1986) reports on a study carried out by German linguist Rehbein (1984) which found that

The ability of Turkish children to deal with complex texts in German was affected by their ability to understand these texts in their first language. Rehbein's

investigations suggest that there is a strong developmental interrelationship between the bilingual child's two languages and that conceptual information and discourse strategies acquired in the first language transfer to the second.

(McLaughlin, 1986, pp. 34-35)

Cummins and Danesi (1990) contend that various community languages should have a place in the education of children of diverse ethnic, language, and cultural backgrounds. A plethora of literature document the various initiatives and multiple forms used to promote and strengthen the teaching of heritage languages through various in-and-out of school programs (Cummins, 2014; Egbo, 2008; Trifonas & Aravossitas, 2014). Dooley and colleagues (2016) for example advocate using multiple language books to promote students' multilingual capabilities, celebrate their cultural and linguistic diversity, and motivate students to view their linguistic talents in a positive way. The authors use the strategy of paired and shared reading where a guest from the community teams up with the teacher to read aloud and discuss a multilingual or a dual language book with students. The book usually includes the home languages of at least some of the students in class. Naqvi (2012) argues that using dual language books with heritage language learners is an engaging strategy that helps teachers bring students' identities and diverse linguistic resources into the classroom and accelerates their literacy development. Thus, teachers in multilingual contexts need to design pedagogical spaces that build on their students' linguistic, social, and cultural resources. They are encouraged to open the space for students to create their own dual language books in order to support their heritage language development.

Cummins (2007) argues that teachers need to rethink their "Monolingual Instructional Strategies". One of the methods that Cummins suggests to bring in multilingual teaching into their language and literacy classroom is the creation of dual-language books. Drawing on the construct of multiliteracies, Cummins (2014) described several research projects that focused on building upon the multilingual competencies of students and expanding the conception of literacy with respect to modality. In his project of Engaging Literacies, students created digital dual language storybooks, dual language PowerPoint presentations, and a digital documentary film where they integrated their home languages. Cummins showed how engaging students in creating their dual language books helped them learn both languages and increased their motivation to continue to develop their home languages. The creation of dual language books facilitated their

language and literacy development. Dual language books can also be the tool that teachers use in their classes to encourage students to practice their oral language skills and have more communication between them and their classmates. Appelt (2008) for example, employed dual-language books written in both French and a variety of mother tongue languages spoken by the parents of children in some kindergarten French immersion classrooms. She demonstrated how dual language books allowed her students to share their linguistic knowledge and cultural roots with their teacher and peers. Viv Edwards (2009) also reports on the academic, personal, and literacy skills that students developed through their productions of bilingual, multimedia stories in Basque.

A lot of researchers and scholars advocate involving parents in the development of their children's heritage language due to the multitude benefits on children's affective, cognitive, and personal levels (Melo-Pfeifer, 2015). Parents' of diverse language and cultural backgrounds and origins are encouraged to read dual language books with their children as this is one of the approaches that promote and maintain the family's heritage language. Paige and colleagues (2017) whose multiliteracies project supported learning in a home-language, wanted to help immigrant students recognize and value their home languages and utilize their 'funds of knowledge'. They encouraged students to link their home languages to schoolwork. So, they involved parents as contributors to their children's learning by creating pedagogical approaches that would allow students to take advantage of resources outside of the classroom like their parents. The researchers report how engaging parents in their children's school work while focusing on using their home language have opened opportunities for them to celebrate their culture, heritage, and values and broadened their children's learning opportunities. Also, a group of researchers from Thornwood Public School in Mississauga worked on a project called 'The dual language showcase' (<http://thornwood.peelschools.org/Dual/>). They engaged students in creating dual-language book bags, comprising of dual language books and multilingual audiotapes for use at school and at home. The researchers highlighted how the use of dual language books increased students' awareness and appreciation of different languages and cultures. They presented how promoting literacy development in the students' heritage language facilitated the acquisition of literacy in their second language. The researchers also encouraged parents to read dual language books with their children and to open conversations about the books' content with them. Students' listening to dual

language stories from their parents engaged them in the discussion of ideas, values, skills, and concepts that were introduced to them in both languages; heritage and one of the two official languages in Canada. They were also exposed to basic vocabulary, grammatical structures, and conventions of texts in both languages which promoted their language learning.

Student: Dana

My two languages in one book... can I use Google translate?

When we free ourselves from these monolingual instructional assumptions, a wide variety of instructional opportunities arise for teaching students by means of *bilingual instructional strategies* that encourage cross-language transfer and the development of language awareness. Among the bilingual strategies that can be employed to promote literacy engagement in both L1 and L2 [is] the *creation of dual language multimedia books* [where] students write creatively in L1 and L2 and amplify these identity texts through technology.

(Cummins, 2005, p. 7)

With her enthusiastic but low voice she addresses me
I have a suggestion ... I wonder if you agree

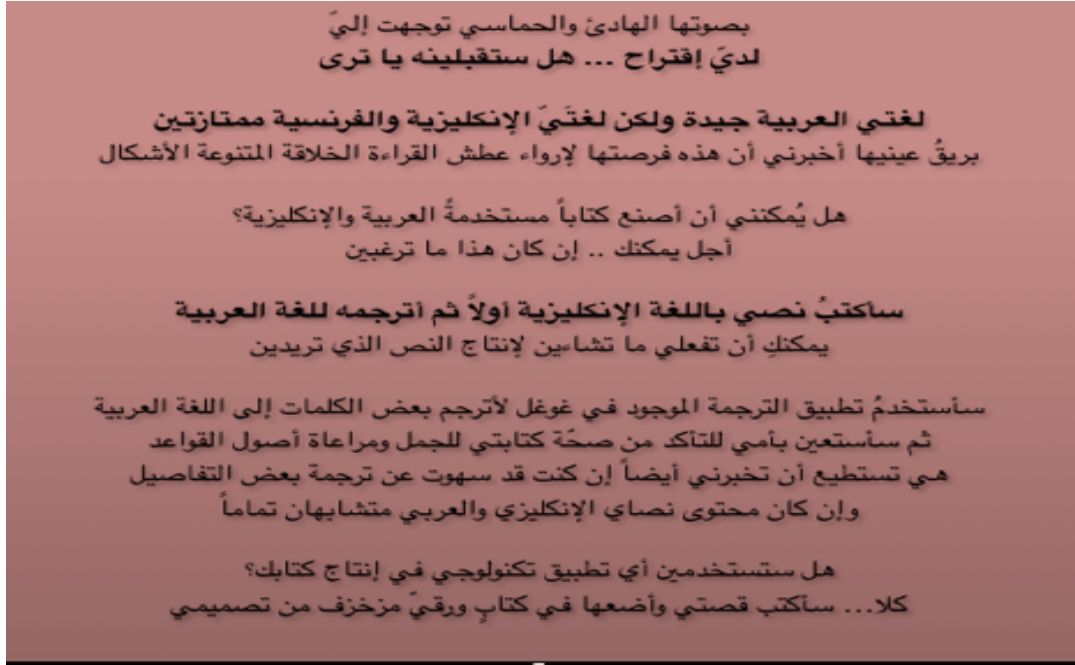
I am good in Arabic but excellent in English and French
Her shiny eyes told me that this is her opportunity for an innovative
multimodal literacy quench

Can I make a book and use both Arabic and English?
Yes, you can... if that is what you wish

I want to write my text in English first and translate it to Arabic next
You can do whatever you want to produce your text

I will use Google to translate some words to Arabic
Then I will turn it to my mom to check my spelling,
grammar, and sentences. She can tell me if I have missed
translating any details ... and
whether I have exactly the same content in both text versions.

Are you going to use technology for creating your book, I ask?
No... An artfully designed paper book with a story about me



Opening the space for students to the multitude possibilities available to show their understanding of the literacy lesson motivated Dana to create an artful dual language book. Ingham (1986) argues that developing dual language books is an opportunity to show the importance of recognizing and accepting students' cultural background. The content of Dana's text showed cultural and personal relevant dimensions of her identity. Her imagination, personal background, and lived experiences were part of the content of her produced text, part of the meanings that she made, part of her own live(d) curriculum (Aoki, 2003); a curriculum that was one of the multiple and diverse curriculums in the classroom. She brought to her work something that Maxine Greene (1995) refers to as a "lived world" in addition to her understanding of the artistic form. Stevenson and Deasy (2005) argue that doing literacy work that is connected to students' lives and personal stories exactly represents 'Arts Literacy' (p. 55). Students feel that it is authentic as they see that they are presenting their unique experiences, which gives more value and appreciation to their literacy and arts' texts productions. Through her home language and English as a second language, Dana shared things about her culture, her country of origin, her family, and her areas of interest in her studies. Dana's self-representation of her individual accomplishments, her experience at school, and her aspirations through an artfully produced book was her means of making something special and strengthening her identity (Delacruz & Bales, 2015). She enthusiastically explained, "*I am happy that I*

was able to write things about myself and my family in my home language as well as my English language.” Thus, Dana’s artful dual language book was an extension of her as a person and an expression of who she is and what she is. It supported exposing her multidimensional, multilingual, and multicultural identity.

In her process of producing her dual language book, Dana developed her language, arts, and cognitive skills. Watching a YouTube first and following some written instructions that led to her end product, was a rich experience that involved her language skills and enriched her vocabulary. Also planning for her story content, brainstorming ideas, finding the appropriate vocabulary words using Google translate, and getting her mom’s feedback on her sentence structure and grammar rules greatly contributed to the final version of her story in both home and English language. She used her linguistic registers of her two languages to express her ideas. Dana used what Sneddon (2009) refers to as the transfer of knowledge and skills between languages. Her existing language skills and her prior knowledge and experience acted as a scaffold for her writing. Because she was personally invested in creating her dual language story, she spent considerable time doing revisions, additions, and modifications to both content and structure in order to get it right in both languages. Finally, she shared her book, reading page by page in both languages and explaining the images and pictures that she used and why she decided to have these illustrations with particular elements, sizes, shapes and colors in her book. She focused on a picture with her family members and another one while doing her presentation at her school.

Cornett (2011) states, “art making and written composition are good partners since both have to do with exploring, experimenting, and organizing ideas using tools and materials” (p. 148). Both artists and writers go through the process of doing drafts, revising, and editing to reach their final products. Dana’s artful dual language book gave her an opportunity to demonstrate her abilities as a writer and an artist. Her arts and language skills were clearly visible in producing her dual language book. She not only employed the arts to make an attractive, illustrative, and nicely decorated book but also she used her language skills to show her capabilities in authorship and interpreting. Her end product passed through several refinements of revision and editing. Bearne and Wolsetencroft (2007) explain that there is a close relationship between visual arts and the language arts. Beginning writers for example interchange drawings and words and

integrate the two symbols to make meaning. As such, Dana's pictures were as much a part of communication as language was. The language she used helped her to communicate her ideas through the use of letters and words while the visual arts helped her to express her understandings and meanings through the colors, lines, shapes, and textures of her visual images (Cowan & Albers, 2006). Thus, she used various semiotic possibilities of the world around her to create her literacy text. She used the three modes of talk, text, and pictures to express her ideas which showed an intrinsic harmony between the visual and literal aspects of her book. Examining the three dimensions of her composed text through the dual language book—content, visual images, and linguistic text—as well as her talk demonstrated her artful multimodal literacy development.



Cornett (2011) writes that meaningful art connection with other academic disciplines engages and promotes the higher order thinking skills, develops language skills, and leverages learning. Creating an artful dual language book and working through the process to reach the final stage of her book production not only provided Dana with an opportunity to develop her language skills but also promoted using her cognitive critical thinking skills. For example, she had to find out about the different cardboard materials, papers, and adhesives. She spent some time looking at and scrutinizing some of the books' formats that are introduced through the book arts, layout, and design. Also, she had to make the planning, organizing, designing, along with taking decisions and

making choices of how to create her own book. All these processes and stages required using her cognitive critical thinking skills (Dawn, 2013).



Dana also felt complete ownership of both the process and the product of her intellectual and imaginative work which led to her sustained engagement. She did everything possible and used whatever available materials like art tools, crafts, multimedia and technology; in addition to consulting people like her mom and me to ensure the coherence of both language texts which resulted in a well written and artfully illustrated dual language book. Cummins (2005) illustrates this point stating:

.... the creation of dual-language books (multimedia or just print) encourages students to take ownership of the target language in the context of a cognitively challenging (but engaging) task. They are enabled to express (and amplify) their identities through both languages and, literally, see themselves as bilinguals who can communicate with a wider audience by using two languages rather than just one. (p. 10)

Providing Dana with the opportunity to write her book in both English and her home language and to present it to her class and school colleagues made her take ownership of her learning experience and positively influenced her self-esteem and her confidence in using her home language (Kalaway & Kear, 2012). She expressed,

“Giving me the choice of producing what I want to demonstrate my understanding and also providing me with the freedom to produce my text in two languages made me feel that what I am doing is important. I was very excited while doing it and I felt that I can’t wait to share it with everybody in my family and my class.”

Dana’s sense of ownership was a significant element that promoted her motivation for producing her artful dual language book. However, she didn’t deny the challenges that she faced when sometimes she wasn’t able to find the suitable vocabulary to express her feelings, ideas, and the humorous things that she wanted to share in her book which made her seek her mother’s support sometimes. Schechter and Ippolito (2008) argue that involving parents meaningfully in their children’s learning is often a challenge even when teachers explicitly recognize parents as partners. However, that was different for Dana’s mom who expressed to me once that helping her daughter in producing her dual language book was a fun literacy task that provided her with the opportunity to spend more time with her daughter, connected her with school literacy activities, and made her think of ways to encourage Dana in connecting more with her home language. She also told me that she was delighted with her daughter’s thinking displayed through the use of her home and English languages, drawings, selections of images, the conversations that occurred while she was decorating her book, and her overall use of aesthetic and artistic skills. Thus, Dana’s solicitation of her mother’s support during the process of creating her literacy artifact demonstrated how creating and using dual books can be an effective way for involving parents in developing their children’s home languages (Naqvi et al. 2012).

Literacy and the arts ... Interwoven, entangled, and complementary disciplines

Israel (2009) states, “literacy can scaffold the understanding of art and art can expand and contextualize literacy” (p. 131). The natural connection between literacy and the arts and how they go hand in hand was demonstrated through Dana’s artful dual language book. Before proceeding to the creation of her book, she showed me some of the suggestions for the artistic design of her book. She brought pictures of examples of the many ways of binding, types of papers and endpapers, the possible material that she might use for making a colorfully designed cover of her book. She thought of the pictures that she might use to accompany her print text and to decorate her book. She also described the colors, shapes, textures, and some arts and crafts materials that she

intended to use in creating her literacy artifact. Finally, she presented herself and her story in a well-crafted dual language book that was a work of art by itself. Wright (2010) states, "... every instance of representation through art is new and creative.... children never just mechanically apply rules when they make an artwork... This is why composing through art is such an important and fundamental form of creativity" (p. 2-3).

Dana's dual language book was the platform that provoked her to think creatively as she wove her different artistic skills and blended her two languages. Her creative arts and aesthetic skills were demonstrated through the different actions that she took to reach her final artfully designed and graphically illustrated dual-language book. Making her own book by hand required her arts, kinesthetic, tactile, and aesthetic skills (Cornett, 2011). She creatively thought of the variations in book sizes, shapes, and materials. She accurately measured and cut out the papers, cardboard material, and some images. Then she selected the family pictures, illustrations, and decorations for her book. Drawing was part of her book art production. Thus, she creatively drew some of her visual images which are described by Bustle (2004) as the most powerful meaning- making devices in our lives. Technology was also part of her book production process. She produced some of her pictures using an application on her laptop. She found the drawings of the flowers, printed them out and used her arts and aesthetic skills to color them. She used pencil crayons, markers, and stickers to decorate and write in her book. The artistically designed page layouts and visual embellishments added and conveyed her aesthetic pleasure. She once expressed,

"I am very happy that I was given the chance to choose whatever I wanted and do it however I wanted in order to produce my literacy text. The fact that it was not 'write a paragraph' encouraged me to try my art skills. I liked the idea that I could write and draw, color and choose pictures the way I wanted and the choice that I liked. I feel proud of my work."

Sneddon (2008) argues that engaging students in reading simultaneously in two languages has a positive effect on their motivation, pride, and levels of achievement. Dana expressed that she is happy with what she achieved for creating her dual-language book; of her written text and the art and craftwork she has done to it. She said,

"I am proud to show it to other students and teachers... I am willing to go on for producing more books later. The process to producing my book was inexpensive and my book is attractive. I think students of two languages need to have books written in both their home

language and their English or French language. I think they like to see two language books that are nicely and artistically designed.”

Dana’s feeling of pride is consistent with Appelt (2008) findings in her research with French Immersion students. Appelt described how students who were engaged with dual language books felt proud when their heritage languages and their cultures were featured in the classroom. Dana’s ideas were also in line with Gregory’s (2008) assertion that working in multilingual schools has made her notice that children need to have access to stories written in their mother tongue. They need to feel the pride of their home languages. Also, Lotherington and Rahemtula (2017) describe how their collaboration with teachers to facilitate producing multimodal texts resulted in students’ production of a talking book with individual simple messages on each page that featured the proud voices of each student in class and their original art. The researchers report on how previously some students were reluctant to work in their home languages until they participated in the ‘Imagine a World’ talking book. Working on producing a talking book while using their home languages was a breakthrough for them, a catalytic moment for change. Edwards (1998) states, “. . . dual texts represent a valuable way of keeping other languages in high profile; they also offer opportunities for teachers to encourage children’s bi- literate development” (p. 61). Thus, students need to be encouraged to write in their home language, when appropriate and teachers need to “honor the written and spoken language of a culture. Students need to retain their heritage while learning the language that will help them to become successful citizens in a global society” (Towell & Smilan, 2009, p. 6). This does not only support students in developing their home language, but also celebrates the different cultures and integrates the multiliteracies that exist in the diverse classroom.

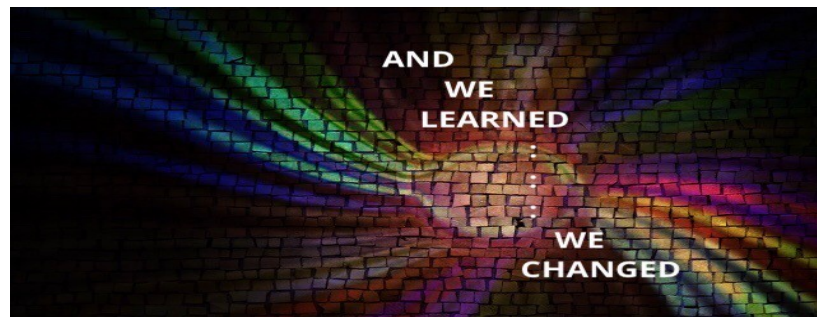
Dana’s drawings, selected pictures, written text, decoration, and the overall graphic design of her book were not just illustrations of her verbal text, not just ‘creative embellishment’; they were part of a ‘multimodal’ conceived text, which is described by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) as a “semiotic interplay in which each mode, the verbal and the visual, is given a defined and equal role to play” (p. 113). Dana demonstrated the meaning of multimodal literacy texts by using both home language and English language in producing her text and combining the visual, the written, and the oral components in the form of images and illustrations. Her visuals reflected her thoughts, emotions, and

feelings which enriched the overall representation of her text. The various actions toward producing an artfully designed dual language book showed how Dana wove familiarity with creative forms of representation other than the print based one only into literacy and how a dual language book that is artfully designed can support literacy development efforts. The design of her artful and aesthetic book showed how the different modes were used “in combination—in *ensembles*: of image, writing, and layout” (Bezemer & Kress, 2016, p. 7).

Reflections Moments of teach/learn(ing) and becoming as teachers

Teaching and learning are interdependent, not separate functions. In this view, teachers are primarily learners. They are problem posers and problem solvers; they are researchers; and they are intellectuals engaged in unraveling the learning process both for themselves and for the young people in their charge. Learning is not consumption; it is knowledge production.

(Lieberman and Miller 1990, p. 112)



By engaging with the participatory action research process, Naziha and I worked collaboratively to put our “knowledge in practice” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). We became active researchers, participants, and facilitators of literacy learning rather than the expert knowledge transmitters or the gatekeepers of consumed knowledge. While managing our collaborative teaching/learning environment, we were excited seeing students teaching themselves instead of waiting to receive knowledge from us. Our nonlinear and flexible teaching approach and the fluid and dynamic learning environment made our role more complex and uncertain. We learned that we needed to be ready and open to the possibility of multiple pathways to students’ engagement and learning. Our students were not restricted to any specific way of showing their understanding and presenting their modes of meaning-making. We were active observers supporting them throughout their journey of creative productions of multimodal literacy texts. We sat with them, observed their interactions, encouraged them to produce imaginative and creative

works that connect what they know to their new knowledge, listened to their conversations and their creative suggestions about their literacy texts, welcomed their multiple ways of showing their understanding, provided our input when needed, and supported them in dealing with any challenges or difficulties they encountered during their individual and collaborative work. After few weeks of our work with students, we began to remarkably recognize that they developed a willingness to prolong literacy engagements and to create deeper, more complex meanings using multiple sign systems.

This made Naziha comment,

I have always talked and discussed with my school colleagues on how we can develop our students' motivation and engagement with literacy in their heritage language classroom. We have been trying various strategies and teaching approaches. We sometimes succeeded in influencing them and increasing their engagement. Yet, after seeing students' interaction in this project, I can say that I am very excited that we tried this creative multimodal literacy approach in my class.

We spoke of how students' attitude toward literacy in their heritage language classroom has changed and how this project has transformed their understanding and knowledge of literacy. We shared our observations during students' brainstorming of their ideas to their arts-based literacy texts and during the production process of their texts. We both concluded that students now have a better education about print-based, digital-based and arts-based forms of literacies which we hoped they can discuss and transfer to their parents. This way they will act as our supporters in changing some parents' conception of literacy that is limited to reading and writing. Also, we discussed how students' knowledge of multimodal literacies has greatly developed and their interest in learning their heritage language has increased. We both agreed that to engage students in their literacy learning, they shouldn't be confined to a narrowly planned curriculum, rigid criteria, and one mode of literacy. We highlighted and expanded the discussion on our observation of how students were fully engaged when they noticed that we are recognizing their life experiences and opening the space for them to present their texts through various modes while also using whatever materials they have available. Students' productions of stories using the book arts made us realize that much of what was locked inside them was released through the arts. Their artful literacy texts unlocked their potentials to communicate in ways different than the reading and writing only. We

learned how working in a collaborative participative classroom using a multiliteracies/ multimodal approach contributed to student language development, creative and aesthetics skills, motivation, and enhanced our own knowledge of literacy teaching and learning.

Naziha and I discussed also how the arts fueled students' excitement, unleashed their imagination and released their creativity to engage with literacy in their heritage language. Not only students brought various used materials from their homes to reuse them in their artful books, but we, the two teachers did the same. Naziha came to class one day with some materials and tools like cloth, threads, buttons, and other used items and offered them to students saying, "take this stuff, you might need them for creating your texts. I want you to be creative in producing your artful books". Students worked in and out of class to produce their arts-based literacy texts. It was a surprise for us especially that some students weren't previously showing interest in learning their heritage language, yet they were able to demonstrate through their artful literacy texts that thoughts cannot be reduced to words. They used the arts as one of the multiple ways to create meaning and to communicate their ideas, emotions, and values. As Eisner (2000) explains, the limits of language do not determine the limits of our thinking. We recalled Joumana who was a new student in class and who had a very basic level in the reading and writing of her heritage language, yet she was able to produce a meaningful and artful diorama (maquette) that represented her house and community in her country of origin and to tell her story through it. We discussed how Joumana and many other students used the visual arts symbol system and its elements of color, shape, and line as their alphabets (Cornett, 2011). This reinforced our conviction of how much the arts are connected to literacy and how much it can expand the number and kinds of communication pathways for our diverse students.

Transfer of knowledge and skills between English and students' heritage language was one of our significant observations through Dana's creation of her artful dual language book presented above and Mohamad's digital dual language story that will be presented in the next chapter. The process toward producing their dual language books engaged them in many learning opportunities which influenced their overall heritage language learning experience. It showed us how working in two languages can support students' heritage language learning, stimulate their reading and writing abilities, build

their confidence in using their heritage language, develop their heritage language identities, motivate them in using various ways to communicate and make meaning, and bridge their two worlds. We noticed how creating dual language books motivated Dana and Mohamad to come up with their own techniques to teach themselves. We recalled how they had their individual ways to look for translations of some expressions and to find the right vocabulary words. This provided them with a great opportunity to develop their reading and writing skills. We also recognized that opening the space for students to create their dual language books promotes their multiliteracies/ multimodal skills, develops their language learning in both languages, and enhances their cultural knowledge. This motivating and creatively engaging experience added a new approach to our literacy teaching and learning in the heritage language classroom.

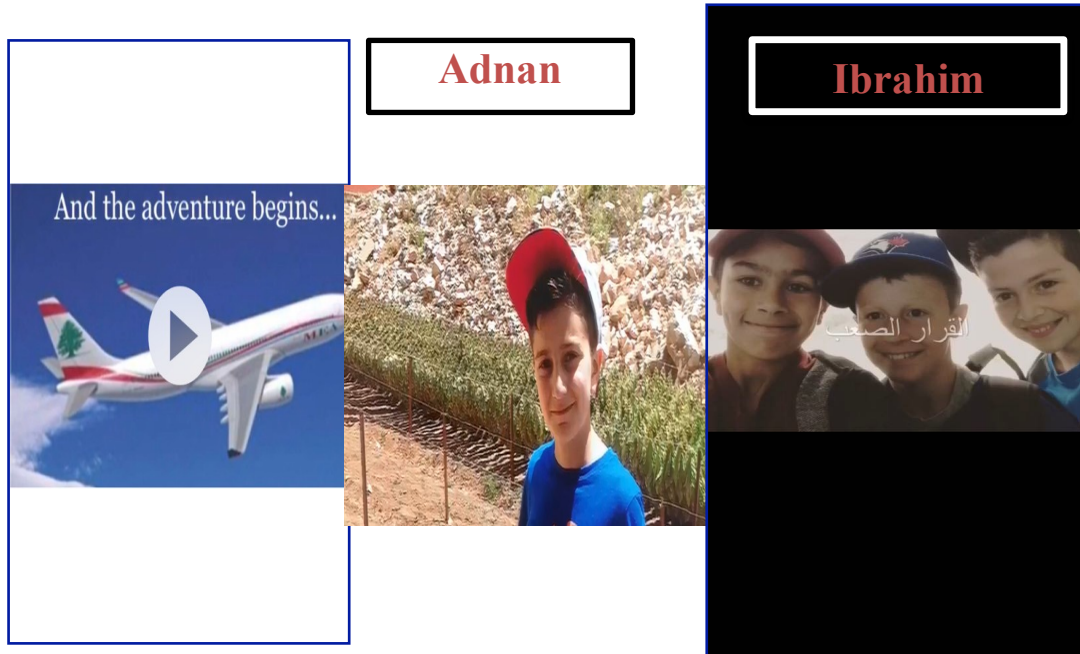
Watching our students' creative engagement and interaction with their multimodal arts- based productions of literacy texts enriched our own understanding and knowledge of what constitutes literacy practices in the classroom. It also affirmed our belief that learning and teaching are about "expanding the space of the possible and creating conditions for the emergence of the as-yet unimagined. [They] are recursively elaborative processes of opening up new spaces of possibility..."(Davis et al. 2006, p. 225).

More openings L(IT)eracy through the digital world

Students' productions of literacy texts in this project showed how shifting their work from the traditional use of language and the sole focus on language mode of meaning-making into the creative and multimodal forms of literacy was highly engaging for them. The above examples demonstrated how a lot of students thrived in our literacy classroom where opportunities of multimodal arts-based literacy texts creatively engaged them. This enriched the development of their literacy skills and nurtured their artistic gifts. Students' thriving and creative literacies continued to grow through another group of students who comfortably lingered in other forms of expression and produced multimodal digital-based literacy texts.

CHAPTER FIVE

A TAPESTRY OF DIGITAL TEXTS: WEAVING HYPHENATED NARRATIVES THROUGH DIGITAL STORYTELLING



Mohamad



Video-stills from three students' digital texts which were layered with the spoken text, "My story of being from two countries".

Discursive expectations, conventions, and rules determine and constrain the possibilities for texts. In order to begin imagining how discursive traditions constrain academic texts, we only need to consider how differently our research might look if we used poetry, film, hypertext, music, or photography, for example, to present our projects and conclusions. My point is simply that texts shape our understandings, and we need to be more self-aware of the ways that we construct texts as artifacts in language, texts that could be constructed in a host of alternative ways.

(Carl Leggo, 2004, p. 107)

Digital literacy is an important entitlement for all young people in an increasingly digital culture.... To be digitally literate is to be able to make and share meaning in different modes and formats; to create, collaborate and communicate effectively and to understand how and when digital technologies can best be used to support these processes.

(Hague & Payton, 2010, p. 2)

Stories take us into our own and other worlds... They enable us to better understand the familiar, but also to make connections to the unknown. They engage our minds, but also our hearts. They can illuminate, but also challenge. And when we become authors of stories, we take a significant further step.

(Anderson and Macleroy, 2016, p. 1)

The actual digital story is the tip of the iceberg, below which are a number of artifacts that can be used to assess traditional literacy, including planning documents, scripted narratives, treatments, story tables, storyboards, and self-assessments, as well as music, art, recorded oral presentations, and other prized examples of student work.

(Ohler, 2013, ch.1, p. 12)

Digital technology for the 21st century learners: Multimodal digital textual landscape

The highly advancing technology of the 21st century in our global society transformed the modes of oral and literate communication and broadened the repertoire of literacy skills required by the young in the world. They have expanded the meaning of literacy to include “multiple, dynamic, and malleable” knowledge and skills needed to engage with “cultural and communicative practices” within our increasingly multicultural and multilingual classrooms and environments (National Council of Teachers of English, 2013, para. 1). This demanded more creative and innovative approaches to literacy instruction and learning in-and-out of school and resulted in a big influence on students’ multiliteracies/multimodal skills, language development, cultural understanding and awareness, and overall academic performance (Carrington & Robinson, 2009). Acknowledging the multiple types and forms of literacies made educators promote the integration of digital literacies in their teaching practices and engage students with many tools of digital technologies. Macleroy (2016) advocate developing students’ digital literacy skills by opening opportunities for them to engage with multimodal composing using the affordances of digital technology. Vasudevan, Schultz, and Bateman (2010) state, “despite a proliferation of opportunities for multimodal composing outside of school, all too frequently youth only read and compose paper-based printed texts inside of school” (p. 446). Many teachers still resort to traditional paper-and-pencil as a dominant approach rather than tapping the twenty- first-century digital resources often available at their fingertips in schools and the world at large (Crawley, 2015). Lankshear and Knobel (2013) argue that students need to be provided with opportunities to experience the affordances of the new technology and practice the new literacies available in our advancing digital world.

Jason Ohler (2009) states:

Being literate in a real-world sense means being able to read and write using the media forms of the day, whatever they may be. For centuries, consuming and producing words through reading and writing and, to a lesser extent, listening and speaking were sufficient. But because of inexpensive, easy-to-use, and widely available new tools, literacy now requires being conversant with new forms of media as well as text, including sound, graphics, and moving images. In addition,

it demands the ability to integrate these new media forms into a single narrative, or “media collage,” such as a Web page, blog, or digital story (p. 30).

Bull and Anstey (2019) argue that the advent of digital technology has produced an array of new texts that were not possible in the late 20th century. These technologies have also changed the concept of text from its traditional written word perception to something that can be produced through live technologies while incorporating elements of music, art, colors, movements, images, or sound effects such as those presented in videos or films. Using the new technology to produce texts that incorporate a variety of meaning making systems became a need for educators to help support and create multiliterate individuals. According to Bull and Anstey (2010) a multiliterate person need to understand and be able to use traditional and new communication technologies in addition to engaging with new texts in a variety of contexts and audiences. Thus, educational institutions and teachers are expected to raise awareness of students about the range of educational technologies that they could use and how these technologies support their language and literacy development. They need to develop digitally literate students by engaging them with literacies that go beyond the linguistic texts and draw across the multiple modes of communication and meaning-making. With all these advances in the conception and application of literacies, educators and teachers should increasingly engage students with complex multimodal digital literacy practices and forms. This opens chances for them to make- meaning using a wide range of communication expressions including linguistic, visual, gestural, kinesthetic, artistic, auditory, graphic, and digital (Miller & McVee, 2012).

The powerful and engaging potential of multimodal digital composing has influenced students in this research. They produced their multimodal digital stories using images, gestures, sounds, music, and movement which represented their identities and showed their understandings of the narrative genre.

A digital platform for stories ... Heritage language in digital storytelling

Through digital stories, heritage language learners can position themselves in connection to their heritage language and culture in the ways that are important to them. They have an opportunity to talk about who they are and to illuminate the challenges they face in their exploration of themselves and the histories of their families and communities. (Vinogradova, 2014, p. 319)

Booth (2006) states, “reading doesn’t matter anymore, unless we understand that story is the heart of literacy” (p. 65). Stories appeal to people of all ages and across all cultures (Anderson & Macleroy, 2016). They engage our minds as well as our hearts. They help us understand and make connections to the world. When we become authors of our own stories, representing our lives, experiences, challenges, and illuminations, our narratives become embodiments of authenticity. Lambert (2013) states:

Story has many jobs, as a learning modality through memory, as a way to address our connection to the changing world around us, as a form of reflection against the flood of ubiquitous access to infinite information, as the vehicle to encourage our social agency, and finally, as a process by which we best make sense of our lives and our identity (p. 14).

Telling our stories is different than engaging in many other types of communications. When we tell our stories, we become very selective in our choice of words, very sensitive about how we describe interactions, very accurate on pulling out the details, feelings, and memories. We do that hoping to create emotional connections with others and to help our audiences relate their experiences to ours. Radford and Aitken (2016) argue that telling our stories in light of our own experiences makes us strong storytellers. Christensen (2017, parag. 5) states, “how we tell our stories — the actions, the dialogue, the character descriptions — can merely entertain or can reveal the world that shaped us”. Our lives are full of memories and stories that can take us to laughter and joy or tears and sorrows. Students’ lives are also full of recollections and moments that formed them. Those stories are teaching tools. They are lessons from their lives that should not be separated from their curriculum because they are the curriculum itself. Those stories deserve to be told and shared in the format that students like best just as published writers do.

The multilinguistic, diverse, and multicultural environments we live in have influenced the way students tell their stories. The increasing sociocultural diversity of students in language and literacy classrooms, the world’s recognition of the importance of multilingual and translingual teaching-learning practices, and the increased understanding of multimodal communication have encouraged educators and researchers to look at technologies and pedagogical approaches that incorporate multimodal meaning

making and bring students' multicultural and multilingual backgrounds, in addition to their diverse interests and experiences into the literacy classroom.

Macleroy (2016) emphasizes the role of new technologies in developing students' mother tongue, foreign, and community languages. She advocates using students' first languages for their overall language development and emergence of their multiliteracies. Many other language educators have been extensively discussing and advocating for the urgent need to introduce multiliteracies and multimodal materials to the process of learning second, foreign, and heritage languages (Polina Vinogradova, 2014). According to a multiliteracies approach, teaching and learning requires drawing on students' multiple literacies' text types and forms. This involves developing students' multiliteracies through the incorporation of tasks that demand students' productions of multimodal ensembles (Bull & Anstey, 2019).

Zapata (2018) argues that in order to foster the development of heritage language learners' multiliteracies, "instructors could resort to digital media, which would not only be a very suitable source of linguistically and culturally rich multimodal ensembles, but would also offer the tools to create open source tailored to answer the needs of specific populations of heritage language learners" (p. 13). Digital stories as short personal digital narratives that incorporate verbal, visual, and musical narrative modalities, is one of the various digital media meaning-making forms that can provide students with an opportunity to develop their multiliteracies/multimodalities skills. Research that focus on the use of digital stories in second, foreign, and heritage language education highlight the potential of digital stories to make learning more relevant to students' lives, experiences, and interests and to bring in the development of multiliteracies/ multimodalities to literacy education (Hur & Suh 2012; Oskoz & Elola 2014; Robertson, Highes, & Smith 2012). Polina Vinogradova (2014) states:

Digital stories are multimodal personal digital narratives that can address the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse language learners as well as the needs of educators looking for innovative, transformative, and student-centered teaching. (p. 3)

Ng and Nicholas (2009) argue that mobile devices can be used as pedagogical and social learning tools. The endless myriad of available digital resources nowadays facilitate students' productions of multimodal digital stories using either their

smartphones' or their tablets' video cameras in which they have the opportunity to represent themselves rather than attempt to find themselves represented by textbook publishers (Smolin & Lawless, 2009). Students in this inquiry were given the opportunity to engage with their heritage language in ways that reflect today's diverse and multiple methods of meaning making. Opening the opportunity for them to use the digital medium and create their digital texts made them present their understanding of the narrative genre through their productions of digital stories. With the use of technological tools like the smartphones and tablets and accessing various apps to produce digital stories, students in this research developed their traditional heritage literacy skills and their digital literacies. They also developed their multiliteracies/ multimodal skills through socially and linguistically framed dynamic ways.

Chung (2016) argues that digital storytelling can be a good pedagogic tool in the context of community language teaching. My students' motivation to work on producing non-print multimodal literacy texts using various semiotic resources came from the fact, amongst many, that they did not feel proficient enough to do it in traditional school literacy of their heritage language reading and writing. As they engaged in this approach to literacy, they became more creative, more active, and more transformative. They also developed their heritage language and literacy skills by crafting and sharing their own multimodal digital life stories that expressed their individual and community identities.

Between the lines and pages of the upcoming section, I present the innovative and creative set of digital stories that were produced by three technology-oriented students.

Student: Adnan

And the adventure begins A journey to my country of origin



The first time I sat with Adnan after he decided to produce his digital story, he presented to me a synopsis of his story and the technology tools he had as options for making it. He said, *“I like to tell you about the time when we decided to go to Lebanon.”*

He continued, *“At that time, I felt that it was an adventure that included so many happy times, boring times, and some sad times also. I want to tell you about my family there and how they live, the places I visited, the school, the activities I was involved in, and how I used to spend my time. I have a lot of pictures that I can use while telling my story. The pictures are not for me only but also for my family members.”*

Adnan spoke about his story so excitedly and recalled very many details that he wanted to share. I felt the emotional connection to the content of his story. Adnan’s story not only included a specific topic and a sequence of events but also showed the values and traditions of his family and his community. I excitedly listened to Adnan telling about his initial thoughts for his story. However, I noticed a few things that he needed to be aware of.

I said, *“There are two things we need to ensure before you proceed very far in your digital story. First, since you are willing to have pictures of other family members, then you should ask for their consent. If they don’t agree to have their pictures in the video, then you can’t use them. Second, as I listen to your plan of the story, I think it might be too long. You need to try not to exceed the three to four minutes video. This way you can keep the attention of your audience to listening to your story.”*

Adnan responded very surprisingly, *“Why do I have to get the consent of my family members?”* Then he continues, *“I can’t make my story in just three to four minutes. I need to tell you many things. Also, I like the symbol of Lebanon ‘Raouche Rock’ and the views of the sea and the mountains. I am thinking of finding images for them on the Internet to include them in my story. I also like the very famous Lebanese singer ‘Fayrouz’. She is one of the cultural representations of Lebanon. I am thinking of adding her song to my video.”*

Then, whoever hears her song or music in my video will know that this story is for a Lebanese student. I think you will like my story, but let me do it according to my plan.”

Adnan was not very happy about the limitations I had mentioned. However, he was very respectful to the process and agreed to do as required. He still negotiated the video time with me. Observing his high enthusiasm and motivation made me try to keep his task as entertaining and enjoyable as possible. I ended our discussion with a smile and said, “Do what you like but try as much as you can to limit yourself to the appropriate non- exhaustive length of digital stories.”

(Reflections on moments of teaching-May 2017)

Digital technologies have reshaped the outlook of stories and invite[d] us to explore image, sound, and writing in new ways.

(Budach 2016, p. xv)

With his high interest to create stuff using digital technology, Adnan proceeded in creating his digital story. He wasn't sure at the beginning how to start, what steps are involved, and how to get it done and produce his video. However, he was confident that he could learn from You Tube or seek his friends' help. To produce his story, Adnan chose a topic and a meaningful theme that are of genuine interest to him. His ten minutes personal, autobiographical narrative included focused logical and chronological story events, emotional storytelling qualities, and some metaphoric forms of expression (Sepp & Bandi-Rao, 2015). The song and music that Adnan chose represented his land, his background, and his life. He developed a meaningful personal story that incorporated multimodal elements of the visual, auditory, spatial, and print-based sign systems such as his family photos, his country's cultural music, his own voice, and a short written text. The use of different ensembles connected to his personal experiences allowed for synesthesia (Kress, 2010). He worked with different kinds of genres and non-linguistic meaning-making resources using various symbolic means. Through this combination of

verbal narration, visual images, and a musical background, he was able to communicate in an innovative and creative way using the video iMovie editing software.



In the process of creating his video, he learned how to do video editing and what production tools and techniques are available. He not only learned how to use both visual and print texts, but also how to design shapes, change the direction, and the size and colour of the fonts and backgrounds, and how to insert music files that represented his heritage culture. The audio semiotic system included music and his voice where he modified the pace, pitch, and volume to augment the literal meaning of his oral text. Thus, he created a multimodal hybrid text by relating and combining different modes of meaning making (Robertson, 2010).

Adnan's use of his heritage language and cultural artifacts in the form of music and visual images demonstrated the synchronicity between multiliteracies and digital storytelling. The process of his digital story production incorporated multiliteracies into the heritage language curriculum by bringing his own life and out-of class community life into the learning process.



Adnan made a connection between meaning and form in an effective and creative way. He deployed his cultural and linguistic knowledge to produce a digital story about himself using his mom's phone video camera. While telling his story, Adnan kept on



using the standard formal Arabic language which made the story so unique to him. His short verbal narrative was like a script for his story which is one of the steps for creating a digital story. He once expressed to me, *“I am thinking of showing my video to my family members who live in Lebanon. I want to show them how nice my story is with their pictures and the music that I also added.”* Adnan's multimodal digital story which combined a variety of material modes allowed fashioning it and giving it a particular flavor and personal distinctive character. It gave him the opportunity to express himself in his own words, using his heritage language, and in his own voice which fostered his sense of identity, individuality, and ownership.

Student: Mohamad

My family and I in a dual-language digital story A self-representational digital story



Mohamad had the topic of his story ready as soon as we discussed the task of responding to narrative genre. He was so enthusiastic to tell about his life in Canada, his family, his hobbies and activities in both his school and the community center. He wanted to show how he spends his time with other friends from his own community, and what achievements he is proud of that he would like to share with the larger audience. He said, *“I want to create my You Tube channel and upload my video story to it.”*

I was surprised to know that Mohamad is aware of the possibility to use this multimedia tool that can expose him to everybody in the globe. When I asked him how he got to that idea, he answered, *“My sister is very good at this technology stuff. I will seek her help, but if I find that my sister isn’t able to help me create my own You Tube channel, I will go to Google, read the steps, and do it by myself. Also, since I am thinking of having some text in both my Arabic and English languages, I can use Google translate to find some words if I face any difficulty.”*

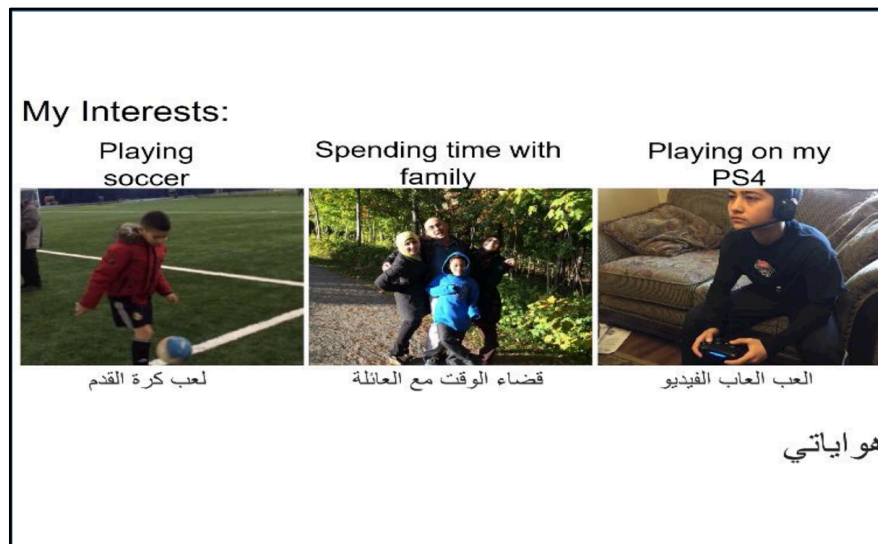
Mohamad was concerned about the medium of presenting his story as well as the content. He said, *“Now I am thinking of what topics or events to include. I want to have the most interesting ones and the ones that I like most. I am thinking of the ideas that I can present, which characters to include in addition to myself, how I can show my feelings in this video and what type of music to accompany the narration of my story.”*

Mohamad’s answer was like a plan of a script. He brainstormed ideas and events, and thought of related pictures and the suitable sound track. This demonstrated Mohamad’s high engagement and motivation to use technology in learning his heritage language. The way he presented his ideas and his plan for producing his digital text also showed his confidence even though he was trying something completely new to him while also using his heritage language.

While Mohamad was so enthusiastic to create his personal You Tube channel and he was ready to go through all the steps required, he ended up doing the video without uploading it to the web. Since his story included some family pictures and personal stuff, he preferred to keep it to a video that he can share with me and classmates.

He presented his dual language video story to his friends while using the standard Arabic language most of the time. He listened to his friends' comments and replied to their questions. He also drove us through the steps that he followed to have his end product of a digital story.

(Reflections on moments of teaching-May 2017)



Hull and Katz (2006) highlight the role of multimedia and multimodality as a powerful form of communication and means of representing self, family, community, and social worlds. Anderson (2016) argues that when students are provided with learning opportunities that require them to produce digital texts that connect with their lives and their families and to be presented to an audience, they become more engaged and motivated to express their creativity and imagination. Mohamad developed his previous understandings of literacy through experimenting with new literacies and engaging with technology to represent himself and his life. He showed to be knowledgeable of Web 2.0

technology. The variety of digital applications that he was familiar with provided scope for him to represent his thoughts and ideas in a range of modalities emphasizing his bilingualism. To start with his story, he was more comfortable writing the script in English first. Then he did the Arabic version of each part of his story with the support of his mom, classmates, Google translate, and sometimes me because telling the story in standard Arabic completely was highly challenging for him.

Mohamad's approach to producing his digital story demonstrated his multiliteracies skills. He illustrated his understanding of how multimodality can be effectively developed with the narrative and how each element can contribute to meaning making (Walsh, 2011). He added various semiotic sign systems and different modes to develop an attractive digital story. He once explained, *"I know that I added too many pictures to my story and a big music file but I think this is what makes my story more attractive to others who will watch it."*

Collecting the visual images and photos that he wanted to use in his digital story was, as he expressed, the most entertaining step. When I once asked him to describe for me where he was in the process of producing his digital story he said, *"I am at the stage of collecting the photos I need for my story. I thought that I might not find all the family photos I wanted to pair with my written and verbal text. I was surprised to find a big number of images and pictures stored in my mom's phone photo album. The photos I used helped me illustrate what I wanted to say in my story."* Then he continued showing his excitement about this activity saying, *"I am happy to present the images of myself and my family and do the voice over. As for the music that I will use in my story, I want to have an ambient sound or a soft soundtrack that would make my story look happier. So, I am looking for a classic music file to accompany my written text and voice over. Now that I have a very good idea of what I want to say in my story, I can see the picture of its various events and details in my mind. Recording my verbal text won't be very hard for me because I will not video record myself while presenting the story. I will audio record my verbal text and then create the images and text that will accompany it. I am still not very good at doing the editing in iMovie application but I can go online and learn all that stuff fairly easily."*

Creating a digital story was a powerful venue to creatively engage Mohamad in learning his heritage language. He expressed his feelings about his produced work saying, *"I liked doing this project of digital story so much. I love the fact that it made me talk about my family which is something important to me. Also, presenting my story to my classmates was a very nice idea*

because I saw how they were excitedly listening to my story. My parents were also happy and proud when they saw what I did to produce my story. They started asking me several questions about its content and about the technical stuff related to the use of technology in my literacy classroom. Now I think that I should go on and produce other digital stories. Next time I will make my own YouTube channel. I still want to do that later.”

The innovative nature of this literacy activity changed students’ attitudes toward their heritage language (Anderson, 2016) and raised their self-confidence in using it. The excitement that Mohamad felt during his work to create his digital story made it an enjoyable and positive experience. This experience not only inspired Mohamad but also other students to tell their own stories in their heritage language using more digital tools and the affordances of Web 2.0 technologies.

Student: Ibrahim

A Road Traveled: Our difficult decision...A story of Immigration and Re-immigration



Two weeks passed after the class started working on their own multimodal literacy texts to represent their understanding of the narrative genre. I see Ibrahim sitting silently and just watching his colleagues either experimenting with an online digital tool to use for their stories or working on other arts-based stuff for their own texts. I approach him and ask, “So what is your story about? Have you decided yet on what you want to do?”

Ibrahim smiles with shyness and very quietly says,
“I have a story in mind but I am still thinking if I can tell it or not. I have very nice memories in this story but I also have things that I don’t like and I am not sure if I want to tell them in my story or not.”

I tell Ibrahim, “You can choose what you like of your story and just make it the way you want.” My answer encourages Ibrahim to talk louder and say,

“Yes, but the story will not be complete if I leave out some details that are very important to me and also important to make others understand what happened. I have already compiled all the pictures that I want to use in my story. I also have written some parts of the story on paper and typed some on a document in my iPad but I am still thinking if I will use all of what I have written. I have two music files that I might use in the video. Each goes with the content of some parts of my story.”

Ibrahim’s answer encourages me to have a deeper conversation on his story. I find out that he wants to tell about the time when he returned back to his country of origin with his family. Ibrahim had a very touching story which he called ‘The Difficult Decision’ and which I could describe as ‘Ibrahim’s story of immigration and re-immigration’.

A lot of conversations and discussions took place between us on his story until he finally took the decision to tell it all. When he finished his digital story and showed it to me, I understood why he was so reluctant about telling everything. It was a story that contained a lot of strong emotions. Ibrahim, who was born in Canada and had to return back with his parents to Iraq after his dad got a job offer there, tells about his feeling as a foreigner, an immigrant, and a stranger at certain times there.

He says,

“I am not a foreign-looking person, but I was treated as a foreigner many times. I felt like I am an immigrant in my own country. I walked on the streets in my country with a constant feeling of being a foreigner. Even our close neighbors and friends were calling me ‘The Canadian’. I was confused at many times. My parents tell me that Iraq is my country as well as Canada. But many people in Iraq did not consider me an Iraqi person.”

Ibrahim was at home that did not feel like home. In his story, he tells how hard it was to make friends or interact with others who perceived him as surprising and who constantly saw him as “from foreign” (Hernandez-Ramdwars, 1997, p. 95). He emotionally presented his longing and nostalgia for Canada and his hope to feel that Iraq is his home. Many of Ibrahim’s recounts of events in his story reflect that he felt a sense of loss and confusion about his identity and belonging.

(Reflections on moments of teaching-May 2017)



While brevity is recommended in the length and design of digital stories and less than five minutes is advocated, Ibrahim’s story was beyond seven minutes due to the details, feelings, and emotions he expressed. Digital storytelling was the encouraging venue for Ibrahim to share his personal story of immigration and present his feelings of being from two countries. It also contributed to increasing his motivation to share a multimedia story using his heritage language (Campbell et al. 2016). Ibrahim blended his

thoughts from his lived experience as an immigrant and his technological skills to translate his ideas into a media-based form of expression. The visual and verbal alternatives for creating his text encouraged him to be illustrative and add more details. Through his digital story, Ibrahim conveyed his values and emotions and connected with his inner self. He introduced his audience to his own culture highlighting his family and community values and explaining the cultural tensions he lived through, his own shifting and fluid identity, and his feeling of being not at home. According to Trinh Minh-ha (2011), “home and abroad are sometimes intuitively determined according to the light of the sky on location, other times by the taste of the native water, or by the smell of the environment.... [yet] home is not only in the eye, the tongue, and the nose” (p. 12). Ibrahim was in his native land and in the place speaking his mother tongue, yet he felt that he is not at home as he expressed in his digital story. He showed feelings of love, empathy, (un)belonging, and confusion and developed a question about his identity and his relation to other people from his country (Mantei & Kervin, 2016).

Ibrahim released his creativity by weaving a meaningful narrative combining music, images, video, text, and voice. The images and music that he used were cultural artifacts that conveyed his emotions and extended the message of his verbal narrative. The emotional content that Ibrahim included in his story represented an important element of creating a digital story. Thus, he was able to create an engaging digital story in which he included images of himself, family, and country of origin while also embedding sound tracks of his heritage music. Then he added a linguistic text to illustrate some of the meanings that he wanted to make clear to his audience. By telling his story with the help of technology, he was able to touch his friends’ and other viewers’ hearts.

In his piece, Ibrahim selected a wide range of images that showed various happy but also some sad moments in his life journey of immigration and re-immigration. These images along with his description of the joyful and challenging moments and events that happened during his journey illustrated the happy times and the tensions that he experienced during his stay in his country of origin. Ibrahim was so proud showing all the images he selected for his story which gave life to its events and enhanced meaning. He once said, *“If I have the chance of making my story longer, I would also add more pictures and tell more things in it.”*

Several images of Ibrahim's story showed a background of his country's cultural artifacts and touristic places. Those images were very much relative, illustrative, and coherent with the content of his story. The audio component of his story included background music that represented his culture as well as another engaging music that both evoked the feelings he wanted to convey and supported his narrative. His digital story represented many elements of '*creativity, originality, and creatical thinking*' (Ohler, 2013, p. 34). He did not borrow his story from TV movies or any other media sources. It was his own original, personal, and emotionally overwhelming story in which he also used original photos of him and his family.

Ibrahim was also able to demonstrate his speaking and presentation abilities through a video-recorded performance of his story. Integrating his words with the images, sound, music, and movement to create his digital artifact showed that he did not privilege the linguistic form of signification but rather drew on a variety of modalities which demonstrate how the use of additional modes constructs another layer of meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Through a process of braiding (Mitchell, 2004) and orchestration (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), Ibrahim was able to create a digital multimodal text that represented the meanings, feelings, and understandings that he wanted to show to his audience.

Multifaceted benefits of digital storytelling

Digital storytelling is viewed from a broad multiliteracies frame which involves fluid and flexible means of communication across different modes. It is one way to incorporate multiliteracies into the literacy classroom and engage students in exploring their multiple literacies and identities by using multiple semiotic modes and resources. Anderson (2016) argues that there has been little consideration given to the potential of digital storytelling in the context of heritage language teaching which he refers to as 'community language' (p. 2). Many language and literacy researchers (Anderson & Macleroy, 2016; Cummins et al. 2007; Lundby, 2008; Vinogradova, 2014) explain that digital storytelling greatly contributes to addressing issues of motivation, engagement, self and cultural expression, identity affirmation, learner agency and empowerment, collaboration, personal voice, creativity, in addition to developing cognitive, language, and communication skills, and digital multimodal literacy.

In the following sections of this chapter, I present how creating digital multimodal stories contributed to developing various personal, cognitive, academic, and social skills of students in this research inquiry.

Students learning collaboratively....

While access and use of the various hardware and software needed to create movies or videos should be accessible and easy for students nowadays, most students in this research had very minimal to no videography experience. It was a surprise for me to learn that those students aren't familiar with many of the technological tools found in computers, handheld devices, and online, but they still wanted and insisted on demonstrating their understanding of the narrative genre by producing their digital stories using whatever available applications that they might find. After some research and multiple trials of explorations with me in class in addition to using their families as resources, they decided to produce their digital stories using the iMovie or Windows Movie Maker applications. These were the easily accessible tools for creating their digital compositions.

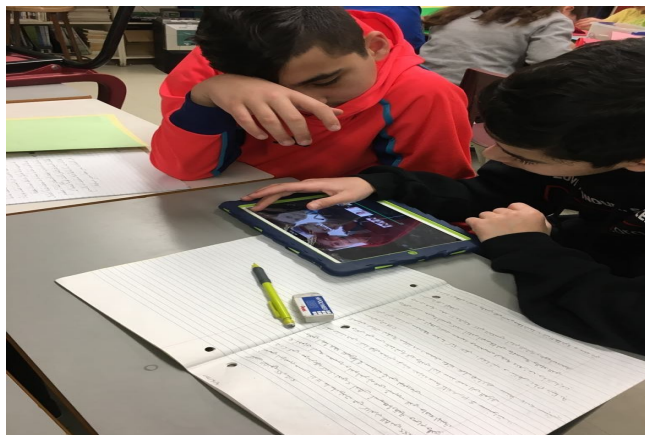
Though I did not teach them how to use the iMovie or Windows Movie Maker application, I noticed the collaboration that was going on among them during their work on their videos. They shared tips and addressed common problems together to get into solutions. For example, when a student had difficulty editing his video, one of his colleagues who had done it successfully volunteered in offering his help to show the entire process of creating the video. This participatory and collaborative activity made the class a space of a learning community. It provided students with the opportunity to co-construct knowledge of their target language. Students had little to no technical background, but they were still able to collaboratively create their own digital stories that reflected their enthusiasm in doing literacy through the use of technology and in speaking their heritage language.

(Reflections on moments of teaching-May 2017)

Multimodal digital storytelling A venue to foster collaborative learning

Anderson and Macleroy (2016) explain that the digital medium is intrinsically interactive and fluid which makes it ideally suited to cooperative and process-oriented ways of working. The flexibility and connectivity of the digital storytelling landscape provided my students with scope for participation and collaboration to creatively represent their thoughts and ideas in a range of modalities. Together, they tried to discover new techniques and ways of doing things like cutting and adding images, embedding narrative texts and music files, and finding the suitable editing ways to finish their digital texts. The process of crafting their digital stories engaged them in using each other's computers, phones, and/or tablets to search for pictures and music files suitable and relevant to their stories and then to organise and present their autobiographic stories in meaningful ways to their audience. Students' different voices and various life expressions that they collaboratively designed and presented in their digital stories were a realistic and an innovative arena for their learning. They spurred their creativity and engaged them in dialogue through an *embodied experience* that took them to acquire the tools, to imagine, to create, and to perform their stories in front of others (Budach, 2016, p. xv).

Di Blas (2016) contends that one of the unique affordances of technologies in education is their potentiality to collaborative learning and construction of knowledge. Smalkoski and colleagues (2017) argue that digital storytelling can foster collaboration in class and cultivate learning communities.



The short time that the students had weekly for learning their heritage language made them start working on producing their digital stories in class but finish some of the steps required in this process outside school, either with a family member at their homes or with their friends at the community center. Throughout their work on their videos, they demonstrated how their collaborative work contributed to their learning. The social context of their classroom and out-of-school helped develop their ability to produce new knowledge, solve any problems they faced during their digital stories production process, and employ creativity to their texts. Students who were a combination of both novice and a little experienced in creating digital stories, took up different roles and learned from each other. The gaps in their digital skills provided them with opportunities to take on coaching roles and assist each other. They consulted each other in every step they wanted or were thinking to apply to their digital stories. When one of them was stuck at adding some visuals and music to his recorded narrative, his friends supported him to have this nicely incorporated into his digital story. They weren't more professional than him in technology but they spent the time together going online and watching YouTube videos to learn how to do this step in the process of digital storytelling production. Mohamad who was a little more comfortable with multimedia tools acted as a mentor for one of his other friends especially at the final stage of the production process. Thus, students worked collaboratively and cooperatively to produce their digital stories which initiated a progressive learning environment (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and created a dynamic learning situation.

Students' collaboration during the creation of their digital stories made them the owners and facilitators of the learning process (Nishioka, 2016). They also became active decision-makers through the involvement of their digital texts as they had the chance to choose the topics and themes that are meaningful and of genuine interest to them. Their digital stories which incorporated the verbal, visual, and musical narrative modalities had a big influence on their feeling of empowerment and fostered their meaningful language use.

Multimodal digital storytelling ... Extending roles: Text designers and text bricoleurs

The construction of a digital multimodal story required students to perform different roles. They played the roles of text designers and text bricoleurs (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). They were text designers by utilizing the written word, the image, and the sound in designing their digital texts. They artfully mediated written text, font style and color, images, and music into their pieces. They took responsibility to be the authors for writing, the illustrators for image, the graphic designers for the typeface in which the writing was set and for layout as the placement of text elements on the page or screen (Bezemer & Kress, 2016). They used the full range of meaning-making signs included in texts: words, images, colour, font, layout, sound, and movement. Thus, they employed a range of linguistic, visual, auditory, spatial, tactile, and gestural design modes through the various steps needed to produce their digital stories: creating the content for the storyboard, composing the written narrative of the text, taking or preparing the photos, choosing the music suitable for each segment of their videos, and adding their own voice while telling their stories. This combination of the different modes increased their understanding about the composition of texts and how to engage with them (Bull & Anstey, 2019). It also helped them better illustrate their ideas and produce an emotional and affective digital story.

Kress (2010) suggests that design not only requires the competence of using the various resources, but also beyond that it requires the orchestration and remaking of these resources to express the maker's intentions in shaping the social and cultural environment. According to Bezemer and Kress (2016), design is prospective and therefore always a necessarily innovative and transformative process rather than a competent implementation of conventionally given practice. Students used their knowledge of the resources available, their understandings about the concept they wanted to work on, their understandings of the affordances of the various modes, their knowledge of their social environment, and their purposes, aims, and goals in order to design their digital stories. Students' designs and multimodal ensembles considered layout, composition, use of text and image including other aspects like colour, size, and positionality of other modes in the text. They ended up with good designs which

demonstrated their understandings of the technologies and tools available and their ability to draw the various elements of the text together to achieve cohesion.

Students were also text bricoleurs-artists of inventiveness- by drawing on what is available to hand to make meaning. They *tinkered* (Kincheloe, 2011, p. 255) with the various tools and sign systems to achieve the designs and meanings they wanted and produce a multimodal montage of digital text. They avoided purchasing any new apps for creating their texts, so they used either their moms' iphones or their friends' ipads to create their digital stories using the available iMovie app. They gathered their photos by accessing the photo albums of their moms' phones, by using pictures from the Internet, and by selecting the sound track that they also found for free on some websites. Some students asked the school administrative assistant for permission to use the school desktop which allowed them to access the Windows Movie Maker in order to produce their digital multimodal literacy texts. They wove together various available text modes in ways which promoted new knowledge and understanding. Ibrahim for example explained how each mode he used in his digital story helped him make a better expression of it and how experimenting with the different modes made him learn a lot of technology and experience the meaning of digital literacy. He once said,

"I know that if I had to use my voice only in the presentation of my story, I think it wouldn't have been as effective as it is now with my voice, my music files, my images, and my text. Producing my story using my mom's phone camera made me also learn a lot of technology stuff. At first, I didn't know how to add sections to my digital story, how to delete, or edit, or how to insert some captions. I had to watch You Tube videos to learn a lot of this stuff. At the end, I was impressed by myself of how I was holding and changing the position of the camera whenever I needed to take a picture for something I wanted to use in my digital story. For example, I learned to how to position the camera to get a nice light source for myself while I am recording, and how to provide clear sound."

Thus, Ibrahim's experience with each medium throughout the production process of his digital story helped him better express and illustrate his ideas. Experimenting with technology to produce his narrative story has raised his awareness of technological literacies and promoted his various modes of communication and meaning making. Ibrahim gave good attention to creating the content of his story and made the iMovie application the vehicle to producing an innovative and creative literacy text.

Multimodal digital storytelling ... Linguistic gains

Rance-Roney (2008) points out that deep language acquisition and meaningful practice is embedded in the digital storytelling process. Anderson (2016) argues that one of the pedagogical strategies to develop students' language abilities is to engage them in digital storytelling. Polina Vinogradova (2014) introduced multiliteracies and multimodalities into her teaching through the production of digital stories. She reported how this approach to literacy teaching was an intriguing addition to the ESL curriculum. Through the digital multimodal texts, students engaged in meaning-making that is relevant to them and that encouraged them to use their English language skills for meaningful communications. Also, following the multiliteracies pedagogical framework, Angay-Crowder and colleagues (2013) report on a digital storytelling project that they implemented to teach multilingual middle school immigrant students in a summer program. The researchers document how engaging students in a multiliteracies project of digital storytelling resulted in a high level of students' engagement, helped them expand their literacy repertoires and means of expression, developed their second language skills, and gave them the chance to reflect on and recreate their multilingual and multicultural lives and identities. Literacy teaching through digital storytelling showed to be a powerful venue for second-language learners. Also, Hepple and colleagues (2014) report on a digital media project that involved a number of immigrant high school students with low level of English competence to create digital texts. Those students experienced the multiliteracies approach to language education through the affordances of producing Claymation movies. Students created the content for the storyboards, designed and photographed the clay models, filmed the models, and added the special effects accompanying each segment of their film animation. Then they engaged in oral discussions, sketching, and writing captions. Thus, they integrated the linguistic, visual, spatial, audio, and gestural elements fundamental to multiliteracies pedagogy (Comber & Nixon, 2008).

Prensky (2001) argues that digital storytelling has a great potential to provide students an opportunity to speak their own language. The digital multimodal approach to literacy provided my students with a significant opportunity to develop their heritage language abilities. Engaging them in showing their understanding of the narrative genre through the production of digital multimodal stories, made them create personal

narratives in which they demonstrated a clear development in the use of their spoken and written heritage language. They showed a good advancement in their linguistic expressions and the use of more complex oral sentence structure. The use of iMovie or Windows Movie Maker technology tools for their digital stories also raised their self-awareness and confidence of using technology to serve the objective of developing their language and presenting their stories in a new and innovative way.

Mohamad, who produced a dual language digital story, commented on the affordances of technology and how it helped him develop his language skills and present his story without the fear of making mistakes. He once said to me,

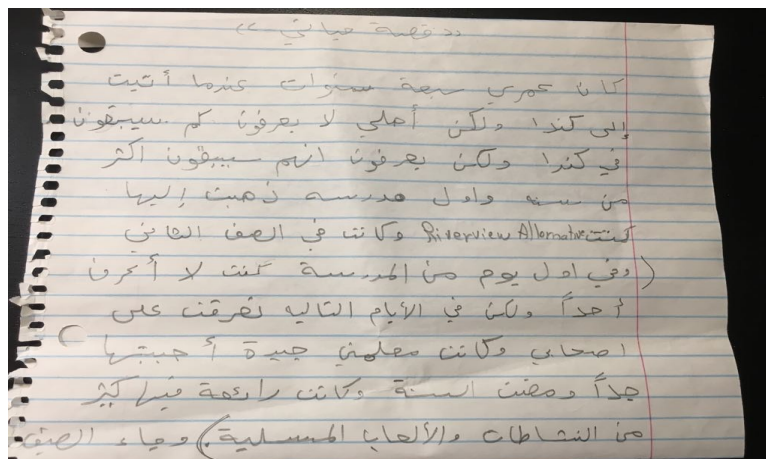
“I was afraid of Arabic because I usually make mistakes in using some vocabulary and sentence structure. However, producing my story through the use of the video application helped me use my language confidently. After I recorded various sections of my story, I took the time to constantly replay my video and change the script, sentences, or some of the vocabulary words that I used. This helped me refine the content several times. I liked this very much as I could keep on revising my story until I was completely satisfied with it. This made me feel confident that I could use my Arabic language well.”

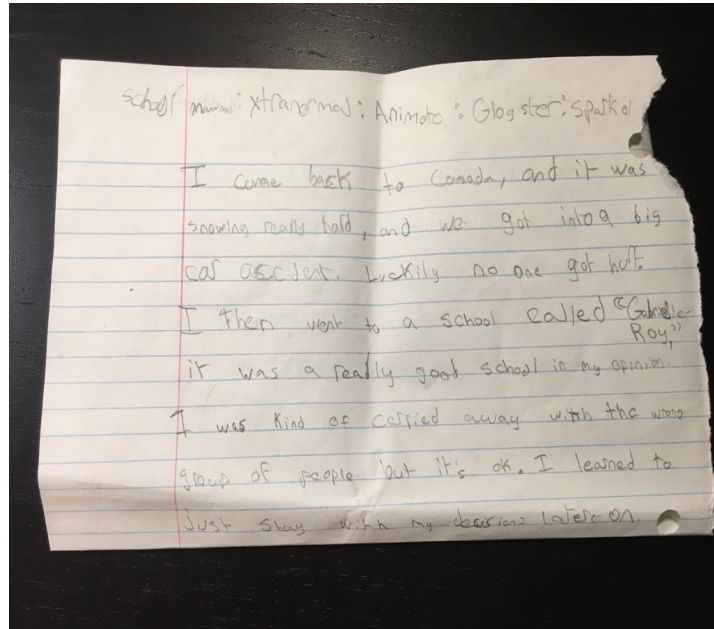
So, Mohamad used the affordances of the iMovie technology in order to develop his language skills. Replaying the video to revise it and changing the script that Mohamad mentioned required him to be rethinking his sentences and modifying some expressions and other vocabulary words; all of which contributed to his language and writing development. Fries-Gaither (2010) points out that while the writing process itself can be a bit dull for some students, students combining their stories with sound, images, and music may experience a more engaging and stimulating task.

Producing digital stories have also powered up students’ oral and written heritage language. Throughout the process of creating their digital stories, Adnan, Ibrahim, and Mohamad always referred to each other for either technical or linguistic support using their heritage language at some times and just finding it quicker and easier for them to use English at other times. Adnan for example who had a very good level in using his heritage language was able to provide assistance to some of his classmates who felt uncertain about how to write a story. Students also learned how to choose the suitable nouns, verbs, adjectives, and conjunctions as well as know how to structure their sentences that they orally used in their digital stories. They used various resources to create their storyboards and then they video recorded themselves while they were telling

their stories. At the end, they shared their final videos with an audience who were their classmates. This helped not only promote their oral/speaking abilities and enrich their vocabulary, but also enhanced their self-confidence in speaking their heritage language. Thus, they experienced linguistic gains which positively influenced their self-confidence as Arabic language speakers.

Sylvester and Greenidge (2009) propose digital stories as an alternative conduit for students who struggle in learning the language and in writing traditional texts. Digital storytelling composition helped develop my students' four core language skills which are listening, speaking, reading and writing. It also served as a tool for taking them through the steps of a writing process and engaging them in moving a story from a rough idea to a finished video project. The process of planning, scripting, and storyboarding their videos exactly mirrored writing skills. Similar to the traditional writing process, students started their digital stories with a little planning. They brainstormed their topic, thought of the chronology of its events, and how they wanted to end it. This was like an outline which gave a focus to their stories. When Ibrahim for example was still reluctant about what he wanted to compose for his digital story, I met with him to help him go forward in his planning. I asked him to tell me verbally what his story is about. Ibrahim was able to get to the heart of his story which made me understand that he was on the right track for the planning phase of digital story writing process.





Lambert (2013) argues that moving from the big idea of the story to the little script of a narrative is excruciating. Since many students didn't have the appropriate heritage language competence of developing a well-written script for their stories, I was open to having them use small index cards to write whatever came out of their minds to create a short draft of their stories. I encouraged them to think of it as a postcard in which they did and produced short Arabic and English narratives. This composition became later the digitized voice-over narration. Once students' short scripts were completed, they moved to the storyboarding step in which they chose the scenes and images to complement their narration. Ogawa and Tsuchiya (2017) explain that storyboarding entails figuring out what section of text goes with what image or picture. Though students didn't have their images sketched on a storyboard, they orally presented where each one fits in the story sequence or various events and how they all together connect to form the story. Students were highly engaged in this part of the process because it seemed more active and entertaining to them than simply sitting and writing.

The last step of the digital story composition was the production (Ohler, 2013) in which students assembled their stories using the software they liked which was the iMovie on their iPhones or the Movie Maker on their computers. I asked Adnan once to present to us where he was in the process. He said,

“I am cutting some of the pictures and sorting out all the ones I want to use in my story. I have also audio recorded the first section of my story but since my story is long, I still need more time to finish it. I added one music file and I have another one that I will use for my next section of the story. I also added my title on the first screen.”

Adnan edited and finalized all the media and arts pieces he wanted to use in his story. Once his digital story was created, he joyfully and proudly showed it to the class. This was like a publishing step in the writing process. The process that Adnan went through showed how well the writing process and digital storytelling fit together and mirror each other (Miller, 2010).

Developing digital narratives also extended students’ understanding of the structure of narratives. The need to produce a digital narrative with text, images, and music required students to be concise and cohesive in presenting the chronology of events, the different elements of a story like the main ideas, supporting details, the setting, the characters, and the development of the events (Walsh, 2011, p. 47). Engaging students in this literacy activity allowed for greater chances of understanding the traditional writing process and implementing a more creative approach that involved multimodal digital literacy texts. Digital storytelling was a promising construct to engage students in an innovative process to writing development.

On the way to producing multimodal digital texts... engagement, digital learning, and motivation

Gura (2014) argues that applying technology resources to the needs of classrooms still have one foot in the world of traditional instruction. He explains that engaging students with technology tools in the literacy classroom and across the curriculum opens the space for them to produce creative multimodal, digital, and arts-based texts. This facilitates students’ learning, increases motivation, and changes the nature of teaching and learning. Students in this research who attempted using various digital technology tools to represent their understanding showed a high level of engagement and motivation on the way to creating their digital texts. When I once asked Mohamad who produced a dual language digital story about what he liked most in this activity, he said,

“The flexibility I experienced in choosing how to tell my story or create my narrative was very motivating. It made me like learning more about narrative genre. The freedom I had for using different media tools, for using whatever way I want to express myself, and the permission we had to using the various found and unused materials from our homes was very exciting for me. It encouraged me to tell my story in details and speak much about it. Though

I had to do a lot of thinking and discuss many ideas with my friends sometimes and with my sister other times until I decided on the format of my digital story, I still was enjoying the activity. I didn't feel bored of it."

Mohamad was motivated to tell a rich story because he was happy experimenting with the multiple modes of meaning-making and enjoyed the creative approach to showing his understanding. The process of creating a digital story also promoted his collaborative learning with his friends in class. This was demonstrated when he sometimes acted as a technological resource for his colleagues, with pride aiding them but also learning to compose digitally with them (Crawley, 2015).

Hammet and Toope (2014) argue that providing students with opportunities to experience with technology-rich teaching-learning environments support developing digitally literate individuals. It also develops their ability to negotiate a technology-mediated environment, expands their digital literacies, and fosters their multimodal communication skills. Adnan, for example who produced a digital story which combined more than one music file and various pictures, presented to his classmates the challenging but exciting digital learning experience that he passed through while creating his story. He said,

"I had some experience in creating videos but when I started working on my digital story, some things seemed to be more difficult than I expected. I had to learn how to capture the images I wanted, how to choose the background colors, how to position each of my pictures, what is a suitable sequence for them according to my story, whether I should add them all or delete some as they might make my video look too busy. I also had to learn many other technical stuff either by googling them and watching You Tube videos or seeking the help of my mom, and sometimes my friends here in class. I was mostly stressed out when I had everything ready but needed to be put all together to make the sequence of my story. Cutting backwards or forwards from one scene to another gave me a very hard time. I also had to learn how to work on the speed of my video scenes. Sometimes, I needed the scenes to be going in a very fast motion, other times I wanted them to be going very slow because I wanted whoever watches my video to focus on an important event or detail that I tell about in my story. This created some tension for me and I felt at some point that I want to quit this and change to a simpler text like a power point presentation of my story."

Adnan learned how to use the visual semiotic resources in his digital story, incorporating choice of color, still and moving images, quality and types of lines and shapes, lighting, point of view which refers to the position of viewing the scene or image, juxtaposition of his video objects, and editing; the stage that needed his highest concentration, effort, and time (Bull & Anstey, 2019).

All of this contributed to his digital multimodal literacy learning and expanded his multiliteracies.

Digital storytelling also provided students with a powerful learning experience that capitalized on their interest in technology. The technical aspect of digital storytelling was like a ‘hook’ for them. At many times, students were literally consumed with researching and finding the appropriate app or digital tool to use for producing their digital stories. They also spent much time on learning how to use those apps. When Ibrahim for example found some digital storytelling apps on the Internet, he came excitedly to class asking me, “*Can I borrow your laptop to show you the apps that we can use for our digital stories?*”. He took my laptop and started experimenting with the apps that he located on the Internet while his friends surrounded him and tried to discover also how to use each of those apps. It was interesting to see how students were highly engaged in exploring the technological tools that would help them finish their literacy task.

While opening spaces for students to choose their preferred digital tools in order to produce their multimodal digital stories was one of the main areas in my multiliteracies/ multimodalities inquiry, I was always cautious to prevent them from falling into the trap of focusing on technology only rather than the content of their stories. Thus, I asked them first to plan their stories, develop the various important details on a small slip of paper, think of the pictures and music that they want to incorporate, and finally start thinking of how each step can help them in producing their digital stories. Ohler (2013) argues that students need to experience with the various tools available for developing their digital literacy skills, yet they need to be careful not to engage the medium at the expense of the message and producing a technical event rather than a story. He elaborates saying, “technologies will come and go, but stories are forever” (Ohler, 2013, p. 14). Thus, teachers are advised to encourage digital storytelling students to focus on story first and technology second, as this will make everything fall into place then. My students showed a high interest in doing digital stuff but they also produced compelling narrative personal stories using the affordances of iMovie and Windows Movie Maker. They were creative enough to use technology as a tool for their literacy learning and language development. They showed how they employed technology to

serve their objective of crafting their creative and multimodal digital texts in their heritage language.

Multimodal digital storytelling ... A tool of empowerment and agency

During the active multiliteracies process of digital stories productions, my students showed feelings of ownership and agency. The student-led, generative, and joint activities experience, rather than the traditional practices of a preplanned, scripted, and generic practice of basic skills promoted their agency. They took charge of their own range of activities for the digital storytelling process from the planning phase of their stories to the final stage of the digital story production. Carlile (2016) highlights the power of personal stories to empower young learners and promote their feeling of agency. This feeling of agency and control over their own learning made them excited to attempt more discovery of computer and mobile applications that they can use for other language related tasks. They spent time in class navigating the Internet to find technological applications suitable for their digital texts. Adnan, Mohamad, and Ibrahim for example came one day telling me about the list of options they found to create their texts, *"We found Animoto, bitstrips, storybird, sparkol videoscribe, xtranormal"*, they said. Ibrahim also once said, *"I have a relative studying computer engineering. I will ask him if he knows of other applications that I can use for my school work."* Adnan was so excited that he was able to represent his identity, values, interests, experiences, and culture through his media text. He once expressed, *"What made me so happy while creating my story is that I was able to show through images, music, and my own verbal text the things that I liked most."* Students' self-representation is referred to by Hull and Katz (2006) as 'crafting an agentic self' (p. 72). They agentially engaged in their learning.

Freire's (2005) ideas on education-as-empowerment and the need for learner-led learning environment were also demonstrated through students' productions of digital stories. The process of creating digital stories required my students to make decisions among many choices which increased their sense of empowerment. Their role made them active knowledge developers (Hur & Sah 2012). They felt ownership of the work which led to better engagement and sustained collaboration. They also felt a sense of empowerment because they were in control of their own learning throughout the

production process of their digital stories. They were the main decision makers regarding the multimodal content of their stories. Adnan once said,

“It is not that I don’t like the texts in the book or our class work, but I enjoyed this activity because I wasn’t waiting for the teacher to tell me what to do and I didn’t have to do a task like an exercise in my workbook. I was doing something about me. So, as soon as I understood the task, I proceeded in doing my digital story the way I wanted.”

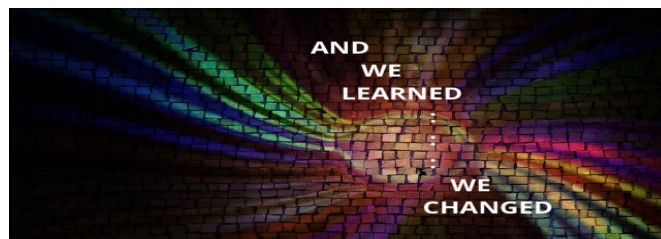
Adnan liked the idea of “teaching about myself versus myself teaching about something” (Ohler, 2013, p. 28). He and other colleagues enjoyed the freedom they had in choosing the mode they liked in order to present their work and the flexibility they had to make linguistic and content decisions. They were given the opportunity to present themselves in the ways and forms they liked and that interested them. Mohamad for example produced his digital story using his two languages; Arabic and English. His spoken narrative is supported on the screen with a dual language written text along with media which are placed side by side.

Students were also the main judges of their own work (Anderson & Macleroy, 2016). They practiced either self-evaluation or peer feedback to each other work which made their digital stories in continuous improvement. When Mohamad saw Adnan’s video he said,

“I like how you move from one image to the next”. Adnan answered happily, “I didn’t know at first that I can do that. While doing my digital story, I learned that this is something already built into the iMovie software. It just happened while I was putting my story together.”

What students were talking about is called transitions which is one of the digital story development phases. This was new technological knowledge that my collaborating teacher, Naziha and I also learned from our students.

Reflections.... Moments of teach/ learn(ing)..... and becoming as teachers



It was a day full of learning for both students and us. We spent more than three hours facilitating the work of our students who were almost at the final stages of producing their digital texts. Naziha and I took turns sitting with each of them and watching their multimodal digital stories. Students felt so proud and excited to show us their work and present the process they went through with the challenges they experienced or the digital and language learning they acquired during the exploration and creation process of their digital stories. Though our classroom was not technologically equipped and students did not have access to digital technology, we noticed that they were easily engaged when they were given the chance to create their texts using any available digital tools and applications they could access through their own phones. This drove Naziha and I to pause for a meeting in which each of us shared her classroom lived experiences and observations to reflect, learn, and make the connection between theory and practice.

Naziha commented,

“Creating a digital text provided my students who are of various language levels with opportunities for exploration, creation, and participation which affected their engagement and motivation to learn in their heritage language classroom. I was surprised by Nadim (a pseudonym) when I saw how active he was in class while creating his digital story. So, even struggling heritage language learners in my class were fully engaged in the process of creating digital texts which required them to read and write as well. I was also surprised of how this changed my role and affected our relationship. Nadim didn’t usually approach me for questions, however in this activity he was always trying to show me what he achieved and how he is progressing.”

This motivated me to take the opportunity to capitalize on his experience and push him to think further into the creation of his digital text by asking him why he chose to put a certain image in his digital story, how this image served to the overall meaning of his story, and to think if those images are just decorating or illustrating his message.”

Then she continues,

“I am very happy with students’ literacy texts productions but I am still worried about my curriculum plan and what I should cover from the textbook. I have to find a way to manage that issue. Though it will be difficult for me not to comply with our textbook plan exactly, I think that it became a must for me now to embrace other types and forms of literacy teaching and learning like the ones we engaged our students with in this project. Students and their parents need to understand how digital literacy interconnects with other literacies. The first step I assume to implement in the future is to introduce my students to the available and possible digital tools and their affordances.”

Then she stops and says,

“But there are two challenges to implementing this approach. First, I have very limited time in my literacy classroom. Students come to this class once weekly for two and a half hours. Second, I have to explore the new technology tools first. If I don’t know what available digital tools I can use in my literacy classroom, how would I be able to support students during their text creations.”

She then continues,

“But the good thing is, my students explored the creative potentials of technology through this project and they finished their digital texts with more gained interests in digital literacy and multimodality. Now, I will need to plan for how I should also develop my knowledge in digital technology and their use in the literacy classroom.”

I know that it is not necessary to master the software the students use, but at least to have a basic knowledge of the tools so that I can provide some introductory material and answer their general questions. I think for next time I engage students with a technology-based activity, I will first do the same task myself. I think this is an important step because it makes me understand what is expected in the process, the time it takes, the tools needed, and the challenges my students may encounter. This would make me ready for helping my students on the way of their text productions. I also need to find ways to support my students in accessing the digital tools considering that not only we have very limited access to technology tools here at school but also many students do not have access to computing hardware like the tablets, the computers, and the smartphone at home.”

Though Naziha lived the tension between opening spaces for arts-based and digital based literacies and the teaching of traditional print-based literacy as prescribed in her curriculum, her reflection was like a transformative plan for her literacy classroom. I was excited listening to her reflections which showed her enthusiasm of bringing the creative types of literacies into her literacy classroom.

I continued the discussion and reflection and shared with Naziha my mixed feelings of pride and fear when I saw that some students became, after few weeks, more knowledgeable and experienced than me in many of the applications of digital technology. When Kareem (a pseudonym) asked me once how to add background music to his recording, I told him that I need to check that out to be able to help him. However, he came in the next class with a manual that he found on the Internet on how to mix a narration with background music. He walked me through the steps that he applied to get this step done in his digital story. Sharing his knowledge offered me and his colleagues a practical learning opportunity.

Other students were very much appreciative of the digital and technology learning they acquired along the way to producing their digital texts. Adnan for example commented,

“I am not very good at digital technology and there are plenty of things that I don’t know, but I have enjoyed learning the nuances of iMovie software to produce my digital text. I learned how to edit video files and to upload music files to my digital story. I also played a little with other digital tools like the Sparkol and Animoto and I learned a lot about them but I couldn’t use them in my Arabic class due to their incompatibility to Arabic characters.”

Students’ enthusiasm to engage with non-print forms of literacy texts made them totally immersed in learning more about digital technologies to produce their digital texts. This was demonstrated through their attempts to learn from various sources like their family members, google, and their friends. This digital learning experience helped in developing their technical skills fast. The final products of their digital texts showed that they did not just create a digital artifact with audio and visual cueing systems, but they crafted a new and creative form of text that also connected to other forms of texts. That didn’t mean that students were able to produce their digital texts with no challenges. When Ibrahim for example described to me the process and steps involved to producing his digital text, he mentioned how arduous it was when things didn’t go as expected from the first time. He had to do the same step over and over to reach a satisfactory outcome. He mentioned the challenge he faced when he decided to change a section of his script which also demanded finding other images of good quality and other music files that would go with his new section of the story. He said,

“I can’t tell you how many times I had to do the re-recording of certain sections of the story. I repeated this step several times until I learned what optimal distance I can keep between my phone camera and myself.”

Thus, Ibrahim learned by trial and error. Adnan mentioned how he had to spend hours to edit his video. Mohamad mentioned how he struggled sometimes to do the voice over. He commented, *“I finished it with the least and basic knowledge needed so you can notice now that my digital story does not look really professional.”*

All students encountered challenges related to technology that they had to learn how to deal with. The technology challenge was an opportunity for them to develop several kinds of New Literacies like visual literacy, multimodal literacy, and digital literacy.

All students who created a digital text considered lack of time as the main hindrance to producing an excellent digital story as they described. They mentioned that they couldn't finish their digital texts in class considering the short teaching time and they couldn't dedicate the needed time after school to finish their digital texts because they also have a lot of assignments and other tasks for their regular week day schools.

The digital storytelling process was a good motivator for students to self-express and self-reflect and it was an effective way to develop a learning community where I observed how the digitally advanced learners supported other colleagues with less or no digital knowledge. Students offered new ideas on each other's work and solutions to each other's technical problems which developed their social competence as well. Ibrahim for example was working on his story but he was also highly engaged with other peers listening to their first ideas or scripts of stories and providing his input or feedback. Adnan also consulted his friends on how to express some parts of his story because he wasn't sure what mode he would use to make the best expression to it. He was wondering between expressing a section visually or verbally and with sound or music.

His friends and I collaborated by providing our views on what could be the best modes to use for those sections in his multimodal aesthetic digital story. Students also developed their social competence by offering their opinions, making their criticisms, questioning, arguing, and rethinking their ideas all together. Ibrahim for example commented on Adnan's media files of music and images appreciating and advocating them to be in his story with a certain sequence which added a more influencing meaning to the emotional aspect of the story. Thus, the group of students grew into a community of thought and practice. They enjoyed the experience of creating, sharing, and building their heritage language together.

Many times, Mohamad commented,

"I like this activity because I was able to choose doing something that I wanted and something that I liked. Though I felt it is challenging in terms of using technology but it was fun at the same time. I didn't feel bored at all while doing this activity."

Mohamad's comment confirmed our understanding that students demand interactive teaching methods and we as teachers need to embrace all forms of literacy in our teaching and learning approaches.

(Anecdotes of Reflections, May 2017)

Developing literacies in the multimodal designs enabled by technologies became one of the literacies that Naziha and I wanted to continue promoting and engaging our students with it in the future. We were both proud challenging the tradition of constructing students as readers from textbooks to creators and designers of knowledge and ideas in a multimodal way. We also both insisted on breaching the uncertainty, frustration, and limitations of our digital knowledge as we engaged our students with this experience. Johnson and colleagues (2017) argue that if teachers feel they are not competent enough to use technology in their classrooms, they are unlikely to open spaces

for students to explore possibilities of digital tools and they are more likely to stick to the traditional ways of teaching literacy. However, this was not the case during our work with students. Though we were not very comfortable or adept with technology and our knowledge of available options of producing digital texts was very basic, we were not afraid to dabble. We tried to learn about the different technologies just as students did which positioned us as knowledge collaborators and creators rather than technicians and which also affected our digital technology growth. We learned from our students and with them. The collective knowledge of the class surpassed our expertise (Katz, 2014). Some of the tools that our students and we explored during the productions of the digital texts included Glogster, Sparkol Videoscribe, Animoto, Xtranormal, iMovies, and Windows Movie Maker. We spent some time exploring those tools on our own and then we learned more about them with our students during their work on their digital texts in class. When one of the students needed support on how to use the Animoto application, we had to do some self-learning to be able to help him. However, the student found out that the application is not compatible with the Arabic characters so he shifted to another application. We also had to do some learning on shooting techniques, editing, and framing (Willet 2009). This provided us with a good chance to develop our skills and capacities as designers and producers of digital texts. We worried sometimes about our low to medium knowledge of digital technology but we learned that engaging students with digital literacies does not require us to be experts in technology. Understanding some technology tools and how they work was enough for us to be able to facilitate our students' work. However, that doesn't eliminate the fact that digitally literate teachers would be more able to inspire students to expand their learning opportunities (Glenn Wake, 2013). This demands providing teachers with adequate education on technology so they use it to its full potential in developing digitally literate learners.

Naziha and I recognized that our vision of literacy teaching and learning has developed and will continue to develop through our teaching and learning journey. This provoked us to create new openings and shifted our pedagogical perspectives, understandings, and actions toward literacy in the heritage language classroom. Our interest of developing digitally literate learners made us avoid being docile operatives of a planned curriculum despite the many tensions and challenges we lived (Merchant 2009). We recognized how living in the hybrid in-between space of curriculum as-plan

and curriculum-as-live(d) created opportunities for students to showcase their literacies and identities and to express their lived curriculum in multiple ways. Their digital texts were deeply infused with multimodal sign systems and expressed ‘relationships and events that matter’ in their lived experience of the curriculum (Phal & Rowsell, 2010, p. 1). We not only enjoyed our live(d) curriculum but we behaved more like bricoleurs (Levi-Strauss, 1966) while implementing a new literacy artistry through a living pedagogy of multiliteracies/ multimodalities. Together we learned how to approach the challenge in our own ways rather than following a prescribed method or a predetermined script. We “made do with the materials of the here and now, crafting solutions out of what was at hand” (Strong- Wilsom & Rouse, 2013, p. 177), living in the in-between spaces of the curriculum-as-plan and curriculum as-live(d), and improvising by moving freely in that space that generated as many possibilities as the situation allowed. This experience made our students and us learn how to appropriate the print and the digital in an innovative fashion. It opened the space for us to be creative, to build good relationships with students and their parents, to gain some technology skills, and to inspire students to develop their Arabic heritage language in authentic contexts and outside the limits of the textbook and the classroom. Additionally, students’ high engagement and affinity with the digital and arts mediums, their personal, cultural, and linguistic development, and their creatively produced literacy texts confirmed our belief of the need to adopt multiple and alternative forms of literacy teaching and learning in the heritage language classroom.

Glitters and sparkles of change

Students’ experience and engagement in producing multimodal literacy texts influenced the entire school students and teachers. Multiliteracies became one of the significant approaches that teachers adopted in their literacy classrooms. This was demonstrated through the end of school year celebration in which students presented to the local community their productions of multimodal literacy texts from their literacy classes. They also presented various drama sketches, plays, and songs. This celebration along with the displays of students’ productions of literacy texts showed the promising change in the teaching and learning of literacy in the heritage language school.

CHAPTER SIX

WEAVING THE THREADS TOGETHER

We must reconstrue our curriculum to focus on knowledge-in-action rather than knowledge-out-of-context... As we move through life, we learn to draw upon many different traditions that provide alternative, often complementary, ways of knowing and doing—of defining the world and of existing within it.

(Arthur N. Applebee, from *Curriculum Conversations: Transforming Traditions of Teaching and Learning*, 1996, p. 3)

It is good to have an end to journey towards, but it is the journey that matters in the end.

(Ursula Le Guin, 1989, *Dancing on the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places*)

The unfolding of research is a story of success and frustration, of hopes and dreams, for participants as partners and for me as researcher.

(Anita Sinner, 2013, p. 7, *Unfolding the Unexpectedness of Uncertainty*)

**Departures don't always have known and specific destinations
Journeys don't always have identified paths
They can be long... difficult... stressful**

BUT

They can also be enlighteningcracking the conventional

In this research, my collaborating teacher and I were on a journey of

**multiliteracies
as a living pedagogy attempting to explore**

what possibilities might emerge out of students' engagement

**with multiliteracies/ multimodalities in the
heritage language classroom**

In this journey, we changed directions several times....

looped back and forth ...

moved forward a step or two before going back

in order to move ahead again

This allowed us new points of departure

in order to support students

in their creations..... in their learning

Visit “The Beginning” at “The End”

Five years ago, when I was taking my Learning and Literacies PhD course, I got a comment on my first assignment that disrupted my understanding about literacy teaching and learning. My professor who appreciated the depth of my engagement with issues of literacies, encouraged me to consider the non-alphabetical forms of literacies.

Considering the management, measurement, and evaluation school of thought I come from, I remember that I felt challenged, troubled, disturbed, and confused. Now I recall my professor's comment and think how it created an epiphany moment... a challenging and tensioned moment... a moment that shifted the borders of my understanding and conceptualization of what is literacy. Those moments are described by Denzin (2014) as

ruptures in our daily life. They are revelatory since, “something new is always coming into sight, displacing what was previously certain and seen” (p. 1). After that comment and enlightening moment, I was provoked to develop my engagement with one of the heritage languages schools that is under the International Languages Program in Canada. I was already volunteering with this school to develop its literacy instructional practices and offer some training sessions for the school teachers. As I was familiar with this school literacy teaching and learning approaches, I was motivated to expand my collaboration with this school and to focus on inquiring into multimodal literacy in one of its literacy classrooms. My two research questions focused on what would happen when learners in an international languages school (Arabic Language) engage with multiliteracies as a living pedagogy. I also aimed at looking at how would a participatory and interactive teaching relationship enrich the knowledge, perspectives, approaches, and practices of my collaborating teacher, Naziha and myself, as a teacher.

My participatory research journey which was complicated at some points, messy, uncertain, and tensioned at many times, was also full of learning and enjoyable moments. My research in the heritage language school which was completed at the end of the school year, created waves of change and showed many signs of learnings in the entire schoolteachers’ literacies understanding, approaches, and practices. The first sign of change was the school principal’s aspiration to offer a training session on the creative pedagogical approach in teaching literacy. He wanted to introduce other schoolteachers to what Naziha and I were engaged with in one of the school classrooms.

Research engages other practitioners

The shift in literacy teaching from a complete reliance on a textbook to a creative pedagogical approach of multiliteracies that highly engaged students and sparked innovative multimodal, artful, aesthetics, and digital literacy text productions, encouraged the school principal to ask me to deliver a presentation about this creative approach in teaching literacy for all school teachers. I was so excited about the principal’s request because it would allow me to share the research activities, processes, students’ productions of literacy texts, and our learning with other schoolteachers, which could encourage them to attempt engaging their students with this approach of literacy teaching and learning. So, sharing our research work with other schoolteachers and staff

found its way through a request from the school principal and a response from me to deliver a training session on how our participatory action research on multiliteracies engaged heritage language learners in one of the school classrooms and encouraged them to produce creative multimodal, arts-based and digital based literacy texts to show their understanding and meaning making.

When teachers got the invitation to the training, many of them showed interest in learning about the literacy approach that Naziha and I were implementing in our class. However, they commented that they were looking for opportunities to learn about the best strategies for teaching reading, writing, and vocabulary as well. They proposed to me some topics that they identified as a need for their professional development emphasizing topics like “instructional strategies” and “language assessment methods and techniques”. Teachers’ expectations for my upcoming presentation discouraged me for some time, however I thought that this is the best opportunity for me to introduce them to other perspectives, approaches, and practices of literacy teaching and learning and to attempt supporting the creation of a multiliterate view of language curriculum.

After presenting teachers with theories of literacy within multimodal and communicative environments, they reflected on the classroom implications of these. They also examined the design and structure of multimodal texts. The presentation was a good turning point for most of the teachers present. It provoked them to think loudly of many questions and to provide substantive and creative comments and ideas to be implemented in the teaching of literacy in their heritage language school. At the end of the presentation, I opened the space for teachers to reflect on their literacy teaching practice and to discuss what they learned from this presentation with their fellow teachers. While most of them conceptualized a shift in literacy practices to include multiliteracies and showed interest in engaging their students with multimodal forms of literacy teaching and learning, few were aware and concerned about the amount of work and time it might require. Those teachers were also worried about controlling their class and their students’ work. They explained that engaging their students with such multimodal activities in their literacy classroom might affect their ability to keep control of the classroom since students will not be referring to their textbooks only but they will have the opportunity to choose from a wide range of text forms.

These comments revealed that those teachers positioned themselves as experts and conceptualized the use of print-based texts as a strategy to control their students' literacy learning. This made me understand that for this group of teachers it might still be hard at this stage to diverge from traditional roles and let go of their position of authority in the class with their students (Stolle & Fischman, 2010). The negotiation of power structures will probably drive their classroom practice by continuing to valorize and maintain their traditional literacy practices. One of those teachers who clearly showed to be more comfortable with what she already knows once said, "I think multimodal, digital, and arts-based approaches to teaching literacy can prevent students from learning the real literacy which is the ability to decode, encode, read, and learn the spelling rules and applications." This comment reminded me of Bruce et al. (2015) who described how engaging everyone in their multiliteracies pedagogical framework of 'learning by design' journey was challenging. They state, "... in every educational journey there are people who get on board straight away, while others need a little more time to see how it works in practice" (p. 90).



The change to a more creative approach to literacy teaching and making this practice find its place in a setting where some feel that textbooks and teachers (experts) rule the domain of educating students was clearly showing to be a challenging one. Another group of teachers was more open to step out of their comfort zone and try alternative approaches. They were very excited with this new conceptualization, knowledge, and learning, and they were open to try this creative way of literacy teaching and learning with their students. They described this approach to literacy as an opportunity to get away from the textbook as the sole reference point and engage with more creative ways of multiliteracies. Teachers' high engagement during the presentation and the various innovative ideas that emerged during our discussion on promoting multiliterate learners was a good sign for me for a possible pedagogical change of literacy teaching and for 'thriveability' (Anstey & Bull, 2010, p. 145) of my multiliteracies project in this heritage language school. Supporting teachers to move from the default mode of teaching to an innovative, creative, and multimodal type of literacy teaching and learning provided them with the knowledge, understanding, and motivation to attempt change. The multimodal, artful, and digital literacy activities that they proposed doing in their classes demonstrated a transformation in their views and a possibility for further development of multimodal literacy teaching in their school. They were still concerned about finishing the curriculum, which they referred to as the textbook, but they also realized that teaching literacy through this creative, alternative, and multimodal form might engage their students more, and develop their language abilities.

Waves of change: multimodal literacy across the entire school classrooms

Multimodal classes teach us to expect the unexpected and to believe that students can do amazing things that we cannot even begin to imagine or predict. They also encourage us not to be afraid to try new things. Rather than worry about what is the worst thing that can happen, I know that with these kinds of possibilities and affordances, often the best things can (and do) happen.

(Kim Haimes-Korn & Kendra Hansen, 2018, p. 35)



As my journey began to come to a close, I had a mixed feeling of both sadness and excitement. I was excited about how students creatively engaged with multiliteracies and what they produced. I was also excited about how this journey developed Naziha's and my multiliteracies teaching/ learning perspectives and practices. At the same time, I was saddened by the journey's completion as I felt that there were still many opportunities of creative and generative possibilities of multiliteracies in this school left behind.

My research work at the heritage language school was completed one month before the end of the school year. Being a researcher who collaborated on developing literacy education at this school and promoting the engagement of students with literacies that are not solely reliable on reading from their textbooks, made me become the school point of reference on this topic and many other educational/teaching ones. I also gained the teachers' trust by supporting them in their endeavors to change approaches and practices of literacy teaching in their classes. This academic position in addition to the school principal's great interest in moving forward and developing more plans for incorporating multiliteracies in the school curriculum, made me a frequently invited academic into the school various learning events and other school activities. This time was an invitation to the end of school year celebration. I was so excited to watch students' singing, dancing, and role- playing performances which all demonstrated their multiple forms of literacies.

Parents' joyful reactions were a good sign of their satisfaction with their children's performances. Such performances were not new in this school, however the combination of those performances with students' presentations of their creative literacy texts was a good opportunity to demonstrate how students engaged with various aspects of literacy—reading and writing— along with arts and digital productions which developed their multiliterate/ multimodal skills.

Thus, traditional aspects of literacy were being expanded to include other creative forms, modes, and processes. Students who decided to showcase their multimodal literacy text productions, did a final show-and-tell exhibition for their parents and the community. They proudly had their creative work displayed on two sides of the auditorium. When the celebration finished, we were all invited to have a look at students' productions of literacy artefacts and listen to their presentations. Students' artful, digital, and aesthetic productions of literacy texts showed that literacy teaching and learning in their classrooms has changed which has also influenced their demonstration of literacy understanding and practice. It exhibited students' enormous imaginations and the richness of learning that occurred when they experienced literacy in a creative approach. This confirms the reality that teachers can create powerful and innovative possibilities for their students' reading and writing by bringing the creative multimodal, arts- based and digital based literacy pedagogies into their teaching practices.

A picture at the school end of year celebration and show and tell exhibition

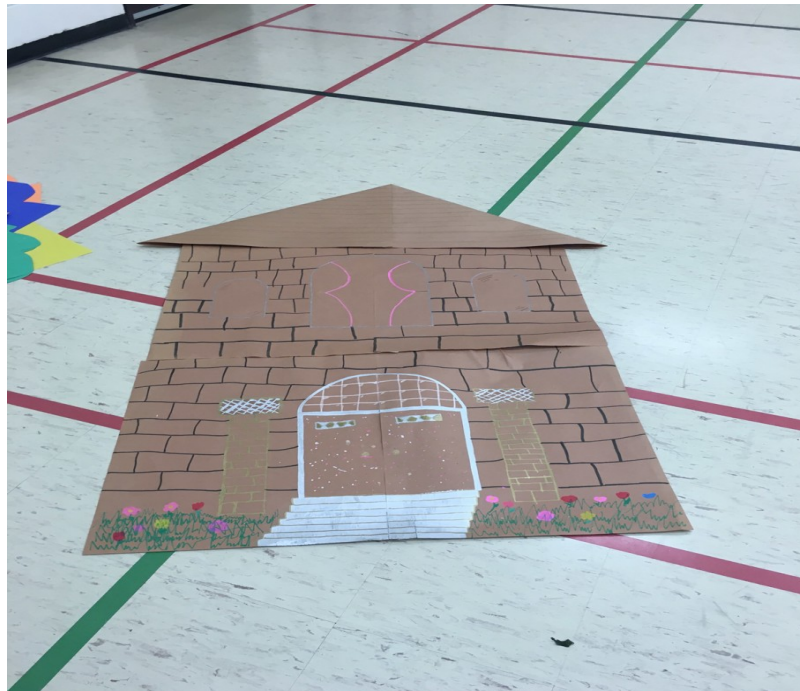


Students' engagement with literacy through the arts like singing, drama, music, and their productions of arts-based and digital based texts provided them and their parents with an opportunity to view literacy from a multiple perspective and to develop an appreciation to literacies other than what they find in their print-based textbook. The scene of students' engagement and enthusiasm while showing and telling about their aesthetic, artful, and multimodal literacy artefacts, the effective involvement of the principal, in addition to the determination of the school teachers of the need to look at new approaches to literacy teaching and learning showed that the research project continued to thrive beyond the initial participatory action research in one of the school classrooms. Multiliteracies approach was absorbed into the teaching practice of several classrooms in the school. Multimodal literacy influenced many teachers and expanded their literacy forms beyond that of the linguistic. They learned from each other and they worked inspirationally with their students to help them engage with arts-based literacy initiatives and digital possibilities. The project also culminated in the school principal's proposition of establishing a learning community among the schoolteachers and maintaining continuous collaboration between the teachers and the researcher in other projects. This suggestion could probably be a good platform to collaboratively engage in dialogue about how teachers can integrate multimodal literacies into their school existing curriculum and to make classroom literacy practices more multimodal and creative (Rajendram, 2015). It gives teachers the chance to harness the potentials of multiliteracies pedagogy.

I recognized then that I
disseminated the first seeds for a
creative process of the entire
school literacy teaching and
learning

From skepticism... to embracement ... to an interest in continuous engagement

Parents' skeptic attitudes at the commencement of our multiliteracies research in their children's classroom, which I presented in chapter two of this thesis, were not encouraging for Naziha and me. Their aspirations and expectations regarding their children's literacy learning were mainly focused on the reading and writing of their heritage language. At different times, they showed us interest in developing their children's reading skills and learning specific literacy and linguistic aspects such as spelling, vocabulary, and grammar rules. This confirmed our understanding that their view to literacy was limited to the print-based mode. Since parental support was crucial for us as it plays a significant role in developing students' heritage language, demonstrating their culture and identity, and promoting their multiliterate skills, we were in continuous search for ways to show them how our multimodal literacy approach was allowing for a broad range of meaning-making models and designs, enriching their children's learning, and promoting their literacy and heritage language skills. We kept good communications, connections, and coordination with the families which made our project cross the school gates to involve them.



Parents' embracement to the new approach was demonstrated through their involvement and support to their children during the process of creating their multimodal literacy texts. They also showed their active interest by their constant encouragement to their children to be as creative as they could in presenting their stories whether through the arts-based or the digital modes. Some mothers used various community venues to access resources like books, videos, and the web to support their children in creating their literacy texts. One mother told me how she benefited from the public library to bring books that would show her daughter some of the aesthetic and artful ideas that she can use in creating her book. Another parent said,

"I am surprised by how much my son and I learned through this project. We had to research the website of our country of origin to pull out some of the information and pictures we needed. We also read from the same website some historical information that were important details to add to the story. I was excited that not only my son was learning, but I also was gaining new knowledge in different ways."

Parents and their children worked collaboratively to research information and collect the materials they needed using digital technology, media, and online tools. The multiliteracies approach enabled parents to engage in the school literacy practices which contributed to their new understanding of literacy and the expansion of ways for the teaching and learning of literacy. So, parents used various strategies to raise their children's motivation for learning their heritage language through the multimodal approach of literacy.

Parents' reactions at the end of the school year along with their comments on their children's work demonstrated their shift in perspectives toward literacy. Those parents who initially showed a high value for traditional literacy through a dominant medium of a printed book became open to a broader view of literacy and a multimodal conceptualization of it.

Engaging students in the creation of multimodal literacy texts was an influential tool on some parents who actively participated and collaborated with their children to produce their literacy texts. At the end of the show-and tell exhibition, some parents approached me and started telling about how this literacy activity (as they called it) engaged their

children in learning their heritage language. Their reactions and comments revealed their high satisfaction with this approach which provided their children with an opportunity for learning their heritage language through various motivating forms and modes. Below are some of the parents' comments that I translated from Arabic to English.

One parent said,

"I never saw my son so much interested in finishing his school task like this time. I saw him developing his Arabic language while having fun with digital stuff and learning some technology. He was becoming more literate in a relaxed environment. I was so happy to see him hooked into the content of his activity. I think the form of this literacy activity which required not only reading but also the inclusion of images, music, and voice in building his digital story motivated him to persist and creatively finish his activity."

Another said,

"I liked this activity for several reasons. First, I was so excited to see my daughter putting a lot of thinking to have an aesthetically designed text of art and crafts, along with her heritage language. She changed her ideas several times during the process of creating her text because she was concerned to use pictures and colours that would clearly illustrate her meanings and feelings. Second, creating a literacy text in the format that she liked gave her the freedom to do what she wanted and however she wanted which was a very good opportunity for her to express herself, her heritage, her traditions and culture."

A third parent said,

"My son didn't like reading from the book at all. It was very stressful to him whenever he used to have an assignment from his book. However, through this activity, I saw him reading a lot from the computer screen, from different websites, and learning new words that he really surprised me."

A fourth parent said,

"I must say that in spite of my initial skepticism and the many moments of hesitation to consent to engaging my son in this research in addition to my uncertainty about this approach to literacy, I now understand its capability in developing my son's literacy skills and building his self-confidence in learning his heritage language. I think this is an invaluable way of engaging our children in the learning of their heritage language. I acknowledge and appreciate the work that has been done which helped me see my son enthusiastically and confidently speaking his heritage language while presenting his artful literacy text."

Our conversations continued and many innovative ideas and possibilities emerged during our discussions. They asked for more activities of this kind in the teaching of literacy to their children but they still emphasized that they want to see their children reading from the book and doing written expression activities in their copybooks. The

conversations, discussions, and ideas that the parents shared with me and later with the schoolteachers, students' creative engagement through their productions of multimodal literacy texts, and teachers' and school management interest in bringing this innovative approach to the teaching of literacy in their school drew the future path of literacy teaching and learning in this school.

Reflections on my journey... Challenges.... Tensions

The path is not always smooth ... (Kanu, 1997, p. 183)

Messiness of the action research journey

Realities of collaborative research are complex and riddled with challenges. These challenges are rooted in tensions that arise in the meeting between different participants' knowledge forms and knowledge interests. They are further expanded and manifested through various details connected to the inquiry in the field of research (Phillips et al. 2013). As I write this section of my thesis, I feel the surge of ideas, memories, events, tensions, and challenges that I encountered throughout my research journey. According to Whitehead (2016), "action researchers face real-life issues that are rarely straight forward and linear... [They] are complex and sometimes chaotic and messy" (p. 3). The messiness of my action research was demonstrated through my feelings of uncertainty, frustration, and sometimes a sense of being overwhelmed by possibilities.

Dudley-Martin (1997) argues, "teaching is messy, complex, and uncertain ... [and] the pedagogical experience is infinitely complicated" (p. xiii). Living the messiness, complexity, and uncertainty of my teaching and participatory action research journey put me in the tension of learning how to embrace uncertainty, how to live more comfortably with it, and dwell aright. At many times, I felt disappointed, frustrated, and unsatisfied especially during the first two sessions of teaching the class. Considering the lived practice of my teaching pedagogy and my research paradigm of unpredictable and uncertain processes and ends, the reactions of some parents were challenging to me. They requested seeing very specific outcomes as a result of their children's involvement in our participatory literacy teaching/learning sessions. They wanted to know exactly what their children will be getting out of this activity (as they called it) in addition to what

assessments will be done to measure their language learning. They also wanted to ensure that their children will be trained on reading and writing from their language textbooks and will be doing class and home worksheets. This reminded me of the drill- and kill type of activities (Gallagher, 2009) that would not only destroy students' love for reading but also eliminate their chances of becoming multimodal literacy learners. Parents implicit request was to follow their children's curriculum as a script, unaware that the classroom is too uncertain a place for recipes (Eisner, 1998) and its life is inevitably unpredictable.

While I knew that my inquiry process is difficult to predict, might unfold in surprising ways, evolve in the middle of complex events and messy situations with clouds and shades of light and dark, and would not follow any linear logic, their request was like an idealized story of literacy learning and knowledge making with a sharply defined outcome. Their overemphasis on specific reading and writing outcomes, their doubts about what their children's literacy learning will be, combined with my own uncertainty about what might emerge throughout this teaching/research experience and how students' learning and experience will unfold in the classroom doubled the tension that I lived. The tyranny of certainty, as McDonald (1992) call it, and the search for evidence-based language learning, limited at some points the pleasure of my work with students. However, living the challenge of messiness and uncertainty, embracing it, recognizing and reflecting on it helped me gain increased knowledge about students and classroom teaching/learning. From the untidiness, messiness, and uncertainty of my participatory action research journey, I garnered new insights about my multiliteracies teaching/learning lived experience which generated new learning (Goodnough, 2008). Simply, I tried to ride the wave of messiness rather than fighting it recalling Cook's (1998) statement, "if we miss out the 'messy' bit... the creative part of our work can be lost" (p. 106).

Maintaining collegial relationship

Tensions throughout my research journey were not limited to issues related to the messiness and complexity of my teaching and classroom practice. I lived the tension in several aspects of my research journey. Britzman (1991) states, "enacted in every pedagogy are the tensions between knowing and being, thought and action, theory and practice, knowledge and experience, the technical and the existential, the objective and

the subjective” (p. 2). I had to manage the tensions inherent in my participative and collaborative relationship. I wanted to build a collegial relationship based on mutual learning and avoid the ‘expert’ role of the researcher.

This was a challenge for me considering my previous long professional background in teaching, teacher training, and curriculum development in addition to my role as an academic researcher, which, by itself, provided me with the authority of the ‘know-it-all’. Mitchell and colleagues (2009) state, “status, and the power associated with it, whether based on educational degree, years of experience or work role, may serve to intimidate or alienate teachers. This will only serve to undermine collaboration and equity” (p. 347). I wanted to frame our relationship by shared responsibility, collaborative teaching, and power sharing. Thus, I worked closely with Naziha as the project unfolded which helped inform our evolving actions. I avoided being the sole decision maker and focused on creating reciprocal dialogue and generating knowledge through interaction with her. Though I gained her trust, I was very cautious not to be imposing my own knowledge, ideas, and ways of doing things. When, for example, we were thinking of changing one of the introductory activities for the lesson to students, Naziha wanted me to design that activity saying, “I trust your pedagogical approaches and your way of designing engaging activities to students”. She then justified this by referring to my previous teaching experience and academic position as a researcher and ‘expertise’ in the area of literacy education. This made me continuously reflect to remind myself that my role in this participatory and collaborative research requires embracing all voices and knowledges and resisting the traditional models of knowledge construction which privilege expert knowledge (Brydon-Miller et al. 2011). Thus, acting in a dynamic, flexible, and open way to ensure genuine dialogue and the sharing of knowledge and feedback rather than acting like an ‘all-knowing expert’ (Stringer, 1996, p. 46).

The premise of PAR is participation by the research participants including the researcher. To me, this meant that I should maintain collaboration with Naziha from the very beginning of the project to its completion. To do this properly, I had to ensure that I was not using my academic knowledge and power to do things I want and in the way I desire. I wanted to ensure that we are both contributing to the process of this research inquiry. I sought to “avoid control” and to develop “a sense of connectedness” with her (Reinharz, 1992, pp. 20, 25) which enhanced our cooperation and learning. We

demonstrated our collaboration, share of power, and contributions of knowledge production when we jointly produced a proposal of arts-based literacy teaching/learning unit for our class. This proposal gained a high appreciation from the school principal and a great attention from some other school teachers. We both brought our unique knowledges, perspectives, and understandings to this proposal which created a situation of co-learning. Also, when some students didn't show up for two consecutive class sessions, Naziha suggested that we think of ideas to better engage them and their parents. She explained that involving parents in this process would have positive influence especially with developing their children's heritage language. She took the initiative to talk to parents and explain to them where we are in our project work and how their cooperation would engage their children and develop their literacy skills. She felt ownership of the project, so she tried to remove barriers to their engagement by offering them a visit to the school so we share more information about our project and show them how our multiliteracies teaching-learning process is unfolding.

In practice this was reinforced at the end of each teaching day. For example, we routinely met in the school hallways, in an available room; sometimes a classroom or the school library or gym. We shared various creative ideas during our conversations. Our unplanned meetings generated a lot of new opinions, thoughts, and viewpoints. We were active listeners while sharing our experiences and ideas. This continuous interaction, exchange of ideas, and reflection upon our teaching/learning sessions helped us maintain a strong participatory relationship. Sharing power over the teaching/learning and research process promoted our collaboration. I learned how to balance between the teacher's need of control on her class and my own power or authority due to my position as a researcher (Mitchell et al. 2009).

Not without challenges and tensions

Our *multimodal literacies* (Sanders & Albers 2010, p. 5) project that incorporated arts, multimodality, and new literacies did not always proceed smoothly and the way we hoped. We encountered things that worked and other things that did not. Technology was an important component needed for some students to produce their digital texts. Lack of necessary digital tools and apps was an obstacle for an easy creation of multimodal texts. Even though Internet access was available and the school offered free Wi-Fi to students,

the main technical problem for students to create their digital multimodal texts remained the shortage of free digital apps and the very few digital apps that are compatible with Arabic characters. Although students could find many Internet sites that offer free software, most of them offered very limited features or required subscription with fees to be able to use the more sophisticated editing features for creating a well- designed multimodal text. This frustrated students at some points as it deprived them from the chance to create their digital stories using some specific apps that have more interactive features than the iMovie and Windows Movie Maker which they used.

Several issues challenged our engagement and easy transitions throughout the process. Technical issues involving logistics, some equipment constraints, and some unanticipated interruptions slowed down the process of our research. This required certain follow-ups with either the school management or the parents at some points. Many times our multimodal work became chaotic. Securing resources whether some arts supplies or some digital technology tools restricted our students' creative additions and ideas to their projects. This was a challenging area especially that the school already struggles with budgeting for other print-based resources like the textbooks. However, positioning the research in the bricolage approach, we were able to deal with these critical challenges and entice students' creativity by making them use whatever materials and resources available to produce their multimodal literacy texts. Another factor that slowed down our work with students was some parents' attitudes and collaboration. Though some parents consented and were motivated to involve their children in our multiliteracies project, they weren't sending their children to school every week. Considering that students have their heritage language class once per week only, in which I had the chance to see them, made our work progress very slowly. To mitigate the influences of this challenge, Naziha and I carried the burden of following up with those students weekly. We had to either stay after class or use some of the recess time to support them in their work of multimodal text productions and answer their questions which were mostly related to their heritage language use.

Time was perhaps the most daunting challenge for us. Given the time available for us during the regular teaching day to work on expanding students' ideas and productions of literacy texts and to observe their work and listen to their thinking and challenges throughout the process of producing their literacy texts, we had to be creative

in finding ways to address this challenge. Many times we were faced with some questions on the digital and arts stuff from our students.



Time constraints made Naziha and I communicate during our weekday evenings using the whatsapp. Alternating between the two languages during our communication was very spontaneous

This required us to look for answers by learning on our own outside our class teaching time which was a further drain on our time as well. However, once we got things going, the unleashing of our students' creativity surprised us and multimodality demonstrated how it provoked their literacy skills. According to Stein (2003), “[m]ultimodal pedagogies unleash creativity in unexpected, unpredictable ways. They produce creativity” (p. 134).

We were also challenged with finding time to write our journal reflections after each teaching/learning session. The demands of the participatory approach for our multiliteracies research project were overwhelming that we didn't have enough time to meet and reflect after each and every teaching session. We tried to compensate by

creating a flexible time zone that allowed us to communicate on the evenings of our teaching days through instant messages or over the phone. This not only helped us overcome the challenge of time but also was a good representation of our multimodal literacy as we were using a new genre through a combination of various modes of communication (visual, audio, and print) with the aid of digital technology. Texting was one of the approaches for our own multimodal literacy practices and our support for advancing our collaborative work on innovative and creative multimodal literacies (Christiansen et al. 2017).

Not only we suffered to find the time we needed, students also complained about the very limited time available to produce their digital or arts-based texts. The production of their literacy texts was not possible to be finished entirely inside the classroom. The process of representing their ideas artistically, using creative and unfamiliar ways to show their words, feelings, and understandings, and to look for the images that would embody their story consumed time that was way beyond the two and a half hours we had every Saturday.

This is not the end.... An eye to the future

We look at the present through a rear view mirror. We march backwards into the future.

(McLuhan, 1967, p. 74)

Going back to the beginning of this project, I reiterate that our extremely fast-paced, dramatically changing, culturally and linguistically diverse, and technologically driven world requires us to be able to work, interact, and communicate in new ways. Additionally, our educational and social world is becoming more multiliterate and multimodal. Thus, teachers and educators are expected to be engaging learners in multiliteracies and multimodal meaning-making which ultimately opens doors for teachers to extend and transform their traditional literacy teaching-learning practices and ideally prepare students to be able to use varied forms of literacies, knowledges, understandings, and realities. Bali and Mostafa (2018) call for reconsidering literacy teaching approaches to encompass all forms of literacy texts. They wonder, “which students do we continually privilege when we require only particular ways of doing things? Choosing only one path greatly limits the chances of the majority of students to

show us they have learned” (p. 228). They contend that this limits students’ creativity and possibilities for expressing their learning in a variety of ways.

With all of these demands and the many aesthetic, artistic, digital and multimodal literacy texts produced by students, the project of multiliteracies as a living pedagogy culminated in this school. My final step was a ‘close out and learning’ session with the school principal. I informally approached him for a discussion on the whole multiliteracies project and work done with students, teachers, and parents. This informal discussion showed the principal’s intention for maintaining and developing this project in his school. However, he presented some concerns about implementing this new approach to literacy teaching and learning in his school. He said,

“I am impressed with students’ level of engagement and the confidence that they showed throughout the process. I think this way of teaching the language broke the routine of learning from one source only, which is their textbook. I understand that some parents still do not perceive this way as viable and effective for language and literacy education. But I noticed that the majority of parents’ reactions demonstrated their acceptance, satisfaction, and appreciation to keep on bringing such innovative ideas to our school. However, teaching our students to understand and create multimodal texts as they did in this project would require some changes to be done in our school.”

Though the school principal’s reactions were mostly appreciative, he was still concerned about few things that he needed to plan for in his school in order to have a well-structured change. Changes in the school were the main focus in our discussion. We touched on topics related to curriculum, teachers’ professional development, school physical environment, and school- parents connection and collaboration. Some of the main changes that he showed interest in doing included; making developments of more creative multimodal units to the present literacy curriculum, enriching the classrooms’ physical environment with art and digital tools, designing a teachers’ training program on new approaches to literacy teaching and learning, and changing the perspectives and expectations of parents to literacy teaching and learning in his school to include not only the print based form but also all other modes of literacies.

The principal implied in his conversation that since most of the school community perspectives about students’ accomplishments in reading and writing is based primarily on the significant focus and class time dedicated for reading and writing activities, the

school needs to extend the definition of language and literacy to include multimodality. He also indicated that they need to make space in their curriculum and through their teaching practices that would facilitate developing students' multiliterate skills. Modifying the literacy curriculum to allow for multimodal composing and transforming teachers' literacy teaching practices were among the most pressing issues that the school principal wanted to deal with in order to open the space for teachers to engage their students with multimodal literacies. The principal's suggestions for improvements in his school echo Zammit (2014) who states, "when teachers move to include the creation of multimodal texts into their classrooms, it places them in the position of having to make changes to their curriculum and teaching practices: the what they teach and how they teach" (p. 22). The principal also emphasized the idea of expanding teachers' knowledge base and skill set to be able to facilitate their students' multimodal literacies development and respond to more creative ways of literacy education. This also resonates with Walsh's (2011) ideas about the challenges that exist within changing classroom practices to incorporate multimodal literacy teaching and learning. He explains, "to adjust to the realities of changed modes of communication, classrooms need to change and additional descriptors of literacy need to be extended to encompass the nature of multimodal literacy" (p. 97).

Considering teachers' familiarity and comfort with using the traditional approach in teaching literacy, the principal was concerned about the professional support that the teachers need to integrate multimodal literacies in their classrooms. He highlighted the importance of offering teachers the knowledge and training needed to be able to integrate educational technology and digital literacies in their teaching practices. This concern is closely tied to what McVee and colleagues (2012, p. 15) refer to as 'teachers as learners' who have the chance to experience, experiment, and engage with literacy and technology in new ways which open the space for a creative and innovative type of teaching practice and literacies in their classrooms. According to Bull and Anstey (2018) teachers need to develop their technological pedagogical content knowledge and receive training and support to infuse multiliteracies/ multimodalities into their teaching practices. The principal also emphasized that working with new technologies could pose major practical challenges, even for experienced teachers. He explained,

“Being introduced to this way of teaching about multimodal texts and how technology changes students’ involvement in their literacy classroom does not guarantee that teachers will engage their students in it, nor does that guarantee that they will develop their students’ skills as producers of multimodal texts. This might be hard without getting the needed training on how to integrate multiliteracies into their teaching practice. I think if the school teachers get the training needed, then they would not avoid engaging their students with multiliteracies simply because of a lack of training or experience, and students possibly would not shy away from involving themselves in all forms of literacies.”

Considering the many challenges we faced when students tried to use digital technology for their digital texts made the school principal mention the need to equip the classrooms with good supports for students and teachers as well to be able to access the digital technology tools that can build students’ multimodal literacy capacities. He mentioned the lack of arts resources and digital technologies tools as some of the challenges that might hinder the sustainability of this literacy teaching approach in his school. He said,

“I know how much those tools can inspire students and widen their ways of showing their understanding and engagement. I am keen to have teachers and students work in different ways from the past.”

The principal was aware of the importance of making those tools available to teachers and students as they enrich students’ meaning-making and communication modalities and open the possibilities for them to creatively show their heritage language development, share their experiences, and express their opinions and feelings. He was cognizant that if he wants his school to transform its literacy practices and infuse its literacy curriculum with arts, digital, and multimodal approaches, they will then have to find ways for equipping, supplementing, and organizing their work. However, he repeated several times that the technology itself will not make the difference if teachers don’t get the appropriate support they need to use this technology and other non-digital tools to engage students with exciting, multimodal literacy activities.

The principal’s comments extended to one of the main pillars of the teaching-learning process, the curriculum. He suggested developing the curriculum to include more multimodal activities, as he named them, like the ones we did in one of the school classrooms. He wanted the school literacy curriculum to go beyond content knowledge of

reading and writing to include an emphasis on multiliteracies skills development. According to Du (2017) if the school engages students with a literacy curriculum that integrates all forms of literacies using their heritage language, better chances of language development and multiliteracies skills will take place then. In this sense, the school is supposed to expand its curriculum to include the teaching of arts, digital, and multimodal literacy texts in addition to the traditional print-based ones. A revamped literacy curriculum that embraces multiple modalities would help the parents to then realize the expanded image of literacy teaching and learning and better engage students as it would be more meaningful, relevant, different from the conventional, and resembles real life texts (Takayoshi & Selfe, 2007).

Students' experience in this research has produced creative arts-based, digital based, and multimodal literacy texts and demonstrated students' multiliterate skills. This project can be considered as a first attempt toward creative literacy teaching and learning which still requires more care and support to be nurtured and sustained. Thus, like print based literacy teaching, multimodal literacy teaching and productions of texts can be cultivated through the creative literacy teaching approaches and curriculum. This allows students to get opportunities to engage with multiple forms of communication and enrich their heritage language learning experiences (López-Gil & Molina-Natera, 2018).

Final words ...

And so, finally, I must bring to a close this assemblage of texts that included students' understanding of the narrative genre through their arts-based, digital-based, and multimodal stories. As you have made your way through this dissertation I have shown you how the journey of my participatory action research in an International Languages Program, namely the Arabic language unfolded. Considering the limited heritage language teaching resources, this study storied how students and teachers can be creative by making use of existing resources or making their own resources through engaging with technology, arts, crafts, music, and other visual, aural, and multimodal ways and forms. Students' literacy text about "The Immigrant Kid" that they had to respond to was the springboard to show their understanding of the narrative genre and opened the chance for them to use their creative and aesthetic multimodal literacy skills. Students' productions of literacy texts in this project broke the traditional perspective and practice

of Arabic language teaching and learning that was centered on repeated print literacy activities in this school. They demonstrated how Arabic as an international language can be multimodal and engaging. Now I am excited and proud seeing how the school that used to implement a literacy curriculum using the print-based mode only is open to the multiliteracies/ multimodal perspective of literacy and to develop multiliterate learners and multimodal producers of literacy texts.

As I look back over my research journey, it feels more like a crossed path through stages – cyclical stages of learning, growing, and re-learning. Yallop and Shield (2016) use the metaphor of the “*academic as sojourner* ... meaning one who both travels and rests from travel, as part of the continuing journey of living, learning, and teaching” (p. 43 emphasis in original). Now, I am the sojourner who wants to pause for a rest in order to think again about what I thought I knew, to ponder the lessons learned, and to think of how this journey shifted my pedagogical perspectives, my thinking, my actions, and my way forward in the world.

Although a plethora of literature and studies suggest that engaging students with multiliteracies allows developing their language and literacy skills and promote their productions of multimodal texts; published reports or research projects on this topic in the context of a weekend heritage language school do not exist. This project has contributed to the body of research that calls for innovative, creative, and alternative forms of literacies in a heritage language school. It also added new insights to educators, policy makers, scholars, and researchers who are working toward enriching diverse linguistic and cultural societies. Also, a new orientation for the teaching of literacy in heritage languages/ international language schools in Canada was demonstrated through using the principles of a multiliteracies approach to support preparing them for the world of ‘multis’. I think that through this inquiry, I was able to make a crack which will open up further within the school and other similar schools.

While my journey of inquiring, learning, and researching about multiliteracies/ multimodalities continues in various paths, now I reach a stage of sufficiency in writing about my research journey in one of the heritage languages schools that is under the International Languages Program in Canada. It was not an easy journey, but I believed from the onset of my project that “when the seas seem too treacherous to travel and the

stars too distant to touch” (Eisner, 2003, p. 383), our imagination releases new insights and constructs innovative ways of travelling through our endeavours. Through my living inquiry, I attempted to stretch students’ imaginations, unsettle teachers’ and parents’ perceptions of what is literacy, and nurture the conceptual and epistemological change of literacies in this heritage language school. This journey made students and their parents have a first time engagement with heritage language outside the textbook. It was exhaustively inspiring which made the school teachers and parents learn how engaging learners with multiliteracies in a heritage language classroom can influence the entire school literacy teaching and learning approaches and transform the school understanding of literacy. This helped pave the way for the whole school community to embrace and engage with multiliteracies as a new pedagogical approach to literacy teaching and learning. Creativity and innovation became a characteristic of literacy teaching and learning in this school.

The voices of parents, teachers, and the school principal were a main contribution to this research, which was the plateau that represented their shifts of understandings of literacy, and how the creative and multimodal forms influenced students’ heritage language learning and development. I will close this dissertation with these voices.

Parent 1: *I liked how the school recognized and celebrated my daughter’s literary and creative accomplishments for her literacy classroom. I think what students did deserved to be made public for the school community. However, I still would like to see my daughter do more writing tasks as this will improve her written expression skills. I am not suggesting stopping this type of artful activities. It is good to keep on encouraging students to use arts and crafts and enhance the content of their written pieces with visual information like the images.*

Parent 2: *I liked the idea of showing the work of our children and sharing it with other students and parents. I felt proud of my son’s work toward his literacy class. Working on this literacy task encouraged my son to learn the language and some digital stuff from his friends. I also noticed the joy that my son felt about his produced literacy text. He enthusiastically shared his work with his peers and other parents during this end of year celebration using his Arabic home language.*

Teacher1: *I learned that literacy can be anything, it does not need to be the alphabetical symbols and signs only...I understand that I can immerse my students in rich literacy learning experiences through the teaching of literacy in various forms. I recognized how engaging students with multiliteracies fostered a collaborative*

learning environment in my classroom and promoted students' creativity, aesthetic skills, and language development...

Teacher 2: *It has really been a great experience teaching through different modalities that ranged between the print and the arts. I learned that art makes teaching more dynamic, creative, and interesting. Students enjoyed the literacy classes which positively affected their learning and engaged them. My goal for next year is to bring more of other forms of literacy like the digital into my teaching practice. I never thought that I might engage with this literacy teaching approach in my classes. I always thought that I don't have enough time for experimenting with such activities considering the two and a half hours per week for teaching the language.*

School principal: The most important thing I am impressed with in this research project is how students were motivated and engaged in literacy and learning their heritage language. This engagement will provoke us to do more innovative and creative literacy teaching and to combine students' print-based literacy learning with other new forms that allow them to read, write, and create using pictures, drawings, digital apps, songs, music, theatre, and other. I also liked seeing them using various materials from magazines and other art supplies to make their own personalized books. This was a very good learning experience for them in which they expressed their cultural heritage and identities by including flags, symbols, and pictures from Canada and their countries of origin. All of this required them to search for information, to write few sentences in order to illustrate their ideas, and to speak about their stories which encouraged them all to be learning their heritage language.

Winterson (2004) states, "there is no story that's the start of itself...." (p. 27). Throughout this study, I narrated how students engaged with multiliteracies as a living pedagogy in a heritage language classroom, but the story is far from over. I hope that this study inspires at least some of its readers to add to the narrative through their own research in this area.

There will come a time when you believe everything is finished...that will be the beginning.

Louis L'Amour'(1980), from his Novel, Lonely on the Mountain

Epilogue

by Pierre Boudreau

For Houda, and
the two or three people who will(maybe) read the thesis

As I write this text, Houda, you have successfully defended your thesis. Even if you are not satisfied with your performance in the question and answer part, all the members of the committee agreed that it is an excellent thesis; here they are referring to the written document.

But this written document is NOT your journey: it is an “image” of your (our ?) journey since only you and I have been working / playing on this lived / living project since the very beginning until its end, in a few days. The six years journey experienced by both of us, different, is much more than what is presented here in the thesis.

Belgian artist René Magritte’s painting titled

“Ceci n’est pas une pipe”

illustrates well this distinction between the “image” and the real object/ experience. A distinction that goes unnoticed, most of the time. Magritte is right when he says in the title that “what” the person sees is NOT a pipe.

But without the real object of “a” pipe”, the painting could not be. So there has to exist an object that we, at least a large part of the humanity, agree to call “pipe”

Your thesis, Houda, is the “image” of your journey in a living pedagogy of multimodal multiliteracies in a context you describe very well, with a teacher partner/collaborator.

Using my own journey of reading during your journey, I think I can write that
without *movement and movement literacy*,

this experience you describe of
“living pedagogy of multimodal multiliteracy(ies)”
could not be.

And you could not narrate your journey.



So convinced of this “essentiality” of *movement and movement literacy*, I wanted to orient your eye / your ear towards it, as part of my own journey.

During the defence, as supervisor, I was the one who came in last with my comments OR questions. I had decided I did not want to ask questions, but wanted to solicit spontaneous comments from you on this literacy ...

since it is “hidden” from you as from all of us,
hidden and always there,
movement literacy.

A literacy ingrained in me.
forming a part of the essence or my inmost being,
to which I succumb daily or almost daily.

I had prepared the following written text to solicit your comments / thoughts:

“For Houda’s defence....

Sharing your thoughts and (maybe) lived situations in this class ...

About another type of literacy ...

Movement literacy ...

obviously close to my heart and life experiences ...

as physical education teacher and

later teacher educator-researcher in physical education.

Please share your thoughts on two quotes on the foundational status of

movement literacy,

“foundational” here means that other literacies, such as art and digital, and meaning making

would not be possible without some kind of movement literacy / how to move oneself.

Here are those quotes:

“... movement is the generative source of our primal sense of aliveness and of our primal capacity for sense-making ... (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p. 132).

“What is already there is movement,

movement in and through

which the perceptible world and acting subject come to be constituted,

(which is to say) movement

in and through which

we make sense of

both the world

and ourselves.” (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p.138)

After a moment of silence, you shared the following thoughts / comments:

Almost all of the children /students in my inquiry were born in Canada but their parents have ”moved” from the country they were born in to Canada. This “move” and connection to their countries of origin is present in the students’ lives and present in the work produced for this project. A living pedagogy has opened a space for them to express their hyphenated identities emerging from this “movement” from a country to another. (Sabra, H., 2020. *Thesis defence*. Virtual meeting on Zoom; March 27, 2020).

I had not “seen” movement with that eye. Thank you, Houda, for enriching my conception!

But this comment / thought was not enough for you.

As usual

Any subject that is worthy of interest

Has to be digged in, not left untouched.

Curiosity, perseverance.

Later that day (of the defence) I receive your email part of which reads as follows:

Now.... I decided that just like other committee members who requested additions to the thesis,

I want to bring into the discussion something about physical education/ physical literacy and movement.

So, please advise me on any reference(s) I can read now so that I can add this type of literacy into my text.

If you have any other thoughts, ideas, or suggestions, please share them with me.

Sincerely,

Houda

In your email, you write:

“... I want to *bring into the discussion* something about physical education/ *physical literacy and movement*. ...”

... but ...

This is NOT about movement literacy

“This” is your thesis, Houda.

More directly: your thesis is NOT about movement literacy.

I will NOT let you discuss, bring in “physical education/ physical literacy and movement” !!

SMILES ☺☺

You (we) could have chosen to adopt, insert this theme of *movement literacy*, what I consider the foundation of animated life, a foundation always present, hence unnoticed, invisible, unheard.

We chose not to.

A PhD is made of numerous decisions of this kind.

And a PhD has to come to an end.

Even without any reference to movement and movement literacy, the journey you describe IS worthy of a Ph D thesis, an excellent one.

It is about other forms of literacy(ies) and “a” pedagogy of literacy(ies), named “living pedagogy” by Ted Aoki.

It is this word “pedagogy” that brought us, you and me, together on this journey, on this project. We both have a strong interest in pedagogy, what goes on between a teacher and a student, when they interact on a subject of interest to both.

Only the two of us have lived /have been animated by this journey all the way, from the moment you and I met in my office to discuss our (in) compatibility and mutual interests related to education to this moment of writing this text.

I am familiar with the writings of Aoki on “living pedagogy”. In my first contact with Aoki’s writings, I found many similarities between this living pedagogy and the “I, Thou and It” of David Hawkins (1974), an author I re-read while you were reading, and re-reading Aoki.

While you were progressing towards this goal of obtaining a Ph D, I was continuing my exploration of movement by continuing “to move” like I have done all my life (jog, bike, ski). And read about

self-movement,
learning to move oneself
from a phenomenological perspective through
the writings of Maxine Sheets-Johnstone and Max van Manen

Exploration, curiosity about movement, and movement literacy
since I taught physical education at the primary level in schools,
and followed as a teacher educator, again in the field of physical education / activity.

Pedagogy of movement all over me.
Moving
“Doing” pedagogy in a real gym with real kids.
And sharing / teaching pedagogy to future teachers.

And what is physical education about, fundamentally, other than movement and movement literacy?

This interest of mine, this essence of me, is quite clear in the following communication, I offer you:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/11GRnK2ultsHEDwDHjXdaOJYLqe0hsQa/view?usp=sharing>

*If the link does not work, copy it in your browser. The communication will open and run “all by itself” Magic!!

Houda, I think I can say you are a “perseverant” person. You have proved it to me all along this journey. And you want to persevere, to correct what you consider, even after this assessment of your thesis, as a “mistake”: not *bring(ing) into the discussion* something about physical education/ *physical literacy and movement. ...*”

The few paragraphs that precede and the communication correct the mistake as you see it, but ...

This(thesis) is NOT about movement literacy

Smiles 😊😊

In the same email I mentioned you also write:

What bothered me so much and made me so sad after the defence is that I felt *I wasn't able to make you clearly present in the thesis*. I mentioned you in one of my anecdotes in the thesis but I didn't use any reference or citation from you. I consider this a *mistake that I need to see how to correct*.

You write “...*I wasn't able to make you clearly present in the thesis.*”

Here is an excerpt of a proposal written to present at a conference, a proposal never accepted, but used after all. It describes well, if incompletely,

my conception of teaching

and supervising a Ph D, of what should be this **presence**:

*The teacher/supervisor is a collaborator every time
a learner/Ph D student learns,
or most of the time, and
he does not have to be at the center of the stage,*

in fact should not be at the center of the stage

*And the learner/PhD student must **join** with the teacher/supervisor
to make learning possible.*

*You can not imagine how passionately the teacher/supervisor hopes for
good learners/Ph D students who will exert themselves
to find the energy and the color of the subject matter
the teacher/ supervisor has worked so hard to put there.
Real learning, the learning that brings the subject matter
to the understanding of the learner / Ph D student
is hard work of a special kind, and
not everybody is equally gifted as a learner /Ph D student*

*BUT for a teacher
there is always a way
to the heart, the body and the mind of
« **this** »
learner,
this
person !
Sometimes, a way not so obvious, not so easy.*

*But it was such an easy **journey** with you, Houda.
(Enjoyable, adds Houda)*

*(Adapted from: Boudreau, P., 2015. A Narrative of Teaching and Learning about
Pedagogy in a University Course. Proposed communication (declined) for the AERA
2017 conference (American Educational Research Association).*

Houda,

I think I can say you are have a “BIG heart”.

And a completed Ph D will not alter
this quality.

It is ingrained in the essence of who you are.

Wishing you the best in your future endeavors

With all my affection

Pierre Boudreau, (co) supervisor

April 2020

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