Transcultural-Affective Flows and Multimodal Engagements: Rethinking Pedagogy and Assessment with Adult Language Learners

Julianne Burgess & Jennifer Rowsell

Transcultural-Affective Flows and Multimodal Engagements: Reimagining Pedagogy and Assessment with Adult Language Learners

In this article, we present a research study with a group of newcomer and refugee learners who have resettled in the Niagara region in Canada to create new lives. Over the course of four months, we came to know the stories of fifteen adult language learners, and we witnessed their steady induction, acceptance and enjoyment of multimodal activities. Combining the notions of translanguaging and affective flows with multimodal assessment, we draw out artifactual and interview data to illuminate ways of reframing assessment making it more meaningful and agentive. We push for broader perspectives of language education and a reconceptualization of ways to teach and assess English language learners.

Keywords: multimodality; translanguaging; resettlement; affective flows; assessment; 3D Model of Literacy

The introduction of rigid and instrumental forms of assessment to language programs for newcomers to Canada has produced a seismic shift in the adult language learning classroom. Once a flexible and supportive environment that allowed for teacher responsiveness to learner interests and inquiries; it has now become a space of anxiety and stress for both teachers and students (see Desyatova, 2018; Vanderveen 2018). The newly mandated model of assessment policy and practice in federally funded settlement programs is anchored in the assumption of language as a fixed set of skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking – by which learners are measured (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2019), thereby narrowing and essentializing definitions of language and identities. Viewed through a deficit lens, newcomers are classified based on a lack of English. Such labelling results in the erasure of the individual as a complex and competent transnational, transliterate global citizen; a creative person with feelings, goals and dreams of the future. As an adult literacy educator and a literacy researcher, we push for broader perspectives of language education, a reconceptualization of the ways of teaching and assessing language development, with a *sin fronteras* (no borders) perspective that restores more of an ethic of care to the language learning classroom.

For research reported in this article, we did not conduct formal assessments of participants during workshops. In fact, we discovered many participants quietly expressed delight that our sessions gave them an opportunity to escape from classroom assessments. The students' remarks alerted to us the need for research that reorients language assessment away from prescriptive and punitive models, to more holistic and agentive methods that take into account learner identities, affect and embodiment in meaning-making.

In this article, we speak across this spectrum through participant stories and multimodal artifacts produced by adult language learners who attend language classes in a local Welcome Centre, which is a community-based settlement services provider. The centre offers a variety of supports for newly arrived immigrants and refugees, including an employment help centre, computer training workshops, and recreational activities. The Welcome Centre's key mandate is the provision of language classes with a focus on settlement and integration for newcomers who have varying levels of English ability.

Contemporary research in language education promotes "more agentive engagements in language brokering that recommend 'refugee students' involvement in digital literacies and multimodality to adapt to resettlement" (Karam, 2018, p. 512). The rhetorical practices that create and sustain Canadian language and literacy policies are often grounded in White, middle-class values and monocultural assumptions about learning and communication. In this article, we present a research study with newcomers and refugee learners who have resettled in the Niagara region of Canada to create new lives. Over four months, we offered multimodal, arts-based workshops where research participants shared family photos and artifacts and produced their own multimodal texts in the form of digital storybooks, conceptual photographs and collages that capture their resettlement experiences. Our multimodal activities were grounded in multiliteracies theory, specifically attending to the affective and socio-cultural needs and identities of participants (New London Group, 1996). We observed the affective engagements of participants: their vocal and embodied expressions of surprise and discovery in new forms of meaning making. As educators, we were attuned to the ways that emotions circulated in the classroom and created sticky relations (Ahmed, 2014) across ideas, objects, people, and multimodal products; this attention to affect guided our pedagogy in workshops. Focusing on

affect made us aware of how data can move us and move with us (Burnett, 2019), as we gathered and analyzed our findings.

For our research, we adopted an ethnographic approach (Heath, Street, & Mills, 2008) to document the nature of texts that participants accessed and made and we explored themes that emerged using a lens of translanguaging and flows (Blackledge & Creese, 2017; García, 2009; Lin & He, 2017) coupled with more recent scholarship in literacy studies which reflects an affective turn in literacy research (Ehret, 2018). We offer an expansive view of texts in the article – one that frames meaning-making as fluid, interactive, and multimodal, having two or more modes in play in all of the participants' designs and assignments. We therefore reconceptualize language learning as involving tacit, felt, affective flows (Abrams & Rowsell, 2019). In our research, we observed that such flows grew with each session resulting in the creation of a space in which creative meaning-making is embraced in opposition to both standards-driven curricula and restrictive assessment priorities and processes.

We therefore advocate for a reconceptualization of language assessment policy and practices informed by the framework of translanguaging in tandem with affect theory, toward a *sin fronteras* (no borders) pedagogy (García & Wei, 2014, p. 43) that reflects multilingual learners' *sin fronteras* worldview. The article structure is as follows: we begin by framing the research study and our own reflexivity; after presenting the research and our positionality, we define how we assessed artifacts multimodally through Green's 3D literacy model (Durrant & Green, 2000; Green, 1988, 2002; Green & Beavis, 2012; Ludwig & Authority, 2003); then, we move onto translanguaging as a presiding conceptual frame coupled with illustrative data and how multimodal assessment strands emerged; from there, we draw out our secondary layer of

theory, namely affect theory, in addition to presenting data samples and multimodal forms of assessment.

Research Study Background

The research took place from January until April 2018 at a Welcome Centre in the Niagara region. To conduct the research, we worked together to plan and teach units of study to fifteen newcomers over nine sessions, and we documented our teaching and observations in detailed ethnographic fieldnotes (Heath, Street & Mills, 2008). In addition to co-teaching and co-researching, we both conducted interviews with each participant. The core research questions for the study were: In what ways does language teaching shift when applying a multimodal and translanguaging approach to pedagogy? How can more open, multimodal approaches to language learning be assessed? Does affect theory offer a way into language pedagogy and research to enrich data collection and analyses?

In terms of data collection, we held nine two-hour sessions (including initial interviews), followed by a celebration event and follow-up interviews. The sessions were held weekly, with holidays and school functions occasionally interrupting the schedule. Study participants were volunteers who were recommended by their teachers, and several participants helped recruit friends and classmates for the project. Participation was not contingent upon completing coursework. The term "newcomer" is used here to describe refugees and immigrants who are recent arrivals to Canada; one participant came to the country three months before the study began, and the participant with the longest history in Canada reported being in the country for one year. We use emergent bi/multilinguals (García, 2009) to acknowledge newcomers' growing proficiency in English and to contest deficit perspectives that perpetuate inequalities in English-only classrooms by focusing on learners' limitations rather than their skills, talents and potential.

Our data collection comprised: co-teaching; ethnographic fieldnotes; participant interviews; and artifact collection. The fifteen research participants came from countries spanning the globe, including Syria, Iraq, Columbia, Venezuela, China, and Burundi (See Table 1 in the Appendices). The reasons for their resettlements ranged from urgent, such as asylum-seeking, to quality of life concerns such as family reunification and employment and career opportunities. In addition to offering bridge programs to assist newcomers transitioning to the workplace or post-secondary studies, the Welcome Centre also provides English classes for settlement purposes for beginners with little English to more advanced fluency levels. Table 1 (see Appendices) presents names (pseudonyms), ages, and cultural backgrounds of participants involved in the research.

We completed ongoing data analysis (Merriam, 2009) throughout the study and we met after each session to debrief and write reflection notes. Patton (1990) indicates that the data analysis is guided not only by the research questions but also by analytical insights made during data collection. Combining translanguaging with affect theory enriched our data interpretation and helped to elicit more multimodal forms of assessment. Over the course of the research, there were ongoing interactions with participants, and a process of action-reflection that informed our data observation, reflection, and analysis. To analyze data, we engaged in open coding whereby major thematic categories were identified through an inductive process that "moves from the specific to the general" in order to "find connections among them" (Hatch, 2002, p. 161). This step of analysis was essentially a descriptive one involving several readings in affect theory, assessment, and multimodality. In contrast with previous data analyses that focused more on multimodality and design, in this research we focused more on affect and embodiment by coding non-representational, felt, and sensed moments during fieldwork and interviews.

Foregrounding Reflexivity

I, Julianne, have been teaching English to adult newcomers in federally-funded LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) community and academic settings for more than 20 years. The federal government recently mandated an assessment framework called Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA), based on a belief that there is a need for a "nationally recognized set of language standards" (Hajer & Kaskens, 2012, p.1). From my experience with this new assessment program, the application of PBLA has resulted in a rigid approach that focuses on skills teaching and constant testing and leaves little space for learner-centered pedagogies or spontaneity to act on those teachable moments that flow from the questions, stories, and experiences that newcomers so often bring to the learning setting. Additionally, PBLA practices fail to capture the full extent of what bi/multilingual learners can do with their rich linguistic repertoires. To push against this codified, instrumental view of language teaching and assessment, we worked with Green's 3D model and employed theories of affect and translanguaging to interpret data.

I, Jennifer, have collaborated with Julianne for six years – both in her LINC class and in the Welcome Centre where we conducted this research. Over the last five years, we have completed three research studies (Rowsell & Burgess, 2014; 2017) and a consistent strand across all of this research has been teaching through multimodality coupled with taking detailed ethnographic fieldnotes, interviews, and artifactual analyses. I have experience in language classrooms and an abiding interest in ways of expanding language and literacy through multimodal assessment frameworks.

Defining Multimodal Assessment through Green's 3D Model

In conducting this study, we applied Green's 3D Model of Literacy as a guiding framework (Durrant & Green, 2000; Green, 1988, 2002; Green & Beavis, 2012; Ludwig & Authority, 2003), to assess language learners. Green's framework appeals to us because of its generative capacity to layer dimensions of language learning from technical language work to cultural-discursive references to fostering critical learning when students slip into deeper, more meta-understandings about themselves as language learners. The 3D Model highlights the following overlapping areas of language understanding:

- *an operational-technical dimension* involves competency with a language system, as required for decoding/encoding print or using particular tools, such as alphabets, pencils, laptops, and tablets;

- *a cultural-discursive dimension* involves competency with the meaning system, as required for the understanding of literacy contexts (e.g. knowledge of socially constructed situations, ability to read cultural meanings and understand genres); and,

- *a critical-reflexive dimension* involves active engagement with literacy, as required to develop the capacity to interpret multiple and/or conflicting sources of information, to transform and synthesize understandings, and to ask questions about audience and power (e.g. understanding what may be 'true' or attempts to manipulate readers).

In Green and Beavis's (2012) reading of the relationship across language, literature and literacy, language is superordinate with literature and literacy "understood as conditions of written language" (p. 75). In this usage of "language", Green and Beavis intend it as a category which "ranges from the verbal-linguistic to the digital-multimodal and embraces communication and semiosis more generally" (p. 80). Green and Beavis recommend taking "due account of a

profound and historic media-shift, from 'print' to 'digital-electronics', and the emergence and consolidation of a new communication order. This is to draw in appropriate consideration of past(s), present(s) and future(s), or of residual, dominant and emergent forms of cultural practice and change" (p. 75). Green and Beavis's observations about contemporary shifts in language are particularly germane to English language learners in our study because, for most, their goals rest firmly on securing employment and a life in Canada and they need new(er) literacies and language skills to do so. On another, we would argue, deeper level, they need to feel personally invested in and fulfilled by their language learning experiences. Traditional and verbal-linguistic approaches alone do not allow for enough transcultural and identity work because they do not speak to our participants' many funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) that we observed first-hand during the research.

As previously stated, Canadian settlement language programs for adult learners are required to assess language using the Portfolio Based Language Assessment (PBLA) approach (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, nd). In this case, portfolios are not curated by the learners themselves, the portfilios are repositories for learner assessments based on the four language skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking, and further subdivided into competencies – with a target number of assessments per semester. The PBLA protocol falls squarely within Green's operational-technical dimension, with a sole focus on language-as-code. By contrast, the activities our participants engaged in during our workshops operationalized all three strands of Green's literacy framework. Our multimodal projects called on participants to work within multiple cultures and languages, employ their own knowledge, talents and communicative repertoires, use a variety of modes for creative meaning making, and actively participate in

transformative literacy practices by shaping their own messages and imbuing those messages with several possible meanings (Ludwig & Authority, 2003).

The dimensions of the 3D Literacy Model work together simultaneously rather than sequentially or developmentally. In the case of our definition of multimodal assessment, we argue that artifacts featured in the article involve, to varying degrees, all three dimensions and the presence of these three dimensions demands non-representational work (affect and embodiment) as well as representational work (modes, design choices, colours, fonts, angles, etc.). In this article, we bring a new framing to our work; for the first time we are implementing this approach to data analyses and formulation of multimodal forms of assessment.

Over the nine sessions, all three parts of the framework worked in unison for much of the time with the operational dimension having much less of a presence within multimodal design and production work compared with cultural-discursive and critical-reflexive dimensions that were present all of the time. As we analyzed the multimodal artifacts that resulted from the project, it soon became clear that Green's 3D Model had strongly enhanced our definition and understanding of multimodal assessment.

Participants, drawing on their stories of migration as well as their cultural resources and linguistic backgrounds, used their cultural, social and linguistic resources to inform their modal choices (Rowsell, 2013). In the next two theoretical sections, we will apply the 3D Model to ways that we assess multimodal artifacts. We foreground two core theoretical strands, namely translanguaging and affect theory, accompanied by illustrative artifacts to elucidate multimodal ways of evaluating/assessing the nature and quality of language learning.

Translanguaging, Flows and Multimodal Engagements

The notion of translanguaging helped to accentuate the fluidity and more ephemeral, positive, and affirming aspects of the research study. Translanguaging, according to García (2009), is the use of "multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds" (p. 45). This definition takes into account the communication styles, registers and repertoires that are representative of dynamic multilingualism and the fluidity of those semiotic resources, commonly found in linguistically and culturally diverse settings. Central to translanguaging is a switch from an essential focus on language-as-code to one on identity-as-dynamic. Translanguaging illuminates and activates the complex practices of bilingual speakers, whose lived realities are linked to the deeply personal and social dimensions of language; as García (2017) states, they are speakers who "cannot avoid having had languages inscribed in their bodies" (p. 24). A translanguaging perspective describes the process by which learners perform bilingually and multimodally in unique ways, giving agency to the individual speaker. In doing so, speakers construct a multilingual identity that may not necessarily align with national identities (García, 2017). Through their multilingual and multimodal practices, speakers activate their hybrid knowledges (Grey, 2009) and create their own dynamic, hybrid identities.

Translanguaging implies ways of acting, being and knowing with language, which is both situated and agentive insofar as linguistic and embodied communicational patterns shift as people enter and exit contexts, naturally allowing for discourses to flow (García, 2009). Our drawing out of translanguaging within multimodal artifacts relies on these properties of discourse flows as well as the different histories and experiences that are part and parcel of language experiences (but are ephemeral, couched and opaque to the extent that you cannot see history,

beliefs or feelings, but you can sense them, and they can be manifested in artifacts). In this way, translanguaging relates to mobility and diversity because it invites a natural entanglement of histories, memories, felt experiences, linguistic diversities across formal and informal learning contexts. For Creese (2017), translanguaging practices "[put] the relational before the linguistic, [translanguaging] foregrounds meanings rather than code, and understanding more than 'correctness'" (p. 8). Through our arts-based, multimodal research, we fostered a language learning environment that leverages translanguaging as a way into multimodal expressions and responses to resettlement.

Adding to our application of translanguaging within the research, we take up Lin and He's (2017) theory of translanguaging and dynamic flows, which provides a multifaceted perspective on how language users deploy their communicative repertoires. Lin and He cite Lemke's (2000) theory of timescales to characterize translanguaging and flows as speech/action events that occur across multiple material media and multiple timescales; the participants, their bodies, linguistic and multimodal resources, tools and artifacts – both physical and symbolic – are interconnected in the flow of collective meaning-making.

Telling Examples of Translanguaging

The first activity in our study activated the first two pillars of multiliteracies practices (New London Group, 1996), through situated learning in an experiential setting, and overt instruction, with teacher scaffolding to assist participants as they analyzed and interpreted a series of conceptual photographs. Translanguaging scholars describe "a bleeding of languages" that happens in classrooms challenging the notion that languages are discrete, bounded systems. In our participants' photo series, we recognized a blending of cultures as the emergent bilingual

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learners developed new relationships and understandings with each other. We heard through our interviews and class discussions and saw in participant artifacts the sharing of stories, histories, the daily concerns in their unfolding lives, and also the discovery of both surprising similarities and conscious respect for differences: evidence of learners' evolving, hybrid identities and cultures (Alim & Paris, 2017), their further becomings as transnational, translingual global citizens.

To begin our first workshop, we presented a series of original photographs by female photographers from the Middle East, showing images of a man and woman in an unnamed setting, engaged in mundane everyday situations (having a picnic, sitting in a car, reading a newspaper); each scene contained a twist with the presence of some unexpected objects around the central figures. As a whole group, we discussed each photo. We tried to interpret the sombre expressions on the faces of a newlywed couple in their wedding finery, sitting in the rusted shell of an automobile. Participants then discussed the imagined conversation between the couple in the car. A participant, Lisha, suggested the bride was saying: "No way! No way!", while the groom pleaded: "I'm sorry. I love you. I will try to find money to make you happy!" The group generally agreed with Lisha's reading of the photo. At the end of our first workshop, we noted how our participants, from various classrooms, ethnicities and linguistic backgrounds, had come together through the sharing of personal histories, artifacts, imagined stories, and laughter. Our affective encounters drew us into a community of feeling (Grey, 2009), in which the participants entered into new relationships with each other and with us, as teacher/researchers. There was an openness to difference – to different possibilities and different connections – in which the participants imaginatively used their differences as resources in our project work, in a creative disruption of the narrow mandates of settlement English programs.

Figure 1. A Love Story.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

For our second workshop, we began by asking the participants to review the photos from our previous encounter by describing the textual details in the photos, re-telling the storylines, and reviewing the English vocabulary they found useful. Occasionally group members moved into their first language, but generally group members spoke English. We then asked the participants to break into small groups of four. Their task was to draw on their critical understandings to re-invent the story in one of the original photographs, altering it in some way, invoking the fourth pillar of multiliteracies theory, transformed practice. The main characters in the Figure 1 photo are Lisha and her husband Chunlei, from China. The other group members were Adara from Syria and Maria from Colombia. They decided to work with an image of a couple, facing each other while sitting on a picnic blanket, surrounded by an array of unusual picnic items: goldfish bowl, an ornate mirror, and a copy of *The Quran*. Lisha took charge of arranging their scene while Maria and Adara gathered props from around the school to re-make the picnic setting. They found a table cloth to spread out on the classroom floor to stand in for a picnic blanket, a vase with flowers, a plastic water bottle, two oranges on a plate, and a student's notebook to replace *The Quran*. This group caught our attention several times with how much they were enjoying this activity. We heard loud bursts of laughter as they worked together to arrange their props and watched the characters improvise and playfully act out different storylines. We observed Chunlei and Lisha giggling together throughout the activity. The group finally decided on their image: "a love story" to capture the moment of the marriage proposal. In

appraising their photo (and perhaps reflecting in his 40-year marriage to Lisha), Chunlei stated: "They are happy together." Chunlei, Lisha, Maria and Adara explored an idealized version of romantic love and engaged in an animated discussion with visual texts and artifacts through talk and visuals. There was no deliberate intent to contrast the somber feelings in the original photo, rather they interpreted the scene as they saw it.

Our translanguaging space allowed participants to work through and aross multiple languages and cultures, to engage in collective, affective, and embodied meaning-making beyond a single codified system to a more expansive, pluralist view of the communication process. During their encounter, the bi/multilingual participants drew on their knowledge of English as well as their own languages, deploying, integrating and appropriating new linguistic and cultural features from the surrounding environment into their own communicative repertoires. The interaction of the critical, cultural and operational strands of the 3D Model allowed the participants to respond to the multimodal artifacts and create new artifacts with multiple meanings. The meaning-making process brought the participants together in a new context in which being and meaning took new shapes and offered new opportunities for imagining, and for acting within and upon their worlds (Wei, 2011). The participants demonstrated language as identity, and language as affective and dynamic, not bound by official "standards" or regulated by state-imposed assessment regimes.

The original photo selected by the next group showed a woman wearing a white hijab and patterned blouse, sitting with an open newspaper, her head up and her eyes looking forward to engage the viewer with a direct gaze. The group that chose to work with this image had prevailing voices such as Monique who had a clear sense of the story she wanted to tell in her recreation of the image. Monique's group had a short discussion and devised a plan to

reconfigure elements of the story. They went straight to work, recruiting a male participant and

locating matching coffee cups in the kitchen cupboard to fill out the scene.

Figure 2. A Story of Equality.

[INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE]

From her fieldnotes, Julianne wrote:

> I (Julianne) discussed the scene with the group as they were setting up. Monique
> explained she wanted the man and woman to be sitting side by side so that they would be
> the same height, while holding the same coffee cups, representing equality between men
> and women. They are not smiling because this is not supposed to be seen as a relaxed
> moment enjoying a coffee. Their expressions are solemn to emphasize the theme of
> equality. Monique is looking directly at the camera to engage the viewer to make this
> point, echoing the gaze of the woman in the original photo. The group explained the man
> is portraying the woman's brother; this is an expression of family support for gender
> equality. Interestingly, Monique does not normally wear a hijab, but chose to wear one in
> the group's photo (another nod to the original image). This is when Monique made the
> comment; "the woman is equal in the limits of her culture".

The members of Monique's group represent a variety of cultures and religions in the

room, some were initially uneasy with this new performance of gender relations but Monique's

rather ambiguous explanation about the "limits of her culture" seemed to be a mediating factor.

The photo shows the performance and contestation of gender roles and Monique's intentionality

and determination to tell a particular story, along with a fluidity in the movement between

languages, cultures and religious practices. Here, literacy is more than a fixed set of skills; it is a

lively, affective encounter through a reworking of a text, a melding of cultures and religions, a

new assemblage of the human and non-human elements. During our workshops, Monique

exhibited an easiness and openness in her interactions with her peers and, although she admitted

to missing her country, she expressed confidence in her children's wellbeing and security in their

new homeland. There was a sense of dynamism to her unfolding of identity in the classroom. Monique's group created a shared digital story that illustrates how language is a complex and "deeply personal and social affair" (García, 2009, p. 12); a social process that is continually and collectively reconstructed as an assemblage of speakers, language, culture, lived histories, and affect, flowing through time and place.

Combining Translanguaging with Multimodal Assessment

Our workshops did not incorporate any formal language assessments; here, our focus on multimodal assessment is for illustrative purposes only. We begin by drawing attention to our use of a translanguaging lens to describe (and informally assess) participants as "emergent bi/multilinguals" (García, 2009), an asset-based perspective that suggests a linguistic advantage over monolingualism and a rejection of the negative framing of "English language learners" (ELLs), a term that focuses on limitations or deficits, and is routinely employed in English language teaching.

Green notes the importance of an informed view of literacy, one that is complex and multi-dimensional to meet the increasingly complex needs of learners. We argue that weaving Green's model (Durrant & Green, 2000; Green, 1988, 2002; Green & Beavis, 2012; Ludwig & Authority, 2003), with translanguaging and affect theory provides a deeper perspective on the complexities the literacy work in which our participants are engaged, illuminating the representational and non-representational dimensions of multilingual, multicultural, multimodal meaning-making. We take up Green's (2002) call to re-energise the "literacies of the imagination and the creative possibilities in language activity" (p. 73); we start with the cultural dimension of the 3D Model so that activities focus on meaning-making in context, and organically draw in the operational and critical strands of the framework.

Rethinking assessment through a multimodal, transcultural lens can be seen as an ethical stance. The artifacts in our workshops provided a multimodal context through which to assess our participants' work. Creating a translanguaging space attuned to emotion and affect points the way forward to a different, potentially richer ecology for language teaching and assessment. Operational moments (Durrant & Green, 2000; Green, 1988, 2002; Green & Beavis, 2012; Ludwig & Authority, 2003) emerged when participants like Lisha or Chunlei learned vocabulary to discuss the content of photographs and simple techniques of photography. The group engaged in cultural-discursive dimensions when participants improvised and experimented with modes like artifacts, colours, objects and poses to transmit meanings that were culturally and ideologically laden.

Assessing language development through a transcultural and multimodal lens produced the strongest effects in porous moments when participants like Monique's past seeped into the present and she displayed a critical dimension about meaning-making. Through her engagements with other members in the class, with Julianne and Jennifer and with various materials and modes, Monique sought a contrastive stance from her former views on feminism. It was clear from our conversations with Monique that our method of teaching was noticeably different from her previous experiences, and the difference lay in the transcultural flow of her background, memories, and stories informing her learning.

Toward Affective and Emotional Language Teaching

Reimagining the possibilities of language development through cultures, backgrounds, and stories can lead to more affectively driven teaching. Language and literacy scholars understand communication as a multi-semiotic achievement, but it is also an affective, integrative and creative achievement (Ehret, 2018; Nelson & Johnson, 2014). The turn to affect

in education research has brought with it psychoanalytically informed theories of subjectivity and subjection, theories of the body and embodiment and cultural-political theories of emotion and affect (Zembylas, 2016). In "second" language practice, policy, and research, the focus on emotions and affect is primarily linked to the creation of optimal conditions to maximize language learning, theorizing emotions as primarily internal psychological states in need of management (Waterhouse & Arnott, 2016). However, poststructural perspectives on emotions in "second" language settings have yielded innovative scholarship that examines the relationships between discourses and social and cultural forces, based on the cultural political theory of emotions by Ahmed (2014). Another vein of affect research explores the human body and emotions and affects that are individually-experienced but historically situated, linking it to the work of Massumi (1996).

According to the literature in English language teaching, one important role of the teacher is emotion management, to reduce so-called "negative" emotions such as frustration, anger and anxiety, that are believed to hinder language acquisition (Benesch, 2013). Benesch (2017) sheds light on English teachers' embodied emotions, including "emotion labour", which occurs when workplace directives (such as plagiarism and attendance policies) conflict with a teacher's professionalism and ethic of care. Zembylas (2005) believes attention to affect creates space for moment-by-moment pedagogical decision-making guided by the reading of student and teacher emotions. By recognizing and legitimating our own and our students' emotions, and by exploring the ways in which emotions are politically grounded, teachers and students may find their way to deeper political engagement (Benesch, 2017), and perhaps push against the assumptions embedded in Canada's "happy migrant" discourse, and examine the ways newcomers and teachers are implicated in the maintenance of prevalent discourses.

Emotions and affect are undertheorized in the literature on translanguaging. Our research highlights the affective dimension of translanguaging, which allows us to see how emotions are political, how emotions circulate in relationships of difference (Ahmed, 2014), how discourses emerge in classrooms, and how those discourses influence the construction of learner emotions to establish, disrupt or uphold unequal relations of power (Zembylas, 2016) in hegemonic resettlement regimes. In Ahmed's (2014) writing about emotion, bodily sensations, and individuals, she speaks of an "aboutness" of emotions that implies a stance on the world. As Ahmed observes,

> The 'doing' of emotions… is bound up with the sticky relation between signs and bodies: emotions work by working through signs and on bodies to materialise the surfaces and boundaries that are lived as worlds. (p. 191)

Emotions circulate within material worlds and there most certainly was a stickiness to the language learning that happened over the course of our research. Our concern here is to explore that "sticky relation" in more detail and try to understand the role of affect and emotion in language work as a driver of meanings and we strive to devise assessments that fold in affect and emotion.

Telling Examples of Affect Theory and Multimodal Assessments of Language

Ehret (2018) argues that a New Literacy Studies account with a focus on social practice, texts, and what already exists eclipses a host of feelings, sensations, that are foundational to the qualities of meaning. Ehret (2018) describes the idea of knowing and feeling when he recounts his research in hospitals:

> Knowing and feeling affective dimensions of literacies as they emerge through the moment, as they did through moments with Ella, require speculative propositions that lure us into grasping relational transformations as they happen. (p. 566)

Our vision of translanguaging and multimodal language learning and assessing is one that encompasses more than representational work; it includes affect and it can therefore push back at ways of knowing that define the world in particular ways (e.g., a codified stance on language development). The next section explores participants' affectively driven multimodal practices, in a shift away from design-based notions of multimodality. Our participants engaged in storytelling centered on personal artifacts laden with historical, cultural and emotional significance, and collage-making, in which it became evident that designs are not necessarily structured and built, but may evolve through ideas, convictions, and felt sensibilities (Leander et al., 2017).

Every Object Tells a Story

Figure 3. Lin's Ring.

[INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE]

The first example of affect informing language learning came from an activity that we completed with the group on artifacts. The week before the session, we asked the group to bring an artifact that they value and that tells a story (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010). One young woman, Lin, brought in an intergenerational artifact in the form of a ring that she wears as a tribute to her baby. Lin's ring demonstrates a connection to her mother, grandmother and child. It is a tiny ring, but not a fully enclosed circle, and it has darkened over time. The ring has a specific purpose: to soothe a colicky baby. Lin explained that when needed, the ring is dipped in egg white, placed on the baby's abdomen, and covered with a scarf, which is bound around the infant's umbilical area. When we asked if it works, Lin replied confidently, "Yes. It work." The

ring is comforting in many ways for Lin. The small object has become a rich text that enfolds all three dimensions of Green's 3D Model as well as Lemke's (2000) theory of timescales, representing an ancient culture, a family's history and, within that family, the women's bonds through their shared experiences of motherhood. As Lin held the ring in her palm, she told us: "I feel my family is with me." As Lin shared the complex story of the ring, group members discussed other similar intergenerational, often culturally infused artifacts that they have at home or back in their home countries. The process of talking through artifactual lore and practices brought in the sticky relations that Ahmed speaks of in her work. The same discussion would never have happened if it were not for Lin's ring and the story behind it; the ring served as the sticky material relation that induced a mood of nostalgia and of camaraderie.

Collage

Our final workshop involved collage making. Here we delved further into the emotional nature of multimodal design work, challenging traditional approaches to multimodality anchored in designed texts with structures and grammars, to embrace a non-representational lens focused on affective intensities and capacities to move and be moved (Leander et al., 2017). We began by showing the participants four sample collages and discussing the colours, possible meanings of the images and the feelings each collage evoked. The participants were then given their task: *Make a collage that tells the story of you in Canada.* We observed each participant become fully immersed in their work, and each produced a vivid, evocative text. Most canvases were covered with an explosion of ideas and images: families picnicking, children playing, trees in bloom, winter scenes and waterfalls. Many had pasted the magazine titles at the top or center of their collages, subtly appropriating the titles – *Our Canada* and *Canadian Living* – to evoke their lived experiences. A few had chosen to let their background colours dominate, placing smaller images

of children or the shape of a homeland, in select places. Like the artifact activity, not only was there a sticky relation across the group, but additionally, there was what Ehret (2018) describes in his work with Ella as a "speculative concept of literacy as becoming" (p. 566). Whether the *becoming* entailed the focused knowledge work or a greater ease within the learning environment, the dynamic bodily, material and human interactions (Massumi, 1996) produced a unified feel.

As individuals finished their work, we sat down and asked each person to tell us the story of their collage while we took notes. We heard stories about the accessibility of nature in Canada and the changing seasons, about children enjoying school, families having opportunities and hope for the future. Pointing to the family van on a canvas dominated by smiling faces, Lin said, "My family is going to travel – anywhere. Just family together. Language improve first." Chunlei's canvas has a red and pink background, with a small image of a mother and child reading, and a couple embracing. He explained, "I am very happy every day."

Ahmed's sky-blue collage contained the words "Life is calling" and "I can change the world" at the top of the canvas, and "Our Canada" below. Through the center of the canvas, a van is passing construction roadblocks, there is an image of a man with his head in his hands, and a larger photo of another man with an expression of happy surprise. Ahmed, a recent arrival from Syria, explained in detail:

> I was worried about many things before I came to Canada. My life. I have challenge to overcome obstacles, to get work, adapting to our community. I realize I have to have plan. Our goals have to be clear... I got part-time job afternoon. Maybe not the right job for me now. I have to pass this days to get another job in the future. Once I see my family very happy, children happy, school and community, I feeling Canada "Our Country" for all, not for individual. Some obstacles overcome still others to adapt to be successful.

Alongside Ahmed's fierce determination, some collages were tinged with sadness, missing

home, and worry about the future. Maria's vivid blue canvas was dominated by images of

children and animals, which hide her fears of her family being deported back to Colombia. She

and her husband left their homeland to provide their children with a safer future, away from the

threat of being recruited by gangs. In Spanish, she told us:

> It is no longer in the fields but in the cities. The children are lost, they are taken away.
> When you realize they are part of a group, they already know how to use weapons. The
> parents think they are dead or they were taken out of the country but they do not know
> they are with these groups. The children are used for drug sales in schools,
> psychologically they are run down, they have no childhood.

Sumaya's collage is dominated by an image of a woman in profile, her eyes closed her

hand on her cheek; it's from a facial cream advertisement. I (Julianne) pointed to her collage and

asked her to tell "the story of Sumaya in Canada". She tilted her head back, closed her eyes, and,

mirroring the action of the woman in her artwork, Sumaya moved her hands across her face, over

and over, and said, "no stress, no stress, no stress".

Sumaya's collage spoke to her embodied and felt movements away from the lived reality

of war in Syria and the intolerable stress, which no doubt has been replaced by new uncertainties

and stressors that come with being a refugee family in Canada. However, for Sumaya, she felt

tremendous relief. She added, "I want I make (collage) my dream. In Canada my children happy.

I make development. Life not difficult. Relax. Life easy. Safety, healthy, good. I am happy. No

stress". Monique, who left Burundi fearing for her life after being forced to work in the sex

trade, stated that her collage represents "freedom in Canada, the happiness of my daughters and

the nostalgia of my country".

As we reflect on the collage-making exercise, we are reminded of how the participants'

multilingual and multimodal literacy texts have moved us and compelled us to pay attention to

the transcultural flows and affective intensities in the moment. As Leander and Ehret (2019) state, by attending to the felt intensities of literacy learning, as movements, words and bodies enter into relations, performances and practices, we open ourselves to see possibilities for language learning, for reorienting and reshaping our teaching and research practices. We also see more sharply how narrow definitions of language assessment and outcomes play out in current neoliberal classroom practices to limit language learning opportunities and restrict life chances for newcomer students.

Figure 4: Monique's Collage**.**

[INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE]

Thinking about Green's 3D Model as informing our definition of multimodal assessment, all of the dimensions were clearly layered onto each other. With some operational skills in play through the visual and design work combined with writing and thinking, the deeper impetus had to do with cultural-discursive engagements and critical work. Participants' canvasses evoked the hopes the participants have invested in the promise of Canada: we see the discourse of gratitude and happiness. Obviously, emotions and affect pushed the cultural and critical work. Arts-based activities, such as conceptual photographs, artifactual analyses and collages enabled the voices of newcomers to be heard differently, in innovative and affective ways.

As demonstrated in the participants collages and artifacts, modes are shaped by culture and subject to cross-cultural ways of knowing, seeing, being and becoming. Multimodal meaning-making in a translanguaging space reveals how meaning-making is inextricably linked

to the past that flows into the present moment, as well the movement of bodies in space, and becomes saturated with affect.

Privileging an Experiencing instead of Assessment of Language

While some scholars and policy-makers may feel there is an urgent need to develop multimodal assessments to keep pace with changing multiliterate learning environments of the 21st century, we argue against the creation of additional or "alternative" testing tools on the grounds they simply cannot capture complexities, interdisciplinary nature, or the affective and embodied dimensions of learning and meaning making. As Leander and colleagues (2017) state:

> Rather than imposing an evaluative, perhaps even punitive yardstick to meaning-making and communicative practices that dictates what literacy and multimodal work counts, whose culture and class counts, a nonrepresentational and embodied view of multimodality opens up communication to difference and listens to alternative framings and contestations. (in Leander et al., 2017 p. 108)

Instead, there could be a roundtable discussion with learners that foregrounds the *affective, the compositional, and the critical* (Callow, 2008), embedded in Green's 3D framework. The *affective dimension* would invite learners to discuss and interrogate emotions captured in and through the creation of their project work, including their own enjoyment of the activity. The *compositional* would help develop a metalanguage to talk about language(s), cultures and designing through a discussion of the purposeful use of digital and non-digital elements, actions, symbols, and the effectiveness of the design work. *The critical* dimension would ask how the viewer might feel about or interpret the finished product, and the ways in which multiple readings might be found in the work. As Jacobs (2013) notes, "assessment is about watching and noticing what students are doing and then using that information to guide students toward new skills and knowledge" (p. 626); good teachers already do this without needing to use tests and rubrics.

During our final interviews, our participant Ana marveled at the multiple ways the participants were able to express their feelings, thoughts, and ideas over the course of our workshops. She remarked: "I learn any way you don't talk, you can communicate. There's other ways. And I am, yes, a little bit English, because we try new words, also for the lowest levels it's more difficult. And what else, yes, that's with imagines, expressions, you can say things too."

Reflecting back on the work, what sticks for us is difference and not similitude, commonalities, or cohesion within the group. These differences were never really stated, they were felt – through interactions, moments, within artifacts, within photographs. These are affective intensities, they are the stickiness of everyday life that is not assessed and that so often does not inform language teaching and learning. But, or so we argue and believe, the stickiness is what most interests learners because it is a lived and familiar sensation. It was the present-ness and person-centredness of the language teaching and learning that allowed the group to make artifacts. These artifacts did not come from scripted lessons, vocabulary lists, or formal language assessment, they emanated from story sharing and personal investment in getting the exact meaning across that they wanted to get across – in English – through determination and creativity.

A *sin fronteras/no borders* approach to teaching creates a subtle but significant shift in a translanguaging classroom; the teacher shifts to the same side as the students, working in multiple languages, multiple modes, in alliance. There is also a change in the directionality of instruction; teaching happens *with* students (rather than *to* or *at* students), opening up pathways and possibilities for teaching, learning, and assessing in new, more equitable, and imaginative ways.

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Appendix A

Table 1: Participants in Resettled Literacies

Name	Age	Country of Origin
Ahmed	38	Syria
Ana	26	Venezuala
Adara	56	Syria
Mohammed	67	Syria
Sumaya	24	Syria
Chunlei	76	China
Lisha	69	China
Lin	31	China
Niema	25	Iraq
Sara	36	Syria
Monique	36	Burundi
Maria	39	Columbia
Alazar	45	Iraq
Sonya	58	Iraq