The creation of multimodal texts of adult English language learners in a Canadian university - A case study

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Abstract

This paper reviews the larger context of English language learning and multimodality and attempts to shed light on how multimodal texts impact adult English language learners' social practice of second language learning and their identities. The theories of multimodality and identity texts shape this study. The data in this case study were collected through participant observation, interview, and artefact elicitation. The results show that multimodal text creation could help adult English language learners transform the learning model from competition to cooperation, from operational aspects to social aspects, and from monolingual to multimodal, as they invest their identities in the creation of these texts. Some implications and recommendations for English language teaching instructors and researchers are provided.

Keywords: *multimodal texts, international education, English language learning, language and identity, artefact elicitation*

Introduction

Globalization of economies and internationalization of education have promoted the rapid expansion of programs within and between universities, which has encouraged international exchange and study abroad (Tarc 2019). There has been an increasing number of students from ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds coming to the North America for higher education (Zhou & Zhang 2014). Canada has become an increasingly popular choice for international students. In 2018, Canada issued 356,876 study permits to international students at all levels of study with more than 721,000 international students, up 13% from 2017 (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship 2018), and this number is still rising.

English language learners meet various challenges in English-speaking universities. One of the challenges is to adjust to unfamiliar pedagogy and new learning environment. The biggest difficulty for English language learners is limited language and literacy skills (Zhou & Zhang 2014). Traditionally, literacy is defined as the ability to read and write. However, in the 21st century, literacy has become multidimensional and integrated with new technologies and multimodality (Luke 2003). In contrast with the operational dimension of literacy (Green 1988) that most often involves mastering printed-based text, new literacy goes beyond the traditional print-based texts to multimodal text such as images, sound, and other different modes of communication (Kress 2010). Literacy and language teachers' main tasks are to design different activities to facilitate students' meaning making and representation process (Stein 2000, Zammit 2015). English language teachers strive to find different strategies to help students transform "what students know, remember, sense, feel, and believe into a paragraph of writing, a lively dialogue, or a scrapbook of images" (Stein 2000: 333). This case study explores how an English improvement program offered by a Canadian university used multimodal texts to expand English language learners' skills while tapping into their life experience. In this paper, we review the larger context of English language learners and multimodality; and attempt to shed light on how multimodal texts impact adult English language learners' social practice of English language learning.

Theoretical background

According to Lankshear and Knobel (2006), there have been three major changes in literacy and language education in Western countries during the 1970s. The first shift was the result of Freire and Macedo's work on critical literacy (Freire & Macedo 1987). Freire and Macedo's concept of "reading the word and the world" saw language as an outgrowth of consciousness of critical social praxis and critical awareness. McLaren (1992: 10) states that "Freire has revealed to us that literacy practices are practices of power" and being literate means to develop various ways of "resisting oppression so that a better world can be summoned, struggled for, and eventually grasped". Paulo Freire's work helped people know the world more deeply and critically. Second, the profound changes of society due to structural changes in the economy, labor market, and employment require "leaners [to] [become] literate to the extent required to live 'effectively' under contemporary conditions" (Lankshear & Knobel 2006: 10). This dissonance led to "literacy crisis" in the 1970s that swept over almost all English-speaking countries such as Britain, the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The third shift was the popularity of sociocultural perspectives on literacy. Those perspectives changed the landscape of literacy and language education and promoted different perspectives on literacy and language such as ideological perspective (Street 1984); literacy as a social practice (Street, 1984); cultural literacy (Hirsch 1987); three-dimensional literacy (Green 1988, 1997); multiliteracies (Cazden et al. 1996, Cope and Kalantzis 2000, 2009); powerful literacy (Gee 2001); multimodality (Kress 2003, Jewitt 2008, Siegel 2012, Lee 2014); and multilingual and identity text (Cummins & Early 2001). This plethora of approaches was further complicated by the development of multimedia technologies, which led to a new understanding of what it means to be literate (Jewitt 2005, Kress & Van Leeuwen 2001). For this paper, literacy is understood as social practices of communication; and multimodality builds on the idea of social semiotics as a response to social meaning-making.

Multimodality

Multimodality indicates more than one modality in representation and communication processes; and assumes that people's meaning making often draws on multiple modes such as text and pictures, video and script, music and lyrics, gesture and sign, and so on. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001: 20), multimodality is "the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event". Therefore, meaning is "made through the situated configurations across image, gesture, gaze, body posture, sound, writing, music, speech" (Jewitt 2008: 246). The ways of representation are modes that organize sets of semiotic resources for meaning making. Kress (2009: 79) defines mode as "a socially shaped and culturally given resources for making meaning. Image, writing, layout, music, gesture, speech, moving image, soundtrack are examples of modes used in representation and communication". According to Jewitt (2008), many scholars have contributed to the development of different communication modes such as Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) work on images, van Leeuwen's (1999) work on sound and Martinec's (2000) work on movement and gesture. The ability of using different semiotic modes to convey meanings is defined as "affordance" (Jewitt 2008). Therefore, to create multimodal texts, in this sense, requires "affordance".

Students in higher education use language for a variety of purposes, not only academic but also social purposes (Kress 1997). Communication with peers, for social purposes and for learning in the classroom, may be heightened or expanded through using more than one modality (Stein 2000). Transformation of different modes of communication depends on the needs of communication with certain social contexts (Ajayi 2009, Jewitt 2008). People may also use a new mode of communication to express the old information, which often leads to the creation of new meaning. As Stein (2000: 336)

states, "taking invisible, taken-for-granted resources to a new context of the situation to create new meaning" allows students learn differently.

> Through this rearticulating in a new site, students come to see what they have and what they know differently: the source is re-sourced. Re-sourcing resources is possible through multimodal pedagogies that recognize students as re-makers and transformers of the representational resources available to them. (Stein 2000: 336)

Compared to students whose native language is English, English language learners not only need English language for academic purposes but for social purposes. Therefore, English language learners who are accustomed to one traditional way of meaning making such as written language, need to develop skills with different modalities in order to create new meanings in different contexts—to 'Re-source resources'.

Identity text

International students who arrive in a new country and are faced with the challenge of learning in a second language may also be facing a sense of identity crisis, or feelings of alienation--of not belonging-- as they attempt to adapt to a place that is not home, in a language that is not their first or mother tongue. As Metro-Rolan (2018: 1412) points out,

> In studying abroad, students face the dilemma of interacting with people and places that do not lend themselves to the sense of well being one can find at home. Part of the tension here goes back to this issue of identity—of wanting to feel a sense of belonging. For many international students studying in the US, especially for those coming from more communal rather than individualistic cultures, the experience can be alienating.

Cummins and Early (2011) develop the concept of identity text to describe the way students may construct and communicate a sense of their identity. Cultural production represents an expression of identity and projection of identity into new social contexts (Cummins, Markus & Montero 2015). Recreation of identity results from feedback from and conversation with various audiences (Cummins & Early 2011).

> Students invest their identities in the creation of these texts—which can be written, spoken, signed, visual, musical, dramatic, or combinations in multimodal form. The identity text then holds a mirror up to students in which their identities are reflected in a positive light. When students share identity texts with multiple audiences (peers, teachers, parents, grandparents, sister classes, the media, etc.) they are likely to receive positive feedback and affirmation of self in interaction with these audiences. (Cummins and Early 2011: 3)

In this study, we adopt the theoretical frameworks of multimodality (Jewitt 2008, Kress 1997, Kress & van Leeuwen 2001, Stein 2000) and identity text (Cummins & Early 2011) to understand an adult English language learner's experiences of multimodal texts creation.

Multimodal learning

Many studies have discussed the multimodal approach to English language learners in terms of a sense of control. English language learners who struggle with language may gain a sense of power over the object or establish communication between the body and the object through taking photos, a sensory appropriation of an object (Sontag 1977). Krause (2015) argues that young English language learners can build a sense of ownership through a selection of their ways to present their narratives, which is also called meaning-making autonomy (Ganapathy & Seetharam 2016). In the process of making multimodal texts, English language learners can self-direct their meaning making with a high level of accomplishment (Stille & Prasad 2015) while receiving minimal guidance from teachers (Ganapathy & Seetharam 2016). Those studies focus on the relationship between multimodal resources

and English language learners and show that multimodal resources can help English language learners enhance their learning autonomy.

In addition to learning autonomy, a sense of identity is another feature of a multimodal approach (Ajayi 2009). English language learners project cultural and national identities into their multimodal text (Shin & Cimasko 2008). Cummins and Early's work (2011) on identity text explains how English language learners in multilingual settings use multimodal recourse to reflect their identity. Students invested their identities to create multimodal texts such as written, spoken signed, visual, musical, and dramatic forms. "Through identity texts, students' identities, cultures, languages, and past and present experiences are reflected in a positive light" (Cummins & Early 2011: 4). Following up on Cummins and Early's work, Stille and Prasad (2015) explore the potential contribution of a multimodal approach to English language learners in an Ontario classroom. They found that "through creative multimodal engagement, students can direct themselves toward producing language and literacy work at a high level of accomplishment, constituting a powerful tool for teachers to support students in developing positive affiliations with and identifications in school" (619).

Different modes of representation become increasingly integral in the lives of young adults and play a more essential role in developing their identities than traditional modes (Mina 2014). International students translate between two cultures. In a foreign culture, international students "lack the sense of commonness they used to have with groups in their culture" (Mina 2014: 144). Encouraging international and multilingual students to represent their identities through their stories could be of great significance.

Some previous studies focus on the affective effects of a multimodal approach to English language learners. Lee (2014) conducts a longitudinal case study and finds that multimodal composition can improve the confidence of English language learners who are identified as at-risk. Multimodal approaches can help students to develop a sense of authenticity to learning (Krause 2015). English language learners may develop emotional connections with the multimodal texts that they create (Shin & Cimasko 2008). Furthermore, students who find traditional literacy challenging can discover other strengths by creating multimodal texts (Zammit 2015). Some researchers point out that this approach can also improve English language learners' motivation (Ganapathy & Seetharam 2016, Lee 2014). However, they do not investigate which dimension of motivation has been improved. Promoting a multimodal approach with English language learners can enhance effective interaction, collaborations, and creativity (Hafner 2013, Ruefman 2015, Zammit 2014).

Many studies focus on English language children learners, but few discuss the adult English language learners in Canadian universities. This current study attempts to address this gap by focusing on how multimodal text creation impacts adult English language learners' experiences in an English improvement program at a medium-sized comprehensive Canadian university.

Methodology

This study looks at one participant in a research project that took place during one semester in an English language development program. While the project included several participants, this paper will focus on one of them, as a case study in order to obtain rich and detailed description. A case study can be located at the "micro … or macro levels" and involve one participant or many (Schwandt & Gates 2018). The goal of the case study is to provide an in-depth look at a bounded phenomenon, to focus on "particularity and complexity" (Stake 1995). The phenomenon under investigation is adult English language learners' experiences of multimodal text creation in a Canadian university language improvement program. The case for the study is an adult English language learner in Canada. We collected rich and detailed information in different ways over a continued period (Stake 1995). Data was collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and artefact elicitation.

Artefact elicitation, photo elicitation, or document elicitation use artefacts to prompt (or elicit) discussion. The researcher may present an artefact; or the participant may bring an artefact of their creation or choice, in which case both the artefact and the discussion provide data for analysis. Artefacts that the participant creates or provides allow greater opportunity for the researcher to ask questions that attribute meaning to the artefact (Grant 2019). Artefacts can serve as a buffer to help the participants feel less nervous, because they talk about their experience with a concrete artefact; and artefacts can help participants to express their memories and emotions (Prosser 2011). The artefacts can act as stimulus materials in interviews (Crilly, Blackwell & Clarkson 2006). Harper (2002: 22) states "photo elicitation mines deeper shafts into a different part of human consciousness than do words-alone interviews".

Interviews were conducted and audio-taped; tapes were transcribed into word documents; data were coded for emergent themes. Artefacts were analysed for content and integrated with related interview text. Another component of the case study is the unit of analysis, defined as the area of focus of the study (Merriam 1988, Yin 2009). For this study, the unit of analysis is the English through arts program provided by a Canadian university English language improvement program. To connect data to propositions, we try to match patterns that appear in the data with the theoretical framework (Yin, 2009). Finally, we carefully extract meaning from the findings to identify implications and recommendations for practitioners and researchers.

Research site

With the high growth of international students arriving in Canada, English language centres that offer courses and activities to raise the English language skills of registered students or prospective applicants are increasingly the norm on Canadian campuses. We approached the director of the centre and proposed collaborating with an instructor to implement multimodal activities into one of the centre's courses. The director was receptive to our proposal. We exchanged ideas for multimodal activities that would support English language learners' learning and mapped out a program outline that reflected our initial vision. The purpose of this course was not to provide students with specific language training such as vocabulary exercise, grammatical drill and listening exercises. Rather, the purpose was to provide students with more opportunities to use English through multimodal resources and assess the effect on learners' experience.

Participants

For the current analysis, we focus on "Rose" (age range 25-35 years old), one of the seven participants of the study. All students who registered for the course did the same activities and drew the same benefits from the program, whether they chose to be a research participant or not. The course ran for ten weeks, two sessions per week. Author 1's role was to assist the primary instructor in the classroom. Each session was planned to help create opportunities to encourage students to use English, by using a variety of strategies and media. We chose a single case in order to have deeper and detailed understanding of exploring the subject (Dyer & Wilikins 1991) and to describe richly the existence of phenomenon (Siggelkow 2007). Compared to single case, multiple cases are chosen to understand similarities and differences between cases (Stake 1995). This study was not intended to compare and contrast different cases but to extensively and deeply explore one case. We will first describe the methods used during the full study, and then provide a detailed description and analysis of one case, Rose's story.

Data collection and analysis

The data were collected through participant observation and a follow-up interview with artefact elicitation. There were ten sessions of the program and each session had different topics of multimodal text creation. Author 1, as a facilitator in the program, took field notes of each session. His observations were of those students who had consented to participate in the research. During the observation, he also had casual talks with Rose to learn about her experience of creating multimodal texts, and those casual talks were included in the field notes. At the end of the program, the researcher did a follow-up interview with Rose to have a better understanding of her whole sense of multimodal text experiences; during the interview, Rose was invited to bring and talk about her artefacts. The data were coded, categorized and themed. The artefacts that Rose chose to share, with the class, and with the researcher, were saved as a form of documentary data.

Results - Rose's case

Before we explore Rose's story, it is important to give some background information about the context of language proficiency requirements at the university. As do all universities in Canada, the university setting for this research (henceforth to be referred to as The University) has language requirements for international students. Applicants who have not previously studied at an English language university must have taken one of the internationally recognized language proficiency tests (e.g., International English Language Testing System, IELTS or Internet-based Test of English as a Foreign Language, TOEFL) and passed with a score as determined by the university or program. If students have previously failed to achieve the required standard, they can register with a language development centre. At The University, students must take courses until they complete Level 3 of the "English Language Improvement Program." They may then apply to any faculty or degree program in The University. The centre categorizes students' English Level based on their entry test Level and offers five language improvement programs: Foundation, Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, and Level 3 Fast Track. Each student needed to take an entry test to qualify for different Levels. Level 3 fast track program aims to help students who need quick entry to university courses, and it condenses all the courses that are supposed to be taught in three months into a month. Students who have a conditional offer by The University, once they have achieved Level 3 or Level 3 fast track (75% or better), can register for university courses.

Rose was categorized into Level 2 according to her entry test results. She already held a Master of Science in Hydrology in Kazakhstan. She was offered a language-conditional offer majoring in Earth Science by The University; meaning, she had to provide proof of English language proficiency before the day of registration (i.e., pass the Level 3 examination).

Translating two cultures

Rose's past learning experiences influenced her current learning experiences. According to Rose, while learning English in Kazakhstan it was important to be competitive among her peers. In the follow-up interview, she said, "we [had] to know English because maybe before ten or twenty years ago, it was not popular but now everyone [knew] English. If you [did] not know English, you [would] look like a loser" (follow-up Interview, March 2017). She said that she learned English through text memorization; and that most of her classmates in Kazakhstan had low communicative competence.

At the very beginning of the program, Rose sat alone at the corner of the classroom whereas other students sat in groups. Rose placed her grammar exercise book and a reading textbook on the desk. During the first two classes, she kept busy doing grammar exercises and checking some unfamiliar vocabulary on her smartphone. (Field notes, February 2017). Eventually, in the third session, which used the theme of music and writing, we successfully engaged Rose in a creative activity. We asked the class to express their gratitude to their loved ones by any form they preferred. Rose chose to write a letter to

her parents. Other students chose different ways such as drawings and poetry to express themselves, and some recorded a video. After the session, she told us that she preferred to write letters because she thought it was safer and could be corrected if there were some mistakes (Field notes, February 2017).

After several sessions, Rose's behaviour started to change. First, she began to cooperate with other students. She sat closer with others and, in one session, she worked with four other students from different countries to design a poster that represented their experience of walking in the local community (Field notes, March 2017). Second, after the third session, she stopped bringing her grammar exercise book and reading textbooks during class. In the follow-up interview, she told us that the multimodality activities were interesting and that she liked the way of communicating with others. Finally, Rose began to explore different ways of expressing her feelings (Field notes, March 2017). She used a bio-poem to express her identity; drawings, pictures, and written content to express her community experiences; and music to express her homesickness.

Re-sourcing resource

Rose created new meanings through her multimodal texts. Rose lived on the campus, and the language centre was near to the campus. In the follow-up interview, she told us that she often went to a bubble tea store near the language centre; and she was familiar with the local community as she walked from where she lived to her classes at the centre. In one of the sessions, the instructor encouraged each student to go outside to explore the local community. She went into the bubble tea shop and talked with the boss. She took notes of what the boss said to her. After that, she took a picture of the bubble tea and went back to the centre (Field notes, March 2017).

After she came back to the centre, we encouraged the students to present to us what they found interesting when they explored the community. Rose presented a story of a bubble tea restaurant to the class. Other students attentively listened to her presentation. After her presentation, we also invited Rose to make a poster from a combination of images and texts, of what she would like to include and express. She collaborated with other students to make a poster (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Community poster artefact.
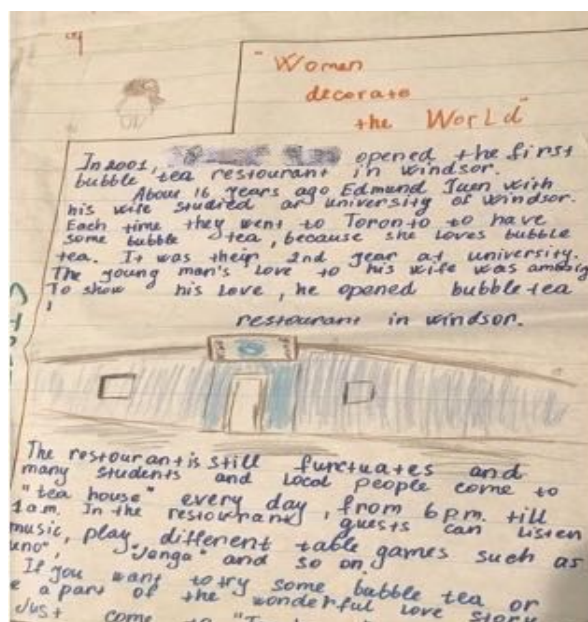
In her poster, Rose wrote about the history of the business and drew a picture of the front of the building. During our interview, we used this poster for the artefact elicitation. Rose commented:

> I find the photo and poster are interesting. Taking a picture is my favourite... I like taking a picture because and it is my hobby. I can choose what I want to take. I also talked with the boss and I like this way (follow-up interview, March 2017).

Rose's statement reflected the freedom and autonomy that multimodal representation provided to her. Rose appeared confident to talk about her experiences, while using her poster during the artefact elicitation. Recalling her memories about her experiences of making this poster also helped her to make new meanings. When she looked at the poster, she also reflected on her experiences of being pregnant, which would be her process of identity projection.

Identity projection

For one of the session activities, students were asked to introduce their home country by any form they preferred. One student from China played a song named Descendant of Dragon, through YouTube.[7] When the video stopped, all students were confused as they did not understand Chinese. Rose said that it may be about the patriotism and nationalism. She added that, although she could not understand the Chinese language, she could guess that the singer loved his country. The Chinese student said yes and gave Rose a thumbs-up.

Rose came to the front of the classroom and she also decided to play a song, through YouTube, in Kazakhstan language. When the video played, everyone was immersed in this song because this rhythm was beautiful. When the video stopped, The Chinese girl raised her hand quickly and said that this song was about a man who loved a woman, but he could not see her. While smiling, Rose said that was incorrect. The Indian student said that it was about the battle, and soldiers were sad because they could not go home. Rose said that was partially correct. After that, Rose drew a picture to explain the story (Field notes, March 2017).

Figure 2: Kazakhstan song artefact.
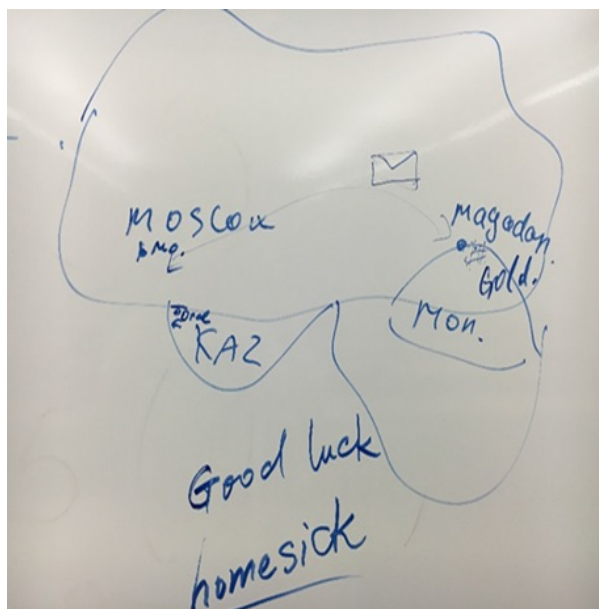
She introduced two cities in Russia: Moscow and Magadan. Magadan is a port town and is famous for the Natalka gold mine. She said that those two cities had a battle, and Moscow lost. So, some people living in Moscow were sent to the Magadan and put into prison. They became slaves and cheap labour in the gold mine. They received letters from their family in Moscow, and this song is about their homesickness. After the explanation, she wrote down the story besides the picture she drew.

In the follow-up interview, Rose said that "I [liked] …sharing home country music with others. My sharing song [was] about homesickness. It [was] interesting and I never did that before" (Follow-up interview, March 2017). For the artefact elicitation, Rose chose the picture (Figure 2) to express her feelings. She said she was homesick and hoped she could obtain some supports because she was pregnant (Follow-up interview, March 2017); but it was too hard for her family to travel from her home-country to take care of her. In addition, she was concerned about her pursuing her studies, because of her pregnancy. The feelings of uncertainty and being helpless were evoked by reflecting on the map she had drawn.

The images in Figures 1 and 2 carried symbolic meaning to her, representing her identity, as an international student, and her sense of vulnerability due to her pregnancy. Artefact elicitation, using multimodal texts, enabled Rose to make new meanings of the taken-for-granted things and to project her identity through her narratives.

Discussion

Our research aim was to explore how multimodal texts impact an adult English language learner's social practice of second language learning and identities. We will now discuss the transformations that occurred for Rose during the language program; and then we will reflect on effect that the research had on us.

Competition to cooperation

Author 1 met Rose in December 2016 and got to know her as Rose took every session of the multimodal program. The program ended in March 2017. Through the four-month communication, Author 1 established a trust relationship with Rose.

Rose thought that learning English was a must for her in Kazakhstan because she wanted to appear successful in other people's eyes. Memorization was an effective way to compete with others as her early schooling focused on the operational dimension of literacy (Green, 1988). This mode of learning was Rose's expectation when she began the English language course with us. She brought her grammatical exercise book and reading textbooks and did not engage in communication with others around her. However, after several sessions, she started to cooperate and collaborate with others, and participate in the multimodal activities. This finding corresponded to Ruefman (2015), Hafner (2013) and Zammit (2014)'s work of multimodal approach promoting second language learners' effective interaction and collaborations. In other words, Rose's initial understanding of language learning was as a knowledge consumer, not a creator; it took time for her to open up to the potential of cooperating with other students and contributing to group learning through creative activity.

Operational aspects of language learning to social aspects of language learning

Just as Rose experienced during her early education in Kazakhstan, many students from non-English speaking countries still regard English literacy as a *requirement* of learning instead of as *a goal* of learning (Lankshear & Knobel 2006). This is despite the many sociological perspectives that have been introduced into literacy and language practices over the past thirty or more years; approaches that expand people's understanding of literacy beyond the traditional forms of reading and writing. For example, Hirsch (1987) proposed cultural literacy to urge students to be familiar with a cultural canon in

order to be able to negotiate their social contexts effectively. Green (1988) proposed three-dimensional literacy including operational, cultural and critical dimensions.

Rose's experiences in her home country reflect the operational dimension, that is to say, the cognitional aspect of being able to read and write. To help English language learners become competent in their future life, in all its facets, literacy education should go beyond the operational level and include cultural and critical levels of communication and thinking. In our program, multimodal resources encouraged students to go beyond the operational level, and to communicate at an emotional level, if not at a literal level. For example, in the music session, Rose shared a song from her home culture with others who could not understand the meaning of the Kazakhstan lyrics. Rose then used her English skills to share the stories behind the song, and the culturally embedded meaning within those stories. In the follow-up talks with Rose, she described her experiences of the music session as positive. In addition, this transformation also creates conditions for Rose to enhance her affordances (Jewitt 2008). The transformation from monolingual model to multimodal model resulted from the change of concept in literacy. Rose's concept of literacy initially was monolingual and functional, but after those sessions, her concept of literacy has expanded to a multimodal and social model. Rose preferred to use print-texts to express her feelings at the very beginning of the program. For example, when she was encouraged to express her gratitude to her loved ones, she wrote a letter. Then, after several sessions, Rose started to use different modes of communication, such as bio-poem, drawings, music, storytelling, poster and pictures, to express her feelings. In the artefact elicitation, she stated that these activities were "interesting." What we observed as a change in her behaviour was her engagement with her classmates through the various activities – the "interest" she experienced motivated her actions, and her actions changed her learning modality.

New meaning-making

The multimodality approach can provide English language learners with opportunities to make new meanings of their taken-for-granted daily activities. Rose often went to the bubble tea shop, but she had not thought about talking with the owner. This experience caused her to reflect about herself through her daily routine. The multimodal text creation activity allowed her to 're-source the resource' (Stein 2000) – to experience in a new way and give new meanings to something that she often took for granted. Both in front of her classmates, and later, during our interviews. The song that Rose shared with her classmates was famous in Russia and well known to Rose; however, when she shared this song with others who did not know it, she rediscovered the richness of cultural meaning the song evoked. The "re-sourcing" of this song in an English language learning context gave Rose an alternative way to produce meaning, first by creating a visual diagram, and then by adding a translation into English text. The poster that Rose made built on this experience. The poster was a multimodal text where she included her social experience, visual images, written and spoken texts. Each of these sources was integrated into the re-sourcing of meaning-making, which "recognize[s] students as re-makers and transformers of the representational resources available to them" (Stein 2000: 336).

Cultural identity

Rose produced a number of artefacts and took part in some creative and communicative activities. In each of these activities, she opened up a little more. Over time, Rose was able to engage in a way of learning and collaborating and communicating that, when the course began, was unfamiliar to her. For Rose, this was "transformational learning" (Cummins & Early 2011, Ajayi 2009, Shin & Cimasko 2008). As an international student struggling to gain university admission, and as a pregnant woman, she needed support from others, but she was reticent to engage with others in English. Rose's reflections during the

artefact elicitation illustrates the relationship between multimodal text creation and cultural identities (Mina 2014, Norton 2008).

During the classes, Author 1, as a facilitator, provided guidance only if students requested help. Most of the time, students organised their time to do what they wanted. Author 1 gave students the freedom to explore the nearby community and never asked them to use certain ways to record and express their feelings. The students maintained their choice and freedom to design and experience different modalities, and to exert a sense of power to a certain object (Sontag 1977), a sense of ownership (Krause 2015), and meaning-making autonomy (Garapathy & Seetharam 2016).

Researcher reflections
Author 1

This research originated as a master's thesis project of Author 1. Early in the process, Author 2, the thesis supervisor, stated that, "Conducting research is to create new knowledge." Author 1 kept this in his mind but kept questioning what knowledge is and how one can acquire knowledge. For Author 1, the connotation of knowledge is associated with science that can, for example, help people launch rockets, cure illness, create new products, etcetera. This paradigm of knowledge was formed as part of his early education. Author 1 began the research project with this understanding, and with an assumption that quantitative results from a statistically significant number of participants would be necessary for research to create new knowledge. Therefore, when he designed the activities for this program, he still followed the old understanding on language learning, trying to focus on operational aspects of language learning.

However, Author 1 found that the number of students showing up in the second session dropped sharply. In the first session, there were almost 20 people, but there were only 5 people in the second session. Looking at the design of the class activities, it was clear that the activities were centred heavily on the operational aspect of language learning. Students had already been learning these skills through their prior classes in the centre and may have expected this class to provide more of the social aspects of language acquisition. Author 1 modified the activities, focusing more on the social aspects of multimodal texts. As the sessions went on, Author 1 had a new understanding of what knowledge is. Knowledge is all about the human and for the human. Creating new knowledge is also to create new channels to know oneself and to know one another. By observing the personal transformations that participants experienced from creating multimodal texts, Author 1 realized that not only scientific knowledge could greatly contribute to human development, but social and spiritual knowledge was also vital to learning.

Author 1's affordance of using multimodality to do research was also enhanced. In this study, with the guidance of Author 2, one more method was added: artefact elicitation interview. During the artefact elicitation, Author 1 could feel that the participants were more willing to share personal information. The multimodal approach created unexpected learning that was reciprocal to both participants and researchers.

Author 2

As a supervisor of many students both at the master and doctoral levels, Author 2 had often been asked about co-authorship, but had not previously agreed to work with a graduate student. However, this project was of particular interest for two reasons. First, because many of Author 2's students were international students who had ongoing need for language support. Author 2 had often bemoaned the seeming lack of language supports at The University; but she had little knowledge of the English language development centre, or how it supported students to successfully reach The University's language requirement. Second, because the use of multimodality and artefact elicitation are approaches

that are of particular interest to Author 2 in her own research in the arts, she was fascinated to see these methods applied to the English language learning setting. The most profound learning for Author 2, though, was the persistence and dedication of Author 1; the evolution of his thinking and writing over time was a lesson in patience. The rush to research, write, and publish, that many graduate students exhibit, especially at the master's level, mitigates against the benefits that come from slow, persistent engagement with a singular purpose.

Because of this project, and curiosity it had raised about the English language development centre, Author 2 attended a workshop for faculty and staff offered by the centre and had a conversation with the director. The aura of the space - modern teaching classrooms, cool quiet offices, comfortable sitting and study areas - communicated a powerful sense of purpose, but also of calm. It reinforced the importance of lived experience, and of immersive research, a principle of doing case study research which Author 2 often taught, but rarely had experienced so vividly.

Conclusion and implications

This study explored the impact of multimodal text creation on adult English language learners' English learning at a Canadian university. The results show that multimodal text creation could help adult English language learners to transform the learning model from competition to cooperation, from operational aspects to social aspects, and from monolingual to multimodal communication. It can also provide English language learners with opportunities to make taken-for-granted resources into new meanings in a new context, to "re-source resources" (Stein 2000). Furthermore, it has the potential to empower adult English language learners to project their cultural identity into the process of multimodal text creation during which they develop a sense of ownership. Based on this study, the following are some implications and recommendations for English language instructors and researchers.

Recommendations
Using inclusive pedagogy to help create the conditions for personal transformation

Language learning that stresses reading and writing is common in some non-English speaking countries. Personal transformation may be nurtured in an inclusive environment where the instructor gives English language learners freedom and autonomy to choose what they want to express and how they want to express it. For English language learners who come from different educational traditions, it is important to feel the difference of pedagogy in a gradual way. Providing English language learners with a situated learning experience, and without judgement about their prior experiences of learning, encourages them to be open to a transformative approach.

Building confidence through prior knowledge and lived experience

A multilingual and multicultural learning environment is common in Canada. International English language learners often would like to sit with classmates who are from the same cultural background. This may increase their sense of confidence, to participate in class discussions, as they have the support of their peers. If there is no one in the classroom from their home country, a student may be reluctant to engage and communicate with their classmates. Using a multimodal approach, English language instructors can encourage English language learners, who may be reticent to communicate, to share familiar things such as their home country's culture (e.g., songs, paintings, poems, festivals), stories of family members, or favourite pictures. It is important, while implementing these strategies, to give students time, and not to force them into activities until they have developed some confidence to bridge the gap. This may be through transitional activities that are shared only with the instructor.

Using artefact elicitation in interviews with English language learners

Many international English language learners have limited communicative competence. Some researchers will invite them to speak in their native language and then hire translators to translate the

contents. It is time-consuming and expensive. We have found that some English language learners have the competence to express themselves, but their performance is subject to other factors such as anxiety. Using artefact elicitation may help those students to speak about their feelings. Furthermore, allowing participants to choose which of their artefacts they want to share reinforces a sense of autonomy. This increases their sense of ownership over the interview process.

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