

“My Book Ideas were Spinning in my Head”: Arts-Rich Bookmaking Experiences to Create and Sustain Multilingual Children’s Meaning Making Flows and Authorial Voices

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Abstract

Important theoretical developments in TESOL education challenge the monolingual mindset, instead valuing and leveraging students’ complex linguistic repertoires alongside their funds of knowledge and identity through translanguaging practices to foster literacy development. Through a case study of an arts-rich book making experience facilitated by community organization, Kids’ Own Publishing, this article uses assemblage thinking to examine how children’s semiotic, knowledge, and identity resources interact to support them to create and sustain meaning making flow and to express distinctive authorial voices. Employing a critical content analysis guided by assemblage thinking, we highlight the literacy skills demonstrated in five students’ published eight-page books and show how the interaction of children’s meaning-making resources is best understood

through an “assemblage” lens, a process which is under-researched. Through this lens, we examine the facilitative role of the arts-rich experience in furnishing vibrant activities, artifacts, and an inspiring physical space that shaped how the children’s meaning-making resources came together as flows. We consider implications for literacy learning, including the need to create conditions for all children’s meaning making resources to be drawn upon in text creation in an approach that values what all students, whether they identify as monolingual or multilingual, bring to their learning.

doi: 10.1002/tesq.3279

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, particularly in diverse multilingual contexts where English is taught as the dominant language, TESOL educators have come to see a strong push for teaching approaches underpinned by critical, post-method, culturally responsive, translanguaging, multiliteracies and digital literacy framings (de Oliveira, 2022; García & Kleifgen, 2018; Vinogradova & Kang Shin, 2020). Recognizing the complex linguistic repertoires of students in any given formal and informal language teaching classroom context, a compelling body of research has considered the positive impact of leveraging multilingual learners’ whole semiotic, knowledge and identity repertoires in making meaning (Aleksić & García, 2022; Choi & Slaughter, 2020; Cummins, Hu, Markus, & Montero, 2015; Heugh et al., 2022; Lemke & Lin, 2022; Lin, 2019; Ollerhead, 2019; Sohn, dos Santos, & Lin, 2022). Recent studies have emphasized the importance of drawing on learners’ “everyday meaning making,” funds of identity, and broader life experiences to foster their engagement in learning (Kendrick, Early, Michalovich, & Mangat, 2022). In particular, studies of translanguaging practices in education have shown how this imperative can be enacted with students (García, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017). The arts have also proven to be powerful tools in supporting literacy learning and providing “an expanded multimodal checklist” for “successful literacy users” (Wessel Powell, Kargin, & Wohlwend, 2016, p. 177). However, few studies have explored how children’s meaning making flows are supported by their use of their whole semiotic repertoires encompassing their funds of knowledge and identity. How these resources come together as semiotic assemblages which create meaning-making flows in the texts children create is also not well understood. Additionally, there is a gap in the literature around how arts-rich experiences support children to engage in these meaning making flows.

The following questions guide our analysis of the way children’s semiotic, knowledge, and identity resources work together as assemblages in the context of an arts-rich book making experience with community organization, Kids’ Own Publishing (KO).

- How do semiotic assemblages help us to understand how children’s semiotic, knowledge and identity resources interact to create meaning-making flows?
- How can arts-based experiences facilitate meaning making flows for children? And what are the implications of this for teaching and learning?

Our analysis demonstrates the importance of empowering children to draw on their full semiotic, identity, and knowledge repertoires to create and sustain meaning making flows in the literacy classroom and the role of arts-rich experiences in facilitating and strengthening this flow. Through an assemblage lens, we are able to build on the current literature around translanguaging spaces by spotlighting not only the elements that come together to create meaning but also the way they interact to allow children to engage in meaning making flows. Ordóñez, Siques, and Esteban-Guitart (2018) emphasizes the usefulness of learning from the practices enacted in informal, “out-of-school, interest-driven” settings like community organizations “to transform and improve formal practice” (p. 9) in literacy learning in the school context.

We now turn to the conceptual framework which has guided the analysis of the children’s texts in this project.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Semiotic Assemblages and Meaning Making Flows

In this paper, we employ the concept of “semiotic assemblages” (Pennycook, 2017) as an analytic lens. Assemblages can be found in the transformational interaction of a group of diverse elements which are connected and interacting in dynamic, evolving, and vibrant ways (Gurney & Demuro, 2019). An assemblage lens allows us to consider the transformative possibilities for children, especially multilingual learners, in utilizing their whole semiotic repertoires alongside their funds of knowledge and identity, in the practice of making meaning in literacy learning.

Meaning is defined as the message an author intends to convey to an audience. An individual’s semiotic repertoire consists of all the

resources they possess for meaning making, encompassing both their linguistic resources (including multilingual resources) and other semiotic resources (e.g., visual, gestural, spatial, and audio resources) (Kress, 2010; Lin, 2019). A child's funds of identity transcend the key sources of knowledge and practices of their cultural, community, and familial context known as "funds of knowledge" (Hogg & Volman, 2020). Funds of identity can be understood as the funds of knowledge that the individual child defines "as important to their identity and self-understanding" (Hogg & Volman, 2020, p. 864).

Through the assemblage lens, we consider not only the range of semiotic resources, funds of knowledge, and funds of identity that an individual applies in making meaning, but the way these resources *are brought together* or *assembled* in a non-hierarchical fashion (Gurney & Demuro, 2019) to create and sustain a meaning making flow (Choi & Liu, 2021; Li & Hawkins, 2021; Lin, 2019). This flow or "translanguaging corriente" (García et al., 2017, p. 21) can be understood as a continuous, evolving current or stream of meaning making continuing through time (Lemke & Lin, 2022). The concept of the semiotic assemblage extends on the concept of the "translanguaging corriente" by allowing us to consider how the interaction of meaning making resources occurs as an "ensemble" (Mavers, 2007, p. 155). In this flow, an individual's semiotic repertoire will evolve and expand in interaction with "people, artefacts and space" (Pennycook, 2017, p. 789) to make meaning. The concept of "resourcefulness" (Mavers, 2007, p. 155) indicates the "agentive" (p. 166) role of the individual in selecting and combining relevant semiotic, identity, and knowledge resources which come together as an assemblage for a particular meaning making purpose. However, as our focus is on the role of the translanguaging space in facilitating children's meaning making flows, it is important to remember, as Ewing argues, that "creative activity is actually a collaborative enterprise" (2012, p. 10).

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

A Multiliteracies Pedagogy

The concept of semiotic assemblages encompasses a range of key understandings about the way meaning is made. These understandings all have their roots in a multiliteracies pedagogy. First conceptualized by The New London Group (1996), multiliteracies acknowledges both the multiplicity of meaning making or semiotic modes and the multiple contexts of language use that literate individuals will encounter in an increasingly globalized world. Teachers can use a multiliteracies

pedagogy to leverage children's diverse funds of "cultural and linguistic capital" (Cummins, 2006, p. 64), and their attendant semiotic resources, in the literacy program. Accessing this capital can bridge the gap between children's home and school literacy experiences (Nagle & Stooke, 2016) and enable children to draw on their full "funds of knowledge" and "funds of identity" (Llopart & Esteban-Guitart, 2017) in creating meaning.

Drawing on children's funds of identity as part of a multiliteracies approach has been shown to have transformative effects on literacy learning, particularly for multilingual learners (Cummins, 2006; French, 2019; Hogg & Volman, 2020; Llopart & Esteban-Guitart, 2017; Subero, Llopart, Siques, & Esteban-Guitart, 2018; Subero, Vujasinovic, & Esteban-Guitart, 2017). Li and Hawkins (2021) also emphasize the importance of this transmodal stance in combatting a monolingual mindset in educational settings. Such an approach demonstrates respect for children's multilingual identities by allowing them to express "the full repertoire of their talents" (Nagle & Stooke, 2016, p. 159) both artistic and linguistic as well as highlighting their intelligence and imagination (Cummins, 2006). Smith, Amgott, and Malova (2022) have established the positive impact of facilitating students' use of multimodal text creation for "innovative meaning-making" (p. 525), identity affirmation and contextualisation of the curriculum for bilingual and emergent-bilingual secondary students. What is less well understood is how children's semiotic, knowledge, and identity repertoires come together as assemblages to maintain a meaning making flow in the creation of texts.

Enacting a Multiliteracies Pedagogy through Translanguaging, Trans-Semiotizing and Transknowledging

One expression of a multiliteracies pedagogy which aims to leverage children's full multilingual semiotic repertoires (French, 2019; Ollerhead, 2019) is the practice of translanguaging (García, 2009). Translanguaging rejects the notion of languages as "discrete" sets of "codes" (p. 6). Instead, translanguaging facilitates language users' "application" of their whole "multilingual repertoires" (French, 2019, p. 22) to their learning. Aligning with Lin's (2019) definition of semiotic repertoires, Li (2018), Gurney and Demuro (2019), and Ollerhead (2019) extend the definition of translanguaging beyond *linguistic* practices alone. Li (2018) argues that translanguaging empowers the learner to engage their complete range of "cognitive, semiotic and modal resources of which language in its conventional sense of speech and

writing is only one” (p. 18) to communicate with others and support their learning. Lin (2019) coined the term “trans-semiotizing” to explicitly articulate this idea of “language as entangled with many other semiotics (e.g. visuals, gestures, bodily movement) in meaning making” (p. 5).

A further vital process of multilingualism is now conceptualized as “transknowledging” (Heugh et al., 2022): a two-way exchange of knowledge between diverse communities. This process, in conjunction with translanguaging, enables the sharing of knowledge which may have been developed in another language and “facilitates[s] optimal exchange of knowledges among students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds” (Heugh, 2021, p. 37).

The linguistic process of translanguaging and the knowledge sharing and production process of transknowledging facilitates children’s engagement in meaning making flow. Supporting these powerful processes requires three things from teachers according to Aleksić and García (2022): “a translanguaging stance, a translanguaging design, and translanguaging shifts” (p. 3837). Teachers must understand and believe in the ability of their students to harness their full semiotic, knowledge and identity repertoires, including their multiple languages, to make meaning. Through this process, “translanguaging spaces” are created “that leverage the language and knowledge systems of all students” (p. 3837). Li (2018) explains acts of translanguaging as creating:

a social space for the language user by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience, and environment; their attitude, belief, and ideology; their cognitive and physical capacity, into one coordinated and meaningful performance (Li, 2011: 1223), and this Translanguaging Space has its own transformative power because it is forever evolving and combines and generates new identities, values and practices. (p. 23)

Arts-Rich Experiences as Translanguaging Spaces

The need to create translanguaging spaces and the impact of context and shared experiences on an individual’s use and development of their semiotic repertoire is clearly established. In this context, the role of arts-rich experiences in supporting children to engage in meaning making flows, where their full semiotic repertoires are employed, is ripe for investigation.

Arts-rich experiences are created through the application of “arts-rich pedagogy” (Ewing, 2019, p. 2): the practice of teaching about,

with, and through the arts. Arts education is “fundamentally about learning to produce and represent meanings” through “doing,” “being,” and “knowing” (Arts Council, England, 2019, p. 8). Learning in and through the arts creates the opportunity of learning in and through the aesthetic: a heightened experience that is created when students’ thoughts, bodies, emotions, and lived and “imagined experiences” are engaged concurrently in “response to artworks” (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2010, p. 25). The “aestheti[c] charge” (Shenfield, 2015, p. 47) injected by arts-rich pedagogy into other disciplines, including literacy, “transform[s]” learning environments, increases “complexity” in student learning, and has the potential to “reach” all students through support and challenge (Champions for Change, 2006, p. 2). The transformative power of arts-rich pedagogy is borne out across multiple studies citing growth in student engagement (Fiske, 1999), well-being, imagination, creativity, and academic achievement (Catterall, 2009; Workman, 2017), including literacy development (Cleeve Gerkens, 2022; Ewing, 2019; Saunders, 2021). There is a gap in the literature, however, around the impact of arts-rich experiences in supporting children to engage in meaning making flows.

In the following section, we describe the arts-rich experience, involving a range of semiotic resources and funds of knowledge and identity, that ultimately affected what the children were able to draw on in creating their multimodal eight-page books.

METHODS

Assemblage thinking guided our use of critical content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019) to understand how children’s semiotic, knowledge, and identity resources interact, facilitated by arts-based experiences, to create meaning-making flows. Critical content analysis examines texts in the context of their uses considering aspects of politics, identity, and equity. The emphasis on context aligns with assemblage thinking in that the influence of interacting spaces, people, artifacts, and experiences on the text created, is a vital part of the analysis. By examining students’ books, interview comments, and letters related to their experience of an arts-rich bookmaking workshop and considering this “whole” body of work through “assemblage thinking” (Gurney & Demuro, 2019), we gained insight into the dynamic ways different meaning-making resources interacted to push meaning to emerge and flow in certain directions. We came to learn how students’ “semiotic assemblages” (Pennycook, 2017) facilitated the generation of the meaning of their text, and how this open and creative

process made the experience not only significant for the children but also allowed them to meaningfully develop their authorial voice.

Participants

We are university researchers who work with arts-based not-for-profit community publisher KO and two of the authors were participant researchers at a one-day excursion “Multilingual Melbourne through Children’s Eyes,” held at Government House, Melbourne in 2022. The excursion involved 36 grade 4 students from a state government suburban primary school. School demographic data shows students have a high level of Socio-Educational Advantage (SEA), with over half of the students in the top quarter of SEA and less than 5% in the bottom quarter (ACARA, 2022). Given the focus on this research, it is significant that almost three-quarters of the students have a language background classified as being other than English (ACARA, 2022). We do not have data for students’ individual cultural and linguistic heritage and language use. The school data broadly reflected the diversity of the student group. In the most recent census data reported for the middle-class suburb where this school is based, 55% of households use non-English languages, and overall, in Victoria 290 different languages are recorded as being spoken (ABS, n.d.; VMC, 2022, p. 7). While not all students live in the same suburb as the school, and statistics like these do not convey the complex linguistic landscape that individuals navigate, this does suggest that students are part of a broader multilingual community.

Before Bookmaking

The students were invited to the event which was facilitated by KO and hosted by storyteller Agum Maluach. After a tour of Government House, as part of the planned workshop, all students were taken to the majestic Ballroom where Agum asked students to share the greeting “hello” in different languages and then led a Dinka welcome with an Obiswina song as a warmup exercise. This warmup exercise was not part of the research design but formed an important element of the overall arts-rich experience of the workshop. Explaining the bookmaking activity, Agum encouraged students to use all the languages they knew (prompted with examples of body language, art, words, and silence) in any way they wanted to use them. Following this, brief presentations were made by two KO artists, Ching2 and Bern Emmerichs, who displayed their artwork and spoke about their artistic practice.

Ching2 explained how her sculptural bird cage art related to emotions, identity, and creative expression. Bern shared published books on Australian history that she has illustrated and demonstrated using scratch paper as a method of drawing.

During Bookmaking

The students were seated at large round tables and shown how to fold their own 8-page book. They began working individually on their book using felt-tipped pens, scratch paper, and collage materials provided (see Figure 1). The books were informally published using a color photocopier. While the day's focus was on Multilingual Melbourne, taking a creative open-ended arts approach, the students were told the books they made could be on any topic they chose.

In total 11 adults (artists, KO staff, KO volunteers, and researchers) as well as government house staff and teachers were available to assist the students. The two participant researchers worked with students on randomly chosen tables for the duration of the bookmaking activity. There were many conversations during bookmaking including children vocalizing their ideas, processes, and feelings towards each other's illustrations, artists suggesting ideas, researchers asking questions about the stories, announcements of how much time they had left to complete the task, and what was being served for lunch. These



FIGURE 1. Children working on their books.

conversations were captured through audio and video recordings taken with parent consent and student assent.

After Bookmaking

The publishing of the books was celebrated through an informal ceremony announcement for each author and book. A copy of each book was displayed in the KO book cubby (see Figure 2). The Governor and her husband attended part of the event. They spoke with students and adults and also read some of the students' books.

The researchers invited students who had published their books to be interviewed as “authors” and read their stories aloud. The students had lunch after making their books and returned to school by bus.

Two weeks after the event, KO requested some student feedback. The teachers encouraged the students to write a letter in response to the workshop.



FIGURE 2. Books held up in celebration at the end of event with books displayed in the book cubby.

Data Source

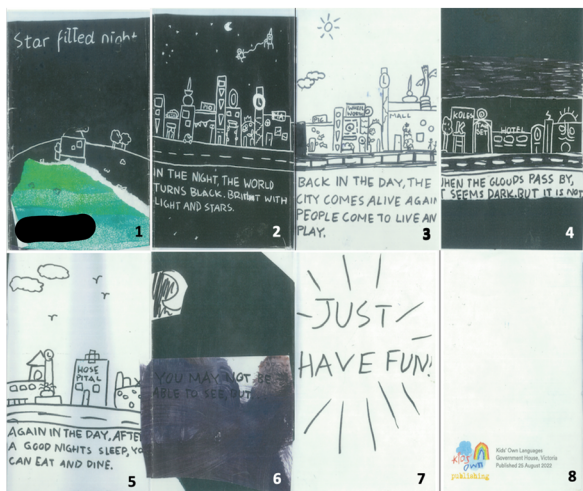
The data available for analysis of the bookmaking process and the books created covered a variety of formats—observational notes, video and audio recordings of interviews, and photographs taken on the day. Hard copies of the published books were available to the research team, as was a collection of 31 student letters. We brought together all of these multiple sources of evidence to analyze how children’s semiotic knowledge and identity resources were interacting to create meaning making flows in the arts-rich bookmaking process. We selected five students and their books to focus on because we had multiple data sources that gave us rich insights into their different meaning making, knowledge, and identity resources, and individual processes.

Data Analysis

Students’ books, interview comments, and letters were read by the research team multiple times as part of undertaking a critical content analysis of the written, oral, and visual texts organized in a spreadsheet. We began by reading and discussing the complete data set. We were then able to see which students provided the richest illustration of how an individual semiotic assemblage comes together to support meaning-making flows. From there, we were able to engage in Provisional Coding (Saldaña, 2009) using the key terms in the research questions to guide a second analysis of the reduced data set. This process allowed us to summarize recurring information in students’ works and comments on the meaning of their books. Our areas of focus included their individual processes, skills in using different semiotic resources to make meaning, knowledges on their topics of interest, understanding of writing practices, and the role of the arts-rich experience in facilitating their meaning making.

Data Presentation

In recognizing their voices as ‘published’ authors, we present their work here in the form of artwork with captions of explanatory text as is often seen in art galleries which reflects the excursion’s arts-based focus (see Figures 3–7). This is also our scholarly assemblage of the data. Each figure contains an image of the 8-page book (written text reproduced for ease of reading), author’s name (pseudonyms), and information related to their book taken from their statements in



Written Text
Star filled (p.1) IN THE NIGHT, THE WORLD TURNS BLACK, BRIGHT WITH LIGHT AND STARS (p.2) BACK IN THE DAY, THE CITY COMES ALIVE AGAIN! PEOPLE COME TO LIVE AN PLAY (p.3) WHEN THE CLOUDS PASS BY, IT SEEMS DARK, BUT IT IS NOT (p.4) AGAIN IN THE DAY, AFTER A GOOD NIGHTS SLEEP, YOU CAN EAT AND DINE. (p.5) YOU MAY NOT BE ABLE TO SEE BUT... (p.6) JUST HAVE FUN! (p.7)

Harper

Star Filled Night 2020

scratch paper and collage paper scraps glued onto A4 white paper, scratch pen and black fineliner

Author Statement (from written letter)

My book was about celebrating the night. Most children look to the night sky in fear or remorse but my book was about how night isn't all that bad. I liked drawing the illustrations the best and thinking about the words the least. During that day, having artists there to give feedback or information was quite helpful. I think the most important thing in a book is the author's reason for creating the book. That being said, I believe that everyone should give the starry night sky a little bit more thought from time to time.

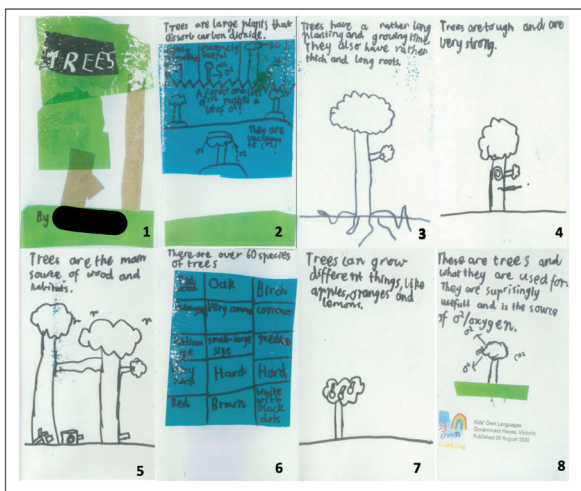
Overall, the trip to government house was really fun! It was the best trip a year four could possibly ever have!

FIGURE 3. Harper: The Poetic Artist.

interviews and/or letters. Together they show readers the book as a form of artwork, and the author's intended meanings and processes in creating the books.

RESULTS: ANALYZING MULTILINGUAL CHILDREN'S MEANING-MAKING FLOWS

In this section, we explore each author's processes of using their semiotic, knowledge, and identity resources to sustain meaning-making flows. Based on our examination, we discuss the implications of arts-



Justin

Trees, 2022

Collage paper scraps, black scratch paper, black fineliner on A3 white paper

Author Statement (from written letter):

I had a great time at government house. It was cool and all, but the best part was the bookmaking. My book was a nonfiction, its sole purpose to make the reader understand about trees. Personally, I found getting the ideas about the book quite hard. The collage materials were quite useful, but I'm not exactly an expert at collage. I found the drawing quite easy, and also the writing. The artists helped me a lot, by giving me ideas and also helping me remember how to fold the book, because my memory cells are still recovering from the times when I bumped my head. For me, I liked making the grids on my book. It was oddly satisfying. For my next book, I'd like to make it about my favourite video games. My book is about trees, and I got the ideas from my favourite plants, which are trees, potatoes, and specifically green grass. I shared my book with my friends, who said it was boring, but I guess they were joking... right? We also had huge tables to work in, and we got to duplicate our books! We even got to publish it! Overall, I rate this experience one hundred out of ten! I had a great experience and had a little peek in the life of an author. Also, the house is amazing. A frontyard as big as my house? Sign me up!

Written text in book:

TREES (p.1) Trees are large plants that absorb carbon dioxide. **Second line:** First box: 'Slightly useful' Second box: Extremely useful CO₂ --- O₂ (next to picture of tree) Third box: diagram of tree and human – next to tree is '8.0', next to human is '1.6'

Third Line: A forest and lots of CO₂ makes a lot of O₂. **Fourth line:** They are vacuums to CO₂! (diagram with CO₂ entering tree and O₂ exiting) (p.2) **Trees are a rather long planting and growing time. They also have rather thick and long roots.** (p.3) **Trees are tough and very strong** (p.4) **Trees are the main source of wood and habitats** (p.5) **There are over 60 species of trees** [table on previous page] (p.6) **Trees can grow different things like apples, oranges and lemons.** (p.7) **These are trees and what they are used for. They are surprisingly useful and is the source of O₂/Oxygen** (p.8).

FIGURE 4. Justin: The Fun-Loving Scientist.

rich experiences for creating translinguaging spaces in language and literacy classrooms in the following Discussion section.

Harper: The Poetic Artist

Drawing on Harper's eight-page book and her written reflection on the book making experience, we can see the meaning making aim of her book is to provide a different way of thinking about the night, not



Fig. 5. Lilly L/W?. My Pets
 Written text in book: My Pets
 “Bla” in thai means fish (p.1)
 I have 6 pet fish. They are
 very ENERGETIC! (p.2) I have
 3 females and 3 males. (p.4)
 “saam” means 3 in Thai (p.5)
 My fish are always hungry
 too. [food and symbol of
 arrow pointing to picnic cloth
 pattern] “Gin” means eat in
 Thai (p.6) Mmm, I Love
 apples! (p.7) [text on
 previous page] (p.8).

Caitlin

My Pets

Scratch paper, collage paper scraps glued onto A3 white paper, and black fineliner

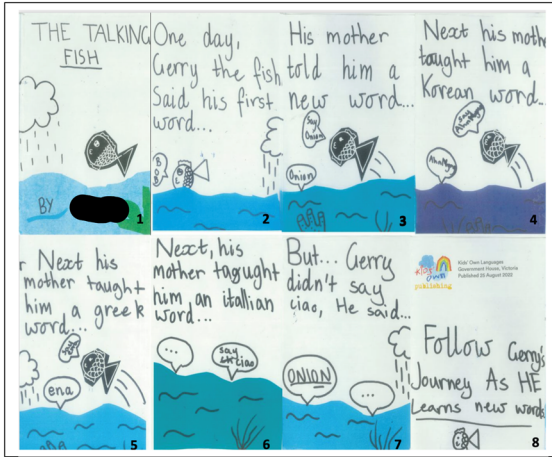
Author Statement (from written letter):

I was so excited when I entered the beautiful, polished room. My book ideas were spinning in my head. There were pieces of fabric on some tables. My book was called, My Pets. It was about my pet fish that I have at home. I had an idea about it when I was just thinking about them. I wanted to do something about family. My fish was part of my family. I want my readers to learn about the language that I use in it. I used Thai language to make readers learn about it. I loved the collage materials because it made my book a little more arty, but it would've made it harder if there wasn't any collage materials. It wouldn't make it more like a creativity lesson about imagination. Over all, it was amazing, just like an adventure.

FIGURE 5. Caitlin: The Resourceful Teacher.

as “dead” time (contrasting with her word choice “alive” in the day time), but as a time of beauty (“bright with light and stars”) with its own possibilities for “fun” (p. 7). To communicate her meaning, Harper draws on visual and linguistic semiotic resources as well as her funds of knowledge and identity. She employs striking visuals and simple but poetic written text and draws on her cultural awareness of how children generally understand the darkness of night-time (“Most children look to the night sky in fear or remorse”), and her understanding that “the author’s reason for creating the book” is most important.

Harper embarks on this mission to provide an alternative perspective by using her dexterous art skills accompanied by short sentences in poetic form. She alternates between etchings on black scratch paper



Written text in book:
THE TALKING FISH (p.1) One day, Gerry the fish said his first word... (p.2) His mother told him a new word "Say onion" "Onion" (p.3) Next his mother taught him a Korean word "Say Anh Nyung" "Ahn Nyung" (p.4) Next his mother taught him a Greek word "Say ena" "ena" (p.5) Next his mother taught him and italian word "say ciao" "... " (p.6) But... Gerry didn't say ciao, He said... "ONION" (p.7) Follow Gerry's Journey As He Learns new words (p.8)

Angelina

The Talking Fish, 2022

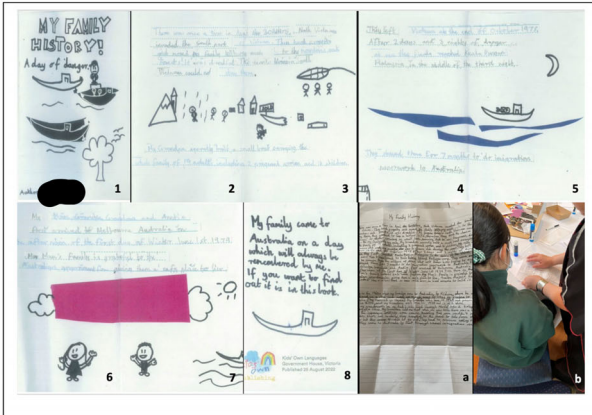
Black scratch paper, black fineliner, collage paper scraps on A3 white paper

Author Statement (from interview):

This book is about a little fish who says his first word. And his mother tries to teach him some new words but the last word she tries to teach him doesn't work out because he says 'onion'. I kinda just made it up as I went.

FIGURE 6. Angelina: The Multilingual Comedian.

to convey night-time with drawings on white paper to convey daytime (pp. 2–6). A simple line depicting place on page 1 extends and transforms into one continuous road across pages 1–5 along the vibrant cityscape. She brings her local funds of knowledge and identity to capture a home, possibly indicating where she lives and her everyday surroundings, as well as the city. The cityscape is shown both in terms of the physical structure as well as a multipage journey. Drawing on her linguistic resources, the written text adds to the meaning as it provides information about what those images are intended to portray. The illustrations and written text with capital letters throughout come together as an assemblage to facilitate the flow of meaning making and bring about a poetic feel to her book. Her comment "I liked drawing the illustrations the best and thinking about the words the least," gives a sense of the way these semiotic modes interacted to support the flow of Harper's meaning making. The words may not be as significant to her nor an accurate depiction of what she seeks to communicate, particularly as there were demanding time constraints and



Written text in book: My Family History! A day of danger (p.1). There was once a time in April 30th 1975, North Vietnam invaded the South part of Vietnam. They took property and moved my family with my mum's side to the mountains and forests. It was dreadful. The peoples living in South Vietnam could not stay there. My grandpa secretly built a small boat carrying the whole family of 19 adults, including 2 pregnant women and 14 children. (pp. 2-3). They left Vietnam at the end of October 1974. After 2 days and 3 nights of danger at sea they finally reached Kuala Dungan Malaysia in the middle of the third night. They stayed there for 7 months to do immigration paperwork to Australia. (pp. 4-5). My Mum, Grandpa, Grandma and Auntie first arrived to Melbourne Australia on the after noon of the first day of Winter June 1st 1979. My mum's family is grateful to the Australian government for giving them a safe place to live. (pp. 5-6). My family came to Australia on a day which will always be remembered by me. If you want to find out it is in this book. (p. 8).

Jenny

My Family History, 2022

cut up photocopied handwritten story (a suggestion from the artist when Jenny showed her the two stories of her mother's and grandfather's migration), collage paper scraps, black scratch paper, black fineliner on A3 white paper

Author Statement (from interview at the event):

Interviewer: What inspired you to write this book?
 Basically, if you don't tell a story that came from your idea or imagination, then it'll kind of be lost forever, until you actually tell it to the world, what YOU think of not what everyone else thinks of. I think I want them to know that your imagination is free. Whatever idea you have, there's no correct answer, and also to be grateful for what you have.

(from written letter):

My book was about my family history, where my mum came from Vietnam, as a refugee. What I found difficult was the time limit to get everything done. The idea that made me create my book was history and comparing it to now. I want the readers to think of how lucky they are and to be grateful for what they have. I shared my book with my Mum and Dad and they love the story and want me to write more. The experience was awesome! Thank you for inviting us!

FIGURE 7. Jenny: The Grateful Historian.

pressures to complete each page of the book. The abrupt 'JUST HAVE FUN' statement at the end without any imagery gives us a sense of a sudden halt from the ways in which an assemblage of art, language, and local funds of knowledge and identity have been mingling to convey her meaning.

Nonetheless, through this assemblage of semiotic, knowledge, and identity resources, we gain a sense of Harper's textual voice as being

contemplative, thought-provoking, artistic, and romantic. It is clear she is comfortable and adept at communicating visually but this capability is further enhanced when artists are around (“having artists there to give feedback or information was quite helpful”), indicating the facilitative role of the arts-rich experience in supporting Harper’s meaning making flow and overall experience to be “really fun” and “the best trip a year four could possibly ever have!”

Justin: The Fun-Loving Scientist

Justin’s meaning making purpose was to “make the reader understand about trees.” While Justin “found getting the ideas about the book quite hard,” he was able to draw on a variety of semiotic, knowledge, and identity resources to achieve his meaning making purpose. Justin’s knowledge, linguistic, and spatial resources came together in an assemblage with the visual resources of the arts-rich experience to communicate his meaning. Justin’s knowledge of trees is a key element driving the flow of meaning in his book, including rich linguistic resources demonstrated through technical language (e.g., carbon dioxide CO₂, oxygen O₂, identification of trees as “species”), and conceptual knowledge shown in diagrammatic form of how plants absorb carbon dioxide (p. 2).

Although Justin found the use of collage materials useful and drawing images easy, visual resources only play a subsidiary role in conveying the meaning of his book. One non-linguistic resource that does contribute to the building of his explanatory text is his use of the spatial mode through the grid on page 6 which “was oddly satisfying” to make. We understand this “satisfying” feeling as one that arises from the ability to organize complex information (on the many species of trees) neatly into a table (see Table 1) to show relationships between key concepts:

Justin’s book provides us with a sense of his interest in structure and authority in the role of a scientist. However, in contrast to this

TABLE 1
Justin’s Organization of Species of Trees and their Characteristics

Red wood	Oak	Birch
Endangered	Very common	Common
Medium size	Small-large size	medium
Very hard	Hard	Hard
Red	Brown	White with black dots

confident non-fiction voice, in his reflective letter on the experience, we also see his knowledge resources in his ability to confidently shuttle between genres (from factual texts to everyday recounts) switching into the voice of a fun-loving, light-hearted, and honest author with a sense of irony with statements such as:

“A frontyard as big as my house? Sign me up!”

“Overall, I’d rate this experience one hundred out of ten!”

Justin’s assemblage of linguistic, spatial, visual, and knowledge resources, and his funds of identity is brought together in a way that shows us his textual identity as an author who is knowledgeable, aware, and brings a sense of humor to his writing. Additionally, the practices of community bookmaking (e.g., “duplicating the book” and “publishing it”) and working with artists who “helped [him] a lot by giving him ideas,” allowed Justin to experience meaning making flows in a way that gave him a “little peek in the life of an author.” It is the totality of this arts-rich experience that made bookmaking the best part of his trip to Government House (“the best part was the bookmaking”).

Caitlin: The Resourceful Teacher

Caitlin’s book seeks to introduce readers to her fish and learn some words in Thai: “I used Thai language to make readers learn about it.” While appearances of non-English languages were evident in a number of the children’s books, Caitlin’s use of her multilingual resources in communicating with her audience, who are not likely to be speakers of Thai, was particularly thoughtful. In every appearance of Thai words (pp. 1, 5, 6, and 8), she is clear and consistent in putting them in double quotation marks and stating the translation in English. In her interview, Caitlin explained she was born in Thailand but does not know as many words in Thai as she knows in English. Her multilingual identity is drawn upon as a meaning making resource through her seamless use of English to represent her meaning in sentences with the appearance of nouns and verbs she knows in Thai in appropriate places.

Caitlin also draws on her visual and linguistic resources in creating meaning. The images and written words in Caitlin’s text are straightforward but delightful to experience. On page 6 she chooses checked material commonly seen in picnic blankets to convey a sense of fish happily joining picnics and eating apples. Perhaps this is what she means when she says the collage materials make her book “a little more arty.” There is some confusion with her use of “would not” in

the sentence: “It wouldn’t make it more like a creativity lesson about imagination” but given her statement in her interview “it felt really awesome to create whatever I want,” we assume she meant: “If we did not have the collage materials, I would not have felt I could be as creative and imaginative.” In this out-of-school space where children were surrounded by cultural artifacts, artworks on loan from the National Gallery of Victoria, enormous stately rooms with chandeliers and expansive gardens, supported by artists and storytellers, children were given freedom and inspiration to create what they want to create. Caitlin’s idea for the focus on fish is also likely to have been triggered by one of the artists who showed the children fish sculptures in her own artwork. Several children wrote their books on fish as shown in the next example.

In Caitlin’s assemblage of multilingual, visual, spatial resources and funds of identity, the meaning making flows bring together a story she cares for, her fish, which she regards as her pet and “part of [her] family” in ways that show her “arty” (artistic) and expert multilingual identity as an author who can teach readers words in Thai. She uses her resources “resourcefully” to convey who she is and her meaning making purpose. In her final page, she gives closure to the book with peritext conventions of “about the author”: “Caitlin is 9 years old, She is from Thailand and she lives with her mum. Her favourite animal is a cat. [Image of a cat] “moaw” means cat in Thai”. The totality of the arts-rich experience remains in her memory as “amazing, just like an adventure”.

Angelina: The Multilingual Comedian

Angelina’s bookmaking experience was characterized by the significant impact of the multifaceted arts-rich experience in creating and sustaining her meaning making flow. From the very beginning Angelina knew she wanted to call her book “The Talking Fish.” “Fish” was a popular character among the children sitting at her table and connected to one of the artists’ work (noted above). Drawing on the audio recording from Angelina’s table, we learned about the making of Angelina’s book as an assemblage of visual, linguistic (the instruments to represent her story in her book), and audio resources, prompted and inspired moment to moment by the physical context, the activities that took place prior to the bookmaking task, and the social interactions with those in the space.

The social interactions with peers, artists and researchers significantly influenced the way Angelina drew on a shared pool of knowledge and linguistic resources. Angelina’s first task was to name the

fish. Someone suggested the name Bob and there was some light-hearted dialog around the names Bob, Barbara, and Gerry. She chose the name Gerry with his first words as “Bob” (page 2). Barbara became Gerry’s mum, who took on the role of teaching Gerry “new word[s]” (page 3). This idea for new words, “new” here referring to different languages, may have in part been influenced by a child who suggested earlier a need for a “multicultural fish,” by the workshop’s theme of “Multilingual Melbourne,” and by the performance earlier in the day where they were encouraged to say hello in the languages they knew. Once she knew what the book was about, Angelina said, “In the end I’m going to make him say ‘ena’ [hello in Greek—a word she knew from her Greek heritage], what other words are there for ‘hello’?” Sitting nearby the researcher suggested:

Researcher: How about Korean? Do you know how to say hello in Korean?

Angelina: No.

Researcher: (verbally) ahn nyung. ahn nyung.

Angelina: OH I know what his first word is going to be! I’m going to make him say “Onion”! (everyone laughs)

“Without any suggestion to include the word in the book, the researcher then wrote the word in letters in English to show her the spelling. Angelina decided herself to put the word ‘ahn nyung’ in page 4. With all the attention on Barbara teaching new words, she realizes Gerry has disappeared and says, “I may have made Gerry submerged in the water.” The children laugh, reinforcing her identity as a comedic author, and she continues. Throughout the rest of the book, Barbara teaches Gerry a range of words for hello in different languages contributed by other at Angelina’s table. Bringing her comedic identity to the fore, and encouraged by the laughter of her peers, Angelina uses the final page to show Gerry ignoring his mother’s teaching and choosing to say “ONION” (p. 7), reflecting the light-heartedness of her earlier interaction with the researcher.

What makes Angelina’s book special to us is the multilingual richness of what lies behind the “onion” utterance. The interaction with the researcher in listening to the word “ahn nyung” and turning it into a word she is familiar with “onion,” which then becomes the punchline for her book helps us see how she makes sense of new, foreign sounds in the first instance for herself. She then finds her own ways of incorporating the new words in ways that are meaningful to her story and to a sense of who she is. Having interacted with Angelina during this task, we can see she also has the textual tools to create a

piece of work that reflects her own identity, that is, as a creative, confident, adventurous, and funny author. She is comfortable verbalizing her ideas, listening to others' reactions and responses, while also drawing on aspects from her wider experience, as material for her book. Discourses such as "Follow Gerry's Journey As He Learns new words" (p. 8) at the end of the book, is also an indication of her engagement with digital texts where children of her generation are surrounded by short stories that can be "followed" on social media.

From start to finish, every decision Angelina made in the story, was vocalized not necessarily addressing anyone or to seek approval from others, but as a way of generating ideas for the story [i.e., "My fish is a circle and a triangle put together" (p. 1), "Look, my fish is jumping out of the water" (p. 3)]. Her artwork may seem simple, but the consistent pattern perhaps allows her to focus on building the story. Thus, we understand Angelina's assemblage as being made up of a dynamic interplay of linguistic, visual, audio, spatial resources, and funds of knowledge and identity, where the flows of meaning making were free to travel in any direction. This assemblage facilitates the emergence of her comedic and playful authorial voice. The arts-rich experience allowed for her meaning to emerge and flow as she went. As she states, "I kinda just made it up as I went."

Jenny: The Grateful Family Historian

Jenny's meaning making purpose was to document her family history and to convince others of the importance of this practice so that they are not "lost forever." Documenting histories like this can help us to "compare" what we have now and make us realize "how lucky [we] are and to be grateful for what [we] have," which is the main meaning of her story.

The written text in Jenny's book is difficult to read because she cut and pasted parts of an existing story on her family history from written narratives she had prepared before the excursion (images a and b in Figure 7). Jenny told the researcher that she knew the stories of her paternal grandparents and her mother's migration history because her parents had told her. While roughly half of the original text did not make it into the 8-page book, the linguistic and visual resources she uses powerfully brings her funds of knowledge and identity to the fore. The textual organization consists of the typical structures of an orientation, complication, and resolution; she judiciously chooses the key information that captures the overall story and did some of this on advice from one of the artists in helping to solve the problem of how to make her 8-page book with the length of the text she had. Spatial

negotiations of where to put the written text (spread over two pages) and the artwork in between texts would have undoubtedly been something she needed to consider. Drawing on her visual resources, the pointy, narrow, and thin lines of the water on pages 4–5, and the banana-like boat shape throughout the book extended our imagination in gaining a sense of the dangerous journey her mother experienced as a refugee from Vietnam. In reading parts of the original text that were left out, we learned about the meaning behind these visual choices: “Grandpa designed the boat that looked like a rivers boat so no one would know, he hired someone to build it.”

Like Angelina’s last words, we see the parting words of the author on the last page sometimes found in the back cover blurb of a book: “My family came to Australia on a day which will always be remembered by me. If you want to find out it is in this book.” Jenny’s assemblage of linguistic, visual, spatial semiotic resources, and her funds of knowledge and identity creates a sense of struggle, desire, and happiness in the meaning of her work. The arts-rich experience has allowed her to research, cut and paste the past into the present to preserve this story into the future. This assemblage allowed her to perform the voice of a historian. For Jenny in particular, the opportunity to “go public” with her story, to publish and share it with an audience, was an important factor in encouraging her to bring her familial funds of knowledge to the book making process. The interview also gave her an opportunity to teach us that with ideas, histories, and stories, “there’s no correct answer” although in the case of the stories she brought to the excursion, the specific details of migration were important ones she chose to share. While Jenny’s focus is on being a family historian, she encourages us to tap into our imagination and tell our stories.

DISCUSSION

Assemblage thinking allows us to understand how these children create and sustain meaning making flows in the “translanguaging space” (Li, 2018). Studies from early childhood, primary, secondary and community settings show that the use of arts-rich experiences support the creation of translanguaging spaces. They do this by opening up creative opportunities for playful and collaborative exploration of the full range of an individual and community’s semiotic repertoire (including their linguistic resources) (Bradley, Moore, Simpson, & Atkinson, 2018; Eisazadeh & Stooke, 2013; Hirsu, Zacharias, & Futro, 2021; Yoon-Ramirez, 2021), encouraging experimentation with layering a variety of elements to create a unified whole (Leung, 2019; Prasad, 2020) that also reveals a great deal to teachers about their

students' funds of knowledge (Arreguín-Anderson, Salinas-Gonzalez, & Alanis, 2018). Arts-experiences are also often extremely engaging, motivating children to employ translanguaging drawing on their full semiotic repertoires to keep the experience going (Arreguín-Anderson et al., 2018). The arts-rich bookmaking experience analyzed in this study is one such motivating environment that encourages students' deployment of their full semiotic repertoires to achieve their meaning making goals. By exploring this process using an assemblage lens, our study builds on and extends the rich body of work around the role of arts-rich experiences in creating translanguaging spaces. While the literature thus far introduces the vibrancy of translanguaging spaces, there is a general lack in understanding of how such spaces are constituted in practical terms. Our contribution to knowledge in this area is to make visible the interaction of people, knowledges, artifacts, arts experiences, and physical spaces that generates the "translanguaging space" which supports children's meaning making flows. In our study, we were also able to show how this led to the expression of students' distinctive authorial voices. The children's authorial voices are evident, we can see this flow through the assemblage of their semiotic, knowledge and identity resources, and the rich input provided by the vibrant and multifaceted context of the arts-rich experience. Through their fluid processes of meaning making, Harper's textual voice emerges as a poetic artist, Justin's as a fun-loving scientist, Caitlin's as a resourceful teacher, Angelina's as a multilingual comedian, and Jenny's as a grateful family historian.

If we view the children's texts as assemblages, we can understand the deeply interconnected and non-hierarchical relationships between all their resources for meaning making. The children begin by drawing on their perceived strengths and the help of supportive adults to generate an idea. In the case of this study, the children often mention the artists' support as being helpful in coming up with an idea. Once ideas are generated, children resourcefully draw upon their individual semiotic resources, and their subjective experience of shared "activities, artefacts, and space" (Pennycook, 2017, p. 273) to continue the flow of meaning creation.

The contribution of the arts-rich experience to facilitating children's meaning making flows can be identified with analysis driven by an assemblage lens. In this way the interaction of the individual's semiotic resources, activities, artifacts and space are made visible. The arts experience provides skill building and creativity inspiring *activities*, physical *artifacts* in the form of collage materials and a vibrant physical *space* in the form of Government House and the promise of publication for an audience. The influence of these elements can be clearly seen in the children's finished texts. Justin, Harper, Caitlin, Angelina,

and Jenny all comment on the way the artists and art materials helped them to generate ideas, think creatively and allow their distinctive stories to come alive as a book. In the words of the children, the arts-rich experience injected the book making process with “adventure” and “amaz[ement].” It provided a “really fun” and “awesome” space for children to play, to actively consider and reconsider their meaning making purposes and gave them a “little peek into the life of an author.” In Angelina’s case, the arts-rich experience promoted her playful and humorous engagement with translanguaging which has been shown in the secondary setting to promote students’ metalinguistic awareness (Dávila, 2019). Here we see the true expression of a translanguaging space that facilitates and encourages the use of children’s full semiotic, knowledge and identity resources and shapes the way these resources come together as assemblages in a dynamic and open way.

Implications for Teaching and Learning

Our findings have implications for language and literacy teachers who are beginning to develop their own translanguaging stance and who are seeking guidance on translanguaging design and enacting translanguaging shifts in classrooms. Through our analysis of this case study, we have shown the importance of considering a range of knowledge resources that contribute to meaning making practices, and the necessity of taking a relational approach to opening up translanguaging spaces for learning. Through our analysis, teachers can see the value of creating the conditions for all of children’s meaning making resources to be drawn upon in text creation so that students can view themselves as capable, knowledgeable, and creative authors. From this starting point, teachers can use their semiotic strengths, identify areas for growth, and keep a focus on meaning making as the primary purpose of literacy. At a time when children are losing interest in reading and writing and standards are falling, we need to rethink how we engage students in their literacy learning. Assemblage thinking provides a way for teachers to gain insight into how people, knowledges, artifacts, arts experiences, and physical spaces work together to support children as meaning makers.

In considering this case study from a community organization, we can take up the advice of Ordóñez et al. (2018) who encourages literacy educators to learn from the practices undertaken in community settings “to transform and improve formal practice” (p. 9) in schools. We are aware there are many schools that may not have access to a wealth of resources; however, the creation of a “translanguaging space” does

not require expensive resources and excursions. What is at the heart of translanguaging spaces is the opportunity and encouragement for children to draw upon their meaning making resources in resourceful ways. This does require creativity and criticality on the part of schools and teachers but can be achieved with basic materials and everyday classroom spaces. In the school setting, there is potential to extend on the scope of such arts-rich bookmaking projects by capitalizing on the increased contact hours and pre-established positive relationships between students and teachers and the built-in audience/readership of peers and teachers. The authors are currently undertaking one such project in the school setting over multiple weeks and considering how arts-rich practices can support teachers as they work within their school-based approaches to language and literacy teaching. Despite its largely monolingual approach to the development of language and literacy, the Australian context is one of enormous linguistic diversity where translanguaging pedagogies can be powerfully implemented. The findings from this Australian study therefore have implications for similar English-dominant contexts with multilingual students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Kids' Own Publishing for providing this opportunity to join the event and supporting the research. We would also like to thank the students and teachers who allowed us to undertake research with them and learn from their enthusiastic engagement with creative bookmaking practices. Open access publishing facilitated by The University of Melbourne, as part of the Wiley - The University of Melbourne agreement via the Council of Australian University Librarians.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The research undertaken for this article has approval from Human Research Ethics Committee, ACU (Project ID 2021-151H).

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