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### Meaningful, Embodied Literacies: Dramatic Play and Revision with Middle School Writers in Warsaw, Poland

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this six-week, naturalistic inquiry study was to explore how middle school students at an international school in Warsaw, Poland experienced embodied literacies in their drama elective and their experience with revision through students' creations of performance and puppetry vignettes that represented their fictional stories. This study centered on the following research questions: 1) How does drama stimulate revision in writing? and 2) How do students describe their experience with drama in the writing process? Multiple data were collected: writing drafts with revisions, photos, interviews, performance and rehearsal videos, and reflections. The constant comparative method was used to analyze and triangulate the data. Additionally, digital images were used to generate a multimodal analytic method that implemented a Semiotic Photo Response Protocol. Analyses of data revealed that acting out their writing stimulated additional ideas for students' stories, especially in how students embodied their stories. However, some students had concerns and difficulty in translating their flash fiction pieces from narrative to script format. Data analysis also demonstrated how aesthetics played a role in the translation of content from writing to drama, and how some students had challenges in collaborating with their performance groups but not during their writing groups.

**Keywords:** drama, revision, theater, transmediation, writing



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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

I never thought I could write a story and then act it out. I was wrong!

~ Mateo, 6<sup>th</sup> grade student.

I learned theater can bring out happiness since you can put a piece of yourself in the script and in the character you are trying to play. Theater is an escape because you find yourself in that process.

~ Olenka, 6<sup>th</sup> grade student.

As Mateo and Olenka (all names are pseudonyms), both 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in an international school in Poland, recognized in their reflections above, theater has the potential to impact students' writing. Drama and writing naturally fit together, because many children's experiences with literacy emerge from *imaginative play* (Wolf, 2006). Students generate more intertextual connections when combining drama and writing (Rowe, Fitch, & Bass, 2003). Drama also increases confidence in writing, because students can envision and rehearse what they want to say through *tellability* (Clark, 2012), meaning students actively and physically perform stages of the writing process (e.g., brainstorming, drafting, revising). When there are visual representations with writing lessons, students' participation increases as well as communicates criteria for assessments (Bustle, 2004). By using dramatic play, students translate and communication understanding at a deeper level (Branscombe & Schneider, 2013; Rowe, Fitch, & Bass, 2003; Wilson, 2003). Branscombe and Schneider (2018) noted, "Drama is a collaborative act of agreeing to inhabit the fictional realm to elicit powerful moments of communal engagement" (p.

21). Centering on the powerful connection between drama and writing, this article describes how middle school students experienced embodied literacies in their drama elective along with their experience with revision through students' creations of performance vignettes that represented their fictional stories.

I begin by examining recent research on drama, writing, and embodied literacies, grounding the work in social semiotics and multiliteracies. I then share the context and purpose of working with students in Poland and present the methodological framework I used to collect and analyze data with the international students with whom I worked. Next, I offer findings that emerged from my research questions: acting stimulated writing ideas, students embodied their characters, difficulties in translation of content from narrative writing to scripting, the importance of aesthetics, and challenges between working with writing groups versus acting troupes. I end with discussion and concluding thoughts with further suggested research.

## Review of Literature

Drama assists students identified as *struggling readers* who may need support in oral or written responses (Adomat, 2007), because students become actively involved in the meaning of the story, moving from listener to participant (Goldberg, 2016). Drama also assists English language learners (Winters, 2010) "without being self-conscious because the child's language is that of her 'character' and not hers" (Goldberg, 2016, p. 81). According to Edmiston (2007), "Drama opens up public socially imagined spaces where all children can have equitable access to communication tools" (p. 340). In fact, students have the ability to change people's

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<sup>1</sup> I acknowledge that there is a gender spectrum and that myriad pronouns exist that we can use when referring to individuals in our writing. Throughout this article we use

pronouns to refer to individuals that correspond with the pronouns that they use to refer to themselves.

perceptions of them (e.g., struggling readers) when engaged in performance (Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012), “where identity categories are renegotiated, struggled over, and challenged” (Leavy, 2009, p. 139). More importantly, drama allows students to become visible and active participants in their learning (Landay & Wootton, 2012).

Writing also encourages students to become active participants in their learning, especially paired with drama when they revise. Experienced writers view revision as fundamental to writing (King, 2000; Murray, 2004). Unfortunately, many students hold misconceptions that revising is merely a hunt for mistakes, or something done at the end of the writing process rather than during the writing experience (Batchelor, 2018).

However, transmediation (taking understanding from one sign system and recasting it into another to generate meaning) (Siegel, 1995; Suhor, 1984) may change the conversation regarding revision, allowing learners to “re-see” their writing throughout the process, thus providing accessibility and meaningfulness that students lacked in previous revision experiences. Cope and Kalantzis (2009) noted, “conscious mode switching makes for more powerful learning” (p. 181).

Transmediation paired with revision is a process that allows students to “re-see” what they have written and acquire new possibilities in revising. Because this process encourages intuitiveness and insights via abduction, which is a process of reasoning by creating a new concept based on an existing concept (e.g., a “hunch”), one could argue that literacies in the body are being tapped. In fact, this process encourages the creator to translate thinking between and among various modes of communication, in order to form a deeper awareness of this thinking.

For example, Perl (1990) believed that meaning is not discovered in writing, but rather is crafted through drawing from one’s inner reflections and bodily sensations internalized during writing called *felt sense*. In other words, literacy and perceptions of literacy are expressed and perceived with the body (Vasudevan, 2014) and through the body. Jones (2013) discussed *literacies in the body* as how they manifest and are acquired, such as performance-oriented literacies, but also pedagogical decisions teachers and students make (e.g., Round-robin reading). She noted, “By literacies in the body I also mean the way particular literacies are in the body, how they manifest, and how they are acquired. Some examples include the more obviously performance-oriented literacies many of us can conjure on demand. . .theater” (p. 526). In their ethnographic research, Johnson and Vasudevan (2012) noticed ways that students engaged and performed critical literacy that might not be recognizable to educators, such as clothing and accessories, and politically incorrect humor, defining the body as “a text produced by socially circulating norms for gender, race, sexuality, class, age, and ability” (p. 35).

Research has also shown how embodied literacies help students assist in identity formation. For example, Enriquez (2014) examined the identities of two *struggling readers* during classroom experiences in which she found that these two students internalized feelings of loss and isolation when labeled as such. However, through embodied performances, they were personally able to reposition themselves as readers, although the teacher and many of their peers did not view or accept these performances in the same manner. Enriquez (2014) posited, “our bodies indicate those shifting identities through performances, which are our socially constructed embodied behaviors in a given social context” (p. 106). Vasudevan (2014) concurred, “How a teacher perceives a student as a

literate person in school is inherently bound up with how he or she perceives and interprets that student as a whole. In this sense, literacy—and perceptions of literacy—are embodied, or expressed and perceived in and through the body” (p. 238). In addition, play can be read as embodied literacies. For example, Thiel’s (2015) ethnographic research developed a concept called *muchness* to describe the moments of intellectual fullness during an activity of engaged curiosity. Thiel contended there needs to be more play in school. In particular, muchness, similar to the notion of being in *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997), occurs when children are engaged in an activity in which there is a natural curiosity or affinity. She noted, “Children learn who to be and how to be within the context of their surroundings, making discourse and materials very powerful in the way they work in and through bodies” (p. 41). Wohlwend (2013) concurred, noting that bodies during improvisational moments served as action texts, stating “We tend to look for some print on page when we consider children’s literacy products and to discount and overlook the action texts that children play” (p. 6).

Embodiment centering on drama also extends the abilities and power of language. Edmiston and McKibben (2011) posited when students engage in drama, they have “affective, embodied, cognitive experiences that are both imagined and real” (p. 90). Branscombe and Schneider (2018) called embodying another role as a lived experience. For example, Salvio (1990) noticed that gesture, facial expression, and sound extend the limitations of language, because students may not be able to negotiate meaning in language until they have embodied it. This newfound understanding can then be translated into written language.

In fact, many connections between rehearsing and revising exists, such as both involve making changes over time until a piece is ready for display. Landay and Wootton (2012) stated, “Rehearsing and revising instills in students the need to get it right, internalizing a sense of excellence that results in both commitment and stamina” (p. 144). Therefore, if students are better able to see their writing in a different sign system (mode of communication), transmediation (specifically via drama) could encourage students to delve more deeply into content-level changes rather than focus on grammatical concerns, thus also altering their overall perceptions of revision. This change means that transmediation could provide opportunities for

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students to look at the generativeness of their writing rather than center revision on superficial, detectable changes. More importantly, transmediation moves the curriculum from a verbocentric stance to one that is more generative, which privileges creative and critical thinking

(Hadjioannou & Hutchinson, 2014).

According to Woodcock (2010), research is needed that “draws attention to literacies that are frequently left hidden, especially when the practices and texts themselves are devalued and overlooked in the eyes of dominant culture” (p. 357). Leavy (2009) stated performance studies advance embodiment research since one cannot separate the mind and body during performative acts. Therefore, the goal of this naturalistic inquiry study was to explore how middle school students’ experience embodied literacies in their drama elective and their experience with revision through students’ creations of performance vignettes that represented their fictional stories. To examine this goal, two research questions guided my study: 1) How does drama stimulate revision in

writing? and 2) How do students describe their experience with drama in the writing process?

### **Theoretical Rationale**

This study's theoretical rationale draws on social semiotics and multiliteracies. Social semiotics is the study of signs and sign processes, and how sociocultural factors shape them. Learners actively participate in the culture that surrounds them in order to reconstruct and remediate knowledge within understanding (Gee, 2012; Street, 2003). A social semiotic framework includes focusing on the social nature of learning as well as the "lived reality of language use, as opposed to the abstract system or grammar that underlies it" (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2013, p. 98), and specifically connects to the multiple sign systems central to transmediation.

Multiliteracies complement a social semiotic approach that includes multiple sign systems, which are modes of communication (e.g., drama, language, art, music, digital media), with an emphasis on students' out-of-school literacies (Kist, 2005; Kress, 2000). Multiliteracies define literacy as situational, multimodal, and social (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, 2009). Multiliteracies posits that literacy is situational in the sense that school and curriculum are just one territory being observed in a student's life; multimodal in the case that reading and writing are not the only ways of representation; and social, in the fact, that there needs to be equity for civic participation and meaningful work for future generations. The New London Group (1996) asked for a broader definition of literacy to include more than the privileged print-based reading and writing. They noted that visual, gestural, and other signs are just as effective as the already-privileged language system in use in classrooms and contended how "texts" are created and used in everyday life. This means that multiliteracies expand communication

to include out-of-school literacies that involve students' cultures and dominant languages. According to Bazalgette and Buckingham (2013), the aim of multiliteracies is to "investigate how the interaction between modes can produce meanings that are more than the sum of the parts" (p. 96). The aim centers on how "texts" are created and used in everyday life, thus encouraging discussion during the process of creation.

In particular, Chisholm and Whitmore (2016) noted that "Drama-based approaches to textual interpretations mobilize the body as a primary vehicle for meaning making for actors, which, in turn establishes itself as a sign to be interpreted by audience members who hear, see, feel, and read the bodies of their classmates to construct their own meaning" (p. 7). Therefore, visual, gestural, and other signs are just as effective as the already-privileged language system in use in classrooms.

### **Methodology**

Situated as a naturalistic inquiry study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I recognize that "the aim of naturalistic inquiry is not to develop a body of knowledge in the form of generalizations that are statements free from time or context. The aim is to develop shared constructions that illuminate a particular context and provide working hypotheses for the investigation of others" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993, p. 45). These shared constructions resonate with naturalistic inquiry since understanding among a group or culture centers on multiple realities. As the researcher, I recognize and acknowledge that these realities have been created by individuals within a group or culture, and it is my responsibility to communicate all shared realities in a way that interprets the participants' experiences that is agreeable to those involved in the research. In this view, reality is interrelated (e.g., as a whole cloth) in which one cannot isolate instances in the



experience without, in turn, destroying the holistic meaning of the experience (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Additionally, the researcher in naturalistic inquiry must establish relationships with those in the setting. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), participants and the researcher influence one another. The researcher must be involved in order to understand the shared and multiple realities occurring in the setting. This will enable the researcher to create findings, rather than discover them. These findings will emerge as the study unfolds since data collection and analysis are concurrent. Because of this interaction and forming relationships with the participants, it must be noted that I wanted to take a more *self-reflexive stance*, meaning, I studied my intentions and interactions with the students and the curriculum reflecting on how I could balance my position between teacher and researcher. I was there to teach a new way of experiencing revision, but I also wanted to study it. Therefore, instead of creating tension between these two positions, I reflected on how they could support and work alongside one another.

This study is also centered on an arts-based research design (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Leavy, 2017, 2018). Arts-based research values aesthetic understanding through the arts as a way of knowing and being. It encourages performative practices such as drama and play building as its methods of data collection, and is understood as a meaning-making engagement. Leavy (2017) noted arts-based research values non-verbal ways of knowing, including kinesthetic, and can be a powerful conduit to understanding the self and others. According to Rolling (2018), “the arts-based research paradigm abducting from lived experiences and contextual

relationships, what I term as ‘differences in interpretation,’ thereby privileges improvisational and hybrid creative activity” (p. 495). Rolling posited that arts-based researchers recognize how aesthetic experiences build new understanding and knowledge. This study aimed to build awareness in students’ revising processes through transmediation using the body.

### Context and Participants

Participants in this six-week naturalist inquiry study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) included 13 (out of 22 in the class) 6<sup>th</sup> grade and three (out of 4 in the class) 8<sup>th</sup> grade students (ages 11 – 14) enrolled in a drama elective at an international K-12 school in Warsaw, Poland. Serving 955 students, the school consists of a diverse population of students representing over 52 nationalities, including American (22%), Polish (20%), and Korean (11%). Regarded as the first American school built in the post-communist era in 1989, the school is immense and high-tech. Although students are able to enroll on scholarship for this school, tuition in general is high. Several diplomats’ children attend this school, with many students speaking at least three languages. However, instruction for all core subjects is taught in English. English language learners (ELLs) receive support, and many ELLs are encouraged to take drama as an elective for further language development. The students I worked with in this study were all ELLs with the exception of one student from India, who spoke English as her first language. Primarily, students in Mr. D’s elective were from Poland, Germany, Ukraine, China, Spain, and Hungary.

I have known the cooperating teacher, Mr. D, since 2001 when we both taught language arts at a middle

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school in San Rafael, California. We have stayed friends throughout the years, even when he and his family moved to Warsaw so he could join the international school as their drama teacher. I chose to work with Mr. D on this project because his school allowed me access to an already-created drama program in which students engage in arts-based literacy practices daily.

### **Project Specifics**

Mr. D and I co-taught flash fiction writing via reading mentor texts. Flash fiction is a stand-alone short story that runs between 250 – 750 words in which the writer must consider this length while also maintaining a powerful narrative that shocks the reader with a twist or unusual craft technique that is specific to flash fiction (Batchelor, 2012; Batchelor & King, 2014).

The unit began with reading mentor texts of flash fiction collaborating in small writing groups, and then whole class discussions of what techniques good writers of flash do in their writing. This practice is followed by giving the technique a name, and practicing it in their writing. We studied one or two flash pieces a day for four days. Students practiced techniques in their Google Doc section entitled “Write Time” each day, and they had the option to extend an existing flash work by incorporating the technique.

After initial drafting, students engaged in transmediation via process drama and performance drama. Process drama posits that texts are authored as readers and writers make meaning (Edmiston, 2007; Whitmore, 2015). Students engaged in process drama through working collaboratively in small groups to think about ways to combine and/or continue a group member’s beginning draft of their flash fiction story. They worked through the stories via acting out moments of the story to translate into

scenes. Students read and negotiated dialogue aloud, and then translated it into a script format. They revised their stories as they embodied them. Students then shifted to performance drama after finalizing an agreed-upon script to share with an audience. We decided that the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students would work with transmediating their flash fiction stories through puppetry, and the 6<sup>th</sup> grade students would work in drama performance. Since Mr. D only had four students in his 8<sup>th</sup> grade elective, he wanted these students to work on something more individualized, while also being able to collaborate as one group. He spent time at an acting camp in England the prior summer, and they taught puppetry as one of the seminars. Mr. D thought this would be the perfect opportunity to use puppetry as a new medium with his students. As the researcher, I went along with Mr. D’s excitement and eagerness to begin a new curriculum. I thought that puppetry could also include embodiment, since the actors needed to use the puppet through their personal actions and emotions, making the puppet come “alive.”

### **Data collection**

The purpose of data collection for a naturalistic inquiry study is to construct reality that is compatible with the natural setting under observation (Erlandson et al., 1993). The following data were collected daily over six weeks: 16 students’ individual drafts on Google Docs; 9 groups’ shared drafts on Google Docs; students’ thoughts on costumes, set design, and music for their performances on Google Docs; over 100 photographs of students’ rehearsals; 25 videos of students’ rehearsals (including feedback from peers); performance day videos in front of an audience; over 40 audiotaped transcriptions; 16 students’ reflections; daily field observations over six weeks; email correspondences and lesson planning with Mr. D; and reflective/memo journal.

Additionally, I paid careful attention to any concerns regarding the fact that I acted as both the teacher and researcher in this international setting and followed guidelines to ensure that students did not feel pressured or obligated to participate as well as remain in the study for the entire duration of it. I also ensured that their decision to participate did not affect their grade. Mr. D explained to students that regardless of participation in the study, the class would center on flash fiction writing, revising, and performance for the next six weeks, but that choosing not to participate meant that I would not be able to use their work for data collection.

### Data analysis

Ongoing data analysis informed the study. More specifically, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), “Data analysis must begin with the very first data collection, in order to facilitate the emergent design, grounding of theory, and emergent structure of later data collection phases” (p. 242). Naturalistic inquiry notes that triangulation of the data will assist the researcher in creating categories in order to represent data. These categories will change over time and allow the researcher to develop a working hypothesis.

Data analysis consisted of the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 2009) to identify participants’ experiences, thinking and understanding about revision, and insights about transmediation via drama. Multiple measures consisting of audiotape, videotape, interviews, written reflections, and observations offered varied perspectives, which through analysis, could be linked together through coding categories. Through coding of these individual data, I sought out quotes to verify and be used as samples for each emerging category, which were inserted into a Word document as a running list of examples. Through this initial coding, I noticed and named what

students seemed to be describing in terms of transmediation. Then, I began to compare these lists for similar noticings. Selective coding integrated categories under larger emerging themes, such as *embodied characterization* and *visualization of story* leading to the findings below.

I took pictures of students “playing” in their stories with my camera. This allowed me to “pause” live action while also focusing on the embodied sign systems Wilson (2003) identified as focal points: facial expression, hand gestures, body posture, and individual student’s positioning among peers. I also videotaped students rehearsing and working through their scriptwriting. Audiotaped interviews of students were also conducted throughout the study. Students performed their “in-progress” pieces in front of an audience of their peers as well as younger elementary students in the school, which were videotaped. According to Edmiston (2014), performing is an essential part of acting because without it, “a person’s ideas cannot be crystalized and shared with a group or carried into possible action” (p. 47). After their performances, Mr. D asked students to reflect on their overall experience within this unit and review their videotaped performances and then upload their thoughts to their classroom blog.

As an additional way to analyze data, I borrowed Whitmore’s (2015), Semiotic Photo Response Protocol (SPRP) (also see Chisholm & Whitmore, 2016), and Wilson’s (2003) four focal points of study (facial expression, hands, body posture, and children’s positioning of themselves relative to others) in photographs I took relating to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. Because 8<sup>th</sup> grade students were using puppets, I centered this part of data analysis only on 6<sup>th</sup> graders embodying their stories. For data analysis here, I wanted to eliminate verbal data and focus on the visual and embodied sign systems of the students instead. In particular, I focused on



students' emotions, exploratory and expressive body movement, and risk-taking they engaged in with their peers during rehearsals. Emotions such as anger and fear shown later in the article were coded through physical embodiments based on students' faces, hands, and location of positioning in the frame in relation to their peers in the photos. I also asked myself, who or what is being depicted in this scene? I labeled each photo (out of 103 photos) with a number and recorded my thoughts and reactions in a Word document underneath each number.

### Findings

This section shares findings based on the two research questions, 1) *How does drama stimulate revision in writing?* and 2) *How do students describe their experience with drama in the writing process?*

#### How Drama Supports Students' Writing

This section describes the results of the first research question by focusing on ways drama provided students support in their writing and revisions. Findings include how students described the overall process of transmediating their writing into dramatic performances and puppetry, how acting out their writing stimulated additional ideas for their stories, and how some students had concerns and difficulty in translating their flash fiction pieces from narrative to script format.

#### Writing Process

In the 6th grade class, students began taking their flash fiction pieces and sharing them in small writing workshop groups. These group members transformed into their acting troupes and were tasked with either selecting one story to move forward in dramatizing it, or they could combine elements of all of their stories into a new drama performance piece. Out of seven groups, four chose to weave together their stories, while three groups

selected one flash piece to present. For example, Natalia's group found a way to integrate all three stories into one because all three settings took place in a school. Natalia explained how they thought about this connection below:

I'm going to add our stories, like his (Victor's) character is going to have a crush on Gabby, my character, and he comes to the lunch table and they start talking and Rhone's robot is going to be the new girl in my story.

Because there were only four students in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade class, each student could perform his/her puppetry with the assistance of their peers. Therefore, they had to share their ideas and visions with one another in order to assist in the puppetry movements.

Marta describes her process with puppetry below:

The creative process in my opinion was very interesting. First, I was able to come up with a completely unique idea for a flash fiction piece. After that I turned it into a script that then was used in making the final performance. As I was thinking about the script and writing it, I also started thinking about how and what I wanted my set to be and look.

Olenka, a 6th grader, discussed how collaborating with her group was a "long process" which required deleting scenes in their combined piece in order to "make it work." She also mentioned the need for multiple revisions. She said, "I ended up having like, seven drafts. Each of these was made better until the last one, the best one!" Olenka also discusses the importance of dialogue writing regarding drama stating, "I wanted the characters to be shown by good lines." Another student discussed how rehearsing her story and how students improvised

some lines helped her add ideas to her script. She stated,

When one of my peers really improvised at the first couple of rehearsals, I gave them some advice to stop improvising and follow the script, because it made the other people lose our lines when he improvised. But, I soon after that realized that this person's improvising was great and that I should add some of it into the script, the whole time it was work in progress.

Another example of process writing is shown below with an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student, Otto, who was trying to think through moving his flash piece into script format, especially in regard to movement and stage directions for his puppet. He was brainstorming aloud in writer's workshop time, and his three peers were assisting him in setting the scene in his script as his peer types verbally-shared ideas for him as he moved around the room with his puppet, enacting his story:

Mr. D: Wait, hold on. Don't go too fast. This scene, what we're doing here, guys, it isn't gonna be the world's most exciting. It's about the subtlety. It's about using the puppets to create a lifelike moment. Right? So. What's Joe gonna do when he hears that creak?

Otto: So he'll act surpri -

Marta: Sit up.

Otto: He'll sit up on the bed. Then he might want to get up.

Mr. D: Maybe, maybe he brushes his hair off, rubs his face a little.

Marta: He's not asleep, so. . .

Mr. D: Oh, he's not asleep. Okay.

Marta: And he gets out of bed, so he sits up on the bed and gets up.

Otto: Yeah, and walks out, opens the door.

Marta: Walks out of his room -

Mr. D: So meanwhile Steve has made his way to the door, though, right?

Otto: Yes. Steve is on his way to the door.

Marta: And Joe walks out the door.

Otto: Yeah.

Mr. D: Okay, go ahead on the floor, Dmitri. You guys can use the puppet, just play with it.

Marta: Maybe there's more room over there (points).

Mr. D: Yeah, let's move over there.

Dmitri: Maybe he stops breathing, act like uh. . .

Marta: So what's going on? So what I've got now (reading computer screen) is they're all in their own rooms, Steve crosses the floor, the floor creaks, Steve freezes, Joe sits up on the bed, and gets up, goes to the door, Steve is by the door.

Mr. D (to Marta): Okay, so help them out. Follow the story.

Otto: Okay, he steps on the - stops on the. . . Keep on going. . . No, he looks around. No, he doesn't really. . . he like stops breathing.

Dmitri: He hears something, and everything stops. And he freezes, looks around. . .

Mr. D: Right, cuz in the moment you're just like - everything freezes and you're like gasp. It's like you said. Everything freezes, make sure - okay, it's cool, it's cool. Continue on.

Otto: Okay.

Dmitri: Where's his front and where's his back?

Otto: (Smacks one side of puppet) Front. (Smacks other side of puppet) Back. It doesn't matter. It's the same.

Dmitri: Okay.

Mr. D: Then what happens?

This event signifies the empowering nature of slowing down the writing process and brainstorming with his peers. By taking a "moment", a passage of Otto's flash fiction piece, and deconstructing it through play-by-play movement, Otto and his peers were able to visualize how the scene should look on stage and thus be written in script context. For example, they emphasized sounds, like the creaking of the floorboard as well as gestures, such as how the character should act and feel. This process of writing, paired with transmediating the movement of the puppet during brainstorming discussion, stimulated Otto's thinking about how to translate content from narrative to script.

I also asked 6<sup>th</sup> grade students to share their writing process with the class one day, and Yun's videotape

showed her thinking and talking about her writing actions as the split-screen idea with her flash story on the left column and then her script on the right side. She shared that she started with turning any dialogue in her story into character's lines and then she would fill in stage directions, including acting description in between the dialogue later. She stated in the videotaping of her thought process,

Well, because the first sentence I started with is . . . so it slithers onto the stage and stares at Kathy. And then I looked at the dialogue and the first dialogue was, 'Excuse me is it okay if I sit here?' so I changed that to a script and then since I couldn't really like write the whole part over here [highlights description of Kathy on screen on left column], that whole part, I just liked I added the word 'sarcastically' to like show Kathy wasn't like, happy about it, so yeah.

Many students liked her thought process, and Yun started a split-screen trend! Below is an example of Yun's story moved to script (see Figure 1).

Story	Script
<p>It slithered onto the chair across from me. My goosebumps rose. It's purple skin was oozing with green fluorescent liquid. Its big black eyeball stared at me. The stench took away my appetite. I had looked forward to my salmon and potatoes after five hours of math class. Dang.</p> <p>"Excuse me, is it okay if me sit here?" it purred. Its voice made me gag. Its breath could overpower a whole bottle of Chanel number 5. I decided to call it Oozy.</p> <p>"Of course, I don't mind. Where did you come from? Hell?" I questioned, exaggerating the <i>of course</i>. Oozy smiled. I frowned. Oozy smile looked like the mouth of a mess up orge.</p> <p>"You very nice! You smart! Me is from Hell. Me lucky day, me find friend and me can copy test answers from friend because friend is smart!" the strange creature from Hell replied.</p> <p>"How exactly would you copy me?" I snickered. The strange creature from Hell looked at me as if the squishy thing inside my skull suddenly disappeared.</p>	<p><i>*Curtain opens*</i>  <i>(Two cafeteria chairs and a table in center stage with bright white lights. Cathy comes on stage from the right with food and sits on the right side. Pulls out phone and starts eating her food)</i></p> <p><i>(Monster "slithers" onto the stage and stares at Cathy)</i>  <i>(Monster walks towards Cathy hesitantly)</i></p> <p><b>Monster:</b> Excuse me, is it okay if me sit here?  <i>(high squealing voice)</i></p> <p><b>Cathy:</b> I totally don't mind. Where are you from anyways? Nightmares? <i>(sarcastically and then puts phone in)</i></p> <p><i>(Monster walks over and sits down. Cathy gags and waves her hand over her nose and makes face)</i></p> <p><b>Monster:</b> You quite right! Me is from nightmareland! How you guess? <i>(grinning)</i></p> <p><b>Cathy:</b> I don't know? <i>(sarcastically)</i></p>

Figure 1. Screen shot of Yun's story and script.

### **Moving from Story to Script Stimulated Ideas for Revision**

Translating their flash pieces into script format and then acting them out assisted students in many forms of revision, from adding description and details in order to assisting in set design to new dialogue. For example, Pascal, a 6<sup>th</sup> grader, stated, “I’m changing a lot of things in my story to make it a script to make sure when people perform it, they’ll know what’s going on so there will be little need for clarification inside my story.” He elaborated that when a peer read his script, the peer said he was not being specific with his setting and didn’t know how to visualize the scenes.

Other students mentioned visualization in writing. For example, Yashma noted that she was adding a new scene in her script that wasn’t in her story regarding a stabbing scene of a sword in the main character’s chest. She said, “It’s kind of like a movie. I wanted it to feel like a movie.” Olenka also noted how to visualize when writing, “I’m trying to see it in my head.” Additionally, Yun said, “I already have my story so I can picture it in my mind, so I can picture how I want it to go.” Fernando noted, “I don’t want to leave description out in the script, because it would make it very plain and dull. So I decided to add a narrator to give that description to make the play a little more rich, and I added some dialogue too, because plays need dialogue.”

The 8<sup>th</sup> graders also discussed visualization as a key part of transmediating. Otto noted, “I need to add stage directions to actually show what’s going on on stage, because the written version, it can be more interpretive. But in acting, it’s shown.” Dmitri agreed, “I’m adding all the physical factors of movement. It’s very weird, compared to when you have a full story that’s written in detail. You’ve got the details, he’s yelling, he’s powerful, right? But then you have to convert it to visual, cuz you can’t

just say he was walking and clanging. In a puppet play you actually have to show it.” Below, Marta described how she’s thinking about the visualization of her puppet show as she’s converting her story to script format,

And then she has her little book in her hand. The puppet has a little notebook or something in its hand. And then . . . Um . . . There’s action and then I think it should go all completely dark for a moment. And then the bus would come. And the audience would see a real human . . . I think, would be cool. To have just a real human sitting on the bus and someone tapping on his should and saying, “Hey, you’d better get off.” I think that would be kind of cool. Now that I think of it.

Marta’s thought process shown above reveals how she moved from thinking about her piece as a writer to more from the lens of an audience member. The way the audience sees and experiences her character has become another component to her script writing and revising.

### **Acting Stimulated Ideas for Revision**

Students found that they were able to add new emotions to their scripts after rehearsing it with each other. For example, Egor, a 6<sup>th</sup> grader, stated, “We added some new stuff. Before we were making it scary but then we realized that when we’re going to present it, we could make it funny, like what we were doing during rehearsing was not in the script, like when I came out as the monster, they [group members] got really scared.” Yashma agreed, “Yeah, when we were rehearsing, he did that and I didn’t know that was going to happen and I really got scared, for real, so I thought we should add that into our script.” Mateo, another member of the acting troupe, reminded them, “Yeah, then we added the

part about me being tired. That wasn't in the script. We're going to add more for the Jake character, where they stay more time talking to him to get some laughs."

Olenka's group discussed similar aspects of including new details based on working through the script in action. Olenka noted, "I saw how like Pascal was acting on stage and I liked how rude his character was that he made, and we didn't really put any stage directions for him, so I wanted to add what kind of person he really was in our script." Additionally, this group noticed that sometimes what was on paper did not fit with the stage. For example, Gleb stated in his script, "the part where I'm downstairs and my brother's upstairs, it didn't really work that well. Because I have to yell up to him on stage, so it doesn't work. Instead, now in the script we're going to change it to have both of us playing video games downstairs the whole time." Some students also realized stage directions can be misinterpreted by actors, which they revised after peers conducted initial practice performances with their scripts. Pascal noted, "You have to be very specific about what you want and how you want it done, and what's going to happen after that." Some students also had to lengthen their scripts when they realized their performance might initially be less than one minute. Mateo explained,

It was very short and took about a minute to act it all out, so that's why I started thinking I could make my story more interesting and make it longer by him talking to himself, because when you're in the desert, you usually complain to yourself.

Students also found that acting their scripts in front of their peers provided ideas to embellish parts in order to receive laughter from the audience, since they were "playing for the audience". For example, Natalia's group noted that they "got a lot of laughs

from the audience." Viktor had come out and acted like the "idiot person," which was not part of the script. Viktor went to the lunch lady for pudding three times and still couldn't get the order right. Natalia agreed they should add that part to the story because they got "so much laughs from that part." Yun's group worked with the idea of having a monster visit a student in school who can read minds, and Marrok's roleplaying of the monster won over the crowd, and they realized they needed to include more scenes for Marrok to embellish his role, because that made his peers laugh. See Figure 2 below for Marrok's "Monsterness".

### Lost in Translation

Students described some challenges associated with moving from flash fiction to script. Specifically, many commented on how script formatting lost their flash story's power. For example, Olenka stated, "I kind of regret like getting rid of everything. I can't really tell my story because I'm going to have to rely on all of the acting. I don't have as much detail in it as I wish I could have as like I do in my story, so that's my regret." Marta agreed, "I like my flash story better because it has more details and I can express my writing better within that story." However, Otto disagreed, arguing that his script had more details than his flash piece, but it is difficult to act it out with a puppet. Students also commented on the difficulty of representing voice



Figure 2. Marrok as Monster during rehearsing



and facial expressions into the script, that they, as the authors, knew how it should sound, but they had to rely on the actors to provide their interpretations oftentimes, because they were not included in the scripts. For example, Olenka recognized, “I’m trying to see how it would sound and add as much helpful tips to the actor as I can that would like suggest how they have to act it out or say it, because I do think some of my dialogue speaks for the actions.”

### **Students’ Experiences with Drama as Part of the Writing Process**

This next section describes the results of the second research question by focusing on students’ overall experiences with drama as a part of the writing process. Findings include how students embodied their stories, how aesthetics played a role in transmediation, and how students discussed group collaboration in drama and writing.

#### **Becoming the Story**

Students working through their stories via acting embodied their writing. They used phrases like “becoming the character” and “feeling the character’s emotions”. Students were able to look at their characters’ motives and feelings in deeper ways. For example, Olenka talked about getting to know her character through embodying the character’s action. She said, “I was able to know my character, but not from the script but from the action I was doing.” Olenka also describes an energy around the emotions of the character she portrayed. In one skit, she played a mother whose son lost his dog. She said, “I cried for his loss, and this made me become his mother and it made me feel an actual loss in my heart.” Olenka also mentioned body language and facial expressions to help her become her characters. She said, “I could show annoyance by my facial expressions and my body language, and

overall I could feel myself in those pieces becoming someone else. I was becoming an actor. I was acting!”

Other students expressed embodiment after reflecting on their experience. Yun stated, “When my character is supposed to be sad, I was sad. When Cathy was supposed to be disgusted, I was disgusted.” Gleb mentioned after reviewing his videotape of his performance, “I knew I had to act like an eight-year-old kid, so I brought back all my memories of how I was as a little kid. You can really tell that I’m a little child who is really curious.” Yashma also discussed maintaining character during their scenes. “In the performance, I was always the girl that wanted to investigate everything and was always complaining with Jonathan [character].” Pascal also reflected on maintaining his abusive father character in one of his plays. He reflected, “I played an abusive father and felt like I portrayed the character in a comical way. I had to change my body language to convey that something about me was off the moment the audience saw my character. I also had to change my voice a lot to convey that I was angry all the time and had no manners.” Pascal also portrayed a monster in another skit and discussed how he changed his gestures. He said, “I had my back hunched over, an angry face, and grunted a lot. The purpose of the hunched over back was so that the audience could immediately figure out that something about my character was off.” Olenka mentioned changing oneself to become the character, which was difficult for her sometimes. She admitted, “The hardest part for me in acting is you have to change aspects of yourself when you’re becoming the character to make it realistic.” Some students mentioned being able to become a new identity, and they noticed how their peers differed in personality when acting. Sophia discussed, “I like making people laugh and being able to come on stage and be a different person and



Figure 3. Rehearsal scene of husband/wife

be able to . . . I don't know . . . to be open and try out new things on stage." Jerzy commented during a feedback session after rehearsals, "I liked how you all were different characters and unique, and you were all out of your, I guess, normal personalities?" Mateo commented, "I like to be an action character, like an agent or guard and be opposite of serious, like I usually am."

A couple of students mentioned the use of costumes and makeup to allow them to feel more like the character. For example, Sophia talked about the semiotic representations of characters through costume use. She said,

We found a dress for me that looked to us like a 'Mom' dress. John's character was a rich child, so we found a vest with what looked like diamonds and a hat a jewelry that looked expensive. I also picked out handcuffs, a fake gun, a police hat, and police officer badge for my police officer role. These props and costumes really helped sell my characters to the audience.

Olenka also talked about the importance of using external props to bring characters to life for the audience. She reflected, "I knew it'd be helpful if there were costumes and makeup. I thoughtfully chose them to match the characters, and the

makeup and costumes brought color to the characters, which were very important."

Overall, students used their bodies to make meaning of their characters and the story. Reviewing the photographs taken throughout rehearsals, I focused on facial expressions, hands, body postures, and how students positioned themselves around others in their group. The four focal points collectively showed students intentions, beliefs, emotions, and believable relationships to become their stories. For example, the image below (see Figure 3) depicts two students engaged in an argument in one scene. They portraying a fight between a husband and a wife, and the husband character portrayed his frustration with his body posture (e.g., legs spread with tension in his legs, hands out as "giving up" gesture, shrugging his shoulders, and eyes focused directly on his wife). The wife character displayed her argument and frustration by pulling her hair out of stress, neck extended, leaning-in to her husband, eyes locked, yet their bodies were purposefully distant due to the argumentative nature of the communication.

Another example of embodiment of characters (see Figure 4) was found within Yun's group portraying a scene in which the monster (see Marrok on far left in hoodie) visited Yun (far right falling to her knees) at school, and she pleaded with her teacher (not in the frame) to believe her that he was a monster and not just some new kid at school. Her best friend (center stage) was in disbelief at the situation. Noticing the pleading body stance of Yun on her knees, the monster's hunched back was larger than life character with his arms extended. His stare aimed directly at Yun, and the friend's raised arms in sheer disbelief, gazing at the audience as in saying, "Can you believe this?" This group in particular noted how rehearsing as their characters gave them more ideas to add to the script, regarding plot, dialogue, and scene staging.



Figure 4. Rehearsal scene of monster visiting Yun's school day.

### Aesthetics

I use the term *aesthetics* to describe how students engaged in art performance, specifically when they imagined, created, and performed works of art. This process includes visualizing settings and writing stage directions. Kendrick and McKay (2004) explained that “Aesthetic, narrative, and reflective inquiries using the arts help children attain new conceptual language to organize and express their learning, and serve as an instrument for acquiring knowledge” (p. 124). For example, students enjoyed discussing and working through the visualization aspect of setting the scene in their scripts. They wanted the aesthetics of their play productions to be as equally important as their plot for their plays. However, scene-description writing became somewhat difficult for a few groups, and Mr. D helped them tease out the settings in their stories in order to write in stage directions and scene descriptions into their scripts. Olenka felt frustrated and said, “I’m trying to see it in my head.” As one student said, “We need to go from word to visual to draw the audience in, to focus everybody’s attention on stage, and then it goes up, the curtain, and what are we gonna’ see?” Below is an excerpt of Mr. D helping students think specifically about setting the scene:

Natalia: So the curtain opens, and two cafeteria chairs and a table are in center stage with bright lights.

Mr. D: We’re in a cafeteria. Where... is this cafeteria?

Natalia: Um, on the stage.

Mr. D: I know, but what kind - is it a hospital cafeteria?

Natalia: No, it’s like a school cafeteria.

Mr. D: Okay what school? Elementary? Middle? High?

Natalia: Like our cafeteria.

Mr. D: Okay, it’s like our cafeteria. So, um a school cafeteria. Not sure yet of the age group, or maybe it’s a mix.

Natalia: it’s a mix.

Mr. D: And you’ve got two people sitting at a table?

Natalia: No, so Kathy comes out, comes on stage from the right with food and sits on the right side.

Mr. D: Okay, so you’ve got Kathy coming in with her tray and that’s how we begin. She sits down.

Natalia: And then she pulls out her phone and starts eating it.

Mr. D: She pulls out her phone and eats her phone. That’s interesting.

Natalia: Yeah. No, not eats her phone!

Mr. D: Oh, oh, not her phone, she eats the food. Oh okay. Be careful, if you pull out your phone while you’re eating, you might eat your phone by mistake.

Mr. D also helped flesh out setting the opening scene for Yun’s group below:

Yun: Okay, so it’s really dark.

Mr. D: Really dark.

Yun: And it's midnight.

Mr. D: Midnight.

Yun: Yeah. And a big bell is going to ring.

Mr. D: Okay, there's a clock, there's a clock tower. Okay. It's dark. There's a clock tower. We see the clock. We hear, we see that it's midnight. Ding . . . Dong . . . And what do we see on stage aside from that?

Yun: Um, 5 kids.

Mr. D: 5 kids. The lights kind of come up enough to reveal 5 kids. Oh, I want to know more. By having students visualize and think through how they wanted their play to look at curtain's rise, students were able to discuss with one another how to write in these gaps into their scripts. Marta noted that one of the most exciting aspects of this project was "being able to know how to think out that idea into something that is actually physical and presentable to other people." Daniela discussed the concept of time and place in setting the scene. She said, "If you have time and place, it's kind of an unspoken hook. Because it shows you, it gives you a scene and you're wondering what's going to happen next."

### Group Collaboration

There was a difference between the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students regarding group work. The 8<sup>th</sup> graders knew they needed each other and relied on each other for their puppetry to work. Their presentations were, by nature, collaborative

endeavors. Marta noted, "Without the help of my classmates, I could not have performed my piece. Together we were able to create a great show." The 6<sup>th</sup> graders agreed that their show was also enjoyable, but many students reflected on the immaturity of some group members. For example, Sophia mentioned, "Sometimes, members of my group would be playing with costumes or looking for sets and props which we didn't need for our play, and it was up to me to get them back on task." Yashma also agreed, "I made my group stay in focus. I also think I was kind of too harsh on them, but all I did worked well, and you can see that in our

performance." Pascal mentioned frustration as well at times. He said, "I was a bit angry at my group and I could have been nicer, which might have had some better teamwork for us. I had to realize that it couldn't be perfect and had to work with what I had." While students had some difficulty as mentioned above with focusing on rehearsing at times, overall, the groups worked quite well in

collaborating with their writing. They worked simultaneously on shared Google Docs for scriptwriting and feedback, and they considered each other's suggestions. For example, Jerzy noted, "I helped my group by making the script with them, and when I was acting I thought that something just doesn't fit in. So I need to tell the group to change the lines, because they just didn't fit in." Other students noted the shared feedback was received positively with their peers as well. Olenka stated, "We gave each other thoughtful feedback, always figuring out how to connect our pieces." Yun agreed, "I was just really happy about the progress we made from a small idea to a really big skit!"

**"Overall, students benefitted from the process of transmediating their writing into dramatic performances and puppetry, since they noted that acting out their writing stimulated additional ideas for their stories."**



Overall, students benefitted from the process of transmediating their writing into dramatic performances and puppetry, since they noted that acting out their writing stimulated additional ideas for their stories. However, some students had concerns and difficulty in translating their flash fiction pieces from narrative to script format, which requires different genre styles of writing, but most students valued transmediation as way to visualize and pursue new ways to see their writing.

### Discussion

Literacy should be viewed beyond conventional notions of competence and achievement. This study is significant because it focuses on an underrepresented aspect of multiliteracies (drama) when paired with writing. Therefore, this study aims to build upon writing research, but offers a new direction in how writing and revision are experienced: through embodied literacy practices. Findings suggest that transmediation via drama helped expand students' flash stories. Students perceived initial drafts in their minds, and then translated this content aesthetically through their imagination.

Transmediation moved the language in students' stories to gesture in performance to enable students to "walk around in the text" and generate new interpretations of the stories that the author(s) might not have realized initially. Furthermore, students interpreted the signs in the text (written story) by translating their sense making into gesture (acting), and then reshaped these ideas back into language (revision) when they returned to script writing. This back-and-forth viscosity between language and gesture created rich spaces for meaning making. For example, it encouraged students to process conflicts that arose in their stories, to enact how characters would handle these situations in real life. These enactments were

oftentimes impromptu playing moments, which then created dialogue students could include in their scripts that was not originally there. Also, audience's reaction provided these inclusions as well, especially when relating to some comical elements in plot as well as characters' actions. For many students, thinking in print and then perceiving it visually assisted them in transforming the original work (writing) into something new, thus allowing revision to take place at a deeper level. Students invented a connection between the two sign systems they employed (Siegel, 1995), which helped them "re-see" their writing when they returned to it. By recasting their thinking from writing to another mode of communication (drama), students developed new insights. They gained the ability to step back and examine their work differently.

Embodied literacy practices transcended language limitation for many English language learners. Engaging in drama allowed them to expand written language in a third-dimensional space, in which they were both participant and observer. Within these roles, revisions became embodied expressions in a third-dimensional aspect that a two-dimensional (writing paper) space had initially limited. English language learners experience power and potential within this space, because engaging in drama supports reasoning skills while supporting language development. It also promotes comprehension skills, practices oral language skills, and builds empathy through character enactment (Winters, 2010). As Winters (2010) noted, "multimodal discourses have the potential to empower those who struggle with written language" (p. 9).

More importantly, students had agency and ownership in all aspects of this unit: they wrote their own stories; collaborated on shared script ideas, deciding on stage directions, costumes, design of the set and dialogue; and reflected on the overall



experience. Also, they had an audience not only of their peers, but also of younger-aged audience members. They knew their stories would move from the personal to the social with an intentional purpose. As Edmiston (2014) described, “without performance a person’s ideas cannot be crystalized and shared with a group or carried into possible action” (p. 47). Here, students centered their thinking on the ways other readers (peers) would receive their texts (stories) and collaboratively form a shared understanding of the work in progress. Students were provided opportunities for reflective moments throughout the unit. The most important one is the individual aspect of analyzing self in a reflective blog after viewing their taped performances in which they examined themselves as performers, writers, and directors.

Overall, performers envisioned another student’s writing world, allowing them to move between the real world (the classroom) and the writer’s world (the flash fiction draft) as directed by the writer(s). Others’ experiences during performance in the latter world influenced and shaped the writer’s thinking and feeling of their written works. This embodied space encouraged and created new revisions that the author(s) previously did not recognize. Students viewed writing not as language-based, but as embodied, crediting successful revision to transmediation.

## Implications

Today’s educational system is mostly viewed through a verbocentric lens (Short & Kauffman, 2000). Research suggest that school systems are excluding and isolating many students whose cultural backgrounds do not emphasize language as the primary sign system for communication (Sumida

& Meyer, 2006). When students use multiple sign systems, they are able to transform labels they acquired throughout their schooling into positive identities, so that they are no longer labeled as *struggling*, but rather as *talented* and *knowledgeable* (Smagorinsky & Coppock, 1994). In order to reach all learners, initial steps are needed to change the culture of the education field today. Eisner (1997) wrote, “Schools serve children best when their programs do not narrow the kinds of meanings children know how to pursue and capture” (p. 353). A classroom that includes drama and transmediation is situated in the arts. According to

**“Integrating kinesthetic modes of embodied learning into the curriculum offers numerous benefits.”**

Wolf (2006), the arts provide cognitive work and imaginative play. As Eisner (2014) explained, “The arts make vivid the fact that neither words in their literal form nor numbers exhaust what we can know. The

limits of our language do not define the limits of our cognition” (n.p.). Wolf (2006) noted that the arts should not be tossed aside as children simply having fun, which instilled a notion that the arts does not equate with learning. On the contrary, numerous studies have revealed that the arts can increase students’ achievement, especially when integrated with academic instruction (Reilly, 2008; Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996).

Integrating kinesthetic modes of embodied learning into the curriculum offers numerous benefits. For example, students develop greater chances for learning via risk-taking. Additionally, using multiple modes encourages the classroom not only to be a safe place to take risks, but it also instills a more democratic learning environment that supports inquiry and diversity (Short, Harste, & Burke, 1996). Furthermore, a classroom environment that nurtures students’ strengths and interests will increase participation and engagement (Sidelnick & Svoboda, 2000). When literacy is rooted in multiple

sign systems and transmediation, students will no longer be passive in their learning, thus encouraging students to make deeper connections when meaning-making occurs.

### **Study Limitations**

This study used a naturalistic inquiry methodology to explore how middle school students experience embodied literacies in their drama elective and their experience with revision in writing through students' creations of performance vignettes that represent their fictional stories. The small number of participants allowed me to experience deeply the richness of the qualitative data. However, at the same time, this study cannot support generalizability of findings overall. Additional studies specifically examining transmediation within an embodied literacies lens are needed, and in particular, studying revision within the writing process using a multiliteracies framework is needed in the literacy field. Additionally, I did not study students' writing, *per se*, as English Language Learners because of my personal limitations of that field of expertise. A future study is needed to reexamine the data through the lens of research in that field.

### **Conclusion**

According to Berghoff, Egawa, Harste, and Hoonan (2000), "How we think about education affects what we do in the name of education" (p. 15). Educators must envision what the future can look like before

there is hope in creating it. Eisner (1997) argued that schooling eliminates equity-based learning by excluding multiple forms of representation. He believed that if schools implemented a curriculum centered on multiple ways of knowing and representing knowledge, a greater chance of equity in learning is possible. Teachers should think of ways that students can participate in literacy events, which do not always center writing as a response but as an opportunity for students to reconstruct and translate understanding through movement. Teachers can envision a new way of teaching revision in the writing process through literacies in the body. Eisner (2002) stated, "It is important for teachers to recognize that nonlinguistic and nonquantitative forms of representation should be a part of the programs that they design" (p. 205). When teachers value multiple sign-system use in the classroom, students raise their level of consciousness as well as create opportunities to invent new signs and metaphors to extend their thinking. As Thiel (2015) noted, these moments are "important to the development of literacies and literacy practices that are embodied and performed later in life" (pp. 47-48).

Furthermore, pairing drama with writing could assist researchers in studying revision differently. Little research addresses revision from a semiotic stance, yet it has the potential to reconsider a language-dominant approach to learning in schools, thus counteracting writing as confinement to one modality.

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