

**DESIGNING STORIES, BRIDGING SUCCESS: MULTIMODAL
DIGITAL STORYTELLING WITH AT-RISK IMMIGRANT AND
REFUGEE STUDENTS**

by

Lauren Gayle Johnson

B.A. (Hons.) Simon Fraser University, 2007

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

(Language and Literacy Education)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

August 2014

© Lauren Gayle Johnson, 2014

Abstract

This thesis presents an ethnographic, qualitative case study on a digital storytelling project with “at-risk” senior-high aged immigrant and refugee students in a Surrey School District transition program. Most of the students were of refugee background, belonging to a subpopulation of English language learners possessing distinct academic and social needs due to limited formal education and trauma. The study addresses a gap in the research on digital storytelling with refugees by investigating the pedagogical potential of a multimodal project design through which students approach composition non-sequentially according to their individual interests and intents, employing cultural, linguistic, and meaning-making resources.

Theoretical frameworks included the socio-cultural perspective of literacy, as well as the notions of multiliteracies and multimodality. Data were gathered through field notes, participant observation, informal conversations with students, semi-structured ethnographic interviews, and the collection of student artifacts and digital stories. I include in the findings both general observations, as well as detailed accounts of the composing process and digital stories of two students. Findings were determined through coding data according to modes of communication and common themes that emerged during analysis, and further organized using an adaptation of Gillian Rose’s visual methodology.

This research demonstrates how a non-sequential, multimodal digital storytelling project promoted a democratic classroom environment in which all students felt capable of communicating their knowledge and identities, according to their strengths and interests. Also, students developed a conscious awareness and enhanced their repertoires of how to use and combine different modes to communicate meaning, thus revealing complex thinking and decision-making. The project furthermore extended possibilities for students to communicate complex and abstract aspects of their identities and social worlds, including difficult knowledge. Teachers gained greater insight into the students’ identities, and the students deepened their understanding of their own strengths and accomplishments.

Preface

This thesis is the original, unpublished work of the author, Lauren Johnson. The UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board approved the fieldwork reported in this study under certificate # H13-01811.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Preface.....	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xi
List of Abbreviations	xii
Acknowledgments.....	xiii
Dedication	xiv
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Background of the Research Problem.....	1
Research Questions	4
Researcher’s Background	4
Significance of Study	5
Key Terms.....	6
Identity	6
Refugee	7
Trauma	7
Multimodality	7
Text	7
Digital Storytelling (DST)	7
Organization of Thesis	8
Chapter 2: Theoretical Frameworks and Literature Review	9
Introduction	9
A Socio-Cultural Perspective: Teacher-Student Relations of Power.....	9
Language and Literacy as Social Practice	10
Empowerment in Education.....	13
Classroom Material Adaptation	15
Community Participation	16
Transformative Pedagogy	17
Teaching Refugee Students.....	17

Classroom Material Adaptation	18
Community Participation	19
Additional Pedagogical Strategies and Educational Considerations	19
Trauma and Identity	20
Impacts of Trauma	20
Stages of Trauma Recovery	21
Multiliteracies and Multimodality	21
Multiliteracies	21
Design	23
Multimodality	24
Literature Review	25
What is an Identity Text?	26
Identity (Texts) and Investment	26
Identity Texts in the Classroom	27
What is Digital Storytelling?	28
Digital Storytelling Theory and Research on Identity and Multimodal Literacies	31
Digital Storytelling, Identity, and Transformative Pedagogy	31
Digital Storytelling and Multiliteracies Pedagogy	33
Digital Storytelling with Individuals of Refugee Background	37
Educational and Ethical Challenges to Digital Storytelling	40
Discussion	42
Chapter 3: Participants and Research Methodology	45
Introduction	45
The English Language Learner Welcome Centre	45
Recruitment	46
The Participants	48
Bridge 2 Success Students	48
Support Staff	49
Case Study Participants	50
Research Methods	51
The Classroom(s)	51

Procedure	52
Data Collection	56
Data Analysis	57
Researcher Positioning.....	57
Chapter 4: General Findings	60
Research Question 1: What is the Potential of Digital Storytelling for the Multimodal Literacy Engagement of At-Risk Immigrant and Refugee Students in a Transition Program?	60
Site of Production and Site of Image	60
Multimodal.....	60
Individual DST process.....	60
Immediate DST participation.....	61
Non-linear DST sequence	62
Linguistic	62
Writing	62
<i>L1 as a resource</i>	62
<i>Narrative editing and development</i>	63
<i>Writing practice for low print literate students</i>	63
Reading	63
<i>Reading practice for low print literate students</i>	63
<i>Reading practice through recording voiceovers</i>	63
<i>Using voice as a communicative tool</i>	65
Visual	65
Use of personal explicit images	65
Use of explicit images from Google	65
Use of implicit and/or highly meaningful images from Google	66
Use of colours	67
Audio.....	68
Songs for mood and emotional content.....	68
Audio volume control	68
Spatial	69

Experimenting with spatial design	69
Other Communication Modes	69
Engaging with digital tools	69
Site of Audience	70
Research Question 2: In What Ways Does This Digital Storytelling Project Promote	
Positive Identities for Students?	71
Site of Production and Site of Image	71
Student Identities in the Classroom	71
Teachers learn about/ take an interest in students' identities	71
Students learn about/ take an interest in other students' identities	72
Students learn about/ express own identity	73
Collaborative Work Among Students	73
Students Feel Pride and Affirmation in Their Achievements	74
Site of Audience	75
Chapter 5: Case Studies of Yaqub and Abdullahi	77
Yaqub	77
Background Information	77
Multimodal Literacy Engagement	78
Site of Production	78
Site of Image	84
Site of Audience	90
Positive Identities	91
Site of Production and Site of Image	91
Cultural identities in class	91
Collaborative work	91
Pride and affirmation in achievements	92
Site of Audience	92
Abdullahi	94
Background Information	94
Multimodal Literacy Engagement	94
Site of Production	94

Site of Image	99
Site of Audience.....	103
Positive Identities.....	103
Site of Production and Site of Image	103
Cultural identities in class.....	103
Collaborative work.....	103
Pride and affirmation in achievements.....	103
Site of Audience.....	104
Chapter 6: Discussion of the Findings	106
A Democratic Classroom: Cultural and Linguistic Identities in Learning	106
Students' Cultural, Linguistic, and Meaning-Making Resources	106
Collaboration Among Students.....	108
Democracy in Education.....	108
Developing a Repertoire of Meaning-Making Tools.....	109
Individual Modes	109
Linguistic	109
Audio.....	110
Visual	110
Explicit meanings.....	110
Implicit meanings.....	110
Multiple meanings.....	111
Use of colour	111
Spatial	111
Modes in Combination.....	111
Local Multimodal Relationships.....	111
Global Multimodal Relationships	111
Complex Thinking	112
Deciding How to Represent Their Meanings.....	113
Determining What Content to Include in Their Stories	113
Ascribing a Level of Importance to Meaningful Story Elements	113
Complex Meaning(s) in Students' Digital Stories	113

Multimodal Depictions of Their Identities	114
“Difficult Knowledge”	115
Students Learn About and Feel Pride in Themselves	115
Yaqub and Abdullahi’s Digital Stories	116
Cultural Backgrounds	117
Story Theme	117
Multimodal Engagement and Identity Transformation.....	117
Digital Storytelling, Trauma, and Identity	118
Challenges	119
Digital Storytelling: Identity Investment and Multimodal Communication	121
Chapter 7: Summary and Conclusion	122
Pedagogical Implications	123
Identity Investment in Learning.....	123
Multiliteracies in Education	123
Knowing Our Students.....	124
Limitations of the Study.....	124
Future Research.....	125
Conclusion	126
References.....	128
Appendix A: “About Me” Card	139
Appendix B: Example Interview Questions for Yaqub and Abdullahi	140
Appendix C: Example Interview Questions for Support Staff	142
Appendix D: Student Process Charts	143

List of Tables

<i>Table 1.</i> Seven elements and steps of digital storytelling	30
<i>Table 2.</i> Bridge 2 Success student participants	48
<i>Table 3.</i> Bridge 2 Success student demographics	49
<i>Table 4.</i> Digital storytelling project procedure	52
<i>Table 5.</i> Noor's script reading	64
<i>Table 6.</i> Yaqub's digital story	78
<i>Table 7.</i> Abdullahi's digital story	94

List of Figures

<i>Figure 1.</i> Societal power relations, identity negotiation, and academic achievement.....	14
<i>Figure 2.</i> Multiliteracies: Metalanguages to describe and interpret the design elements of different modes of meaning	23
<i>Figure 3.</i> Digital storytelling screening event invitation	56
<i>Figure 4.</i> Juan’s “About Me” card.....	61
<i>Figure 5.</i> Image of unhappy cook.....	66
<i>Figure 6.</i> Image of reaching hands	67
<i>Figure 7.</i> Ahmed’s “About Me” card	72
<i>Figure 8.</i> Image of war tank in Syria.....	86
<i>Figure 9.</i> Image of person lost in the desert	88
<i>Figure 10.</i> Image of “Success Kid”	90
<i>Figure 11.</i> Image of Somali boy	99
<i>Figure 12.</i> Image of Somali mechanic.....	100
<i>Figure 13.</i> Image of university	102

List of Abbreviations

B2S	Bridge 2 Success
CDS	Centre for Digital Storytelling
DST	digital storytelling
ELL	English language learner
L1	first language
L2	second or target language
MALP	Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm
NLG	New London Group
NLS	New Literacy Studies

Acknowledgments

First, I wish to extend my gratitude to Dr. Maureen Kendrick for her caring guidance, and to Drs. Margaret Early and Bonny Norton for their valuable input. I am also extremely grateful to the Welcome Centre support staff (“Ms. Mehta,” “Mr. Scott,” and “Ms. Wagner”) for kindly and warmly inviting me to conduct my research in the Bridge 2 Success classroom, and for sharing their observations and wisdom with me during our interviews. I am also grateful to all the students in this class for their enthusiasm and commitment to their digital stories, including the students I’ve called Yaqub and Abdullahi, who generously spoke with me for so long about their projects.

I could not have completed this thesis without the help and encouragement of my mom, who faithfully and carefully read and edited numerous chapters, and talked with me about the research. I am also grateful to both my parents for supporting me, believing in me, and inviting me to work at their home for extended periods of time. Also, thank you to my sister, Alise, for helping me locate images online, and to my brother-in-law Brett, for ensuring my statistics on refugees in Canada were in order. And thank you to my grandparents for praying for me every day.

I also have a number of friends to thank. Mariko, I am so grateful for your continuous support and loyalty. Jim, thank you for helping me get into the mind of a visual artist, for teaching me what it means to brainstorm in different modes, and for making the blank multiliteracies wheel. Martin, thank you for discussing with me the possibilities for students to make their own art in future digital storytelling projects, and for being a faithful friend even though I have been preoccupied with school for so long. Ron, thank you for meeting to talk about the project design, and for being so encouraging during this process. Melanie, thank you for sharing your experiences with digital storytelling with me, and reminding me that the project needs to be one that is empowering for each student. Thank you also to all of my LLED friends for their support and interest in my research.

Finally, I would like to thank Chris-Anne, who suggested I pursue literacy education one afternoon during a conversation at a bus stop.

Dedication

For my mom

Chapter 1: Introduction

Ahmed is smiling widely and his eyes are beaming with delight. “I never gave up!” He tells me enthusiastically. “I’m going to go to [Adult Education] and then graduate from college – you’ll see!” Ahmed, a student of refugee background, has just watched a digital story he made in class about his successful immigration to Canada, projected on a big screen at his place of learning for an affirming audience of classmates, parents, and staff members.

Background of the Research Problem

Pedagogies and classroom practices within Western societies should demonstrate evidence of two fundamental changes in this current age of post-industrialization and globalization: 1) the cultural and linguistic diversity of local and global communities; and 2) the various “texts” created through different (combined) modes of communication (New London Group, 2000). Instead, many students continue to learn in classrooms that emphasize a standard, page-bound English (or national language) (New London Group, 2000).

Exceptions to this can be found in educational settings in which teachers use what Cummins and Early (2011) call “identity texts” as tools in student learning. An identity text refers to a student-produced artifact within which the student invests his or her identities into the process of its creation (Cummins & Early, 2011). Through participating in Canada-wide undertakings such as the Multiliteracies Project (<http://www.multiliteracies.ca/>), teachers and researchers have demonstrated how identity text projects can effectively engage culturally and linguistically diverse students in meaning-making through different modes, while simultaneously highlighting the cultural knowledge, experiences, and linguistic talents of students and their communities. Ultimately, such projects create empowering contexts that better equip students of all socio-linguistic backgrounds with the skills and knowledge needed to participate fully and equitably in today’s society.

Of recent interest is digital storytelling (DST) (Lambert, 2013), an “identity text” in which individuals compose 2-3 minute digital films consisting of still photographs, occasionally video clips, a voice-over (i.e., narration), and a soundtrack of music or sounds, which share an aspect of the author’s identity and personal experience. Research has demonstrated how DST can be used as a powerful tool of self-representation and agency (Alrutz, 2013; Erstad & Silseth, 2008; Wales, 2012; Rolón-Dow, 2011; Reed & Hill, 2010).

Additionally, a number of studies point out how one's representation of self or intended message can be facilitated through a meaningful blend of different modes (e.g., Vinogradova, Linville, & Bickel, 2011; Scott Nixon, 2009; Hull & Nelson, 2005; Yang, 2012; Honeyford, 2013).

This study specifically investigates the pedagogical potential of DST with “at-risk” students of immigrant and refugee backgrounds, strongly focusing on refugee students. Refugee students are arguably the most “at-risk” English language learners (ELLs) in schools, forming a subpopulation of ELLs with distinct psychological, socio-emotional, and academic needs (Emert, 2013). Like many immigrant students, most refugee students need to learn English, and come from countries whose norms, values, and beliefs (reflected within classroom environments and learning paradigms) differ from those of mainstream Canadian society (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010b).

Unlike the majority of ELLs, students of refugee background have often experienced limited or interrupted formal education due to war in their home countries, encountering poverty, migration, and time in a refugee camp (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009). As a result, refugee students may have minimal or no literacy in their first language (L1) to support their acquisition of English reading and writing (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009; DeCapua & Marshall, 2010b). They may have gaps in their academic content knowledge (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010b). They may also have experienced trauma, which, in addition to causing behavioural systems, has psychological impact, including lack of identity, self-esteem, and feeling of belonging (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009). Students of refugee background tend to struggle both academically and socially in schools, and are at an increased risk of dropping out (Emert, 2014; DeCapua & Marshall, 2010a).

In 2013, 23,094 refugees came to Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2013a), and 1,438 of them were resettled in British Columbia (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2013b). From 2010-2014, there have been between 75 and 134 refugee students enrolled each year in the Surrey School District. Refugee students comprise 0.11% of students currently enrolled (information received from the Surrey School District via email upon request.) In 2012, the Surrey School District's English Language Learner (ELL) Welcome Centre began the Bridge 2 Success (B2S) program, an educational intervention program that provides specialized support for the district's most “at-risk” ELL students who

are 17-19 years old. The Welcome Centre defines “‘at-risk’ students” as “those that have come into Canada in the last 3 years who have arrived with one or more of the following barriers: Significant literacy and educational gaps; Significant social and communication barriers due to language and cultural differences; Mental and/or emotional issues as a result of trauma and/or grief” (From the B2S information sheet, prepared September 21, 2012).

The B2S program provides a safe and encouraging environment where students have access to caring teachers and staff members, multicultural and settlement workers who speak their L1, and the district resource counsellor. In a small group setting (approximately 15 students), the students learn English, develop academic content language, acquire socio-emotional skills, and receive assistance in goal-setting for the future, as well as resources to help them create social connections in their communities. Within this environment, students are able to construct positive identities and feel a sense of belonging within their school and communities, as they develop the skills to build a positive future.

There are presently very few studies that investigate the use of DST with individuals of refugee background. Similar to the aforementioned studies, scholars have argued that refugees can communicate their lives and identities through artistic expression (Sawhney, 2009) or by telling a personal story (Lenette, Cox, & Brough, 2013). Lenette et al. (2013) consider DST a narrative tool that can provide valuable information about the authors and their experiences, and furthermore help the authors gain insight into their personal strengths and abilities. In addition, researchers point out how DST can, in formal educational contexts, promote positive identities and meaningful language and literacy engagement among refugee students as students use their existing skills (e.g., storytelling) and cultural knowledge as a foundation to learning (Emert, 2013, 2014; Porter, 2013). Emert’s (2013) research also demonstrates how refugee students can express ideas in more than one mode by “translating” their text into images.

All of these researchers working with refugee populations describe a DST process in which participants collectively move through sequential “steps” that begin with writing scripts. An exception to this is Porter’s (2013) research, in which “literacy” was defined as including skills such as oral storytelling and reading images, and the students used various literacy skills to facilitate their writing (not multimodality). The gap in this research, then, is on the pedagogical potential of a multimodal DST project in which students approach

composition non-sequentially, according to their individual strengths and interests. What effect does extending students' "existing skills" to include their multimodal meaning-making resources have on their engagement with DST? What is the potential for students to gain awareness and control of the different modes to convey meaning? Also, how does a non-sequential, multimodal approach to DST facilitate refugee students' meaningful expression of their identities and (complex) experiences, as well as further a deeper understanding of their own strengths and accomplishments?

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate how a small group of immigrant and refugee ELLs in a culturally respectful and inclusive school district transition program meaningfully used different modes of communication in a DST project, and what effect this project had on the students' identities. Specifically, my research questions were:

1. What is the potential of digital storytelling for the multimodal literacy engagement of at-risk immigrant and refugee students in a transition program?
2. In what ways does this digital storytelling project promote positive identities for students?

Researcher's Background

I have been working for the past ten years as an English language teacher for multicultural students of all ages in Canada and overseas. This has largely consisted of teaching in English language schools for international or immigrant students. It has also included volunteering for a couple of months at a refugee camp in Palestine where I taught an English language and literacy class to children. Many of these children had experienced gaps in their formal education due to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which often unfolds within the confines of the refugee camp. Because my previous students had all had a (relatively) high-level of literacy in their heritage language, teaching in this context required a pedagogical approach that was unfamiliar to me. I wondered, how was I to teach English to these school-aged children, some of whom continued to struggle with Arabic literacy?

The reason I made this trip to Palestine was because I had decided to complete a Master of Arts (MA) degree in Language and Literacy Education with a focus on refugee students. I was interested in learning about the role of literacy education in the restoration and enrichment of countries in a state of post-conflict recovery. My original plan had been to

carry out my research overseas. However, while completing the coursework for my MA, I began to think more about how to teach language and literacy to the many refugee students who had received a limited formal education prior to being resettled in Canada. Similar to the Palestinian children, these students have often spent time in a refugee camp or place of temporary residence, which affects their acquisition of school-based knowledge. Refugee students in Canada, however, require English language and literacy skills, and now live in a culturally diverse society as a member of a “non-mainstream” minority group.

In the fall of 2012, I began serving as an executive member of a UBC committee that is involved in global education initiatives. During the 2013-2014 school year, my position was that of Student Support Coordinator for refugee students who have received scholarships to complete undergraduate degrees at UBC. This position required me to support these students throughout the year as they transitioned from living in a refugee camp to living and studying in Canada. Interacting with these students particularly heightened my awareness of the sensitivities that surround refugees’ sharing their personal stories, as well as the important issue of how audiences may receive these stories.

As well, in the spring of 2013, I volunteered for several months in the Welcome Centre’s B2S class to help with a DST project. I had made contact with the classroom teacher following his presentation on teaching refugee students at an ESL PSA conference. This opportunity provided me with some experience teaching refugee students within a Canadian school context, as well as the chance to observe the potential for multimodal literacy engagement for refugee students through DST.

Significance of Study

Teachers’ assumptions, attitudes, and expectations of their culturally and linguistically diverse students influence teacher-student classroom interactions, which can positively or negatively impact the students’ conceptions of self and engagement with school (Cummins, 1996). Students of refugee background are particularly vulnerable to adverse judgments; research reveals how teachers often perceive refugee students as unintelligent, learning disabled, “preliterate,” “rural,” or “clannish” (McBrien, 2005).

More recently, studies have shown how identity text production can challenge the devaluation of linguistically and culturally diverse students’ identities. Through interacting with students in ways that communicate respect for and affirmation of their identities – and

using their cultural and linguistic knowledge, skills, and experiences as springboards to their school learning (Cummins, 1996, 2003; Street, 1997; Delpit, 2006) – teachers have empowered students with the skills, motivation, and confidence for academic and social success (Cummins, 1996, 2003).

This study demonstrates how welcoming and affirming the cultural, linguistic, and meaning-making resources of “at-risk” ELL students in a DST project can promote a democratic classroom environment in which all students, regardless of language or academic skills, feel capable of communicating their knowledge and identities. In addition, through a multimodal focus, students can develop a conscious awareness and increase their capabilities of how to use and combine different modes to communicate meaning, according to their interests and intents, therefore better preparing them to navigate 21st Century communicational demands. Also, a non-sequential, multimodal approach to DST can extend the possibilities for students to make visible more complex and abstract aspects of their identities and social worlds, as well as produce an awareness within them of their own strengths and accomplishments through engaging with the cognitive and affective affordances of different modes.

Research implications of this study are most beneficial for those working with transition programs for “at-risk” ELLs, including those with no or limited formal schooling.

Key Terms

For the purpose of this study, I will be using the words/ phrases “identity,” “refugee,” “trauma,” “multimodality,” “text,” and “digital storytelling” as follows:

Identity

I use the term “identity” in the way Norton (2000) has defined it in her work – that is, “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that person is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (p. 5). Drawing upon work in poststructuralism, Norton (2000) views identity as multiple, contradictory, and changing over time and space. She argues that identities depend upon contexts, explaining that the identity one assumes within a particular social interaction is often strongly influenced by greater societal power structures.

Refugee

The Canadian Council for Refugees (n.d.) defines a “refugee” as “ a person who is forced to flee from persecution.” I use the term “refugee” with full understanding that an individuals’ refugee status is but one component of their multifaceted identities.

Trauma

The Welcome Centre district resource counsellor provided me with the following definition of trauma: “Traumatization refers to extreme, painful experiences which are so difficult to cope with that they are likely to result in psychological dysfunction both in the short and in the long term” (van der Veer, 1999, p. 4). The Welcome Centre follows Judith Herman’s (1992) model of the stages of trauma recovery to support their students in building resilience. This includes 1) “Safety,” 2) “Remembrance and mourning,” and “Reconnection.”

Multimodality

Multimodality refers to the different modes of meaning-making – “Linguistic,” “Visual,” “Audio,” “Gestural,” and “Spatial” – that students need to understand how to use and combine (i.e., “Multimodal” design) in order to navigate 21st Century communication (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 7). Kress (2000) argues that different modes have distinct potentials and limitations for communication, and that an individual’s meaning-making is logical, intentional, and shaped by his or her personal interests.

Text

In this paper, a “text” refers to an artifact created in one or more of the communicative modes, the meaning of which is influenced by the maker’s interests and intentions, and the affordance(s) of the mode(s) (Kress, 1997). Texts are “read,” or interpreted, through the lens of one’s interests, experiences, and knowledge (Kress, 1997).

Digital Storytelling (DST)

This paper follows the “classic” definition of DST that Joe Lambert (2013) and colleagues at the Centre for Digital Storytelling developed at U.C. Berkeley in the 1990s. Digital stories are 2-3 minutes in length, comprised of photographs and sometimes video clips, a voice-over, and often a soundtrack (music or ambient sounds), and narrate an aspect of the author’s life. The original intention of DST was to give marginalized people(s) a public voice through digital media tools in order to promote social change (Lambert, 2013).

Organization of Thesis

There are 7 chapters within this thesis. Chapter 2 consists of my two theoretical frameworks (the socio-cultural perspective of literacy, and multiliteracies and multimodality). The first section of this chapter includes information on teaching students of refugee background, and on how trauma affects conceptions of self. This chapter also contains a review of pertinent literature on DST. In Chapter 3, I describe my research participants and methodology. I describe the Welcome Centre, the participants (including recruitment), my research methods, procedure, data collection, data analysis, and research positioning. Chapter 4 presents general findings related to my research questions. In Chapter 5, I provide detailed accounts of the DST composing process and digital stories of two students. Chapter 6 contains a discussion of my findings. Finally, Chapter 7 summarizes my findings and offers pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Frameworks and Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter begins with an explanation of my two theoretical frameworks. I begin by discussing the socio-cultural perspective of literacy, with an emphasis on teacher-student relations of power. Within this framework, I explain language and literacy as social practice, and provide a description of Cummins' (1996) empowerment framework. I also include, in this section, information specifically related to teaching refugee students, as well as the impact of trauma on conceptions of self. My second theoretical framework is on the concepts of multiliteracies and multimodality, which I explain in turn. My section on multiliteracies includes an explanation of the notion of "design" in meaning-making. After this, I present a literature review. I explain the concept of "identity texts," and then describe pertinent literature on digital storytelling (DST) that focuses in particular on issues of identity and multimodal literacies. My discussion points out the potential strengths of a non-sequential, multimodal approach to DST to extend students' meaning-making capacities and enhance possibilities for students to meaningfully communicate their identities and experiences.

A Socio-Cultural Perspective: Teacher-Student Relations of Power

Educational theorists (Cummins, 1996; Delpit, 2006) have pointed out how societal power structure, in which a dominant group/individual exercises power over a subordinate group/individual it deems inferior, exerts a strong influence upon the beliefs, values, and behaviors manifested within schools. These "coercive relations of power" (Cummins, 1996) are enacted in educational structures through, for example, the development and publication of Eurocentric curriculum and assessment tools, as well as state-mandated school policies and regulations (Delpit, 1988; Cummins, 1996). Additionally, and central to this section, inequitable societal power relations are replicated in teachers' assumptions, attitudes, and expectations pertaining to culturally and linguistically diverse students and their communities (Cummins, 1996, 2003).

In schools, academic underachievement of students from culturally subordinated groups is often perceived as being attributed to the students' "intrinsic" deficits such as psychological attributes (e.g., genetic inferiority) and/or characteristics of their families and communities (e.g., language use or parental apathy) (Cummins, 2003). These assumptions can influence how teachers interact with culturally diverse students in the classroom (Heath,

2009; Cummins, 1996), and what they communicate to students about their identities and possibilities for the future (Cummins, 1996). Students, Cummins (1996) explains, “react to this discrimination along a continuum ranging from internalization of a sense of ambivalence or insecurity about their identities to rejection of, and active resistance to, dominant group values;” he maintains, “[at] both extremes, the result has frequently been alienation from schooling and mental withdrawal from academic effort” (pp.137-38).

It is the interactions between educators and their “nonmainstream” students of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds that is the focus of this section. First, I explain how such children are socialized into using language and literacy as part of a larger cultural “Discourse” that includes ways of “acting,” “thinking,” and “valuing” (Gee, 1989, p. 10). When children begin school, their teachers often judge them according to the values, behaviours, and linguistic forms of dominant “mainstream” Discourses (Heath, 2009; Delpit, 2006). I then present Cummins’ (1996, 2014) empowerment framework to explain how teachers, even while working within confining educational structures, can challenge the devaluation of culturally marginalized students’ identities through choosing to interact with students in ways that communicate respect and affirmation of their home language/dialect and culture, as well as project high expectations for their future (Cummins, 1996).

Teachers can promote the empowerment of their students through what Cummins (1996) calls “collaborative relations of power,” in which teacher-student interactions generate power for the individuals involved (p. vi). This can be accomplished in the following ways: 1) adapt curricular materials to reflect and celebrate the cultures, communities, and experiences of all students (Heath, 2009; Cummins, 1996; Delpit, 2006); 2) invite parents and community members to participate in student learning (Heath, 2009; Cummins, 1996; Delpit, 2006); and 3) establish a caring and trusting environment in which students can critically examine their identities and social experiences through transformative pedagogy (Cummins, 1996; Delpit, 2006). As Cummins (1996) maintains, “These human relationships that form the core of successful schooling determine the social and economic horizon that students see when they look beyond the school” (p. 222).

Language and Literacy as Social Practice

In the 1980’s, a number of researchers (e.g., Heath, 2009; Street, 1984; Gee, 1989) began to conceive of literacy as social practice. The central claim of their work – referred to

as “New Literacy Studies” (Street, 2006) – is that literacy is always situated within particular sociocultural contexts; that is, the uses and meanings attached to acts of reading and writing vary according to, and reinforce, the cultural norms, social practices, and power relations of a community (Street, 1997). According to this view, literacy is considered “ideological” (Street, 1984); it is rooted in people’s differing understandings of the world and, as such, “is always contested, both its meaning and its practices” (Street, 2004, p.8). Such a view is in opposition to what Street (1984) has termed the “autonomous” model of literacy, which assumes literacy involves the acquisition of “neutral” and “universal” technical skills which will independently lead to predictable, quantitatively measurable cognitive and social benefits (Street, 2004, p.8).

To emphasize the context-specific functions and meanings of the various literacies people engage in, Heath (1988) suggested the term *Literacy Event* to refer to “any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants’ interactions and their interpretive processes,” (p. 350). This includes how text is combined with speech (Heath, 1988) and/or other semiotic systems, such as numeracy (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Street (2006), in turn, proposed a distinction between *Literacy Event* and *Literacy Practice*, the latter he used to “refer to the broader cultural conception of particular ways of thinking about and doing reading and writing in cultural contexts” (p. 5); a Literacy Practice, then, takes into account the underlying values, meanings, attitudes, intentions, social relationships and conventions surrounding a Literacy Event that might not be as easily observed (Street, 1997).

Integrally related to Literacy Practices is Gee’s (1989) theory of how literacy can only be understood within the context of what he calls Discourses (with a capital D). Gee (1991) argues that a Discourse is “a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or ‘social network’” (p. 3). It is, in his words, an “identity kit” (Gee, 1989, p. 7) that instructs members of a particular Discourse community on “*saying (writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing combinations*” (Gee, 1989, p. 6, his emphasis). A Discourse, Gee (1989) argues, is something that children are *apprenticed* or *socialized* into through “scaffolded” interactions in natural settings with members of their Discourse community (p. 7).

The Discourses practiced within the social context of the school tend to be very closely related to those of mainstream society (i.e., the powerful or dominant societal group) (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1997; Delpit, 2006). When culturally and linguistically diverse children from non-mainstream communities enter school, they carry with them certain expectations for the forms, uses, and meanings attached to the spoken and written word (Heath, 1988). As such, children whose home communities do not share similar values, “rules” for living (including time and space usage), and understandings of the communicative practices, skills, knowledge, and expectations of the school can be at a severe disadvantage as compared to children from urban, middle class homes, regardless of the positive value non-mainstream families and communities place on school (Heath, 2009). Cummins (2001b) argues that children of non-mainstream communities – unprepared for the teacher-student interactions and language patterns of classrooms – are “predispose[d]...to school failure even before they come to school” (p. 660). He explains,

when students’ language, culture and experience are ignored or excluded in classroom interactions, students are immediately starting from a disadvantage. Everything they have learned about life and the world up to this point is being dismissed as irrelevant to school learning; there are few points of connection to curriculum materials or instruction and so students are expected to learn in an experiential vacuum.

(Cummins, 1996, p. 2)

This is particularly the case for children whose verbal and written interactions have been restricted to their non-mainstream communities. These children have not had the opportunity to participate in secondary institutions within the public sphere (e.g., religious or recreational facilities) that share language patterns similar to those valued in formal schooling (Heath, 1986; Gee, 1989, 1991). In other words, they have not had a chance to acquire the “dominant secondary discourses” that are used by powerful mainstream groups in society, and directly connected to the Discourses in schools (Gee, 1991, p. 9). Lack of access to mainstream secondary institutions, according to Heath (1986), is often the case for “language minorities, particularly those in low or threatened socio-economic positions, such as migrant workers, illegal aliens, or refugees” (p. 147).

Within classrooms, teachers typically bring their “mainstream” values, behaviors, and habits of using oral and written language, and, assuming them to be “natural,” evaluate

students according to them (Heath, 2009, p. 271). Delpit (2006) explains, “When a significant difference exists between the students’ culture and the school’s culture, teachers can easily misread students’ aptitudes, intent, or abilities as a result of the difference in styles of language use and interactional patterns” (p. 167). Teachers can assume these cultural differences to be the result of intrinsic deficient characteristics of the students and/or their often economically-impooverished communities, which need to be remediated for success in school to be at all possible (Delpit, 2006).

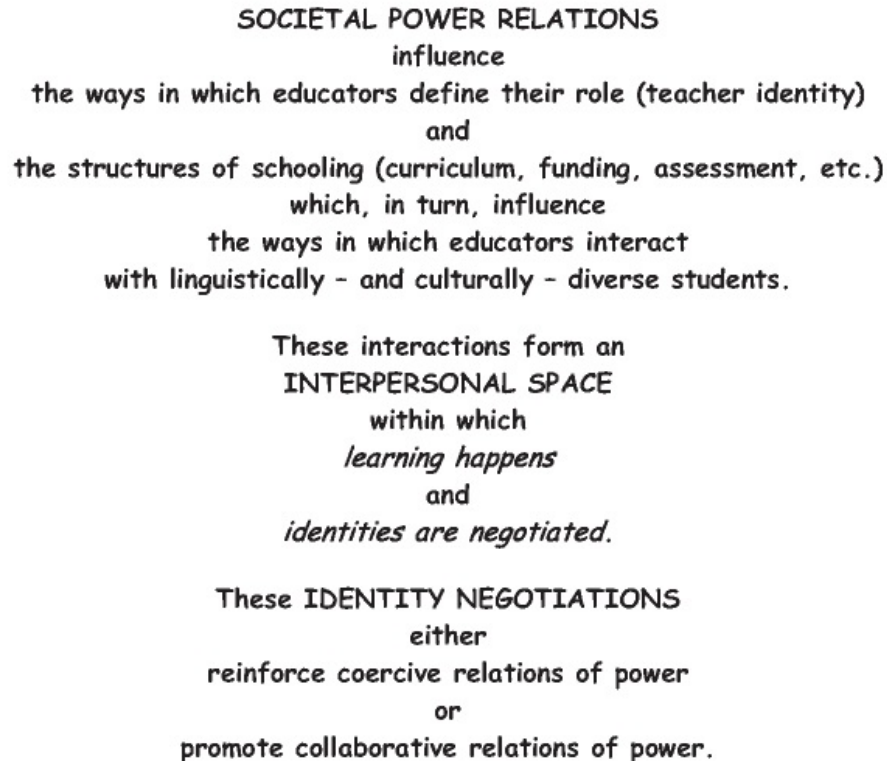
In sum, teachers can assume that children “have internalized *before* they start to school the norms of language used in academic life” (Heath, 1986, p. 148, her emphasis). Children from mainstream homes, which share a Discourse compatible with that of the school, have the opportunity to practice and build upon language and literacy skills they have *already* been developing prior to entering the classroom (Gee, 1991). In other words, they “bring with them to school linguistic and cultural capital accumulated through hundreds of thousands of occasions for practicing the skills and espousing the values the schools transmit” (Heath, 2009, pp. 367-8). On the other hand, culturally diverse students from non-mainstream homes frequently receive the message that their “language, culture, and previous experience have no place within this school, or by extension within [mainstream] society” (Cummins, 1996, p. 2). The result is that some students either internalize a feeling of inferiority, or actively resist the devaluation of their identity (Cummins, 1996). In both cases, academic withdrawal is often inevitable, sometimes leading to dropping out of school (Cummins, 1996).

Empowerment in Education

How can teachers improve the education and promote the academic and social success of their linguistically and culturally diverse students? Teachers must first acknowledge the reality of societal and educational power differentials, as well as their *own* power as a member of the mainstream dominant culture (Delpit, 1988). Teachers must also examine their attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions with respect to non-mainstream students (i.e., the poor, non-White, and speakers of different languages/dialects) (Delpit, 2006). Central to exploring one’s biases is understanding “that our view of the world is but one of many, that others see things in other ways” (Delpit, 2006, p. 133). Finally, teachers must understand that it is their direct interactions with non-mainstream students that is “the most

immediate determinant of student success or failure in school” (Cummins, 2003, p. 51). Cummins (1996, 2003, 2014) demonstrates in his empowerment framework (See Figure 1) how student (and teacher) identities are negotiated in classroom interactions, which influence students’ conception of self and attitudes towards school.

Figure 1. Societal power relations, identity negotiation, and academic achievement



Reprinted from *Managing diversity in education: Languages, policies, pedagogies* (Eds. D. Little, C. Leung, & P. Van Avermaet) (p. 14), by J. Cummins, 2014, Bristol, United Kingdom: Multilingual Matters. Adapted from *Negotiating identities: Education for empowerment in a diverse society* (p. 20), by J. Cummins, 2001, Los Angeles, CA: California Association for Bilingual Education. Copyright 2001 by California Association for Bilingual Education. Reprinted with permission.

Within this framework, educational structures and teachers’ role definitions inevitably influence their interactions with students and their communities. Through the interpersonal space established in these interactions, students acquire content knowledge while concurrently negotiating their identities. Student-teacher interactions can reinforce “coercive relations of power,” further disempowering students and contributing to their academic underachievement and/or failure. Conversely, the interactions can foster “collaborative relations of power” (i.e., empowerment) in which power is mutually generated – rather than imposed from the “top-down” – when teachers affirm students’ identities and life

possibilities. In so doing, teachers challenge coercive power structures and promote students' educational and social success (Cummins, 2003).

According to Cummins (2003), empowering students through negotiating identities in classroom interactions is just as important to school success as teaching content material. He stresses, "Only teacher-student interactions that generate maximum identity investment on the part of students, together with maximum cognitive engagement, are likely to be effective in promoting achievement" (Cummins, 2003, p. 48). Students empowered in educational contexts gain the skills, motivation, and confidence needed for academic achievement (Cummins, 1996). They participate in class activities because they know their identities are respected, and feel they have something of value to contribute. Ultimately, "They feel a sense of ownership for the learning that goes on in the classroom and a sense that they belong in the classroom learning community" (Cummins, 1996, p. 15).

Even while working within constraining school structures, educators can challenge coercive societal power relations through their expectations, assumptions, and goals for their non-mainstream students, and through choosing to have student-teacher interactions that affirm student identities and possibilities for the future (Cummins, 2003). This can be accomplished through instilling the following pedagogical strategies in the classroom:

Classroom Material Adaptation

Cummins (2001b) argues that, "Curriculum and instruction focused on empowerment, understood as the collaborative creation of power, start by acknowledging the cultural, linguistic, imaginative, and intellectual resources that children bring to school" (p. 653). This means that educators should begin their instruction by activating what students already know upon entering the classroom – including skills, language patterns, prior experiences, and understandings of the world – as the foundation upon which to build school-based skills and knowledge (Cummins, 1996, 2003; Street, 1997; Delpit, 2006). In an empowering educational context, teachers will aspire to *add* a (mainstream) language and culture to the valuable (non-mainstream) ones students possess (Cummins, 1996; Delpit, 2006). As Delpit (2006) stresses, "The point must not be to eliminate students' home languages, but rather to add other voices and discourses to their repertoires" (p. 163). Students, then, should be learning academic skills and knowledge while simultaneously developing their home language, as well as cultural skills and knowledge (Delpit, 2006; Cummins, 1996).

In *Ways with Words*, Heath (2009) recommends that teachers and their students become “ethnographers” within nonmainstream communities. In other words, they can explore the different uses and meanings of reading and writing in particular sociocultural contexts as compared to those of the school. In addition, becoming familiar with a community’s literacy practices can help teachers identify what students understand about literacy; this will assist them in knowing what they can build on when teaching dominant school literacy practices (Street, 1997).

Research indicates “the extent to which students’ language and culture are incorporated into the school program constitutes a significant predictor of academic success” (Cummins, 2001b, p. 662). Heath (2009) found that when teachers acknowledged, respected, and affirmed students’ cultural and linguistic identities and the knowledge and values of their home communities, “students improved their textbook unit test scores, standardized test results, attendance records, and attitudes toward school” (p. 340) and “self-concept” (p. 342).

Community Participation

Researchers (Heath, 2009; Cummins, 1996; Delpit, 2006) also argue that community participation is important in the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Cummins (2001b) has gone so far as to assert that “[students] from dominated communities will be empowered in the school context to the extent that the communities themselves are empowered through their interactions with the school” (p. 664). He explains, “When educators involve minority parents as partners in their children’s education, parents appear to develop a sense of efficacy that communicates itself to children, with positive academic consequences” (Cummins, 2001b, p. 664).

One way that culturally diverse parents and community members can assist with their children’s education is to help them develop their cultural, linguistic, and academic abilities (Cummins, 1996). Additionally, they can be invaluable resources in assisting educators to understand the language patterns, worldviews, and “intricacies” of particular communities, based on their own experiences (Delpit, 2006). This information can help teachers determine the most effective instruction for culturally diverse children (Delpit, 2006). In fact, Delpit (1988) has argued “that appropriate education for poor children and children of color can *only* be devised in consultation with adults who share their culture” (p. 296, my emphasis). When teachers learn about the cultures and daily lives of students from cultural groups

different than their own, they will be better equipped to identify such students' strengths, and thus avoid "teaching down" to them due to assumptions of deficit (Delpit, 2006, p. 173).

Transformative Pedagogy

Finally, teachers can empower their culturally and linguistically diverse students through transformative pedagogical practice (Cummins, 1996; Delpit, 1988). In his work, Cummins (1996) has written about the importance of "collaborative critical inquiry" as a main learning tool in classrooms (p. 157). This approach involves students critically examining the assumptions of curricular content as it relates to the social realities affecting their lives and cultural communities (Cummins, 1996). In a respectful, identity-affirming classroom environment, students can critically examine their home beliefs and experiences, as well as those of mainstream society (Cummins, 1996). In the process of identifying and critiquing power inequalities in their lives, students can discuss ways to challenge and transform inequitable power relations through social action (Cummins, 1996). Cummins (1996) argues, "the more critically literate students become, the more they generate the power to define their own identities and realities rather than being subject to the kinds of external definitions that historically have served to disempower subordinated groups" (p. 161).

To sum, the students who experience the greatest degree of school failure are those who belong to subordinate linguistic and cultural groups whose identities have historically been undervalued in schools and mainstream society (Cummins, 1996). Teachers, however, have the power to respect and affirm students' (emerging) identities and set high expectations for their learning (Cummins, 1996). Effective instruction is that which acknowledges students' knowledge, experiences, and home communities as fundamental resources for their school learning and prepares students to be active, successful members of the democratic society to which they belong (Cummins, 1996).

Teaching Refugee Students

Scholarship on teaching students of refugee background "has not kept pace with the need to understand its intricacies" (Emert, 2013, p. 355). There is, however, a growing body of school resources and scholarly articles specifically addressing pedagogical best practices to support the educational development of refugee students who have resettled in English-speaking western countries. For instance, the Calgary Board of Education (n.d.) has put

together a fantastic website containing information and resources for K-12 educators teaching refugees with limited formal schooling (see <http://teachingrefugees.com/>), which includes a literature review. In addition, the B.C. Ministry of Education (2009) has produced a guidebook that suggests classroom considerations and practices, as well as educational resources. A number of academic studies also focus on how to best support the English language and literacy development of students who have had no, little, or interrupted schooling prior to arriving in their countries of resettlement. The instructional recommendations within this literature have many parallels to those outlined in the previous section to support students of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Recommendations include adapting classroom materials for refugee learners, including community members in education, and other instructional strategies specific to refugee students with no or limited formal education.

Classroom Material Adaptation

Refugee students who have experienced gaps in their formal schooling may be unfamiliar with certain general concepts about the world (Dooley, 2009), and struggle with subject content that assumes an understanding of Western culture (Dooley, 2009; Fitzgerald, 1998; McBrien, 2005). Researchers, therefore, advise that teachers make subject content accessible to refugee students through creating links to the conceptual knowledge students have acquired through their life experiences (Dooley, 2009; McBrien, 2005; Fitzgerald, 1998). However, McBrien (2005) cautions that teachers need to exercise considerable sensitivity when drawing upon the prior knowledge and experiences of their refugee learners since “many of their past experiences include painful memories that they prefer not to make public” (p. 342).

It is particularly empowering for refugee students when teachers “aim to valorize and interrogate student voice and knowledge” (Dooley & Thangaperumal, 2011, p. 388). Focusing upon the wide range of refugee students’ existing knowledge, experiences, and interests, communicates a respect for both the child and his/her culture (Dooley, 2009; McBrien, 2005). Like Heath (2009) in *Ways with Words*, McBrien (2005) recommends that teachers conduct “ethnographic research” on the communities of their refugee students, however she advises that teachers be trained in how to “minimize or manage trauma” during their discussions with families due to the sensitive nature of their circumstances (p. 355).

Community Participation

The literature on teaching refugee students similarly stresses the importance of creating a link between schools, families, and ethnic communities. Researchers have emphasized the importance of teachers reaching out to the families of refugee students to increase parental involvement and address possible incongruences between school and family literacy practices (Hamilton, 2004; Fitzgerald, 1998; Dooley, 2006; McBrien, 2005). In addition, McBrien (2005) and Hamilton (2004) have suggested a mediator can improve communication channels between parents and teachers, as well as schools and communities. For example, McBrien (2005) explains, schools can employ adults from various ethnic communities to serve as a bridge between cultures.

Additional Pedagogical Strategies and Educational Considerations

DeCapua and Marshall (2010b) explain how students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) may enter US schools with learning paradigms (i.e., norms and expectations) that contrast with Western education's assumptions about learning (which, in turn, are based on the dominant culture's beliefs and values). The authors recommend that teachers systematically address such dissonance through an instructional model they developed called The Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm (MALP). MALP aims to facilitate the transition of SLIFE to fundamentals of the US learning paradigm by combining elements of both the SLIFE learning paradigm as well as that of the learning paradigms in US formal education. In MALP, instructors 1) accept SLIFE's conditions for learning – that is, immediate relevance and interconnectedness; 2) combine learning processes from SLIFE and US schools (shared responsibility with individual accountability, and oral transmission with written word); and 3) focus on Western-style academic (as opposed to pragmatic) learning tasks, scaffolded with language and content that is familiar to SLIFE. This includes students' L1 or English that students know, and content from students' home cultures or from earlier curricular units (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010a).

Furthermore, because of the difficult language and conceptual demands of (unfamiliar) content material, the literature on teaching refugee students emphasizes the need for teacher-directed instruction. This includes scaffolding tasks through breaking them down into manageable components, and using visuals and graphic organizers (Dooley & Thangaperumal, 2011). In addition, it involves direct instruction of the specialized language

that can pose a large barrier to student learning (Miller, 2009). DeCapua and Marshall (2010b) also report how researchers recommend small group instruction and collaborative work.

Teachers may also need to teach refugee students emergent literacy skills (e.g., print directionality, book handling, and holding a pen or pencil) because some refugee children have had no or little experience or exposure to reading and writing (Cranitch, 2010; Dooley, 2009; B.C. Ministry of Education, 2009). Fitzgerald (1998) suggests familiarizing refugee students with the functions of reading and writing through engaging them in activities that expose them to authentic reading and writing tasks.

As a final point, researchers (Dooley, 2009; Cranitch, 2010) have emphasized the importance of teaching refugee students digital literacy in addition to print-based materials. Dooley (2009) argues that a rich language and literacy curriculum “should ensure that refugees enjoy opportunities to acquire the literate practices of digital communities” (p. 10). The second theoretical framework that I discuss addresses this issue, that is, engaging students in 21st Century communication. First, though, I provide some information on trauma and notions of self. For, in addition to their cultural differences and unique educational needs, students of refugee backgrounds also struggle with the impacts of trauma.

Trauma and Identity

Impacts of Trauma

According to psychiatrist Judith Herman (1992), “The core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others” (p. 133). Trauma destroys one’s assumptions of safety and “[calls] into question” his or her relationships with others; it crushes the survivor’s sense of connection and feelings of trust (Herman, 1992, p. 51). A positive identity, Herman (1992) explains, develops and is sustained through a secure connection with caring individuals. Therefore, “[when] this connection is shattered, the traumatized person loses her basic sense of self” (Herman, 1992, p. 52). Survivors lose their self-esteem and trust in themselves. Their “damaged or deformed” faculties for autonomy, competence, and initiative are replaced with feelings of shame, doubt (of others and themselves), guilt, and inferiority (Herman, 1992, p. 133). Herman (1992) maintains that “[the] identity [survivors] have formed prior to the trauma is irrevocably destroyed” (p. 56). Moreover, she argues, “The experience of terror and disempowerment during adolescence

effectively compromises the three normal adaptive tasks of this stage of life: the formation of identity, the gradual separation from the family of origin, and the exploration of a wider social world” (Herman, 1992, p. 61).

Stages of Trauma Recovery

A survivor’s sense of self “can be rebuilt only as it was built initially, in connection with others” (Herman, 1992, p. 61). “Recovery,” Herman (1992) explains, “can take place only within the context of relationships” (p. 133). In her class book, *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), Herman outlines 3 stages of recovery (Although, she clarifies, recovery does not follow a simple, linear sequence).

Stage 1: “Safety.” It is important to establish the survivor’s physical, cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and social safety, and develop trust.

Stage 2: “Remembrance and mourning.” The survivor tells, and reconstructs, the story of the trauma. He or she shares thoughts and feelings about the experience. The survivor also mourns traumatic loss.

Stage 3: “Reconnection.” In this stage, the survivor connects more actively with the world, and sets goals to create a positive future. The survivor “must develop a new self” (Herman, 1992, p. 196). Herman (1992) explains, “Her task now is to become the person she wants to be. In the process she draws upon those aspects of herself that she most values from the time before the trauma, from the experience of the trauma itself, and from the period of recovery. Integrating all of these elements, she creates a new self, both ideally and in actuality” (p. 202). This includes recovering or discovering dreams and ambitions, and taking steps towards pursuing them. Also, having begun to regain the capacities for trust, autonomy, initiative, and competence, the survivor is ready to deepen connections with others.

Although trauma is never fully resolved, this process “is often sufficient for the survivor to turn her attention from the tasks of recovery to the tasks of ordinary life” (Herman, 1992, p. 212).

Multiliteracies and Multimodality

Multiliteracies

In September of 1994, ten academics came together in New London, New Hampshire (USA) to discuss the future direction of literacy pedagogy in the 21st Century (New London Group, 2000; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Forces such as multiculturalism, globalization, new

communications media and global labour markets have prompted radical “changes in our working lives; our public lives as citizens; and our private lives as members of different community lifeworlds” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 7). The team of scholars, who came to be known as The New London Group, maintained that the new demands precipitated by such changes meant that the very nature of what students need to learn to make meaning in today’s world needed to be revisited (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000); in other words, learning to read and write a standard, page-bound English (or national language) text is no longer sufficient to equip students of all socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds with the skills and knowledge needed to participate fully and equitably in society (New London Group, 2000). In terms of the work force, such skills not only require students to learn “the new language of work,” but also “to develop the capacity to speak up, to negotiate, and to be able to engage critically with the conditions of their working lives” (New London Group, 2000, p. 13).

The New London Group (2000) came up with the term “Multiliteracies” to expand our understanding of literacy and literacy pedagogy to include two key aspects. First, the notion of multiliteracies takes into account the various forms of “texts” in different technologies as well as communication practices (New London Group, 2000). This includes those consisting of the distinct modes of meaning-making – “Linguistic,” but also “Visual,” “Audio,” “Gestural,” and “Spatial,” which can appear together in different meaningful “Multimodal” combinations (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 7). It is therefore important that students learn how to use and understand different forms of representation to communicate meaning (New London Group, 2000). This notion will be expanded upon in the following section on multimodality.

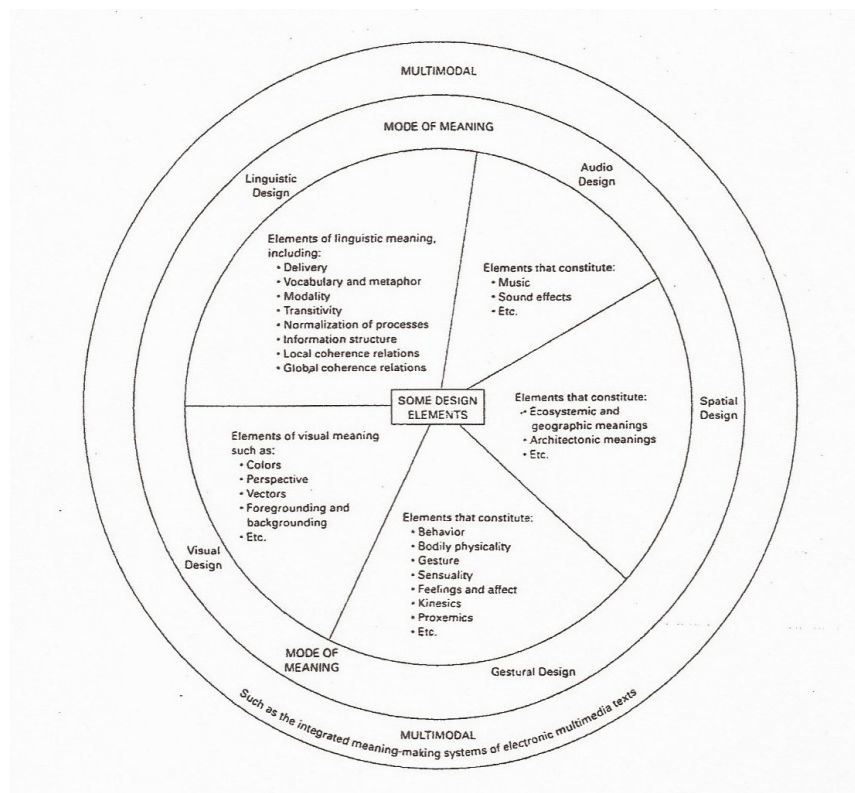
In addition, the term multiliteracies highlights the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in local and global communities (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; New London Group, 2000). People need the skills to negotiate cultural and linguistic differences in their public and private lives. As Cope & Kalantzis (2000) point out, “Effective citizenship and productive work now require that we interact effectively using multiple languages, multiple Englishes, and communication patterns that more frequently cross cultural, community, and national boundaries” (p. 6). For this reason, The New London Group (2000) stresses that educators ought to acknowledge and draw upon students’ differences, such as their identities, cultural knowledge, experiences, languages and discourses, and understandings of the world;

in so doing, educators will promote greater possibilities for societal access for *all* students.

Design

The New London Group (2000) developed the concept of “design” in meaning-making. As both noun and verb, the term design captures how “we are both inheritors of patterns and conventions of meaning, while at the same time active designers of meaning,” and, as such, “designers of social futures” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 7). There are three proposed elements in the process of designing meaning: 1) “Available Designs” refers to the cultural resources available for meaning-making (producing or consuming); 2) “Designing” involves working on/with the available resources; and 3) “The Redesigned” refers to reproducing and transforming available resources to create new meaning (New London Group, 2000).

Figure 2. Multiliteracies: Metalanguages to describe and interpret the design elements of different modes of meaning



Reprinted from “A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures,” by The New London Group, 1996, *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), p. 83. Copyright 1996 by the Harvard Educational Review. Reprinted with permission.

The New London Group (2000) argued that teachers and students need a metalanguage to foster conscious “understanding and competent control of representational forms” (p. 9). As Kress (2000) explains, “there are regularities of structure, and regularities of a ‘grammatical’ kind in different modes” (p. 202) (see Figure 2). However, these “grammars” ought to be thought of as “quite flexible and open ended” – “tool [kits]” through which we can describe and interpret the various elements of design that can (but are not required to) be used in language and the different communicational modes (New London Group, 2000, p. 24).

Multimodality

The work of Kress and colleagues (e.g., Kress, 1997, 2000, 2003; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) is primarily concerned with how people create meaning and make sense of the world. Kress (1997) explains how, in our post-industrial Information Age, it is no longer the linguistic mode alone that largely carries meaning; rather, various meaning-making modes have become increasingly prominent in communication (Kress, 2000).

In Kress’ (1997) terms, we use different modes to create a “sign,” which refers to “a combination of meaning and form” (p. 6). These signs are always, to some extent, new; Kress (1997) explains, “sameness of resources gives rise to importantly different design, to different representational, aesthetic, affective and cognitive purposes” (p. 22). This is, in part, because our signs are heavily influenced by our personal interest(s) at the time we create them. This interest, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) explain, “is a complex one, arising out of the cultural, social and psychological history of the sign-maker, and focused by the specific context in which the sign is produced” (p. 6). For this reason, Kress (1997) writes, “We never represent ‘the whole object’ but only ever certain critical aspects” (p. 11).

Furthermore, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) talk about the “affordances” of the various modes in sign-making. Each mode offers particular potentials and limitations for communication. The different modes allow us to create meaning in different ways with distinct cognitive and affective qualities (Kress, 2000). We thus select the best possible materials we have at our disposal within our particular sociocultural context (what Kress calls “what is to hand”) to most aptly represent the meanings we wish to express (Kress, 1997, p. 13). Multimodal designs, then, allow us to strategically arrange multiple elements – some perhaps more dominant – in order to best communicate what we wish to mean in a

richer, more complex way (Kress, 1997). A main point that Kress (1997) stresses is that all signs are “motivated” – that is to say, people are *deliberate* in their sign-making, even if this realization lies below consciousness. Their signs are designed with logic and intention, meant to communicate meaning.

Moreover, in addition to representing meaning, people also need to make sense of the multitude of multimodal messages surrounding them – what Kress (1997) refers to as reading signs. People must “absorb and transform them into what seems like a coherent, integrated sense” (Kress, 1997, p. 3). The meaning one attributes to the form of an object is influenced by the (cultural) experiences, knowledge, and current personal interests that he or she brings to it. In other words, reading does not involve straightforward decoding; it “is a contested activity socially” (Kress, 1997, p. 47).

Kress advises that educators adopt a multimodal approach in the classroom for several reasons. First, assuming that students intentionally and logically use different modes in meaningful ways, attending to all modes used in an object’s form – however marginal – will provide the teacher with a fuller understanding of the meaning they wish to convey. A multimodal lens will also allow teachers to better uncover their students’ interests, imaginations, and cognitive and conceptual understandings, as well as gain insight into their identities (Kress, 1997, 2000). In addition, as noted above, simply instructing students to read and write is no longer sufficient to prepare them for today’s communicational demands. Teaching students how to create meaning through using and combining the full range of semiotic modes will better equip them to navigate their way through the communicational landscape of their particular societies and workplaces (Kress, 2000).

Literature Review

In this section, I first define the term “identity text.” I explain its connection to Norton’s (2000) concept of “Investment” and its positive effects in classrooms. I then define “digital storytelling” (DST) and provide a review of literature relating, in particular, to identity and transformative pedagogy, as well as the notion of multiliteracies. I also present literature on DST studies conducted with participants of refugee background, in addition to educational and ethical challenges to DST. I close with a discussion addressing the potential strengths of a non-sequential multimodal approach to DST, through which students can extend their communication capacities and express their identities and experiences more fully.

What is an Identity Text?

An “identity text” refers to a student-produced artifact within which, under a teacher’s guidance, the student invests his or her identities into the process of its creation; the “text” “can be written, spoken, signed, visual, musical, dramatic, or combinations in multimodal form” (Cummins & Early, 2011, p. 3). Completed identity texts “[hold] a mirror up to students in which their identities are reflected back in a positive light”; for example, students see themselves as creative, capable, linguistically competent, and intelligent (Cummins & Early, 2011, p. 3). Moreover, when students share their identity texts (for instance, with classmates, friends, relatives, and/or online audiences around the world), their identities are likely to be further affirmed by the positive feedback they receive (Cummins & Early, 2011). Such feedback can also play a powerful role in motivating students’ continued participation in school and home literacy activities (Cummins & Early, 2011).

As a transformative pedagogical tool, the significance of identity texts is profound, particularly for students from marginalized socio-cultural backgrounds. Identity texts ultimately act as a powerful counter-discourse to exclusionary educational power structures wherein educators implicitly or explicitly ignore or devalue students’ cultures and strengths, viewing them according to assumed limitations and deficiencies (Cummins & Early, 2011).

Identity (Texts) and Investment

To explain the identity negotiation that occurs within the process of students’ identity text production, Cummins (2006) has referred to Norton’s (2000) work on identity and investment. Norton (2000) defines identity as “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that person is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (p. 5). Drawing upon poststructuralist theory, Norton (2000) conceives of identity as multiple, contradictory, and changing over time and space. She maintains that identities depend on contexts; the identity one assumes within a specific social interaction is often significantly influenced by greater societal power structures.

Norton’s (2000) concept of Investment explains how a language learner’s identity within a particular social context influences his or her acquisition of the target language. As Norton explains, a language learner may be psychologically motivated to learn a particular language; however, he or she may feel themselves positioned in a demeaning way within a

particular social context, and will therefore be uncomfortable, and unwilling, to participate in its language learning activities.

In Cummins' (1996) empowerment framework, he argues that teacher-student interactions create an interpersonal space where identities are negotiated and knowledge is generated. In the classroom, he argues, teachers position students positively or negatively depending on their implicit or explicit views of them. This positioning, in turn, can affect students' willingness to engage in classroom practices. When students are positioned in positive ways in teacher-student interactions, this will promote (as oppose to constrict) their cognitive engagement and identity investment, and their learning will therefore be maximized (Cummins, 2006). Identity texts, then, are created within this empowering pedagogical space (Cummins, 2006).

Identity Texts in the Classroom

In 2011, Cummins and Early edited a book entitled *Identity Texts: the collaborative creation of power in multilingual schools*, a collection of eighteen short case studies that demonstrate how educators have used identity texts in diverse educational contexts in various parts of the world. Many of the case studies included within this book come from The Multiliteracies Project (<http://www.multiliteracies.ca/>)¹, or The Engaging Literacies project, which followed it. It was during their initial observations of the Multiliteracies Project that Cummins and Early (2011) began using the term “identity texts” to describe the creative work students were producing and the positive influence it was having on their self-confidence, quality of learning, and school achievement.

Studies demonstrate how producing identity texts in the classroom may foster students' understanding of the connection between new information and their background knowledge and past experiences, as well as increase students' knowledge of particular subject areas, and accentuate subject-specific language (Cummins & Early, 2011).

In addition, studies reveal how bilingual or multilingual identity texts can enable English language learners to engage in target language (L2) literacy activities at a cognitively appropriate level by using their L1 language and literacy skills as the basis of their learning

¹ The Multiliteracies Project is a Canadian educational research study (2002-2006) overseen by Early (UBC) and Cummins (OISE/UT). Researchers partnered with classroom teachers to explore the instructional practices that become available when “literacy” is broadly defined as “multiliteracies” (New London Group, 2000).

(Cummins & Early, 2011). As students receive assistance translating their L1 to L2 or vice versa, they develop a heightened awareness of the similarities and differences between the two languages, which can promote successful L2 acquisition as students learn to perceive, and use, their L1 as a cognitive resource (Cummins & Early, 2011).

Finally, teachers describe how students have critically explored their identities through critical pedagogical activities during identity text production (Cummins & Early, 2011). Individuals – particularly those marginalized from dominant, mainstream culture – have come to critique their daily realities, explore their multiple identities, and reposition themselves as competent (Cummins & Early, 2011).

The following section defines and reviews pertinent literature on the particular kind of identity text that students produced in this study: digital stories.

What is Digital Storytelling?

“Digital storytelling” (DST) is a newer, developing field, and, accordingly, definitions “are emergent and shifting” (Wales, 2012, p. 536). Scholars have differentiated between “generic” vs. “specific” DST (McWilliam, 2008) or “digital storytelling” vs. “Digital Storytelling” (capital D and S) (Lunby, 2008b). Those who define the term more widely (e.g., Lundby, 2008a, 2008b; Drotner, 2008; Miller, 2008; Ohler, 2008) maintain that DST can refer to various forms of social narration through digital technology. Couldry (2008), for example, defines DST as “the whole range of personal stories now being told in potentially public form using digital media resources” (p. 42). In broad terms, then, DST can include the multitude of digital narratives on social networking sites such as Facebook, as well as YouTube, blogs, gaming, interactive DVDs, PowerPoint presentations, storytelling on mobile phones, and podcasts, and so on (Couldry, 2008; Lundby, 2008a, 2008b; Alrutz 2013; Drotner, 2008; Vinogradova et al., 2011).

The more narrow “specific” or “classic” definition of DST refers to the method developed by Dana Atchley, Joe Lambert and Nina Mullen, who founded the Centre for Digital Storytelling (CDS) (<http://www.storycenter.org>) at U.C. Berkeley in the 1990s. The standard form of this particular style of DST is typically a personal, 2-3 minute digital film, comprised of still photographs and occasionally video clips, a voice-over, and often a soundtrack of music or ambient sounds, which narrates an aspect of the author’s lived experience.

The CDS grew out of Lambert and colleagues' "shared vision of cultural democracy and social change" (Center for Digital Storytelling, n.d.). Lambert (2013) explains, "CDS was founded out of the legacy of anti-colonial, liberationist perspectives that carried a critique of power and the numerous ways rank is unconsciously expressed in engagements between classes, races, and gender" (p. 117). Their intention was to explore how digital media tools could give culturally marginalized and oppressed people(s) a voice through sharing stories from their own lives (Lambert, 2013; Center for Digital Storytelling, n.d.). The CDS continues to put on numerous public workshops, and has partnered with over 2000 organizations around the world to develop programs to help individuals share their stories "as effective tools for change" (Center for Digital Storytelling, n.d.).

Lambert has produced curricula detailing the CDS's approach to DST, including the *Digital Storytelling Cookbook* (2003, 2010) (a manual for the workshop process) and *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community* (2013) (a book delineating their methodology). Such resources have served as guides to numerous educators and researchers who follow the CDS's method of DST (e.g., Bull & Kajder, 2005; Kajder, 2004; Hull & Katz, 2006; Hull & James, 2007; Robin, 2008; Scott Nixon, 2009; Alrutz, 2013, Kulla-Abbott & Polman; Vinogradova et al., 2011; Erstad & Silseth, 2008; Dreon, Kerper, & Landis, 2011; Kaare & Lundby, 2008; Wales, 2012; Kearney, 2011).

In the first version of *The Digital Storytelling Cookbook*, Lambert (2003) outlined a framework of 7 fundamental elements of a good digital story based on discussions with workshop participants. The CDS team later rewrote these elements to guide storytellers along 7 metaphorical "steps" (see Table 1) (Lambert, 2010, 2013). In this new approach, story circle facilitators first help storytellers visualize their digital story as a finished piece, which can then inform the subsequent writing of their script (Lambert, 2010, 2013).

The CDS's particular style of DST has been applied in a broad range of contexts, both through partnerships with the CDS (as noted above), and independently. Lambert (2013) reports the use of DST in health and human services (including violence prevention), activism, community engagement, organizational team building, international development, journalism, urban planning, conservation and environmental justice, intergenerational dialogue, and education.

Table 1. Seven elements and steps of digital storytelling

Seven Elements of DST (Lambert, 2003)	Seven Steps of DST (Lambert, 2010, 2013)
<i>1. Point (of view)</i> The author's transformative realization(s).	<i>1. Owning your insights</i> What the author learned about him/herself.
<i>2. Dramatic question</i> Setting up a tension.	<i>2. Owning your emotions</i> The storyteller's emotional connection to the story; communicating tone to an audience.
<i>3. Emotional content</i> Truthful emotional material.	<i>3. Finding the moment</i> The moment of change.
<i>4. The gift of your voice</i> A voiceover in the storyteller's own voice.	<i>4. Seeing your story</i> Including visuals.
<i>5. The power of the soundtrack</i> Meaning and emotion through music/sound.	<i>5. Hearing your story</i> Including voiceover, sound and/or music.
<i>6. Economy</i> Reducing language use through meaningful images.	<i>6. Assembling your story</i> Scripting and storyboarding.
<i>7. Pacing</i> Suggesting meaning and emotion though pace.	<i>7. Sharing your story</i> Considering audience, viewing context(s), and the need for contextualizing materials.

In the education sector in particular, the use of DST has grown considerably over the past decade in a variety of formal and informal contexts, with different age groups, and for a range of purposes (Wales, 2012). Robin (2008) attributes this to a combined increase in the affordability and accessibility of digital tools (i.e., computers, scanners, digital cameras, audio devices, and software programs), and the contemporary agenda to instruct students in 21st century skills.

Robin and colleagues at the University of Houston have established a website entitled “The Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling” (<http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu>), which provides information on and examples of DST in K-12 and post-secondary classrooms. Robin (2008) suggests three major categories of digital stories in education, which can be combined: 1) personal or narrative stories; 2) stories that re-tell historical events; and 3) stories that inform or instruct (the last two shifting from the CDS’ focus on personal themes). Teachers can also create digital stories, he points out, to use as engaging instructional tools (Robin, 2008).

Robin (2008) maintains that DST can promote literacy skills that students need in order to communicate effectively in today’s world, namely digital, global, technology, visual, and information literacies. He furthermore argues that DST encompasses skills such as researching, problem-solving, organizing, writing, assessing, and presenting, and facilitates

the productive use technology (e.g., computers, digital media software, and image/ audio capturing devices) in classrooms (Robin, 2008).

In addition, researchers argue that student-created digital stories can guide struggling writers to structure their stories (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009), contribute towards meeting prescribed curriculum goals for narrative and persuasive writing (Kulla-Abbott & Polman, 2008), and help struggling readers through differentiated reading and writing (Royers & Richards, 2008).

Educators have used DST with English as a Foreign Language students to enhance their “academic achievement in English, critical thinking skills, and learning motivation” (Yang & Wu, 2012, p. 343), and with pre-service teachers as a tool for reflection on teaching practice (Kearney, 2011) and to promote technology competency and an openness towards technology integration in education (Heo, 2009). DST has also been used to help high school Geometry students apply trigonometric functions to real-life problems (Gould & Schmidt, 2010), and as a tool to address bullying in school (Cordi & Masturzo, 2013).

Digital Storytelling Theory and Research on Identity and Multimodal Literacies

In this section, I discuss studies on DST that specifically relate to issues of identity and transformative pedagogy, as well as multimodality. Studies take places in formal school K-12 contexts, universities, and informal (out-of-school) educational settings in North America and abroad. I focus strictly on digital stories that are student-produced (as opposed to teacher-produced) and which follow a format similar to that outlined by the CDS.

Digital Storytelling, Identity, and Transformative Pedagogy

DST has been widely used as an empowering tool of self-representation for marginalized voices in different parts of the world. Alrutz (2013) argues that DST, “as a performance process and medium,” can engage youth in identifying, critically interrogating, and (re)presenting complex narratives pertaining to their identities, communities, and the systems of power in their daily lives (p. 54). In this way, digital stories can function as “intentional, political acts of cultural production” (Alrutz, 2013, p. 48) through which youth challenge “their assigned role as passive consumers of media culture” (Alrutz, 2013, p. 51).

Erstad and Silseth (2008) argue that DST projects can promote agency among students in the formal school context. They explain how three Grade 3 boys in Norway, who their teacher described as “low-performing,” collaboratively crafted an outstanding digital

story about World of Warcraft (a popular online roleplaying game) as part of an ongoing study in the country on DST in schools (Erstad & Silseth, 2008, p. 221). Erstad and Silseth (2008) maintain that participation in this project facilitated both *citizenship-as-practice* and *epistemic agency*. First, the students learned how to use digital technology to actively project their personal voices “on their own terms” (Erstad & Silseth, 2008, p. 227). In addition, the project invited students to bring their own (out-of-school) “cultural codes” into the formal classroom, assuming a more active role in their knowledge-building (Erstad & Silseth, 2008, p. 214). Erstad and Silseth (2008)’s research demonstrates how, through DST, students who “are low-performing in regard to the traditional written assignments...get the opportunity to express themselves in new ways by using technologies other than the written text” (p. 221). The authors argue that DST, as a tool of empowerment and democratic participation, has potential to “challenge and change” traditional perspectives and practices in the formal education context with respect to teacher-student roles and ways of learning (Erstad & Silseth, 2008, p. 226).

Furthermore, researchers have explained how DST can be used with students to explore and experiment with their identities. Wales (2012) discusses how the “Youth Tell” DST research project in Singapore, which held DST workshops for youth in formal and informal contexts, provided a platform for three male at-risk youth “to explore, create and perform a range of shifting and tenuous identities” in workshops and through their digital stories (p. 539). For instance, a high school student named Ra’id, who was an ex-gang leader attempting to change his life, portrayed himself “as the ‘good’ and ‘heroic’ boy” in class and “the ‘young romantic lover’” in his digital story (Wales, 2012, p.544).

Rolón-Dow (2011) investigated how DST can be used as a platform for engaging youth in conversations about issues of race in educational settings. She discusses how participants in an after-school enrichment club for high school students in the USA carefully created multimodal digital stories exploring how race shaped their identities as well as school structures. Students also depicted their identities in ways that told counter-narratives to the dominant discourses (including stereotypes) surrounding race (Rolón-Dow, 2011). Although students’ use of different modalities is not a focus of her article, Rolón-Dow (2011) mentions that “[the] use of multiple modalities can be particularly helpful as students try to narrate and illustrate the sometimes covert and coded forms that racism takes in

contemporary contexts” (p. 171). Students’ stories, she argues, can offer valuable insight for those seeking to better understand youth’s complex experiences with race and racism and address racial justice in schools.

DST has also been used with youth from marginalized backgrounds to give voice to and critically engage with their experiences pertaining to social issues in their lives and communities. In 2008, the CDS’s Silence Speaks (<http://silencespeaks.org>) project began partnering with the Sonke Gender Justice Network in Eastern Cape, South Africa, to invite marginalized youth to share personal experiences related to violence and HIV/AIDS through digital stories (Reed & Hill, 2010). The ongoing project builds the participants’ self-esteem and potentially promotes a “sense of self-efficacy and goals for the future” (Reed & Hill, 2010, p. 274). The project also aims to use the digital stories to raise awareness of post-apartheid health and gender challenges facing communities and to mobilize citizens to work towards community transformation and policy changes.

Digital Storytelling and Multiliteracies Pedagogy

A number of researchers have specifically emphasized how DST can support a pedagogy of multiliteracies in classrooms as students rely on their culturally and linguistically diverse lifeworlds as the basis of their learning while simultaneously developing multimodal meaning-making abilities.

Vinogradova et al. (2011) have used multimodal DST to bring students’ interests and lifeworlds in the English as a Second Language curriculum at their English Language Centre in the USA. For the final project of an advanced post-secondary preparation class, students produce personal digital stories about “something important to them” (Vinogradova et al., 2011, p. 178). The authors describe how the “students carefully and consciously [use] multiple modalities of meaning making” (Vinogradova et al., 2011, p. 186). Specifically, the students use “language in focused and purposeful ways,” and strategically select cultural artifacts such as visual images (e.g., photographs, computer graphics, cartoons, drawings and short videos) and audio (e.g., music and sound effects) that is of interest to them to convey explicit or implicit meanings (Vinogradova et al., 2011, p. 177). The students also learn to design their digital stories in such a way that these different modalities work together to create “layers of meaning” (Vinogradova et al., 2011, p. 178). Vinogradova et al. (2011)

maintain that “[the] students are responsible for much of their learning” as they make decisions about the content of their stories (p. 178).

Additionally, Vinogradova et al. (2011) point out how, through the process of producing their digital stories, students learn some basic tools and techniques of video production which “creates the basis for students to become more critical consumers of media who can therefore cast a more analytical gaze on media texts” (p. 176). The students also learn to intentionally blend different modes for the purpose of effectively communicating a particular cultural message for their “imagined English speaking audiences” (Vinogradova et al., 2011, p. 186).

Scott Nixon (2009) describes how the UCLA MSLI Migrant Student Leadership Institute (MSLI) – a program that assists low-income high school students from migrant, farming backgrounds to prepare for and succeed within college – used multimodal DST in their summer institute curriculum as a means to explore and give voice to the social problems that affect the students’ lives and greater society. One project focused on the global problem of domestic violence, as well as the domestic violence against migrant women specifically. The students learned to interpret and strategically convey different and specific types of meaning through using visual (e.g., images and graphs), audio, and written modes. Students also drew on “their complete linguistic toolkit,” using both English and Spanish in DST production (Scott Nixon, 2009, p. 73). Through engaging with different media, the students “gained a collective, critical consciousness about the steps needed to reconstitute social problems for social action and change, and developed new agentive identities as social actors and activists preparing for more engaged civic participation” (Scott Nixon, 2009, p. 64).

Hull and colleagues have written several articles about the digital stories produced at DUSTY (Digital Underground Storytelling for Youth), an after-school program collaboratively operated by UC Berkeley, schools, and community organizations in East and West Oakland, USA. DUSTY provides a supportive, inclusive, and affirming social environment for participants to actively reconstitute images of their identities and communities through producing multimodal digital stories, which Hull and James (2007) call “identity texts” (p. 259).

In their article, Hull and Katz (2006) explore how DST has helped DUSTY participants “to articulate pivotal moments in their lives and to assume agentive stances

toward their present identities, circumstances, and future” in relation to others (p. 44). The authors describe how participants have appropriated and recontextualized texts, music, and images in a personal way to powerfully rearticulate and “perform” their identities (Hull & Katz, 2006, p. 72). As an example, they explain how Randy, a young adult male, authored an authoritative digital story entitled “Lyfe-N-Rhyme” through a complex “interweaving or juxtaposition” of various meaningful (and often symbolic) audio and visual layers (Hull & Katz, 2006, p. 57). In spite of his marginalized socioeconomic background, Randy used the semiotic tools and resources available to him to effectively construct his identities “as social critic, digital artist, and loyal son” (Hull & Katz, 2006, p. 56).

Furthermore, Hull and James (2007) explain how DUSTY participants have demonstrated agency by examining and representing their identities – “both individual and collective” – in relation to the places and landscapes in their neighbourhoods (p. 261). The participants’ rich, multimodal representations, Hull and James (2007) maintain, stand in contrast to the more stereotypical and often offensive depictions of the community and its members constructed by outsiders and displayed in the neighbourhood on social service billboards.

Over this past decade, researchers have begun suggesting frameworks through which educators can analyze the meaning-laden multimodal digital stories that individuals produce. For example, Hull and Nelson (2005) explain how digital stories are powerful because they contain “patterns within, between, and among” (p. 237) different semiotic modes. Stories contain both local semiotic relationships (e.g., the combination of image, words, and music of a particular slide) as well as “global” semiotic relationships (e.g., how components of the digital story relate to another component or to the synesthetic whole), which together form a multimodal whole (Hull & Nelson, 2005). Indeed, Hull and Nelson (2005) argue, “this kind of richly embedded semiotic patterning may well be the defining feature of powerful multimodal design” (p. 237). To illustrate, Hull and Nelson (2005) provide a detailed multimodal analysis of the aforementioned digital story “Lyfe-N-Rhyme” that Randy produced at the DUSTY community centre. They demonstrate how the photographs within his digital story “are steeped in the associative meanings that went before” (Hull & Nelson, 2005, p. 250). The authors therefore stress, “we might say that the mode that is actually

present is imbued in a real sense with the copresence of other nonpresent modes” (Hull & Nelson, 2005, p. 250).

Honeyford (2013) has furthermore suggested that a framework of magical realism “expands the range of possible interpretations of students’ narratives and the work of representation within them” (p.18). The genre of magical realism, she argues, can draw teachers’ attention to both the real and imagined aspects of students’ lives and identities that they represent in their digital stories through a meaningful blending of cultural artifacts and modes. To illustrate, Honeyford (2013) explains how a Grade 7 boy in a class for ELLs in the Midwestern United States composed a digital story entitled “My Name Is” in which, through weaving spoken word and visuals, “[he] imagines being able to fly above the boundaries that limit his experience in...space and time” as an immigrant newcomer (p. 20). In so doing, she argues, he “[writes] within and against reality, pointing to an identity within a new reality” (Honeyford, 2013, p. 24). Honeyford (2013) stresses, “to include the narratives and identities of more of our students in the classroom, we need to understand, expand and take seriously the modes and genres through which they may choose to make sense of and communicate their experiences, dreams and social critiques” (p. 24).

Moreover, in their research on DST with undergraduate students at a university in Japan, Nelson and Hull (2008) identified three “points” of students’ DST development process. These include “prewriting/ previsualization,” “rough construction,” and “completion,” and correspond to “the point at which ideas for the story were being simultaneously generated by means of manipulating language, imagery, and sound; the point at which the rough correspondences of image and language had been tentatively arranged; and the point at which the piece [is] complete” (Nelson & Hull, 2008, p. 129). The authors describe how one student “began her composition process...by engaging in brainstorming activities in different modalities, for example, free writing and collecting images that expressed essential aspects of herself,” and observe how she especially enjoyed brainstorming in the visual mode because of her interest in photography (Nelson & Hull, 2008, p. 134).

Similarly, Yang (2012), following Kress, documented how two ELLS (English majors, teacher candidates) in her undergraduate course in Taiwan approached the multimodal thinking process in creating digital stories as a final project. Yang (2012) found

that “the participants approached multimodal composing through the development of a hybrid multimodal text and dialogic orchestration of multimodal resources” (p. 226) (as opposed to “cumulative, linear stages” p. 227). The students’ designed their stories and arranged the multimodal resources according to their intents (including the intent to enhance “audience comprehension and attentive listening” Yang, 2012, p. 228). Yang (2012) also found that the students’ “meaning-making of the multimodal semiotic resources occurred in their imagination and reimagination;” that is, the students often visualized “how the images and music would look in their mind” before searching for them (p. 233).

Digital Storytelling with Individuals of Refugee Background

There are presently very few reports on the use of DST with individuals of refugee backgrounds. In one article, Sawhney (2009) explains how the nonprofit Voices Beyond Walls program collaboratively conducts summer DST workshops for youth (ages 10-16) in Palestinian refugee camps with local community centres. Participants creatively combine “original stories, drama, poetry, photography, music, and digital video” in order to “express their own perspectives on Palestinian history, culture and everyday life in the refugee camps, as well as their dreams and aspirations” (Sawhney, 2009, p. 304). A goal of this program is to raise the youth’s voices and wider awareness, locally and globally, about the issues relevant to their lives by showcasing their digital stories in their refugee camps, as well as film festivals, and universities. Sawhney (2009) notes that completing their digital stories “provides [the youth] an immense sense of shared satisfaction, identity, and confidence, as well as recognition among their peers, family and community” (p. 305).

In addition, Emert (2013) describes a DST project that took place during a five-week summer literacy program in the USA, specifically designed to address the distinct social and learning needs of 70 multilingual boys from refugee backgrounds who were struggling to succeed academically in their public school classrooms. Emert (2013) maintains that “[schools] often fail to recognize the rich set of skills refugee students possess when they enter the classroom, notably the trait of resilience, and spotlight, instead,...the deficits in specific academic skill sets” (p.356). The intended focus of this program was not on remediation, but rather on providing students with opportunities to meaningfully engage with language through rich, sophisticated, and authentic learning activities, which a strong focus on multiliteracies and other 21st century literacies (e.g., critical thinking).

As their final project, the students produced autobiographical digital stories in response to George Ella Lyon's poem "Where I'm from." This "transpoemation" project required the students to "[translate] a text from one mode – primarily written – to another – primarily visual" (Emert, 2013, p. 361). Emert (2013) found that, through producing their stories, the boys positively "reinvented" their identities in several ways (p. 361). They became "collaborators" (Emert, 2013, p. 362) through working with and assisting their culturally diverse peers; they became "experts" (Emert, 2013, p. 362) by teaching components of project to English-speaking adult audience at a learning fair; and they became "meaning-makers" (Emert, 2013, p. 363) through making multimodal design choices in their digital stories. As an example of how the students used different modes to communicate distinct meanings to an audience, Emert (2013) describes how one boy combined "dark" language with images containing "explicitly humorous connotations" (p. 363). Emert (2013) also notes how the project provided a platform for the class to engage in discussions about the students' diverse cultural backgrounds, their different experiences as newcomers, and the difficulties surrounding articulating their complex identities.

Additionally, in a recent article, Emert (2014) describes a DST program he directed for nine middle-school aged girls of refugee background who had experienced interrupted formal education. This DST project was part of a literacy workshop in a community education intervention program aimed to prepare the students for high school. Emert (2014) used DST "as a strategy to bolster the students' oral and written language proficiency in English" in an authentic, demanding, and collaborative learning environment (p. 33). He furthermore stressed that the project built on the students' personal interests and "privileged their strengths" (i.e., storytelling) (Emert, 2014, p. 34).

According to Emert (2014), the students used multiple complex literacies to produce and present their stories. They told their stories orally, edited a transcribed version of their stories, took photos to use as illustrations, fashioned their stories (consisting of images, text, and music) using movie making software, and then introduced their movies (including the production process) to an audience. Emert (2014) argues that,

Designing sophisticated literacy assignments that honor the academic skill sets students already possess (such as storytelling) and that challenge them to acquire new skills (such as digital representation of ideas) is an important step in providing

opportunities to succeed academically to young adolescents whose school experiences have been marred by their life histories. (p. 37)

In addition, Porter's (2013) doctoral dissertation is an ethnographic inquiry into how DST can shed light on the ways students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) can and do utilize their assets and capital in school in order to graduate from high school. For SLIFE, limited schooling can be due to a range of factors, such as refugee camp experiences, gender restrictions, family constraints, immigration, environmental factors, and/or unavailable/ non-rigorous schooling (Porter, 2013).

Porter (2013) conducted her research in a culturally responsive high school English Language Arts classroom for ELLs. She stresses how this student-centered environment emphasized students' prior knowledge and experiences, collaboration, explicit modeling, high academic expectations (scaffolded), discussions about challenging topics such as societal power imbalances, and a multidimensional view of literacy (defined in this class as encompassing, for instance, speaking, listening, storytelling, debating, and visual literacy). In producing their digital stories, Porter (2013) notes how students used their "funds of knowledge or community cultural wealth" through engaging in storytelling, selecting biographical topics, and using their oral linguistic strengths to facilitate their writing (p. 244). The digital stories themselves highlighted how the students had made use of their "aspirational capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistant capital" to navigate school-related challenges (Porter, 2013, p. 244).

Lastly, Lenette et al. (2013) argue that DST can be a valuable narrative tool for social work practitioners to better understand the intricate relocation and settlement experiences of people from refugee backgrounds. In their article, the authors report on an ethnographic study in which three single-parent women of African refugee backgrounds, resettled in Australia, produced personal digital narratives. They discovered that the women's participation in the DST project "enabled the emergence of new meanings about their lives as lone parents with children in Australia" (Lenette et al., 2013, p.7). The women became more aware of their own strengths, abilities, accomplishments, and even future aspirations.

Furthermore, Lenette et al. (2013) argue that, through representing their achievements in their stories, the women voiced "counter-narratives to the deficit discourses and images that usually circulate about new arrivals in the public domain" (p. 15) as well as the

“patriarchal assumptions within their own communities” (pp.7-8).

The authors maintain that close attention to such digital stories – “to the strategic selection of elements of a narrative and how these are linked to form it” (Lenette et al., 2013, p. 5) – can provide social workers with a great deal of important information pertaining to refugee newcomers’ needs and concerns. This information, in turn, can assist them to work towards positive outcomes for service users (Lenette et al., 2013).

Educational and Ethical Challenges to Digital Storytelling

Several researchers have raised educational, ethical, and political challenges surrounding producing and distributing digital stories. Vinogradova et al. (2011) point out how, in schools, students may hesitate or even resist to engage with an activity that does not comply with their expectations of teacher-centered, formal learning activities (i.e. grammar exercises or research papers). They caution, “To some students the work may seem a distraction from learning English ‘properly’” (Vinogradova et al., p. 193). Additionally, the authors share their difficulty, as teachers, in assigning grades to students’ creative and personal digital stories. They also note that the human and technological resources available to implement and execute DST projects depend on school budgets (Vinogradova et al., 2011).

Furthermore, based on their participatory research method with a small Inuit community in northern Labrador (Canada), Willox, Harper, and Edge (2013) point out that the narrative structure underlying digital stories is based on a distinctly Western model of storytelling; they argue this structure “does not necessarily resonate with non-Western storytelling forms or traditions, which celebrate stories-in-process and do not require stories to conclude succinctly and fully by the end” (p. 141).

In their article on refugee mothers and DST as a tool for social work, Lenette et al. (2013) emphasize Perry’s (2008) astute caution that “[not] all refugees want to – or even should – share their stories” (Perry, 2008, p. 353). However, Willox et al. (2013) have found that when DST participants *do* desire to share traumatic narratives, this can create certain personal and professional difficulties for DST facilitators. For them, “[this] highlighted the need for awareness of, and clear guidelines around, dealing with deep emotional issues that could emerge during such a process” (Willox et al., 2013, p. 140).

In her article, Alrutz (2013) raises questions around issues of self-representation in DST. In particular, she poses concerns about “the reification of identity-based stereotypes” through students’ narrative and visual design decisions (Alrutz, 2013, p. 53). Alrutz (2013) writes how encountering students’ representations of their identities and communities “[forces her] to grapple with tensions around what it means to co-construct knowledge with youth and to remain faithful to a critical, liberatory pedagogy that often works to disrupt youths’ realities” (p. 53). She divulges, “I question where our responsibility, and our complicity, lies when working with youth to create digital stories that will be shared with a wider audience” (Alrutz, 2013, pp. 53-54).

Nelson, Hull, and Roche-Smith (2008) have argued that the semiotic richness of one’s multimodal story can create a powerful sense that their “partial and incomplete” representation of self is whole, fixed, and true (p. 435). This phenomenon can be particularly problematic for a young student whose authorial intentions are compromised during the production of their digital story due to adults (in positions of power) guiding the representations of the student’s identities and communities according to their own intentions and desires (Nelson et al., 2008). Moreover, Nelson et al. (2008) maintain that self-presentations within digital stories – which, by nature, invite viewing and are simple to distribute – can essentially “take on a life of their own” as audiences continue to evaluate and hold the author accountable to them (p. 423). They stress that “it is a mistake to naively assume that new media bestow the power to communicate freely, without constraints, for anyone, but especially of course for kids” (Nelson et al., 2008, p. 437) who “have yet to develop...ideological autonomy and semiotic control” (Nelson et al., 2008, p. 417).

Willox et al. (2013) have raised questions about the responsibility of DST facilitators to disseminate stories in ways that protect participants’ privacy, do not “glamorize, pathologize, and/or neutralize [their] voices and lives,” and avoid perpetuating damaging stereotypes (p. 140). They caution that “if not used carefully, and with great sensitivity” digital stories “can be used to reify, objectify, essentialize, and/or further marginalize individuals and communities” (Willox et al., 2013, p. 129).

Finally, Lenette et al.’s (2013) work with DST as a valuable and insightful tool for those involved with social work has raised concerns about how long and in what ways practitioners can respectfully use a participant’s digital story in other contexts after the

completion of a research project, as well as how privately-owned stories might be used to influence policy.

Discussion

In summary, research highlights how DST can be an empowering tool to represent one's identities and communities, and explore important social issues. Some scholars emphasize how participants' intentional use of different modes enhances possibilities for meaningful communication. The few studies on DST with refugee populations demonstrate how, through creating digital stories, individuals can share their identities, lives, and perspectives through art (Sawhney, 2009) or narration, enabling viewers to better understand their experiences, and authors to become more aware of their own accomplishments (Lenette et al., 2013). Furthermore, in educational settings, researchers have demonstrated how DST can effectively engage refugee students in English literacy and build positive identities as students use their existing knowledge (e.g., biographical topics) and skills sets (e.g., storytelling) as foundations for learning (Emert, 2013, 2014; Porter, 2013).

In the studies on DST with refugees, the participants compose a written script before engaging with visuals, sounds, and video editing (Indeed, this is often the case in many DST how-to guides and studies that include a description of method; see, for example, Robin, 2008; Ohler, 2008; Bull & Kajder, 2005; Kajder, 2004; Vinogradova et al., 2011; Yang & Wu, 2012). An exemption is Porter's (2013) dissertation, in which students create "tellingboards" to facilitate their script writing. In such writing-first methods, the non-linguistic modes (intentionally or unintentionally) can function as "supplementary resources" that help deliver or enhance the meaning of the linguistic narrative (Yang, 2012, p. 222). In Kressian terms, the linguistic remains in a privileged position, with its "superiority" communicated to students.

In Emert's (2013) study, the unique meaning-making affordances of different modes *are* more explicitly encouraged and discussed with students in the classroom. He uses the example of how one boy combined "dark" language with "humorous" images (Emert, 2013, p. 363). However, in this project (as in other multimodal projects that follow a sequential process), students are, in effect, restricted to enhancing meaning through combining or juxtaposing words and images in isolated parts of their digital stories.

As Hull and Nelson (2005) argue, digital stories contain both local and “global” semiotic relationships that together form a meaningful whole. Multimodal composing, therefore, “is not simply an additive art whereby images, words, and music, by virtue of being juxtaposed, increase the meaning-making potential of a text;” instead, “a multimodal text can create a different system of signification, one that transcends the collective contribution of its constituent parts” (Hull & Nelson, 2005, p. 225).

In their research in Japan, Nelson and Hull (2008) observed how students who composed digital stories with no prescribed sequence generated ideas for their stories “simultaneously” by engaging with different modes and then arranging the various modes “tentatively” as they constructed their finished piece (p. 129). In Yang’s (2012) study, she observed how students created their digital stories through developing “a hybrid multimodal text” and orchestrating their multimodal resources in a “dialogic” manner (p. 226). A non-sequential approach to multimodal DST may therefore enhance students’ possibilities to communicate their identities and experiences according to their interests and intents.

In addition, a non-sequential DST project in which the notion of students’ “existing skills” extends to their meaning-making resources could be beneficial for students with limited English language or L1 literacy abilities. Hull and Nelson (2005) argue that multimodality can act “as a democratizing force, an opening up of what counts as valued communication, and a welcoming of varied channels of expression” (p. 253). Erstad and Silseth (2008), in their research, explain how DST has an “empowering and agentic potential” because it can allow students who are “low-performing in regard to the traditional written assignments” to “express themselves” through other “technologies” (p. 221). Scott Nixon (2009), who invited her students to draw on both Spanish and English in the classroom, maintains how multimodality encompasses the languages that students know and can use as resources in communication.

Moreover, Gauntlett (2008) has emphasized how visual methodologies can help people communicate “complex or abstract concepts,” which tend to be “difficult to discuss” (p. 254). For example, Rolón-Dow (2011), in her research on DST as a medium to explore issues of race in schools, argues that using different modes can help students depict “the sometimes covert and coded forms that racism takes” (p. 171). Furthermore, Kendrick’s (in press, 2014) literacy research in Uganda demonstrates how visual images can be used to

powerfully communicate socio-culturally specific “difficult knowledge.” In her study, children produced cartoon drawings on the topic of HIV/AIDS. Kendrick (in press, 2014) describes how, in the context of her research, the visual is “a more socially and culturally acceptable mode than language for communicating difficult knowledge.” It also provides students with enhanced possibilities for expressing their knowledge, experiences, and emotions (Kendrick, in press, 2014). Therefore, refugee students’ meaningful and intentional use of non-linguistic modes may facilitate meaningful expression of the more complex aspects of their identities and experiences.

The following chapters describe a non-sequential, multimodal DST study conducted with “at-risk” immigrant and refugee students in the Surrey School District ELL Welcome Centre’s B2S transition program. It investigates the pedagogical potential of a multimodal DST project for literacy engagement, including the potential for students to gain awareness of and use different modes to communicate meaning, and depict their identities, imaginations, and (complex) experiences more fully. It also investigates the positive effect on students’ identities of a project in which students’ cultural, linguistic, and meaning-making resources are valued, and students are able to meaningfully convey their identities and experiences through different modes.

Chapter 3: Participants and Research Methodology

Introduction

The specific aim of this study was to gain insight into how DST could support the New London Group's (2000) multiliteracies agenda among immigrant and refugee language learners within a respectful and empowering classroom environment. The research questions were as follows:

1. What is the potential of digital storytelling for the multimodal literacy engagement of at-risk immigrant and refugee students in a transition program?
2. In what ways does this digital storytelling project promote positive identities for students?

This chapter introduces the English Language Learner (ELL) Welcome Centre (which I refer to as the "Welcome Centre"), and its Bridge 2 Success (B2S) class for "at-risk" immigrant and refugee senior-high level students. I explain how I recruited the support staff and students in this program for the study. I furthermore describe the demographic of students in this class, including their possible educational, socio-emotional, mental, and family backgrounds, as well as identify the support staff members that assisted with the DST project. I also provide a brief explanation of the two case study participants (Yaqub and Abdullahi) and my decision to select them for a more in depth examination of their participation in the project and digital stories. Following this, I describe my research methods. I provide a timeline and description of the DST project. I also explain how I gathered data, including participant observation, informal conversations, semi-structured ethnographic-style interviews, as well as collecting artifacts and the students' completed digital stories. Then, I explain how I determined findings through coding data according to themes and modes of communication, and further organized data using an adaptation of Gillian Rose's (2001) visual methodology. In closing, I present a statement of my position as researcher.

The English Language Learner Welcome Centre

The English Language Learner (ELL) Welcome Centre is a Surrey School District department that supports newcomer school-aged ELL students and their families. Its services include English assessment and placement, school registration, orientation, settlement counseling, programs and workshops, as well as community awareness and capacity building.

Welcome Centre staff members include teachers, multicultural workers and settlement workers representing over 30 languages.

Among the many programs offered to ELL students and their families is the Bridge 2 Success (B2S) class, a new program developed in 2012 to provide specialized support for “at-risk” immigrant and refugee learners in the district between the ages of 17-19 years. The Welcome Centre defines “at-risk” students as follows: “Our ‘at-risk’ students are those that have come into Canada in the last 3 years who have arrived with one or more of the following barriers: Significant literacy and educational gaps; Significant social and communication barriers due to language and cultural differences; Mental and/or emotional issues as a result of trauma and/or grief” (From the B2S information sheet, prepared September 21, 2012). The B2S program, which runs Monday to Friday from 9:00am to 2:30pm, collaborates with Adult Education and Surrey Community College to provide adult graduation credits and work experience placement to help the students transition to post-secondary school.

Recruitment

I volunteered in the Welcome Centre’s B2S class from April 2013 to June 2013, assisting with a DST project. I became connected with the Welcome Centre after I attended the 2012 ESL PSA conference in West Vancouver, B.C. A professor of mine at UBC had told me there would be a presentation on teaching students of refugee background. She knew this to be of interest to me because I had taken her course on teaching immigrant students. Dr. Margaret Early was the keynote speaker at this conference, and she presented on the topic of “identity texts.” Following the conference, I purchased the book she had edited with Jim Cummins, *Identity texts: The imaginative construction of self through multiliteracies pedagogy* (2011), and began reading about the various identity text projects.

Because storytelling is an interest of mine, I searched online for “refugees and storytelling.” Several DST projects came up in the search results. One project that intrigued me was the Seattle Refugee Youth Project (see <http://www.rescue.org/us-program/us-seattle-wa/world-premier>) in which the Centre for Digital Storytelling (CDS) leads workshops for refugee youth who have been resettled to the Seattle area through the International Rescue Committee. The focus of the project is to support the youth’s successful integration through DST. The youth create stories focusing on their experiences as newcomers adapting to life in

the USA. I thought it would be important to investigate the effectiveness of DST to accomplish the dual purpose of promoting successful resettlement and literacy engagement among students of refugee background.

I sent an email to Mr. Scott, the teacher who had presented on teaching refugee students at the ESL PSA conference, and asked him if he knew of any upcoming DST projects with refugees in the Greater Vancouver area. He and Ms. Mehta, the assistant manager of the Welcome Centre, where he teaches, both wrote back to me, explaining that they wanted to develop and implement a DST project in the Welcome Centre's B2S program, but would love some assistance since DST was new to them. I met with Mr. Scott and Ms. Mehta at the Welcome Centre and they invited me to assist in the B2S class on a weekly basis to assist with a DST project during the current semester. (Mr. Scott and Ms. Mehta wished for the students to create digital stories based on paragraphs they had been writing in class.) Mr. Scott and Ms. Mehta both said that they would be happy to have me return to the Welcome Centre in the fall of 2013 to conduct research with their students in the B2S class for my MA thesis on DST.

Once the new school term began, I met with Mr. Scott (the classroom teacher), Ms. Mehta (the assistant manager), and Ms. Wagner (the district resource counsellor) at the beginning of October to plan the DST project, as well as verbally summarize the study and answer any questions. We agreed that students would complete their digital stories between November 15, 2013 and December 13, 2013. On November 4, 2013 I delivered a PowerPoint presentation to the settlement workers at the Welcome Centre to provide an overview of my research questions and the B2S DST project, and to explain how they could be of assistance to students in the classroom (through, for instance, supporting students to use their L1 as a cognitive resource).

On November 8, 2013, one week before the project was to commence, I provided the students in the class with a letter of consent and verbally summarized the study. I discussed with the students how I would be collecting data, including ethnographic-style interviews, observation, and note-taking. I explained how I would be leading the project along with Mr. Scott. I also talked about how I would analyze the data I collected, and I answered questions they had. To be very sure there was full understanding, settlement workers who shared the students' L1 were present in the class to verbally discuss the study with the students and

translate the letter of consent for them. I also told the students to circle any part of the consent form that was unclear to them so a settlement worker or I could provide further clarification. For students under the age of 19 years old, I provided a letter of consent for a parent/guardian to sign. I also gave consent forms to Mr. Scott (the classroom teacher), Ms. Mehta (the assistant manager), and Ms. Wagner (the district resource counsellor) at this time. Everyone was given one week to consider their (or their child's) participation in the study.

The Participants

Bridge 2 Success Students

The participants in this study were at-risk immigrant and refugee students who were enrolled in the Welcome Centre's B2S program. There were 14 students in the class, but only 12 of these students were included in research data because 2 of the students who joined the DST program at a later date did not have an opportunity to sign a consent form due to limited time and the unavailability of support staff to translate. Table 2 identifies the B2S student participants according to age, sex, immigrant or refugee status, and country of origin.

Table 2. Bridge 2 Success student participants

Name	Age	Sex (M/F)	Immigrant (I) or Refugee (R)	Country of Origin
Yaqub	18	M	R	Iraq
Ahmed	20	M	R	Somalia/ Malaysia
Abdullahi	20	M	R	Yemen
Narun	19	M	R	Sri Lanka
Juan	19	M	I	Guatemala
Lucas	19	M	I	Brazil
Li	17	M	I	China
Leyla	19	F	R	Eritrea
Daborah	19	F	R	Iraq
Farrah	19	F	R	Iraq
Noor	19	F	R	Yemen
Zula	19	F	R	Eritrea

The B2S Application Referral (prepared October 4, 2012) includes the following as possible backgrounds and characteristics of B2S applicants (see Table 3):

Table 3. Bridge 2 Success student demographics

<p>Language and Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has attended school for less than 75% of the time that students in North America would have attended at this student's age. • has attended school in a refugee camp. • has experienced significant interruptions in schooling (e.g., irregular patterns of attendance). • has a starting/emerging level of English language abilities. • has a starting/emerging level of his/her first language. • has noted difficulties concentrating in class. <p>Previous Experience and Background:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has lived in a country in conflict or war. • has lived in a refugee camp or was displaced from his/her home country. • has experienced a traumatic loss of a family member. <p>Family Dynamics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parents/caregivers have a beginner/emerging level of English language abilities. • lives in inadequate housing. • lives in an inner city area. <p>Psycho-Social, and Mental Health Concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has significant emotional outbursts (e.g., extreme anger or sadness) • is socially withdrawn and isolated. • has experienced significant racism and discrimination. • has little interest in trying new things. • complains of a range of physical symptoms with no defined cause. • has difficulty with grasping simple concepts.
--

Adapted from English Language Learner (ELL) Welcome Centre. (2012). *Specialized support for immigrant youth in schools application/referral for bridge program*. Surrey, B.C.: English Language Learner (ELL) Welcome Centre. Adapted with permission.

Support Staff

Other research participants were the classroom teacher (Mr. Scott), the district resource counsellor (Ms. Wagner), and the Welcome Centre assistant manager (Ms. Mehta). As the classroom teacher, Mr. Scott was present for the entire duration of each class we worked on the DST projects. Together, he and I introduced the components of DST to the students and circulated the room to provide individual assistance. Since I had more knowledge of DST and multimodality, Mr. Scott wrote notes on the SmartBoard and reiterated tasks and concepts to the students. He also helped students record their voiceovers.

In her role as district resource counsellor, Ms. Wagner does group talks with the B2S students twice a week in which she presents and facilitates discussions on socio-emotional concepts. One of her intentions is to help cultivate a safe and accepting environment that is respectful of all cultures and in which students feel a sense of belonging. In addition, following Herman's (1992) model of the trauma recovery stages, Ms. Wagner aims to provide the students with information, strategies, and skills to build resilience.

Ms. Wagner was present in class the majority of the time students worked on their projects. She unpacked terminology and concepts related to the project in ways that made them more accessible to the students, and ensured that all students felt they were capable of participating. She also assisted students with their projects in the classroom on an individual basis and worked with students to record voiceovers.

For the most part, Ms. Mehta was not present during class time. However, as the Welcome Centre assistant manager, her input with respect to ensuring the DST project met the Welcome Centre's targeted learning outcomes for the B2S class was important. Ms. Mehta also assisted students in the classroom to complete their digital stories on the final day of the project (January 10, 2014).

Multicultural and settlement workers assisted in the class on an as-needed basis, speaking with students in their L1 to help them understand the assignment and brainstorm ideas. They were not, however, included as participants in the study. All research participants, including the classroom teacher, counsellor, and assistant manager, were given pseudonyms.

Case Study Participants

I also chose to present case studies on two of the students, Yaqub (age 18) and Abdullahi (age 20). The purpose of these case studies is to provide a broader, more intricate description of these students' individual approaches to the multimodal composing process (i.e, their thinking process in terms of selecting, combining, and assigning meaning to different modalities), as well as a more in depth examination of their digital stories.

Yaqub is a student of refugee background. He was born in Iraq and moved to Syria in 2010. He came to Canada in 2013 and began attending the Welcome Centre at that time. When Yaqub first arrived in Canada, he had very limited English language skills, although he was able to read and write in Arabic (his L1). After a year of studying in the B2S program, he is able to read and write in English at a pre-intermediate level. Like Yaqub, Abdullahi is

of refugee background. An ethnic Somali, he was born in Yemen and arrived in Canada two and a half years ago. Abdullahi had had no formal schooling prior to arriving in Canada and is unable write in the language(s) of his country of origin. He has been enrolled in the B2S class for the past two years and is now able to write in English at a high beginner level.

I selected these students for case studies after all data was coded. Several factors influenced my decision to choose them. First, Yaqub and Abdullahi both arrived in Canada as refugees, and my primary interest going into this research project was the literacy engagement of refugee students. Yaqub is able to write in his L1 and Abdullahi, due to prior lack of formal schooling, is not. In addition, Yaqub and Abdullahi wrote stories representing the two categories of digital stories that the students made: stories of success immigration (Yaqub), and stories about learning a particular skill (Abdullahi). Both of these students attended the DST screening event at the Welcome Centre. Finally, I felt I had gathered sufficient data on the DST process of both of these students in order to provide a detailed description of their participation in the project.

Research Methods

The Classroom(s)

Data were collected in the B2S classroom at the Welcome Centre. This classroom was a large bright room with white walls and colourful scarfs tucked into a number of the ceiling tiles. There was a SmartBoard mounted to the wall at the front of the classroom. To the left of the SmartBoard was a small cabinet combining laptops. On one sidewall was a large whiteboard. On the other sidewall was a long window with white coverings. The back of the classroom was a sliding folded curtain, separating this room from another classroom. On the classroom walls were several framed pages from children's books written in other languages. There was a standing flipchart in one corner of the class. There was also a long table at the front of the room for the teacher to sit.

The students worked at long tables that were usually arranged in the way the teacher from the previous school day had left them. Two rows of attached tables formed an L-shape, with one row along the window and another row along the back of the class. In the centre of the room were several rows of long tables facing the front of the classroom. There was space in between the tables for students and teachers to walk amongst them.

Occasionally, students worked in the classroom on the other side of the sliding folded curtain. This room had four square tables in the centre of the room, pushed together into one large table surrounded by chairs. The window from the B2S classroom continued along one sidewall. On the back wall was a bulletin board with photographs, a small white board, and a display board containing pamphlets. This room also had a SmartBoard mounted to a sidewall and a standing flipchart in one corner of the class. Voiceovers (the students' narration of their own stories) were recorded in small offices within the Welcome Centre building that were not currently in use. Within these rooms was one large table and several chairs.

Procedure

The DST project ran from November 15, 2013 to January 31, 2014. Students worked on their projects for five consecutive Friday mornings (November 15, 2013 to December 13, 2013). The first four Fridays were from 9am to 12pm, and the fifth Friday from 9am to 2pm. I returned to the Welcome Centre on January 8, 2014 after school to help Abdullahi with his project. I also returned on January 10, 2014 from 9am to 2pm to assist several students with completing their projects. On January 31, 2014, the Welcome Centre held a DST screening event to view and celebrate the students' digital stories. Table 4 is a general timeline of project activities.

Table 4. Digital storytelling project procedure

Date	Task(s)
November 15, 2013	Introductions, define DST, discuss multimodality, assign project, begin collecting/ preparing components (images, music, script)
November 22, 2013	Review multimodality, continue gathering DST components
November 29, 2013	Storyboarding
December 6, 2013	Storyboarding
December 13, 2013	Complete storyboards, create digital stories using Photo Story 3
January 8, 2014	I assisted Abdullahi with his digital story after class
January 10, 2014	Several students completed their digital stories during class time
January 31, 2014	Digital stories presentation at the Welcome Centre

On November 15, 2013, class began with general introductions. I had created a handout entitled "About Me" (see Appendix A) for students to begin thinking about their multiple identities and meaning-making resources. I introduced myself by completing my own "About Me" card on the SmartBoard. This included completing the following sentence

stems: I am a (noun), I am (adjective), I enjoy (activity), I speak (languages), and I come from (country). It also involved circling icons (e.g., Facebook and YouTube) and small images (e.g., singing, watching television) representing the ways I like to express and learn ideas. Students and support staff (Mr. Scott and Ms. Wagner) completed their own “About Me” cards. With classroom tables arranged in the shape of an open horseshoe, students shared their responses one by one, as Mr. Scott, Ms. Wagner, and I asked follow-up questions.

After this, I introduced the concept of DST. Following Lambert (2013), I defined a digital story as a short video telling a personal story, which contains multiple visual and audio layers. I told the students I would be showing them some examples of digital stories (from the CDS’s YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/user/CenterOfTheStory>), and that I would afterwards ask them what made the story good and/or powerful. On the SmartBoard, I put a completely blank version of a multiliteracies wheel, adapted from the one created by the New London Group (see page 23). As I elicited from the students the elements of the digital stories they had watched, Mr. Scott filled in the multimodality wheel, separating these elements according to the different communicative modes, which he then labeled on the wheel as visual, audio, linguistic, gestural, spatial. I talked about the affordances of the different modes – how, for example, the colours and facial expressions within images communicated ideas differently than words, and how emotion was conveyed through music tempo. I also talked about how the producer intentionally designed the digital story through meaningfully combining the different modes. The students were able to recall an impressive amount of elements within the digital stories, and began relating these personal stories to their own struggles as immigrants/refugees and newcomers to Canada.

I explained to the students that we would be making “accomplishment stories” which are “about achieving a goal” (Lambert, 2003, p. 6). Mr. Scott wrote the words “goal” and “accomplishment” on the SmartBoard and pulled up Google Translate on the screen to translate them into several languages. The students were familiar with the term “goal.” To explain the word “accomplishment” to the students, Ms. Wagner asked them questions such as, “What have you done in the past that you think you did well?” “What is something you have done that you feel proud of?” “What kinds of things did other people tell you they thought you did well?” “When did you feel good or important about something that you’ve

done?” and “When did you have a sense that you had overcome a challenge?” We avoided using the word “success” with the students. Ms. Wagner had cautioned Mr. Scott and I that students of refugee background generally have difficulty identifying past successes. She explained that for refugee students who had experienced trauma, it was often a challenge to think about having an identity prior to arriving in Canada (see discussion of Trauma and Identity in Chapter 2).

As a class, we reflected on a couple of the digital stories we had watched, discussing the author’s desire and the struggle involved in achieving his or her goal. It was a challenge for the students to understand the concept of a “past” or “completed” accomplishment, as opposed to a future goal, even as settlement workers and multicultural workers came to the class to help translate this idea into students’ L1. I encouraged the students to consider things they had learned, skills they had developed, and experiences they had had in their communities, and to choose one event. The nature of the assignment was very wide open so that each student would be able to search within for a feeling of significance they had experienced in the past, and come up with something they felt was of value to share.

I told the students that once their stories were completed, they would be shown at the Welcome Centre to an audience of their classmates and teachers, the students’ families, and Welcome Centre staff members. Students could decide on the content and details they felt comfortable sharing within this particular setting to this particular audience. Then, Mr. Scott, Ms. Wager, and I gave the students free time to begin collecting their ideas – finding images, writing, sketching, searching for music, and so on. I put a scanner at the front of the classroom for students who wished to bring in artifacts.

Mr. Scott and I began class on November 22, 2013 by inviting students to display their “About Me” cards on the classroom wall. I then elicited the modes and/or communicative methods they were able to recall and Mr. Scott wrote these on the blank multimodality wheel (we had not thought to save the completed multimodality wheel after the first class). I showed the students another digital story (again, from the CDS’s YouTube channel), and as a large group the class discussed the use of modes/ design elements and their communicative strengths and affects. Mr. Scott, Ms. Wagner, and I reviewed the concept of an “accomplishment story” (the digital story I showed in this class provided another model as

there was no “struggle” involved in the person’s accomplishment), and the students continued to gather their ideas for the remainder of the class.

After a brief review of the concept of multimodality and a demonstration on using the scanner, I introduced storyboarding on November 29, 2013. Mr. Scott and I showed students some examples of a digital story storyboard and corresponding digital story on the SmartBoard, and provided students with the following suggestions for how to organize the elements of their digital stories; these included numbered index cards; a large posterboard and Post-it notes; a large posterboard with boxes/horizontal rows, a pencil, and an eraser; paper-based storyboard templates; desktop publishing software on the computer (adapted from Lambert, 2012, p. 34). Students were also free to storyboard in any other way they could think of.

Students continued to storyboard during the December 6, 2013 class.

On December 13, 2013, the fifth day, Mr. Scott and I gave the students some time to complete their storyboards before demonstrating how to use Photo Story 3. This program is sequenced as follows: begin a new story; import/arrange/edit photos; add titles/text; record a voiceover image by image; and insert music.

I returned to the Welcome Centre on January 8, 2014 to help Abdullahi complete his digital story after class (from approximately 2:30pm to 5:00pm). I also attended the B2S class on January 10, 2014 to assist several students with completing their projects. (During this school day, other students were working on their homework assignments.)

Then, on the afternoon of January 31, 2014, the Welcome Centre held a DST screening event to share the students’ digital stories (see invitation in Figure 3).

Welcome Centre teachers, staff, and students’ parents were invited to watch the students’ digital stories on the SmartBoard in a large classroom in the Welcome Centre building. There were 9 students from the B2S class who attended this event. (I did not show the digital stories of students who were absent.) After I showed each student’s project on the SmartBoard, the student stood up and everyone applauded. Since this event coincided with the students’ final day of classes for the term, the Welcome Centre provided a congratulatory cake and snacks.

Figure 3. Digital storytelling screening event invitation



English Language Learner (ELL) Welcome Centre. (2013). *Save the date – I am! B2S presentations*. [Invitation]. Surrey, B.C.: English Language Learner (ELL) Welcome Centre. Reprinted with permission.

Data Collection

This study was based on an ethnographic, qualitative case-study design (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). The methods of data collection that I used include field notes, classroom observations, informal conversations with students during class time, ethnographic interviews, artifacts (e.g., storyboards and writing) and the final product of the digital stories.

During class, I spoke with participants to discuss their DST projects. I asked them questions such as “Tell me more about this image,” and “How does this music help you tell your story?” I carried a notebook with me at all times while the students were working on their projects, and I recorded field notes on what they were doing, conversations I heard, and my own informational conversations with the students. I wrote short student quotes verbatim as I was able, but decided not to use a voice recorder during class so as not to distract the students or make them feel uncomfortable. After each session (including the DST screening event), I wrote a reflection on my classroom observations.

After the project, I conducted one semi-structured ethnographic style interview (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999) with Yaqub and Abdullahi to help me gain insight into their multimodal composing process (i.e., their intentions concerning the meaningful

selection and orchestration of semiotic resources) and the impact of the project on their identities. These interviews were approximately 45 minutes, and they took place directly after class. Examples of the questions I asked can be found in Appendix B. I also interviewed Mr. Scott (the classroom teacher), Ms. Mehta (the assistant manager), and Ms. Wagner (the district resource counsellor) to gain their perspectives on the DST project. With Mr. Scott and Ms. Wagner, I conducted ethnographic style interviews that lasted approximately 30-45 minutes (Mr. Scott's interview occurred over two sessions). Ms. Mehta chose to send me written responses to the interview questions via email. Examples of questions I asked for these interviews can be found in Appendix C. All interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed.

Data Analysis

My analysis of data was based on a cross-examination of my field notes, classroom observations, interviews, informal conversations, artifacts I collected, and the final product of the digital stories. I coded the data using thematic analysis (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). My field notes were coded according to the modes specified by the New London Group (2000) – linguistic, visual, audio, spatial and multimodal (The gestural mode did not emerge during coding). In addition, field notes and transcripts were coded for common themes and patterns that emerged during data analysis.

To further organize findings, I also drew on Rose's (2001) methodological framework for critically analyzing and interpreting visual images. This framework distinguishes three "sites" at which an image's meanings are made: "the site(s) of the production of an image, the site of the image itself, and the site(s) where it is seen by various audiences" (Rose, 2001, p. 16). These sites refer to "how an image is made, what it looks like, and how it is seen," respectively (Rose, 2007, p. 188).

Researcher Positioning

It is essential that I acknowledge my own subjectivity as a researcher (Merriam, 1995). I am a white, middle-class, Canadian-born female, whose experiences (family, school, and so on) are vastly different than those of the students in the B2S class. English is my first and primary language. I can also communicate in intermediate-level French (K-7 French Immersion), basic Spanish (self-taught), and basic Arabic (1 year of classes). (The last two languages helped me form relationships with the B2S students.)

During data collection at the Welcome Centre, I acted as “teacher,” a role very familiar to me due to my extensive experience as an English language teacher with multicultural students. I taught students about the concept of multimodal meaning-making, and assigned them tasks to work on during class time. I also walked around the class, assisting students on an individual basis. I talked with them about their projects and answered their questions. Although I carried a notebook with me at all times and frequently wrote field notes, the students rarely made reference to this activity. (On a few occasions, students asked me what I was writing or commented on how quickly I had jotted down an observation.) The students related to me predominately as “teacher,” as opposed to “researcher.”

I recognize that I embarked upon my position as a teacher-researcher facilitating a DST project with my own experiences, assumptions and biases (Merriam, 2002). For example, I believed, going in to this project, in the rich meaning-making potential of multiple communicative modes and encouraged the students to explore different modes in communicating their ideas. I thought that expressing themselves through modalities other than the linguistic may play an important role in helping students, particularly those of refugee backgrounds, to convey complex ideas and difficult knowledge. My objectivity was therefore limited because I anticipated connections between my research questions and findings.

Also, the Welcome Centre support staff (Mr. Scott, Ms. Mehta, and Ms. Wagner) and I agreed upon the DST theme of “accomplishment stories.” This theme corresponded to the B2S class’ goal of promoting successful settlement among the students. While I avoided discouraging students from willingly sharing challenging or troubling aspects of their lives and of the resettlement process, I encouraged them to consider their strengths and attributes so they would come to see themselves in this light. As a teacher in a position of power, I attempted to the very best of my ability to discuss students’ stories with them without manipulating how students wished to present their stories (e.g., the content, themes, and emotions) and depict their identities. However, my identity will inevitably have influenced students’ composing process and digital stories in subtle ways.

Furthermore, in addition to data collection, I acknowledge that my biases and assumptions will have colored my analysis of and responses to the students’ digital stories (Merriam, 2002). Even though I interviewed both Yaqub and Abdullahi to gain insight into

the meanings they attached to elements in their digital stories, my analysis of their digital stories is inevitably biased as well.

The following two chapters present my research findings. In Chapter 4, I present general findings reflecting the participation of all students in the B2S program. Chapter 5 consists of case studies that contain more fine-grained descriptions of two students' DST processes and digital stories.

Chapter 4: General Findings

This chapter presents general findings related to my two research questions. For the first question on students' multimodal literacy engagement, data is organized according to the modes the New London Group (2000) specifies, that is, multimodal, linguistic, visual, audio, and spatial. (The gestural mode did not emerge as a theme during data analysis.) I also include "other communication modes" to discuss students' use of additional communication modes and resources to research and assemble their digital stories. I further organized data, in this section, according to themes that emerged during coding. Data that pertain to the second question, concerning students' cultural identities, are arranged according to themes that emerged in data analysis.

For both questions, data are presented under the larger headings of Rose's (2001) sites of meaning making: the site of production, the site of the image (i.e., the digital stories), and the site of the audience. Words and sentences from students' voiceovers are italicized.

Research Question 1: What is the Potential of Digital Storytelling for the Multimodal Literacy Engagement of At-Risk Immigrant and Refugee Students in a Transition Program?

Site of Production and Site of Image

Multimodal

Individual DST process

The teachers and I recognized that the students each had distinctive preferred modes and unique resources at their disposal to collect and communicate their ideas, and we invited the students to discover and utilize them. The charts in Appendix D summarize the various approaches students took in completing their digital stories. Juan (age 19) is a musician who was a member of a rock band in Guatemala, his country of origin. On his "About Me" card (see Figure 4), Juan identified "singing" as an activity he enjoys. He also specified that he expresses and learns ideas through listening to music, playing an instrument, and writing. Juan began his project by searching through his songs on the online audio distribution website Soundcloud, and then typing his story in Spanish. Although Juan was able to express himself very minimally through written or oral English, he was able to immediately engage in the DST project through his favourite modes of communication – that is, audio and linguistic (writing in Spanish). Leyla (age 19), on the other hand, promptly opened Microsoft

Word, telling me “I like to write.” Indeed, on her “About Me” card, Leyla had written “I like to writing” as the activity she enjoys.

Figure 4. Juan’s “About Me” card

Date: 15 Nov. 2013

About Me!

I am a... (noun)

brother

I am... (adjective)

happy

I enjoy... (activity)

singing
TV

My name is...

I speak... (languages)

Spanish

I come from... (country)

Guatemala

I like to express and learn ideas these ways: (circle as many as you'd like)

Other ways:

Soccer, I like sing

I like watch TV

Immediate DST participation

Under a broad definition “literacy,” all students, regardless of language or literacy skills, began engaging in meaning-making. A few students of refugee background were unable to write in their L1 due to having no or little formal education, and had limited English reading and writing skills. These students selected images from Facebook and Google and used them to tell a teacher about the story they wanted to share. For example, Mr. Scott used Noor’s (age 19) Facebook photos to guide her through an oral narration of her story. He wrote simple sentences on her storyboard (e.g., “I was born in Yemen”) along with image descriptions (e.g., “Picture of Yemen”). Noor made note of the images she still wanted to find in order to tell her story, and later searched for these on Google. Teachers also scribed Ahmed (age 20) and Zula (age 19)’s stories based on their images.

Non-linear DST sequence

In general, there was no linear sequence that students followed to complete their digital stories. They often worked back and forth between communicative modes as their stories took shape. Lucas (age 19), for instance, selected a song for his story about leaving loved ones in Brazil and moving to Canada. However, when he eventually uploaded this song to PhotoStory 3 he was dissatisfied. “It don’t make sense with...the pictures,” he said. He searched on YouTube for another song, and decided upon Abba’s “I have a dream” to help him tell of his pursuit to make new friends and learn a new language and culture in Canada.

Several students worked with different modes simultaneously. Farrah (age 19) used both images (e.g., smiley faces) and words (e.g., nouns or adjectives) on her storyboard to describe the images she planned to use in her story. Daborah (age 19) preferred visual communication (indicating on her “About Me” card that she liked “painting,” “YouTube,” “taking photos,” and “watching TV”), and used images to propel her written narrative about learning to knit. Daborah searched for images of knitting on Google and kept this webpage open in front of her for reference as she thought about the knitting process and the different types of knitting projects. “It’s help me to find some words,” she told me.

Linguistic

Writing

L1 as a resource

For quite a number of students, their L1 served as an invaluable resource in expressing their ideas through writing. As mentioned, Juan typed his story in Spanish because he was unable to write in English. He explained to me (through written Spanish) that he wanted to write his thoughts, feelings, and dreams in Spanish, and then afterwards translate what he had written into English. Juan pasted his Spanish script into Google Translate and copied the English translation onto a sheet of paper.

Also, several students used a combination of their L1 and English to record their ideas. Daborah began brainstorming her story through writing some point-form notes in Arabic on the top of her paper. She attempted to write her story in English underneath this, but later decided to write her story in Arabic and translate the text to English. Farrah, on the other hand, alternated between English sentences and Arabic sentences when she first began drafting her story. Leyla decided to write her story in English and use Somali words only

when she did not know the English translation. She used this strategy in order to communicate her ideas without English becoming a barrier.

Narrative editing and development

Classroom teachers or assistants (i.e., multicultural or settlement workers) helped students edit sentence structure and grammatical errors in their scripts. For example, Juan received assistance from a classmate and a Spanish-speaking Welcome Centre settlement worker to edit the English he had copied from Google Translate. The teachers also helped students develop richer, more expanded scripts about a journey to overcome a struggle. We worked with students to help them tell cohesive narratives focusing on the main ideas.

Writing practice for low print literate students

Even students who were unable to write in their L1 or in English engaged with the linguistic mode. For instance, Noor practiced spelling the words that Mr. Scott had scribed for her. As one point, she tried copying the word “Regina” from her storyboard into Google images. Misspelling the word, Noor called Mr. Scott to ask if the word she had typed said “Regina.” “Close,” he told her as he assisted her with the correct spelling. Noor also initially decided that she did not want to record a voiceover (although she later changed her mind), and she began copying the story Mr. Scott had scribed for her onto the slides in PhotoStory 3.

Reading

Reading practice for low print literate students

All of the students engaged in reading practice while producing their digital stories. For Noor, who was a developing reader, searching for images involved attempting to read the words Mr. Scott had scribed for her as she copied these words into Google images. “Picture of...” I heard her read aloud from her storyboard, before getting stuck on the word “Regina.” Ahmed was quite pleased after Ms. Wagner scribed his story for him, and he began to read it aloud to me.

Reading practice through recording voiceovers

Recording voiceovers provided the students with oral reading practice. This process took place in small, empty rooms in the Welcome Centre building. Many students were nervous about recording their voiceovers, and Mr. Scott had them practice reading their script beforehand. The students, Mr. Scott observed, “were very eager to ask for help and to have guidance” (interview, Feb 25, 2014). Some students asked questions about the

pronunciation of certain words. They practiced saying the words aloud, and wrote notes for themselves on phonetics and word stress in the margins of their scripts. For example, on his script Juan wrote “Julai” beside the word July, “naitin” above the number 19, and “cais” near the word case. He also had word stress notations under the words automotive, mechanical, and engineering.

The students with limited English literacy skills were able to read or gather meaning from the scripts that had been scribed for them. Ahmed made few errors or changes as he read his script. The majority of these were minor (e.g., adding a subject pronoun or preposition, using the infinitive verb form (omitting “to”) instead of the gerund form, adding/omitting an article, or slightly confusing word order). Noor (a developing reader) was able to make meaning from the sentences Mr. Scott scribed for her. Table 5 shows examples of sentences from her script (left) vs. sentences she said in her voiceover (right, italicized):

Table 5. Noor’s script reading

I moved to Somalia when I was 10 years old.	<i>I moved to Somalia after I’m ten years old.</i>
I remember many things about Somalia.	<i>I remember many things about my country.</i>
I was sad when I came to Canada because I didn’t have any friends.	<i>After come to Canada I don’t have any friends.</i>
Now I have many friends in Canada.	<i>Now I have many friend in Canada.</i>
I was happy when I came to the airport in Vancouver because it was big and had many beautiful places.	<i>I’m happy when I come to airport Vancouver. It have big and beautiful places.</i>
The Welcome Centre is good because I learn English.	<i>Welcome Centre first one I come to school is good place because I learn too much English.</i>

It appears that Noor constructed meaning from her script by recognizing content words and using content clues, and expressed these ideas through her most familiar way of English communication, oral English language.

Juan, who was able to read the Latin alphabet in Spanish, read the script he had translated from Spanish to English with no errors. This included all the corrections I had written on his script beforehand (such as adding articles and subject pronouns).

Using voice as a communicative tool

Li (age 17) demonstrated his developing communicative competence through considering how to use his voice as a communicative tool. At one point, Li came to me with his script, asking me “What feeling I should use here?” He was thinking about how he could strategically use the intonation of his voice to convey emotion.

In addition, Ms. Wagner coached some of the students to use their voices to communicate emotion during voiceover recording. She recalls how two students in particular, Noor and Yaqub (age 18), become tearful or close to tears when recording their voiceovers because of the content of their stories. She explained to me, “I wanted to hear that emotion. I wanted them to know that it was okay to put it in there.” She asked the students questions such as, “How do you really feel about that picture?” and “[How] would your voice sound about that picture?” (She advises, however, that students need to be offered a choice with respect to how much feeling they would like to include in their narration) (interview, May 5, 2014).

Visual

Use of personal explicit images

Students were very intentional about selecting images that communicated the emotion and content in their stories. A number of students used personal photos from their own lives that they downloaded from their Facebook accounts or brought from home. Ahmed used several photos from a graduation party in Malaysia as he recounted, “*The school had a graduation party. All my friends and my teacher were excited but sad that I was leaving. There was dancing, singing, and music.*” Lucas included a photo of several of his family members in Brazil standing together in a kitchen. He narrated, “*I have the best family in the world.*” Juan’s voiceover said, “*I would like to be a musician someday*” as the slide showed a black and white photo of himself with his band-mates in Guatemala, holding their instruments. Mr. Scott also brought some of the students outside to take a photo of the front doors of the Welcome Centre to use in their digital stories when talking about beginning classes there. (This was the only image that was created for the project.)

Use of explicit images from Google

Students also found images using Google. Some of these images were literal visual representations of their corresponding script. As Ahmed spoke the words “*I came to*

Canada...” he showed the image of an Air Canada plane flying over the clouds. An image of a city in Yemen accompanied Noor’s narration “*I am born in Yemen.*” Farrah begins her narration with the words “*When I was 14 years old I didn’t like cooking,*” accompanied by the image of young girl wearing a white chef’s jacket and hat with her arms folded across her chest, her chin and nose raised, and an expression of disdain on her face (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Image of unhappy cook



Photomak. (2010). *Serious lady cook with crossed arms*. [Photograph]. TN: Dreamtime LLC: Retrieved from <http://www.dreamstime.com/royalty-free-stock-images-serious-lady-cook-crossed-arms-image16520759>. Reproduced with permission of © Photomak | [Dreamstime.com](http://www.dreamstime.com)

Use of implicit and/or highly meaningful images from Google

Other images that students found using Google were metaphorical, symbolic, or very meaningful representations of their ideas. Students often found images by using descriptive adjectives (e.g., “boring” or “exciting”) or abstract nouns (e.g., “success”) as keywords. Li explains how, after arriving in Canada, “*I didn’t have friends, didn’t go to school, I didn’t know what to do, and I had limited English.*” He used an image with the black silhouette of a man crouched on the floor and leaning against a wall in an empty room. The man’s arms are wrapped around this bended knees and his head faces the floor, creating the impression of loneliness or depression. When Li goes on to tell that he met a woman at his high school (“I knew one [worker’s] name, (name of worker), while I was in high school”), he shows the

uplifting and hopeful image of a hand reaching down from the heavens towards another hand within its palm extended upward against a backdrop of clouds and blue sky (see Figure 6). This image powerfully communicates that this woman was a helper in his life. (Following this image, Li explains that she encouraged him to learn English and introduced him to the B2S program.)

Figure 6. Image of reaching hands



blueeyes. (n.d.). *Helping hand*. [Photograph]. New York, NY: Shutterstock, Inc. Retrieved from <http://www.shutterstock.com/pic.mhtml?id=2539252&src=Nwa9b9XIY8HreJBiiFQ8eg-4-61>. Reproduced with permission of blueeyes/Shutterstock.com

Use of colours

Students also learned to be intentional about the colours they selected for the text in their stories (e.g., story titles), as demonstrated in this exchange between Noor, her brother Abdullahi (age 20), and me:

Noor: (Dictates story title to me): “My country.” (I ask her which font colour she would like to use and she chooses red. It is hard to see the words. She words green instead.)

Noor: “Because I have black scarf.”

Abdullahi: “You can’t see good with green.”

Noor: (Changes font to white) “Because I have jacket black and scarf blue.” (She types the names of the song and artist in black.)

Lauren: “Can you see that?”

Noor: “No.” (Changes the font to red).

Lucas’ choice of colour for his title was more symbolic. After some consideration, he decided upon the colour green, explaining to me “it’s the colour from Brazil” (his home country, which he talked about in his story).

Audio

Songs for mood and emotional content

Students were particularly attentive to finding songs that conveyed the mood and emotion of their stories. “It’s so hard to find the music,” Ahmed expressed to me at one point. He was searching for music that was “first sad” and “next happy.” He wanted the song to be in Somali (“because it’s good in my language”), but through his YouTube search found “Somali songs they don’t have sad.” While looking for music on YouTube, Narun (age 19) told me he needed a “sad song” for the beginning of his story and a “happy,” “challenging song” for the end of his story. When he found a song that he wanted to use on YouTube, he told me, “It’s so sad, emotion song.” It was also an “India song,” suitable for his narrative about leaving Sri Lanka, his home country. Li wanted to use piano music in his story, explaining to me how it “make you sad, make you happy,” adding, “it’s very peace.” Daborah and Farrah also came to the same conclusion about the various moods and tones evoked through piano music. In this conversation, Daborah had just expressed to Farrah that she desired classical music without words.

Daborah: “I like the sound for violin.”

Farrah: “is sad”

Daborah: “in the finish [of my story], there is something is happy, need another music”

Farrah: “Violin is so sad”

Daborah: “You can use piano. Sometimes sad...”

In their digital stories, Li, Daborah, and Farrah all used piano music that is typically used for relaxation purposes.

Audio volume control

The students also learned about the need to lower the volume of the music in their stories so people would be able to hear their voiceover clearly.

Spatial

Experimenting with spatial design

Students experimented with spatial design particularly as they added text to their digital stories. For instance, for his last slide, Ahmed selected an image of students wearing graduation attire, sitting on several rows of chairs. The bottom of the photo is captioned “students who graduated from Amoud University” (a university in Somalia). Ahmed typed the words “Thanks for watching short my movie” on the image, followed by the name of the song he had used in his story. I suggested he add a space separating the closing comment from the song title. The final version of his slide had the song title nicely placed at the top of the slide, and his “thank you” comment at the bottom of the slide right above the photo caption. He continued to take spatial design into consideration as he placed text onto his opening slide. This slide has a black and white photo of Ahmed smiling widely while he sits on a chair. The photo shows him from the chest upwards. Ahmed titled his digital story “about my goal,” and moved these words to the bottom right hand side of the image so as not to cover the image itself. He then skipped down one line, writing “my name is ahmed” on one line, followed by “welcome to my short movie” on the line directly below. His name and welcome message are placed at the very bottom of the image in red font resting over his black suit jacket.

Farrah’s opening image showed a woman wearing a red apron and a white chef’s hat, holding out a tin of muffins with the palm out, her other hand facing outward as if to present them. The entire background is a soft blue. Farrah typed the title “learning to cook” across the middle of the image. She and Daborah decided together that it would be better to move the text to the top of the slide so as not to obstruct the image. On the final slide of Leyla’s digital story, a woman stands outside with her arms enthusiastically raised in the air and a smile on her face. Leyla added words to the top and bottom of the image, framing the woman. At the top, she inserted the sentences “Now I am so happy. / Everything is so exciting.” At the bottom of the image, she listed the music she had used.

Other Communication Modes

Engaging with digital tools

Through producing their digital stories, the students were also able to engage with a number of digital tools. Students spent time searching for images using Google, and learned

to refine their search keywords. Li, for example, typed “wasting time” into the Google search box, and then specified “student wasting time.” Mr. Scott showed Farrah how she could type Arabic words into Google Translate, then search for the translated English word using Google images. Using this method, she was able to locate an image of a “dolma” for her story about learning to cook.

Students who used PowerPoint to organize their ideas also gained more familiarity with this program. Leyla choose to storyboard using PowerPoint because “you can send it to your email.” With the assistance of Narun, her classmate, she learned how to delete photos from PowerPoint slides, and cut and paste text. Daborah, who told me, “using computer is so bad for me,” learned how to copy the images she had inserted into PowerPoint (which she had prematurely deleted from the computer) and save them to her desktop. Learning to use the PhotoStory 3 program also involved uploading image files, sequencing images, recording a voiceover through a microphone, and uploading music.

Throughout the course of the project, students also downloaded photos from Facebook, emailed themselves photos, saved photos to their flashdrives, and renamed the photos on their flashdrives. (When Noor showed Mr. Scott the images she had found on Google images, he exclaimed, “Great! You’re finding them and saving them no problem!”) Students also gathered around the scanner as I demonstrated how Daborah could scan her handmade vest for her story about learning to knit.

Site of Audience

The students knew their stories would be shown on a SmartBoard to an audience of classmates, teachers, parents, and Welcome Centre staff members at the Welcome Centre. As the students worked on their digital stories, many revealed an awareness of their future audience. Lucas, for instance, demonstrated a sensitivity towards the histories, knowledge, and needs of his audience as he considered how they would receive the content of his story. While he wrote his story, Lucas wondered aloud to me about what might be interesting to the audience. He asked me if I thought they would be interested in hearing about his life in Brazil, or whether it would be more interesting to them to hear more about what he has achieved since leaving the country. While working on his story, Lucas produced for me the photos of Brazil he wanted to include in his story, telling me, “Just to show them.” He later expressed to me that he thought it would be best to begin his digital story with a photo of himself,

reasoning that it would not make sense to show a picture of himself later on in the story, telling the audience that was him.

Research Question 2: In What Ways Does This Digital Storytelling Project Promote Positive Identities for Students?

Site of Production and Site of Image

Student Identities in the Classroom

Teachers learn about/ take an interest in students' identities

By starting the DST project with the “About Me” activity, teachers invited students one by one to share their interests, skills, knowledge, and cultural background, as well as how they like to express themselves and learn information. For example, Lucas from Brazil described himself as a “student,” “worker,” “brother,” and “male.” He described himself as “honest,” “funny,” “happy,” and “responsible.” He wrote that he enjoys “soccer,” “TV,” “work,” and “movie,” and that he speaks “Portuguese,” “Spanish,” and “English.” For the ways he likes to express and learn ideas, he circled the icons/ images representing “Facebook,” “Skype,” “YouTube,” “instant chat,” “listening to music,” “speaking with people,” “taking photos,” “talking on the phone,” and “watching TV.” Daborah from Iraq identified herself as a “sister” and “daughter” who is “happy” and “honest.” Narun, from Sri Lanka, shared that he is an “honest person,” writing, “I listen music and play cricket.” Noor from Somalia called herself a “girl,” “sister,” and “friend.” Ahmed, from Malaysia via Somalia, noted, “I speak 5 languages,” listing them as “Chinese,” “Arabic,” “Somali,” “English,” and “Malaysia.” He stated that he likes to “read,” “write,” and “dance” (see Figure 7).

The “About Me” activity provided a welcoming environment for teachers to enthusiastically ask follow-up questions, both while the students presented their “About Me” cards to the class and after the activity. Upon learning that Li spoke “Chinese” during this activity, I afterwards asked him “Mandarin or Cantonese?” “Both,” he replied. “Both!” I responded, impressed. “Then you speak 3 languages!” He smiled shyly.

While helping students work on their projects, teachers were quite interested to learn more information about their particular achievements. Farrah happily told me about learning to make a cabbage dish. Juan played me a song that he had recorded with his band in Guatemala. (He had planned to use this song in his digital story but was unable to upload it to

PhotoStory 3.) Teachers also asked students about their lives in their home countries as we looked through the photographs they had brought from home or downloaded from their Facebook accounts. All the students were more than eager to answer our questions.

Figure 7. Ahmed’s “About Me” card

Students learn about/ take an interest in other students' identities

collaboratively on their projects in class. Students also took an interest in watching the films their classmates produced. “Yaqub, I wanna see your movie, man,” Ahmed called out on the last day of the project. As Ahmed proudly showed his digital story to his friend Abdullahi, the two of them chatted in Somali about the content of the story.

Students learn about/ express own identity

The focus of the students’ accomplishment stories fell into two categories: some students shared a specific accomplishment such as learning to cook, knit, speak English, or develop mechanics skills; other students told about leaving their home countries and successfully beginning a new life in Canada. To tell their stories, some students brought in artifacts from home that demonstrated an aspect of their identities. Juan brought in some handwritten lyrics he had recently written about his future goals, to scan and use in his story. Daborah also impressed her teachers and classmates by bringing a vest from home she had knit herself. She scanned the vest and used this image as the opening slide in her story.

Collaborative Work Among Students

Throughout the project, the teachers and I observed much collaboration among the students. Each class, Juan and Lucas sat together, and Lucas translated class instructions to Juan. Although Lucas came from Portuguese-speaking Brazil, he told me he spoke “60%” of Spanish. Lucas also helped Juan to correct the English translation he had copied from Google Translate. Similarly, Farrah and Daborah sat side by side every class and worked on many aspects of their digital stories collaboratively. They would work together on Farrah’s project, and then on Daborah’s project, particularly when storyboarding in PowerPoint and producing their digital stories using PhotoStory 3. Daborah’s English was stronger than Farrah’s, and she helped Farrah write her script in English. They discussed sentences together in Arabic, Daborah help Farrah with the English translation orally, and Farrah wrote it down.

Although Ahmed struggled to get started with the project (see discussion of “Challenges” in Chapter 6), once he understood a task, he was keen to impart his knowledge to his classmates who needed assistance. Mr. Scott asked Ahmed if he would explain the project to Noor; he explained it to her using Somali and subsequently helped her search for images. He also explained the project to Zula (age 19) in Somali when she returned to class after having been absent for multiple days.

With Narun's expertise in computer technology, the students and teachers regularly called on him for assistance. He helped students to save their completed digital stories, and find music on YouTube. Sitting beside Narun, Leyla would often ask him computer questions, such as how to delete an image from a PowerPoint slide. When Ahmed needed help adjusting the volume on his voiceover recording, I asked Narun if he would help him. "Maybe I can be a teacher!" Narun remarked.

Students Feel Pride and Affirmation in Their Achievements

When Ahmed completed his digital story, he watched it at his desk several times with a big smile. "I'm awesome!" he said to his friend Abdullahi. "Miss, thank you!" he happily called to Ms. Wagner, who had scribed his story for him, when she entered the classroom.

Students expressed pride in their accomplishments in their digital stories. Li shared how he had been "*negative*," "*shy*," and "*confused about future*" prior to moving to Canada a year ago. When he arrived in Canada, he "*didn't have friends*," had "*limited English*," and "*didn't understand some class*." He concludes his narrative stating, "*Since I went in [the B2S] program, I am not shy anymore. I'm more confident. I improve on my English. I make friends. I am happier than at high school. I got my plan for my future.*" He shows the image of two hands holding up a sign that reads "Stay Positive!" against a blue sky with soft white clouds. He continues, "*I can feel what I had change...this year. I am a good student in my teachers' eyes. I am successful in my eyes now.*" Here, he uses a black and white image of a toddler clenching his first with an expression of accomplishment (the same image that Yaqub used in colour for the final slide of his digital story; see Figure 10).

In his digital story, Lucas explains "*I came to Canada, I need to start everything again – new friends, new language, new culture*" – and "*make new friends.*" He says, "*many people said to me that I never could learn a new language. They said I never could make new friends, stuff like that... I never give up. I knew that was hard, but not impossible. And now I have many friends in Canada. And now I have one job. I'm enjoying this new life. And what language am I speaking?*" He shows the image of a Caucasian man dress in a suit writing the words IDEA → PLAN → ACTION in bold, red font on a glass wall. In the background, Abba begin to sing the words "I have a dream..."

Daborah told the story of learning to knit. Her friend had suggested she take up his hobby when she found herself "*[sitting] at home without anything to do*" while other people

were “*studying*.” She expresses that it was “*hard in the beginning*,” but concludes her story by declaring “*I am so proud that I learned to knit*.” She shows a close up image of two hands holding a knitting needle and a bright red piece of knit wool. In Farrah’s story, she talked about learning to cook. She expresses how she “*didn’t like cooking*” and that cooking “*is not easy*,” but with some assistance from her mom explains, “*Now I can cook*.” She shows the image of a plate of well-prepared dolma stacked in the shape of a triangle.

Leyla’s success story is about achieving her goal of learning to speak English. She had met some Canadians “*speaking English very fast*” when she was young and decided she wanted to learn English “*to make bigger my life*.” She concludes her narrative, explaining, “*When I was coming to Canada, I can’t understand anything. I go high school and I don’t have friends. And I don’t know anyone. Now I can understand everything and I have a lot of friends and I can work and I can help my family*.” She uses the image of a Caucasian woman in a soft pink sweater standing outside with her arms outstretched in the shape of a V above her head. Her face is turned to the left, and she is smiling with her eyes closed.

Site of Audience

After the students completed their digital stories, the Welcome Centre held a screening event, which Ms. Mehta, in our interview, called “such an important event” and “a very important piece to the students’ experience in the project” (interview, Feb 27, 2014). The Welcome Centre invited their teachers and staff, as well as students’ parents to attend. The event took place on a Friday afternoon two weeks after the B2S school term had ended. Nine of the students came to the Welcome Centre to attend the screening, nervous and excited to share their projects.

At the beginning of the screening, students drew numbers to determine the presentation order. One by one I showed the students’ digital stories on the SmartBoard, and the teachers could not help but notice the expressions on the students’ faces as they saw their accomplishments highlighted on the big screen – both the personal accomplishments they shared in their narratives and the success of producing a short film. Some beamed with happiness. Others shyly put their head down, smiling. After we showed each digital story, the student who made it stood up, and everyone applauded to congratulate him or her. Ms. Mehta remarked how “it was so evident that there was a sense of pride and accomplishment” (interview, Feb 27, 2014).

When the students had all presented their stories, Ms. Wagner told them she noticed a reoccurring theme: “I didn’t give up.” Ahmed referred to this when I spoke with him at the end of the screening event. He told me that he had not given up. He said he was now going to attend Adult Education, and then proceed to college. “You’ll see!” he said. We concluded the afternoon by celebrating the students’ achievements (including their completion of a school term) with cake and snacks.

Chapter 5: Case Studies of Yaqub and Abdullahi

In this chapter, I provide a detailed account of the DST process and digital stories of two students, Yaqub and Abdullahi. I describe their individual approaches to multimodal composing, with emphasis on how and why each student intentionally selected and combined different modalities to convey meaning. I begin with some background information on each student and then describe, in turn, the student's multimodal literacy engagement and positive identities cultivated through their participation in the project. Unlike the previous chapter, the first section on multimodal literacy is not broken down according to modes or emerging themes so as to give a more fluid sense of the student's composing process. The second section, however, is separated according to the same themes used in the previous chapter, that is, cultural identities in class, collaborative work, and pride and affirmation in achievements. I organized both sections under the broader headings of the sites of production, "image" (the digital story), and audience (Rose, 2001), though there is considerable overlap between sites.

Yaqub and Abdullahi's stories represent the two types of digital stories that participants created. Yaqub's story falls into the category of a narrative about successful immigration, while Abdullahi's story focuses upon learning a particular skill. As in the previous chapter, I use italics to indicate words or sentences from the students' voiceover.

Yaqub

Background Information

Yaqub (age 18) was born in Iraq, and moved with his family to Syria in 2010. He then moved to Canada in 2013 and began attending the Welcome Centre. Upon arrival in Canada, Yaqub had almost no English language ability but was able to read and write in Arabic (his L1). His English skills have grown immensely over the past year. Mr. Scott describes Yaqub as "someone who's quite keen, very driven for success," "very motivated," and "a hard worker" (excerpts from interview, Feb 26, 2014). Ms. Wagner observed that "he doesn't like to be pushed into an area where he's not comfortable," but will "move into those [areas] on his own if he...feels safe" (interview, May 5, 2014).

On his "About Me" card, Yaqub describes himself as "a brother" who is "happy" and "active." He specifies that he enjoys "sports" and speaks "Arabic," "English" and "a let bat of Turkich [a little bit of Turkish]." He likes to express and learn ideas through Facebook,

Instagram, YouTube, instant chat, reading, listening to music, talking to people, taking photographs, and acting. Yaqub specified to me that he most prefers the visual mode in daily communication. He said he uses Youtube “for everything, almost...my work, my English,” and explained, “I like to think before everything that I do” (perhaps referring to visualization) (interview, Feb 26, 2014). Indeed, Yaqub told Ms. Wagner during class that he sees things in pictures that others do not often see. He also mentioned to me during our interview, “I like to write but I’m so lazy to write... On the computer I write. But I don't like to write by my hand” (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

Multimodal Literacy Engagement

Site of Production

Table 6. Yaqub’s digital story

	Script	Image	Notes
1	<i>It was November 9th, 2010.</i>	Photo of Middle Eastern man’s face. He wears a white dress shirt and suit jacket. His face is tilted toward the left. He is gazing in that direction, looking pensive. Tears are forming in the bottom of his eyes.	Text: Title “Impossible is nothing” at the bottom of slide in blue font Audio: Turkish classical music
2	<i>I still remember that day when some people asked my father to leave the country.</i>	Close up image of young boy’s face. His right hand is covering his right eye. His left hand is positioned to cover his left eye, but his eye peaks through his fingers. He looks serious, sad, and frightened.	
3	<i>We start up to pack up our clothes and the passports to go outside the country.</i>	We see the back of a man wearing jeans and a white t-shirt. He carries a black backpack over his left shoulder and rolls a suitcase behind him with his right hand. His head is cast downward. He walks on a white floor, which gradually becomes an endless blue-grey sky with clouds.	

	Script	Image	Notes
4	<i>I was so sad because I had to leave my friends and my beautiful city.</i>	Yaqub and his cousin sit next to each other in chairs. Yaqub extends his left arm behind his cousin. They are dressed casually and are smiling. The cousin holds a can of pop in his right hand and some food in his left hand.	
5	<i>We moved to Syria. Everything was good. I getting a job and a good place to live.</i>	A photo of a city in Syria, with the Syrian flag waving on a pole in the centre of the photo.	
6	<i>Then the war start in Syria. It was so bad to live there at that time.</i>	There is a large green tank in the centre of photo. Three men stand on top of the tank. Approximately ten men stand on the ground near the tank. Some of the men in the lower left hand side are wearing military vests.	Audio: Violins enter the piece in a crescendo.
7	<i>Me and my father lost our job. To live in Syria started to be harder and harder.</i>	A man crouches on the ground against a wall. His knees are bent towards his head and his feet are crossed. His arms are folded and his head is facing down, resting on his left arm. He is barefoot. He sits on a wooden floor in a very small room. Scenery of grass and clouds is painted on the walls of the room. There is a tree painted on the back wall on the far left side.	
8	<i>We stayed in Syria for three years, waiting for a call from the immigration of Canada. Those three years were the worst three years of my life.</i>	There is a black silhouette of a lone person walking through a desert. The sand stretches on seemingly endlessly over hills. The man leaves footprints in the sand as he walks. The sun is breaking through the clouds at the top of the image.	
9	<i>One day, early at the morning, we get the phone</i>	A close up of a breakfast table. There is a bright glass	

	Script	Image	Notes
	<i>call.</i>	of orange juice in the centre of the photo on a mat. To one side there is a croissant. On the other side is a white cup filled with tea. Behind the orange juice is a cream holder and some other food items which are blurred.	
10	<i>I was so happy and so excited to go and get the passports.</i>	A young child wearing a red fleece jacket plays in a pile of leaves on a clear day. The child's arms are stretched upwards as if he or she has just thrown leaves in the air. Leaves fall down around the child. The child has a wide smile.	
11	<i>We left Syria and moved to Canada. I was so excited to meet a new people and to know a different culture.</i>	Yaqub stands in the airport at a window overlooking the runways. There is a British Airways plane behind him. He is dressed casually and has a slight smile.	
12	<i>Canada is so beautiful country. I am so happy because I moved to here.</i>	A photo taken from the Stanley Park seawall in Vancouver, overlooking downtown Vancouver. Two people ride on a tandem bike. It is a sunny day with a nearly clear sky.	
13	<i>My goal now is to graduation from the school and make my parents proud of me. I want to be a successful person in my life.</i>	A toddler stands on the beach making a fist which is full of sand. He has an accomplished look on his face. This image is a common meme known as "Success Kid."	Text: "thanks of your attention" is written at the bottom of the image in black font.

Yaqub put a great deal of effort into the project out of class as well as in class, where he often sat wearing his headphones and working diligently on his computer. Ms. Wagner commented how Yaqub "was very directed" and "knew where he was going" with his project (excerpts from interview, May 5, 2014). Mr. Scott observed, "He was really engaging with

the idea of [DST] and really wanted to make a good story for himself” (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

The first thing Yaqub did when beginning his project was to look through his Facebook photos. He explained that he started using Facebook while in Syria. He deleted many photos from his life when he moved to Canada “‘cause there’s a bad memory,” but knew that he had some photos remaining on Facebook. He turned to these “to remember, to refresh my memory, because I almost forget that” (excerpts from interview, Feb 26, 2014).

On the second day of the project, Yaqub began to write his narrative in English on a piece of paper. Interestingly, when I asked him why he had chosen to write his ideas in English instead of Arabic, he explained that his movie-related vocabulary is cognitively stored in the English language:

Y: I think if I use the Arabic that will be, it’s more hard for me to tell that story.

L: In Arabic? Really. Okay, why?

Y: Because, I like to watch movies and all the movies that I watch [are] in English.

So all my ideas are from the movies... And the words is in English. (interview, Feb 26, 2014)

He also added he is learning English so writing in this language would be beneficial for him.

Yaqub was absent on the third day the class worked on the project. On the fourth day, he began to compile images to use in his digital story. Yaqub was keen to capture the emotions of his narrative through the images he selected. He searched through Google images using keywords (adjectives and abstract nouns) typed in the Arabic script such as “excited picture,” “happy picture,” “scared feeling,” “lost,” “success,” and “sad and angry.” He saved images from his Facebook account that pertained to his story. He also wrote one of his cousins who he was close to in Iraq (now living in the USA). He explained the project he was working on and asked his cousin to send a photo of the two of them together on a particularly memorable evening in Iraq.

For Yaqub, using images in his digital story was an important tool to communicate complex emotions that were challenging for him to express in words. He shared with me how he expressed feelings of anger in his narrative through his choice of images.

L: Were there any modes that you tried to use but were a bit hard for you?

Y: The angry one. Try to be angry.

L: Can you talk about that?

Y: I can't be that, I'm not that angry person. Yeah, I'm angry, but when I be angry I just keep it inside me, yeah that's why I try to. And there's my story, there's a lot of situation that anyone supposed to be angry about, like you lose your job and like two years without job, without money...

...L: So how did you show that anger in your story? How did you tell people about that anger?

Y: By the pictures. I put the picture for a man, he's just sit and he's silent, don't talk to anyone. And another one, he's lost in the desert (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

During this fourth class, Yaqub began to work on his storyboard. He selected a paper-based storyboard design, on which he wrote the frame description, narration, and media list of one slide per page. He also started to search for music on YouTube. Yaqub had decided he wanted to use Turkish music ("It's my favourite music. It's what I like," interview, Feb 26, 2014). He thought Turkish music would be good for his story because "it's like sad and it's happy and it's excited at the same time" (interview, Feb 26, 2014). Yaqub considered a number of Turkish songs he thought might be suitable for his story. He considered the loudness of the singing; in class, Yaqub played me a clip from one song and asked me if I thought it would be too loud together with his voiceover. He also listened to each song while reading his script in order to determine the song's compatibility with his story. He told me he had opted not to use one particular song because the emotion in the song did not connect well with his story from beginning to end. He explained, "[When] I play it and I just use my headphone and listen and read to my story, it was all sad" (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

Yaqub listened to the song that he eventually selected for his story several times before deciding it was "good" for his project. He said, "I turn on the music, my headphone, and I read...my story, and I found that it's really good...when it's changed from the sad to exciting to the happy" (interview, Feb 26, 2014). This song, he believed, "fit" and was well "connected to [his] story." He felt it captured the elements of sadness and "faith" which arose throughout the narrative. He said, "my story starts sad and there's a faith at the end... It's like the same with the music. Starts very sad and there's happy at the end" (excerpts from interview, Feb 26, 2014).

Yaqub completed his storyboard on the final class of the project. As he copied his script to his storyboard, he made some slight adaptations to the script. He explained, “When I start, I just write my story, but when I listened to the music and when I see the picture I realize that I need to change some. I didn’t change what happened to me there [the content of the story], but I just changed the words or the way how I’ll say it.” When I asked him to explain, he said “I’ll say it like when has to be more sad, more happy [in the narrative]” because “when I write it, I just write it like someone who just tell you, just talking” (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

I also worked with Yaqub during this time to correct grammatical errors in his script. His errors were largely related to spelling and verb tense. I wrote the correct spelling over top of certain words. He also made numerous errors of past tense and we talked about these errors together in the context of his story.

Yaqub then began to assemble his digital story using PhotoStory 3. He imported the photos he had selected and decided he needed to add a few additional photos. He also took care to sequence his photos so that the images blended well with the music. The sixth image in Yaqub’s digital story is a large tank, which represents the beginning of the war in Syria. At one point in the song, violins suddenly enter in a crescendo. Yaqub wanted this particular part of the song to coincide with the image of the war tank to create the feeling that something dramatic had begun to happen. To time this effect, he deleted one of the photos he had previously uploaded to PhotoStory 3. He furthermore strategically placed the titles of his opening and closing slides on the images. For example, on the final slide, a male toddler holds a little fist full of sand in the air, wearing an expression of accomplishment. Yaqub typed the words “thanks for your attention” onto the slide, and moved the text to the bottom of the image so as not to cover the child’s face. The text font is black to contrast with the child’s green and white shirt.

With Ms. Wagner’s help, Yaqub recorded his voiceover. He asked Ms. Wagner a couple of questions about pronunciation prior to reading. In addition, as mentioned in Chapter 4, Ms. Wagner talked with Yaqub about how he could use his voice to communicate the emotion in his story. Yaqub was unsure if he could record his voiceover because he was close to tears. Ms. Wagner let him know that it was okay to include his emotions in his voice, and guided him to consider how he could use his voice to communicate the emotion

associated with particular slides. She commented to me in our interview, “I think that was part of made Yaqub’s [digital story] so [powerful]; He really did an emotional voice for each one of his pictures” (interview, May 5, 2014). Although he found “[the] speaking... a little bit hard,” Yaqub was pleased with his narration; he told me, “I speak very well that time, because I just have to read and was really good. Just it’s fun thing that time” (interview, Feb 26, 2014). Yaqub made a few minor grammatical errors while reading his script (see Table 6); however, for the most part he used the past tense (which we had discussed together) correctly.

Throughout the process of selecting images and music and composing his script, Yaqub continually considered how the different communicative modes meaningfully blended together as a complex, multidimensional piece. For instance, when I asked him how he had decided which pictures to use, he told me “I return back to my story, I read it, and after that I listen to some music.” He added that, in general, he “tried to take the picture more connected for the speaking, more than the music, because the music is just about the emotion.” When I asked him how the music he used worked together with the other modes, such as the images and the voiceover, he astutely responded, “They work like a team” (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

When I interviewed Yaqub after the project, the modes he was able to recall using were “the music” and “the pictures,” “[and] the way how I talk there” (excerpts from interview, Feb 26, 2014). This reflects his interest in the visual, listening to music, as well as talking to people and acting, as he indicated on his About Me card. It was these three modes that Yaqub also expressed, during our interview, were the most enjoyable, memorable and challenging for him. For Yaqub, “It was the hard thing to choose the music,” and he spent a great deal of time searching for a good song. However, he explained that he enjoyed the process (indeed finding it most memorable) “because I’m looking for something I like.” He also liked working with images, telling me, “It was so fun... there’s picture that I didn’t see before, long time.” Looking at those images made him feel “sad, but like so happy because it’s still remember those things” (excerpts from interview, Feb 26, 2014).

Site of Image

Yaqub’s story begins with the simple but poignant sentence “*It was November 9th, 2010.*” In the background, we hear a Turkish classical piece (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWZ9UzT-adM>). The image on the screen is a close-up

of a Middle Eastern man's face. He wears a white dress shirt and suit jacket. His face is tilted toward the left, and he gazes in that direction, looking pensive. Tears are forming in the bottom of his eyes. Blue text at the bottom of the slide reads "Impossible is nothing." The man in the image is Yaqub's favourite actor. He told me in our interview that he really admires this man because "He is good acting, he have a nice charisma, he's a very good guy. He help the people and he's stylish, I think." He continued, "He's kind of rich because he's acting, and he tried to build the mosque and schools" (interview, Feb 26, 2014). Yaqub liked this image because the man is "sad, and he's not crying... He's almost there." He explained to me, "He don't cry but his eye... The tears here... Likes more sad than you see someone crying. Like you know, he's keep it inside him" (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

The title on this first slide, he clarifies, relates to the greater theme of the story, but not to this particular image. He deliberately chose to use this photograph at the beginning of his story in order to communicate a sense of sadness, in spite of the hopeful title ("Impossible is nothing") and calming classical Turkish music. He explained, "[The] beginning was need to be sad. So if you just heard the video and music without the pictures...there's no explaining for it" (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

As the film changes to the next image, the voiceover continues, "*I still remember that day when some people asked my father to leave the country.*" We see a close-up of a young boy's face. His hands are covering his face, but his left eye peaks through his fingers. He looks serious, sad, and frightened. Yaqub selected this photo because, as he explained, it communicates to the viewer that "he still remember" even though "he don't like to remember" (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

Yaqub's digital story narration continues, "*We start up to pack up our clothes and the passports to go outside the country.*" This image on this slide shows the back of a man who is carrying a black backpack over his left shoulder and rolling a suitcase behind him with his right arm. His head is cast downward. He walks on a white floor that gradually becomes an endless blue-grey sky with clouds. About this image, Yaqub said to me, "This guy just pick up his stuff and he don't know where is he go. There's no place to go to, like he don't know where's his direction" (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

As the slide changes, Yaqub's voice narrates, "*I was so sad because I had to leave my friends and my beautiful city.*" The image is of Yaqub and his cousin, who he refers to in our

interview (Feb 26, 2014) as his “friend,” sitting next to each other in chairs on a street in Baghdad, Iraq. (This is the photo Yaqub asked his cousin to send him.) Yaqub extends his left arm behind his cousin. They are dressed casually and smiling. The cousin holds a can of pop in his right hand and some food in his left hand. Yaqub fondly reminisced to me in our interview, “We used to walk together. It was like this picture was at 11 at night. Nobody crazy enough to take a picture and to stay on street at this time!... We just came straight from the work. And he just, I found the job for him. And this was the first time he get paid, and he invited me to eat” (interview, Feb 26, 2014). This is only image Yaqub has of himself with his cousin.

In the next slide, Yaqub narrates, “*We moved to Syria. Everything was good. I getting a job and a good place to live.*” We see a photo of a city in Syria, with the Syrian flag waving on a pole in the centre of the photo. Yaqub used this photograph because “This is normal, it’s quiet. That’s before the war” (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

Figure 8. Image of war tank in Syria



Leal-Olivas, D. (2013). *Syria-conflict*. [Photograph]. Chicago, IL: Getty Images. Retrieved from <http://www.gettyimages.ca/detail/news-photo/syrian-rebels-gather-around-a-t-72-tank-captured-from-news-photo/161448654#>. Reproduced with permission of DANIEL LEAL-OLIVAS/AFP/Getty Images

The following slide shows a large green tank in the centre of photo, to which one’s eye is drawn (see Figure 8). Three men stand on top of the tank. Approximately ten men stand on the ground near the tank. Some of the men in the lower left hand side wear military vests. We hear violins in a striking crescendo. Yaqub’s voice narrates, “*Then the war start in Syria. It was so bad to live there at that time.*” According to Yaqub, the crescendoing music communicates that life has becoming “more challenging,” that something is going to happen

(Yaqub refers to this as “faith”) (excerpts from interview, Feb 26, 2014). He explained to me in our interview:

Y: [The music] start to be more loud, and...it's like sad and the same time it's not very happy, there's like faith in the music.

L: There's faith in the music. What do you mean?

...Y: Like there's something will be, there's the end of war... There's the picture when I show you the guy with the bag and he don't know where he's going. But with the music, there's this part, you know there's something, there...

L: There's something coming.

Y: There's something coming. And you don't know its bad or good. (interview, Feb 26, 2014)

The slide changes, and Yaqub's voiceover continues, “*Me and my father lost our job. To live in Syria started to be harder and harder.*” In the accompanying image, a man crouches on the ground against a wall. His knees are bent towards his head and his feet are crossed. His arms are folded and his head is facing down, resting on his left arm. He is barefoot. He sits on a wooden floor in a very small room. On the walls of the room are painted grass and clouds. There is a tree painted on the back wall on the far left side. In our interview, Yaqub referred to this image as “the angry one” (excerpt from interview, Feb 26, 2014). He explained to me in our interview how this image helped him visually communicate his feelings of anger in the story:

Y: I don't like to put someone...look like angry, because that's mean you're give up. And my story is about the “Impossible is nothing.” So...[the man in the image is] just silent and just sitting there and don't do nothing because he can't do nothing. There is nothing to do.

L: But you like that it doesn't show his face?

Y: Yes, and you don't know if he's crying, what he's doing.

L: ...So how does this picture help communicate the emotions?

Y: ...you don't know if he's crying now, what he's doing. Is he smile? (interview, Feb 26, 2014)

Yaqub's voiceover goes on: “*We stayed in Syria for three years, waiting for a call from the immigration of Canada. Those three years were the worst three years of my life.*”

There is a black silhouette of a lone person walking through a desert (see Figure 9). The sand stretches on seemingly endlessly over hills. The man leaves footprints in the sand as he walks. The sun is breaking through the clouds at the top of the image. Yaqub told me he selected this photo to show the sense of hopelessness and directionlessness he felt as a result of staying in Syria for this amount of time. “It’s like someone lost in the desert,” he said. “It’s like no job, nothing. So it’s like someone, you just lost, you don’t know, you can’t go back, and you can’t go, and you go up but there’s nothing happen to you. You just walk, walk” (interview, Feb 26, 2014). This image powerfully communicates feelings of wandering aimlessly with no sign of anything coming ahead.

Figure 9. Image of person lost in the desert



livetalent. (2007). *Walking in the Gobi*. [Photograph]. Calgary, Canada: iStockphoto LP. Retrieved from <http://www.istockphoto.com/photo/walking-in-the-gobi-4295733?st=02e391d>. Reproduced with permission of ©iStock.com/livetalent

Then, Yaqub narrates “*One day, early at the morning, we get the phone call.*” There is a close up of a breakfast table. There is a bright glass of orange juice in the centre of the photo on a mat. To one side there is a croissant. On the other side is a white cup filled with tea. Behind the orange juice is a cream holder and some other food items, which are blurred. This image shows both the literal time of which Yaqub is speaking (“It’s at the morning so that’s look like a breakfast,” interview, Feb 26, 2014), as well as the emotion of happiness he felt at that time. He carefully communicated happiness by showing the image of something that he believes many people associate with this feeling: food. He explained to me, “[The] thing that make the people happy all the time is the food, so when they see the food and there’s juice, oh there’s something good will happen” (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

Yaqub's voiceover continues, *"I was so happy and so excited to go and get the passports."* We see a young child wearing a red fleece jacket playing in a pile of leaves on a clear day. The child's arms are stretched upwards as if he or she has just thrown leaves in the air. Leaves fall down around the child. The child has a wide smile. In our interview, Yaqub juxtaposed this image with the image of the young fearful child covering his eyes at the beginning of the narrative; he explained, "The boy is so happy. It's not like the first one, with his hand on his face" (interview, Feb 26, 2014). To Yaqub, the image of this child gleefully throwing leaves in the air indicates that "he's surprised to be happy" (interview, Feb 26, 2014) – a feeling which Yaqub undoubtedly experienced himself upon receiving news that he would finally be moving with this family to Canada.

In the next slide, Yaqub narrates, *"We left Syria and moved to Canada. I was so excited to meet a new people and to know a different culture."* In the image, Yaqub is in an airport in London, in transit to Vancouver. He stands at a window overlooking the runways. He points out to me that there is a "British Airways" plane behind him, the company of the flight he took to Canada. He is dressed casually and smiling. Yaqub selected this particular image because it is the only photo he has documenting this trip.

The next image is of the Stanley Park seawall overlooking downtown Vancouver. Two people ride on a tandem bike. It is a sunny day with a nearly clear sky. Yaqub narrates, *"Canada is so beautiful country. I am so happy because I moved to here."* He pointed out to me, in our interview, that this image is "normal," showing a typical day in Vancouver. He explained, "it's just two people on the bike." The image "[doesn't] show you the high buildings, and the fire [fireworks]" (excerpts from interview, Feb 26, 2014).

In the final image, a toddler stands on the beach, making a fist that is full of sand. He has an accomplished look on his face (see Figure 10). This image is a common meme known as "Success Kid." Yaqub narrates, *"My goal now is to graduation from the school and make my parents proud of me. I want to be a successful person in my life."* The bottom of the image reads "thanks of your attention" in black font. Of the image, Yaqub explained, "He's like, 'I'm going to do it! I'm almost there!'" (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

Figure 10. Image of “Success Kid”



Griner, L. (2007). *Why I oughta...* [Photograph]. Retrieved from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/sammyjammy/1285612321/in/set-72157620597747933>. Reproduced with permission of © Laney Griner

Site of Audience

Yaqub was aware, while creating his digital story, that it was going to be shown on a SmartBoard to his classmates and teachers, parents, and Welcome Centre staff members at a screening event held at the Welcome Centre. He knew his future audience was “safe” (based on his experience of the Welcome Centre). It would be comprised of people who cared about and affirmed him, and who would not exploit what he exposed of himself. He decided, on his own, that he wanted to share the story of his successful immigration to Canada; however, as Ms. Wagner said, “He just wasn’t sure how much of his story to tell” (interview, May 5, 2014). Yaqub needed to consider which content and details he felt comfortable including in his story, given his particular audience. It was perhaps his estimation of his audience’s knowledge of his story that prompted him to omit mentioning his home country in his digital story.

In addition, Yaqub crafted his digital story with attentiveness towards his audience’s presumed familiarity with movies. In our interview, Yaqub told me that a captivating film is one in which the audience is unable to predict the film’s (happy) ending. He explained how “every one of us... when we see some things we know that the end is happy, we [do] not care [to] watch. Like the movies, when you see movies, [if] it’s very happy the first ‘til the end, it’s too boring” (interview, Feb 26, 2014). He was therefore quite pleased, as he explained to me, about his audience’s tearful response to the beginning of his film. “They liked the first part, the sad part,” he said, “because the sad parts attack them” (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

Positive Identities

Site of Production and Site of Image

Cultural identities in class

In Yaqub's opinion, this project differed from other school writing activities because of its emphasis on himself and freedom of expression. He told me, "This project was different... [Just] of me talking about me and my way.... Like, in my way...there's nobody told me how I need to [do the project]...there's no rule for it... I just need to do it by ourselves and by my idea and by my thinking" (interview, Feb 26, 2014). For Yaqub, it was helpful for him to communicate his ideas in this way, explaining, "I know who I am, who's my story" (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

In fact, connecting his school assignments to his own knowledge, experience, and interests (as he did through the DST project) is an educational approach that Yaqub recognized would be helpful for him as he continues school at an Adult Education centre, as indicated through the following except from our interview:

L: What tools, like things that you can use – academic tools – did you learn through doing this project...that will help you now as you go to [Adult Education]?

Y: I think thinking, like at the school...when I need to write a paragraph, I start to connect with myself. And [if it connects], that's ok. If it [doesn't] connect, I will connect it with a movie that I saw before... So if they give me something in the school, I will try to connect with the project or myself. (interview, Feb 26, 2014)

Yaqub also liked discovering more about his classmates. He expressed to me how, through the project, he and his classmates "[shared] our information together." He appreciated hearing about and seeing their personal interests, such as "what the picture they are like, what the music do they're like" (excerpts from interview, Feb 26, 2014).

Collaborative work

Throughout the project, Yaqub recalled students helping one another with the English language, with choosing music and photos – "with everything, actually." He said the students often worked collaboratively during other lessons, but not to this extent, explaining "I believe that they are more good at finding the music and the pictures more than the study... when you study you getting bored, but you are look for pictures, that you like, everyone like to" (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

On January 10, 2014, when several students in the class were finishing their digital storytelling projects, Mr. Scott asked Yaqub if he would assist a student from Iraq to search for images. When I asked him how it made him feel to assist his classmate with the project, Yaqub replied, “Special. Professional.” He explained, “When someone ask you to help someone, that’s mean that you’re good at this thing. And you try to do your best” (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

Pride and affirmation in achievements

On the final slide of Yaqub’s digital story, he narrates, “*My goal now is to graduation from the school and make my parents proud of me. I want to be a successful person in my life.*” This statement reflects Yaqub’s sense of overcoming challenges. When I asked him, during our interview, what he had learned through telling his story, he replied, “Never give up” (interview, Feb 26, 2014). He explained how he had spent three years in Syria without work, without enough money for the family, and without access to food and other necessities, telling me how “it was very terrible” (interview, Feb 26, 2014). His sense of achievement is reinforced through the image he shows of the toddler (the “Success Kid” meme) making a strong fist with a look of accomplishment.

Yaqub was pleased with the affirmation of his audience upon watching his film, telling me, “My story, it works.” I asked him, “So what was your goal in making this story, then? You said it worked. What were you trying to achieve?” He explained, “I try to achieve that I can make a movie, actually,” expressing that he “[needed] to do a second part” (i.e., a sequel). Film producers, he explained, make a sequel when people “like [the first] part” (excerpts from interview, Feb 26, 2014).

Site of Audience

Yaqub was one of three students who called the Welcome Centre to inquire about when the digital story screening was happening. On the day of the event, Yaqub’s story was the first I showed to the audience and Ms. Mehta observed that he “showed a great deal of pride and confidence in the presentation” (interview, Feb 27, 2014). Yaqub told me he felt “very happy” at the screening event – “I see it on the big screen, it was very nice.” He also said to me he felt “[a] little bit sad, because I remember my friends.” Seeing his photographs on the big screen was an emotional experience for Yaqub. “I think I was almost crying,” he

told me. He also “felt a little bit angry,” explaining to me “I know that the people I love... I see them here, I can’t see them anymore” (excerpts from interview, Feb 26, 2014).

The audience, passing around tissues and visibly moved by Yaqub’s story, applauded. Yaqub felt that the audience members “were so curious” about him and his story. He explained, “a lot of them asked me about [me], where I’m from, what I did in Syria, because in the video I didn’t say where I’m from” (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

When I asked if Yaqub had shown his digital story to anyone else, he told me his mom had found the film on his computer at home and posted it to her Facebook page. Yaqub’s mom praised his work (“she like it and she said it’s very nice,” interview, Feb 26, 2014), and he was delighted (“I felt very happy because [my family] like it,” interview, Feb 26, 2014). Yaqub also read the comments people posted on his mom’s Facebook page in response to his video. These included comments such as “very nice, good job, keep going,” and reading them made Yaqub feel like a movie star – “That’s make me feel like I’m a Hugh Jackman!” he said (interview, Feb 26, 2014). Because the film was posted to this mom’s Facebook, I can assume that the audience was friends of the family who have at least some knowledge of Yaqub’s background, as well as know him and care about him. In fact, Yaqub mentioned to me how the comment “keep going” is in reference to his acting abilities. He said, “all...the people there they know I’m acting before at the church, so they know...I can. I like to do this” (interview, Feb 26, 2014). His Facebook audience, then, watched his digital story through this particular lens.

When I asked if he had plans to show his digital story to anybody else, Yaqub responded that he would likely show it to his manager at his place of work “and maybe all the staff” (probably on a computer screen). He had asked his manager for permission to be late for work on the day I interviewed him, explaining to her that he had made “a movie” that I was going to ask him some questions about. “[She] told me ‘I want to see,’” he said, adding, “They will like” (excerpts from interview, Feb 26, 2014). I am unclear on the nature of Yaqub’s relationship with his manager and coworkers, and on their knowledge of his life or of refugee issues in general. What is clear, however, is that the manager seems to express a genuine interest in and affirmation of Yaqub’s accomplishments.

Abdullahi

Background Information

Of Somali background, Abdullahi (age 20) was born in Yemen. He had no formal schooling in his country of origin. He arrived in Canada two and a half years ago with a very low English language level, and has been enrolled at the Welcome Centre for the past couple of years. Ms. Mehta describes Abdullahi as “a kind and thoughtful young man.” She said that he “is very dedicated to school” and has worked very hard in the B2S program (excerpts from interview, Feb 27, 2014). As Mr. Scott points out, Abdullahi is “very, very motivated” and he “really wants to succeed” (excerpts from interview, Feb 26, 2014). In addition, Ms. Wagner described him as “a kind of student that wants to do that’s expected of him.” She explained, “He likes to live up to expectation of other people and that’s part of what he prides himself in” (interview, May 5, 2014). Abdullahi is also quite dedicated to his family. As the eldest child in a single-parent home, he has a great deal of family responsibilities. For this reason, he is often absent from class (but responsibly informs the Welcome Centre when he is unable to attend).

On his “About Me” card, Abdullahi describes himself as “happy” and a “nice guy.” Activities that he enjoys include reading, dancing, and playing on the computer. He defines himself as a “student” and a “brother.” He identified his countries of origin as both Somalia and Yemen, and wrote that he speaks “Indan [Indian],” “Somail [Somali],” “English,” and Arabci [Arabic].” He did not circle any icons/images representing the ways he likes to express and learn ideas. However, he told me in our interview (Feb 25, 2014) that he likes to communicate or learn information through “writing.” He also indicated he prefers the visual mode, telling me he likes “how to look at the movie” (interview, Feb 25, 2014). He later added he likes “listening and seeing and reading and writing” (interview, Feb 25, 2014).

Multimodal Literacy Engagement

Site of Production

Table 7. Abdullahi’s digital story

	Script	Image	Notes
1	<i>Hello. My name is Abdullahi (last name). I’m from Yemen.</i>	Photo of Sanaa, Yemen	Text: “Learning about Mechanics / By Abdullahi”

	Script	Image	Notes
			centered at the bottom of the page in white font Audio: fast-paced Somali music
2	<i>When I was 10 years old, my mom and I we went to visit my uncle in Sanaa.</i>	A school-aged boy from the waist up. He is wearing a stripped polo shirt and looks directly at the camera. He holds a long, narrow wooden board with Arabic script written on it.	
3	<i>I stay with my uncle 6 month. He was teaching me how to be a mechanic.</i>	An African man wearing a polo shirt is shown from the chest up. He is wearing a grey polo shirt and standing in a yellow room. He looks at the camera with a bit of a serious expression.	
4	<i>First it was too difficult for me because I did not have more experience.</i>	A black and white photo of an African man wearing casual clothing and sitting cross-legged on the ground. He has an expression of concentration as he focuses on the small mechanical tools he is holding in his hands.	
5	<i>He was teaching me how to use oil and wrench.</i>	A large yellow can with the word “oil” written on its centre. The backdrop of the image is white.	
6		A simple image of a silver wrench against a white backdrop.	
7	<i>Now I know how to fix my bike and a car.</i>	A Caucasian man kneels down fixing the gears on the back tire of his bike. The bike is upside down.	
8	<i>My uncle always he told me, “Abdullahi, you are a good person.”</i>	(Repeat of photo) An African man wearing a polo shirt is shown from the chest up. He is wearing a grey polo shirt and standing in a yellow room. He looks at the camera with a bit of a serious	

	Script	Image	Notes
		expression.	
9	<i>My auntie always she believe in me to do the right thing.</i>	The faces of two African women smiling at the camera and wearing black headscarves.	
10	<i>My mom she came back from the vacation. After I went with my mom in Sanaa.</i>	A smiling African woman wearing a bright blue head covering with stars. She is smiling as she claps her hands together. She is sitting on a chair as part of an audience.	
11	<i>My uncle were not happy about me leaving him alone.</i>	(Repeat of photo) An African man wearing a polo shirt is shown from the chest up. He is wearing a grey polo shirt and standing in a yellow room. He looks at the camera with a bit of a serious expression.	
12	<i>The government sent me and my family to Canada.</i>	A photo of the exterior of the Canadian parliament building in Ottawa.	
13	<i>My goal is to be a mechanic when I finish school.</i>	A beautiful old stone building of a university. The building is in the shape of a U with a perfectly groomed green grass lawn.	
14	<i>As you can see, this is what I wanna be for my life. Thank you very much for your attention and I appreciate (video cuts out).</i>		Text: “Thank you very much for your attention!!!” in red front in the middle of a slide with an all blue background.

Although Abdullahi missed several classes, his focus was strong during the times he worked on the project. As Ms. Wagner commented to me in our interview, “His engagement was one that was he really wanted to finish. He didn’t want it to be left undone...because he likes to fulfill...commitments” (interview, May 5, 2014).

Abdullahi, along with Ahmed, were the only two students in the class who participated in the DST project we did at the Welcome Centre in Spring 2013. That project was based on several writing assignments the students had completed in class about their

school, friends, religion, and hobbies. On the first day of this DST project, Abdullahi asked me, “Miss, where’s the paper to write story?” When I explained to Abdullahi that he could start gathering his ideas through whichever mode he preferred (including writing), he began to search for images from his Facebook account. Abdullahi and Ahmed both struggled to understand the concept of an “accomplishment,” and Ms. Wagner talked to them about this.

On the second day of the project, Abdullahi arrived towards the end of class (with one hour remaining). He used this time to search for images on Google and music on YouTube. He was absent the third and fourth days we worked on the project. On the fifth day, he arrived near the end of the class. Ahmed proudly showed Abdullahi his completed project, and Abdullahi commented to his sister Noor about the colour of the font she selected for her story title on PhotoStory 3.

I sent an email to Mr. Scott asking if Abdullahi would like to make a digital story to show at the screening event with his classmates, and we arranged for me to meet with Abdullahi after school on January 8th. Abdullahi brought the images he had collected thus far, saved to his flashdrive. He continued to search on Google for more images. He asked me how to spell “Yemen,” and, showing me a photo from Google images, told me that he was born in that country. We talked together about the name of the city he was born in and how beautiful the country was. He then pulled up another photo on Google of Middle Eastern men dancing. “This is how they dance,” he told me. We talked about how Abdullahi also knew this style of dancing.

Abdullahi then selected a paper storyboard separated on one page into six parts for images and corresponding text. He selected the first image he wanted to use in his story, and wrote a description underneath. I asked Abdullahi which accomplishment story he had decided to talk about, but he remained unsure of what “accomplishment” meant. I gave him some examples of accomplishments his classmates had decided to share in their stories, and he began to tell me about how his uncle had taught him mechanics. “I bet your friends don’t know this about you,” I told him. He smiled and said they did not.

Abdullahi began to draft his narrative in the script lines of his storyboard. He frequently asked me how to spell words as he wrote. When I spelled the word “stayed” for him, he said “Oh, because it’s the past,” noting the “-ed” ending. I left him alone in the room for approximately ten minutes to allow him the opportunity to write his ideas without

constantly worrying about spelling, and went to the staff room. While in the staff room, Mr. Scott mentioned to me that Abdullahi might need to have his story scribed for him. However, when Mr. Scott and I returned to the classroom, Abdullahi had completed the script for one page of his storyboard. Mr. Scott and I both expressed to Abdullahi how impressed we were. Abdullahi promptly asked me how to spell several more words. After I spelled “mechanic” for him, I observed him spell it correctly later in his story.

Together, Abdullahi and I discussed a few of the grammatical errors he had made in his script. We also talked about how he could expand on his story by adding more details. (“What exactly did your uncle teach you? How did you feel about learning these skills?”). I cut Abdullahi’s storyboard into pieces, and we sequenced his story on a long table. We then numbered the cut pieces of paper and taped them sequentially onto a new piece of paper. I asked him to read what he had written aloud to me, and as he was doing so, he noted some of his persisting errors and made corrections on his script. (e.g., adding the word “my” to “I stayed with uncle six month”).

Abdullahi completed his digital story in class on January 10, 2014. First, he finished his storyboard by searching for images in Google. He searched for images using keywords such as “Yemen people,” “Somalian young man,” “Somalian woman,” and “Somalian mechanic.” He asked me how to save the image files under a different name so they would be easy to locate on his computer. He then searched YouTube for music. Abdullahi wanted to use Iraqi music “because I’m from there!” (He said this music was similar to music from Yemen.) He specified that he wanted “relax music” because “if you put loud music it won’t be comfortable with the story.” He searched for “relaxing music from Iraq,” but was not too keen on the music he listened to. Instead, he searched for music from Yemen, telling me, “I like Yemen. That’s where I was born.” In the end, he selected “the music dancing Arabic...because it connect with my story.” He explained he first part of his story was “sad” and in the end it was “happy” (excerpts from interview, Feb 25, 2014).

I asked Abdhullai about the different approaches he had taken to gathering ideas for his story. For the initial story, he began by searching for images. When he decided to tell the story of his uncle teaching him mechanics, he wrote the story first. He explained to me in our interview, “I tried to research my family information including my mom in the Facebook and elsewhere but then I figure out the easiest was to do my uncle’s mechanic because at that

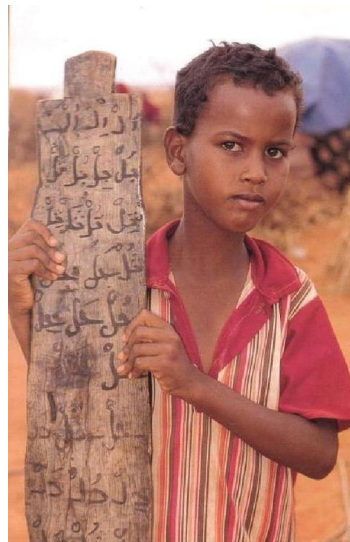
time I was ten years old and he taught me a lot” (interview, Feb 25, 2014, translated from Somali by a Welcome Centre settlement worker). I asked why he had begun writing instead of searching for pictures, and he told me “I did not have a picture that time that I could write about. But I had all the story in my head and I said if I start writing then I will be able to tell” (interview, Feb 25, 2014, translated from Somali by a Welcome Centre settlement worker).

When I asked Abdullahi, in our interview, which modes he had used in his story, he recalled “picture,” “writing,” “and some idea.” Like Yaqub, these reflect the modes Abdullahi told me he most likes to communicate ideas: “writing” and the visual mode (excerpts from interview, Feb 25, 2014).

Site of Image

Abdullahi’s story begins, “*Hello. My name is Abdullahi (last name). I’m from Yemen.*” We see a photo of Sanaa, Yemen. “This is where I grow up,” he told me in our interview. He explained to me, “you need some picture to show the people...where you come from” (interview, Feb 25, 2014). The words “Learning about Mechanics / By Abdullahi” are centered at the bottom (and darkest) portion of the page in distinctive white font. We hear a fast-paced Somali song (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u1iCnBk6SgE>).

Figure 11. Image of Somali boy



Osman. (2008). *Somali boy with prayer tablet*. [Photograph]. Retrieved from http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Somali_boy_with_prayer_tablet.jpg. Reproduced with permission of © Osman, CC BY-SA 3.0.

In the following slide, Abdullahi narrates, “*When I was 10 years old, my mom and I we went to visit my uncle in Sanaa.*” The image is of a school-aged boy holding a long, narrow wooden board with Arabic script written on it (see Figure 11). Abdullahi told me in our interview that did not have a photo of himself as a 10-year-old boy, so he needed to search online. He found this image through a Google search of a boy who looked approximately that age and was of a similar ethnic background as himself. He also pointed out to me that he chose this picture “because he’s writing Hadith” (referring to literature reporting the deeds and sayings of Muhammad) in the Arabic language (interview, Feb 25, 2014).

The story continues, “*I stay with my uncle 6 month. He was teaching me how to be a mechanic.*” We see the image of an African man wearing a polo shirt, standing in a yellow room. He looks at the camera with a slightly serious expression. This man is not Abdullahi’s real uncle (he found this image through searching “Somalian young man”), but he thought he looked similar to his uncle, telling me “my uncle and him they’re same, almost same” (interview, Feb 25, 2014).

Figure 12. Image of Somali mechanic



Weidinger, A. (2011). *Mechanic in Hargeisa, Somaliland*. [Photograph]. Retrieved from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/a-weidinger/6452863879/>. Reproduced with permission of © Alfred Weidinger.

Abhullahi continues, “*First it was too difficult for me because I did not have more experience.*” The black and white image is of an African man wearing casual clothing and

sitting cross-legged on the ground (see Figure 12). The man has an expression of concentration as he focuses on the small mechanical tools he is holding in his hands. Abdullahi told me in our interview, “This picture I chose ‘cause it’s a man confused and he have a hard time fixing cars and that’s why I used this one.” He believes he is confused “‘cause he’s looking at the oil and the wrench” (interview, Feb 25, 2014).

Abdullahi then narrates, “*He was teaching me how to use oil and wrench.*” We see the image of a large yellow can with the word “oil” written on its centre against a white backdrop. This image is followed by that of a silver wrench, also against a simple white backdrop. Abdullahi pointed out to me, “he was teaching me how to...use a wrench and oil so I went to the [Google] and I write it and see picture” (interview, Feb 25, 2014).

In the next slide, Abduhalli tells us, “*Now I know how to fix my bike and a car.*” The image is of a Caucasian man kneeling down to fix the gears on the back tire of his bike. Abdullahi wanted an image of a man fixing a bike to represent that he had learned this skill. I mentioned to Abduhalli that the man in this image was not Somali. He said this was fine; he had tried to find an image of a Somali man fixing a bike but was unable to.

The narrative continues, “*My uncle always he told me, ‘Abdullahi, you are a good person.’*” For this slide, Abdullahi repeated the exact image of the man who resembles his uncle, which he had used for the third slide in his digital story (“Because I’m still talking about my uncle so I use his picture,” interview, Feb 25, 2014). In the next slide, he narrates: “*My auntie always she believe in me to do the right thing.*” (This reflects Abdullahi’s personal desire to please people through meeting their expectations. In this case, he learned the mechanical skills his uncle taught him.) In this image, we see the faces of two Somalian women smiling at the camera and wearing black headscarves. Abdullahi found this image through a Google search, selecting it because the women’s friendliness reminded him of his aunt.

In the following slide, Abdullahi narrates “*My mom she came back from the vacation. After I went with my mom in Sanaa.*” The image shows an African woman wearing a bright blue head-covering with stars. She is smiling as she claps her hands together. She is sitting on a chair as part of an audience. Abdullahi thought this woman looked “almost same” as his mom – “like the smile and her face” (excerpts from interview, Feb 25, 2014).

Abdullahi's voiceover says, "*My uncle were not happy about me leaving him alone.*" Again, we see the same image of the man who looks like Abdullahi's uncle – "Because I still talk about him, and me lefting him in Sanaa [me leaving my uncle in Sanaa]... so we need [his] picture, right?" (interview, Feb 25, 2014).

The next slide is an image of the exterior of the Canadian Parliament Buildings in Ottawa. Abdullahi narrates, "*The government sent me and my family to Canada.*" Abdullahi explained to me that this image shows "the government, you know" (interview, Feb 25, 2014).

The final image is a beautiful old stone building of a university (see Figure 13). The building is in the shape of a U with a perfectly groomed green grass lawn. Abdullahi's voiceover says, "*My goal is to be a mechanic when I finish school.*" This image is reflective of Abdullahi's lofty aspirations. He told me that liked this image "because it's big." He continued, "it's big college and there's [so] many people, so I say when I finish college, so I wanna be a mechanic you know" (interview, Feb 25, 2014).

Figure 13. Image of university



Tørrissen, B. C. (2012). *The Long Hall and the Clock Tower of the UCC quadrangle*. [Photograph]. Retrieved from <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:University-College-Cork-Panorama-2012.JPG>. Reproduced with permission of © Bjørn Christian Tørrissen, CC BY-SA 3.0.

Abdullahi concludes his narrative, "*As you can see, this is what I wanna be for my life. Thank you very much for your attention and I appreciate* (video cuts out)." (Abdullahi believes the final words are "for your attention," interview, Feb 25, 2014.) The image is text in red font in the middle of the slide with an all blue background; it reads "Thank you very much for your attention!!!"

Site of Audience

Like Yaqub, Abdullahi knew that this digital story would be shown on a Smarboard to a “safe” audience of his classmates, teachers, parents, and Welcome Centre staff members at the Welcome Centre. Abdullahi’s awareness of audience is evident within his digital story through the narration of his opening and closing slides, in which he introduces himself (“*Hello. My name is Abdullahi (last name)*”), and then thanks his audience for watching his film, addressing them (“*As you can see, this is what I wanna be for my life. Thank you very much for your attention and I appreciate [for your attention]*”). His awareness of audience was also revealed in our interview, when he explained to me his decision to include a photograph of Sanaa in Yemen. He said, “You need some picture to show the people...where you come from” (interview, Feb 25, 2014).

Positive Identities

Site of Production and Site of Image

Cultural identities in class

During our interview, Abdullahi asked me about the “About Me” activity we had completed at the beginning of the project. I produced a blank version for him, and he expressed how he had liked the activity. He explained how the DST project “gave me opportunity to write about me, my story, where I come from, all the things” (interview, Feb 25, 2014, translated from Arabic by a Welcome Centre settlement worker).

Abdullahi also indicated that he liked learning about his classmates (“about their story,” interview, Feb 25, 2014). He explained he had learned “where they come from, and what language they speak, and how many family they have” (interview, Feb 25, 2014).

Collaborative work

(N/A; Abdullahi did most of his project with me.)

Pride and affirmation in achievements

Abdullahi’s digital story conveys his pride in learning mechanics from his uncle. He expresses, “*Now I know how to fix my bike and a car,*” following this with a couple sentences that reveal the affirmation he felt from his aunt and uncle (“*My uncle always he told me, ‘Abdullahi, you are a good person;’*” “*My auntie always she believe in me to do the right thing*”). He further communicates satisfaction in himself through stating twice that he plans to be a mechanic when he finishes school. He narrates, “*My goal is to be a mechanic when I*

finish school,” showing the image of an impressive university building which represents his (imagined) sense of achievement upon completing his education at this institution. He then emphasizes, “*As you can see, this is what I wanna be for my life.*”

In our interview, Abdullahi told me that, through his participating in the project, “I felt I’m student... student learning about everything” (interview, Feb 25, 2014). He “discovered” that he was an “eager learner” (interview, Feb 25, 2014, translated from Arabic by a Welcome Centre settlement worker). As earlier noted, Abdullahi had not participated in formal education before attending the Welcome Centre. He explained, “when I was [in Yemen], I wasn’t know how to write and research, but here I learned” (interview, Feb 25, 2014). Completing his project seemed to affirm for Abdullahi the academic skills he has developed since arriving in Canada.

Abdullahi also expressed a sense of pride at having created a movie. When I asked him which modes he enjoys, he told me he like “to look at the movie.” “You like to watch movies?” I asked him. “Yeah. And after I could do it [make one],” he replied (interview, Feb 25, 2014). Furthermore, Abdullahi expressed to me that one of the most challenging aspects of the DST project for him was recording his voiceover. He explained to me, “Record the story [at] first was difficult for me... because I didn’t know how to record” but said that “teaching” had made it easier for him (interview, Feb 25, 2014). Recording his voiceover was also one of his favourite and most memorable parts of the project. He had learned a new skill and met the expectations of his teachers. Indeed, Abdullahi demonstrated his pride in his new skill by telling me “in future I could teach more people.” He explained, “I like to record story of my family, and my self...and friend, and my country” (interview, Feb 25, 2014).

Abdullahi also indicated how, through producing his digital story, he felt like a role model. He expressed that he plans to upload his story to his Facebook page, “And maybe after 2 years or three my brother if he wanted to do story by his country, so he could see example from his brother” (interview, Feb 25, 2014).

Site of Audience

Like Yaqub, Abdullahi participated in the digital story screening event at the Welcome Centre. He recalls, “There were many people. And you could invite your family to come and watch your story” (interview, Feb 25, 2014). (He noted to me that his sister, who is a member of the B2S class, was in attendance.)

Showing his story, he told me during our interview, “was scary” at first and he felt “nervous.” He explained, “I thought that the stories are not good,” and that it might have been an “embarrassment” to watch the stories on the big screen. However, he immediately added, “And after it was excellent” (excerpts from interview, Feb 25, 2014). He recalled how students had shared their stories one after the other and everyone applauded. “I felt very happy that time,” Abdullahi said. The audience, he felt, were his “fans;” he described their reactions as being “Like a fan, fan, you know, the many people. Like when people watching football and that stuff.” He said he most remembers the presence of “the staff, and the teachers...because they’re friendly, all” (excerpts from interview, Feb 25, 2014).

Abdullahi told me that he had also shown his digital story to his mom, a friend, and his aunt on a computer screen. (An audience of relatives and loved ones that know him, understand his experiences, and care about him.) I asked Abdullahi how they responded, and he said, “They was happy, excellent.” “How did this make you feel?” I asked. “Same thing, happy.” He said he also had plans to show his project to others “in future” – “somebody I know... people, friends.” He said, “I will post it to Facebook” (excerpts from interview, Feb 25, 2014).

Chapter 6: Discussion of the Findings

The Welcome Centre's B2S program aims to provide a safe and supportive classroom environment where "at-risk" ELLs of all cultural and linguistic backgrounds feel valued, respected, and a sense of belonging while learning academic, social, and workplace skills. This study aimed to investigate how DST, as a pedagogical tool, could effectively support the B2S program in these goals. My research questions were the following:

1. What is the potential of digital storytelling for the multimodal literacy engagement of at-risk immigrant and refugee students in a transition program?
2. In what ways does this digital storytelling project promote positive identities for students?

Findings demonstrate that a strong focus on students' cultural, linguistic, and meaning-making strengths and interests led to an inclusive, democratic classroom environment in which all students felt capable of participating and helping others. Additionally, through creating personal digital stories, students explored the affordances and gained awareness of the design elements of different modes of communication. In particular, students expressed their intended meanings through the strategic use of individual modes, as well as modes in combination, thereby revealing complex thinking and decision-making. Finally, the students' engagement with non-linguistic modalities facilitated their meaningful depiction of complex and abstract aspects of their lives and identities. The completed digital stories served as affirmations of their skills and knowledge, fostering within them a strong sense of pride in their abilities and accomplishments.

This chapter includes comments on differences between the two case studies, DST and trauma, and challenges in the study.

A Democratic Classroom: Cultural and Linguistic Identities in Learning Students' Cultural, Linguistic, and Meaning-Making Resources

I am a daughter. I am a brother. I am a worker. I am a friend. I am funny. I am honest. I am happy. I am responsible. I enjoy soccer. I enjoy movies. I enjoy dancing. I enjoy playing cricket. I speak Portuguese. I speak Spanish. I speak Arabic. I speak English. I come from Iraq. I come from Sri Lanka. I come from Somalia.

From the moment we began the DST project, in which students each shared their "About Me" responses while sitting at tables arranged in an open horseshoe, teachers

explicitly acknowledged and communicated a respect and affirmation for students' diverse home languages, cultures, hobbies and interests, strengths, experiences, and (emerging) identities. The teachers related to the students as intelligent and talented individuals – interactions that fostered within the classroom “collaborative relations of power” (Cummins, 1996). This perception of the students was reinforced when we invited them to display their “About Me” cards in the classroom for the duration of the project.

The DST project operated within a sociocultural literacy framework (Heath, 2009; Street, 1984; Gee, 1989) insofar as the cultural capital (i.e., the prior knowledge, interests, skills, experiences, and perspectives) that the students brought with them to school formed the foundation for their development of school-based skills and knowledge. The students “have these beautiful rich sources of history that [makes] them who they are and...[provide] them their context of how they live their lives,” Ms. Mehta commented (interview, Feb 27, 2014). The assigned topic for the students' digital stories was their personal accomplishments (Indeed, the impressive digital stories I showed the students at the beginning of the project communicated to them that the Welcome Centre staff members and I had high expectations for their learning!). The students created projects based on achievements such as learning to cook, knit, and speak English, as well as leaving their home countries and successfully beginning a new life in Canada, about which the teachers took great interest in learning.

The students also brought to the classroom their linguistic capital. Some students expressed their ideas orally in their L1, the language within which much of their knowledge is encoded. A number of students who knew how to write in their L1 used this ability to help them communicate their ideas (and, in the process, support their L2 acquisition through L1-L2 transfer). For example, Juan wrote his ideas in Spanish and used Google Translate to translate them into English, and Daborah brainstormed her ideas through writing in Arabic in point-form. The multicultural and settlement workers who brainstormed story ideas with the students in their L1 explicitly helped them acknowledge and use their cultural and linguistic capital and that of their communities as cognitive resources in the classroom.

A sociocultural perspective of literacy also acknowledges and affirms the multimodal resources that students bring with them when they enter the classroom (Lotherington & Jenson, 2011; Stein, 2008). This includes the “broadening range of technoliteracies knowledge and skills learnt and practised within *out-of-classroom* or ‘third-space learning

sites” (Edward-Groves, 2011, p. 50). The icons and images that the students circled on their “About Me” cards (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, listening to music, taking photos, and acting) revealed the multiple ways they *already* know (but perhaps are not consciously aware of “knowing”) to learn and express ideas.

Collaboration Among Students

Vinogradova et al. (2011) argue that a digital story project can create a community of practice within a classroom; they explain how “each student brings to the classroom community skills that are needed by others as everyone works to create a multimodal project” (p. 194), and therefore students assume “learner and mentor roles at different times” (p. 179) depending on their strengths with particular modes of communication. In the B2S classroom, students helped one another translate their L1 into English, explain the project to one another in their L1, find images and music, and learn or solve various technological issues.

In addition, in the project, students learned more about one another’s cultural knowledge and perspectives, experiences, interests and languages. Collaborative work among culturally and linguistically diverse classmates, the New London Group (2000) maintain, will help prepare students to negotiate interactions with people of different cultural backgrounds in their public and private lives.

Democracy in Education

Stein (2007) has argued that there is a strong democratic element to allowing students to represent their knowledge and experiences through a broad range of semiotic resources; she advocates that “giving children equitable opportunities to represent their worlds – their voices, cultures, histories, feelings and opinions – in the modes and languages they choose and feel comfortable with is an educational right” (p. 42).

Ms. Mehta’s hope for this project was that “the students will find their inner confidence and unique strengths, despite the language barriers” (interview, Feb 27, 2014). She stated, in our interview, how “it was important for the students to learn that they can advocate for themselves through different expressions, tell their stories without the pressure of language and know that in the future there are multiple ways of ‘showing what you know’” (interview, Feb 27, 2014).

As my findings demonstrate, the students all took different approaches to expressing their ideas and emotions in their projects, each one drawing on his or her strengths and

personal interests. Yaqub most enjoyed “the part when you need to find the music,” because, he explained, “I’m looking for something I like” (interview, Feb 26, 2014). Daborah used visuals (her preferred mode of communication) to propel her writing. Juan, a musician and songwriter, brainstormed by listening to music and expressing his ideas in written Spanish.

In addition, Ms. Mehta recalled one student in particular who, she believed, “benefited greatly from this experience;” she explained,

This student is from a refugee camp, where there was no instruction in first language (written, reading) and has been in Canadian schools for 3 years, with little to no success in reading and writing in English. This student found this project to be highly motivating and esteem building due to being able to express her story in another modality than English. (interview, Feb 27, 2014)

For students such as the one Ms. Mehta describes (to whom writing in English or in their L1 is a strong barrier to communication), this project affirmed them by provided opportunities to represent their knowledge, experiences, and emotions through valuable communicative resources such as images and songs, which these students felt comfortable using.

Developing a Repertoire of Meaning-Making Tools

In addition to harnessing students’ semiotic capacities, the DST project also helped to extend their understanding and control of different meaning-making modalities to better equip them for 21st century communication (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Before the students began working on their projects, I showed them numerous examples of digital stories, and, as a class, we identified and discussed the affordances (i.e., potentials and limitations) of the different modes that the authors used to represent their meanings. The students’ composing processes and their digital stories reveal their (developing) knowledge of how different modes communicate meaning, both individually and in relation to other modes.

Individual Modes

Firstly, students developed and demonstrated an awareness of how individual modes could be used to design meaning in their digital stories, using the resources at their disposal.

Linguistic

Through working with teachers and classroom assistants, the students’ understanding of the elements of linguistic meaning increased. The students revised sentence structure and grammar errors, as well as practiced correct spelling. In addition, teachers helped them to

write cohesive scripts with sufficient narrative detail. Students also improved their pronunciation, developed fluency, and learned to communicate emotion with their voices through recording voiceovers.

Audio

In their digital stories, the students used music to communicate their cultural backgrounds (e.g., Narun from Sri Lanka selected Indian music). Students also used songs to express the mood and emotion of their stories. Abdullahi explained to me how “I could make it feels sad story, so you need to sad the music” (interview Feb 25, 2014). The students carefully selected music that reflected the changing tone of their stories, and music that evokes several emotions at once (i.e., piano music). Yaqub exploited the changing tempo (violin crescendo) within a piece of Turkish music to build a sense a sense of rising action. Students were also conscious of the loudness and volume of vocals within songs.

Visual

Explicit meanings

The students selected visuals from their personal collection or from Google images to communicate explicit meanings with careful attention to detail. Abdullahi used search keywords such as “Yemen people” and “Somalian mechanic.” He chose images of people to represent his uncle and mom in his story based on their physical similarities. The image of his “aunt” reflects her characteristic friendliness. To represent himself as a 10-year-old, Abdullahi choose an image of a boy around that age, of similar ethnic background, and holding a wooden board with Arabic script. In addition, Yaqub deliberately chose a “normal” image of Vancouver to reflect regular life (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

Implicit meanings

Students also chose visuals from Google images that were rich with implicit meaning, such as Li’s image with the black silhouette of a man crouched against a wall in an empty room with his arms wrapped around this knees and his head to the floor to communicate the loneliness he felt after arriving in Canada. Yaqub communicated the feeling of bottling up emotions by showing a man with tears forming, but not falling.

Multiple meanings

Yaqub's image of a breakfast table ("*One day, early at the morning, we get the phone call*") includes both explicit and implicit meanings. The breakfast table connotes literal time, while the food represents the feeling of happiness.

The students' images reveal an awareness of perspective (e.g., close-ups) and foregrounding (e.g., photos containing a dominant object, such as a war tank, to which the eye is drawn).

Use of colour

Students used specific colours in order to ensure the words on their slides were visible against their images, and for symbolic purposes (e.g., font in national colours). Students also communicated mood and tone through colour (e.g., using images with dark, greyish tones to communicate the feeling of loneliness).

Spatial

The digital stories demonstrated students' awareness of spatial arrangement, particularly in terms of adding text to their slides. Students attentively arranged words on their images so not to obstruct images, and separated the lines of their text with spaces.

Modes in Combination

Local Multimodal Relationships

Furthermore, students meaningfully combined modes within the individual slides of their digital stories. Li integrated narration ("I knew one [worker's] name, (name), while I was in high school") with the uplifting image of a hand reaching down from heaven towards another hand in order to communicate how this woman was a helper in his life. Yaqub blended narration ("*Then the war start in Syria. It was so bad to live there at that time*") with the image of a threatening war tank and crescendoing violin music to communicate that life was becoming "more challenging" (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

Global Multimodal Relationships

The student process charts in Appendix D echo Hull and Nelson (2005), Nelson and Hull (2008), and Yang's (2012) findings regarding how students assumed a holistic approach to multimodal composing, working between and among modes in a non-sequential manner to produce unified, meaningful digital stories. In this project, Mr. Scott describes how students

“were getting more an idea in their head of what they wanted the viewer to see and to feel and to understand and to...bring them on their journey with them” (interview, Feb 25, 2014).

Yaqub, viewing the different modalities as “a team” (interview, Feb 26, 2014), listened to song options while reading his story to ensure the music reflected the narrative tone from beginning to end. He selected images while reading his script and listening to the music he chose. He modified the words of his script to correspond with the images and music. He also sequenced his images to be timed with the changing music tempo.

As a result of his careful, holistic approach to production, Yaqub’s digital story contains relationships between different segments of the story, as well as relationships between elements of the story and the greater whole. As he explained, the image of the man close to tears is meant to communicate the story’s initial tone of sadness within this first slide, which contains a hopeful title (“Impossible is nothing”) and music that could be interpreted as calming. In addition, Hull and Nelson (2005) point out how “modes can progressively become imbued with the associative meanings of each other” (p. 239). In our interview, Yaqub verbally juxtaposed the image of the frightened child at the beginning of his story with the image of the elated child towards the end of his story (“The boy is so happy. It’s not like the first one, with his hand on his face,” interview, Feb 26, 2014). This reflects how he intentionally created a meaningful association between these images.

Throughout the process of composing and assembling their digital stories, students also gained a familiarity with digital communicational resources such as the Google search engine, Google Translate, PowerPoint, and PhotoStory 3, as well as skills such as downloading and emailing images, renaming image files, cutting and pasting, and using flashdrives and the scanner.

Complex Thinking

Based on his experience conducting a video-making project, Gauntlett (2008) observed that “the task of making a movie requires participants to make particular decisions about what to include, how to represent it, and what level of importance or priority to assign to different elements” (p. 256). Through talking to students about their production process, I discovered similar complex thinking and decision-making with respect to designing meaning in their digital stories.

Deciding How to Represent Their Meanings

The students carefully selected and combined different modes according to their understanding of each mode's potentials and limitations to communicate meaning. As multimodal designers, the students needed to determine how to best represent their intended meanings by using and combining the limited range of resources at their disposal in the classroom (i.e., on Facebook, YouTube, and Google images).

Determining What Content to Include in Their Stories

Additionally, the students needed to make decisions about what content to include in their digital stories, based on their perceptions of the knowledge, backgrounds, and interests of their audience (i.e., classmates, parents, and staff members at the Welcome Centre). Lucas, for instance, considered whether his audience would be more interested in learning more about his country or his achievements.

Ascribing a Level of Importance to Meaningful Story Elements

Students also considered each mode's level of importance in contributing meaning to different parts of the story. Yaqub, for example, explained how, in general, he “tried to take the picture more connected for the speaking, more than the music, because the music is just about the emotion” (interview, Feb 26, 2014). However, in the slide showing the war tank, Yaqub assigned more importance to music (the crescendoing violins) to convey his meaning.

Complex Meaning(s) in Students' Digital Stories

Engaging with multiple modalities in the DST project opened up possibilities for the students to communicate more complex and abstract aspects of their identities and experiences (e.g., their feelings and perceptions). Mr. Scott explained, “Generally the story telling [the students] do is through writing and...there's not very much detail. There's not a lot of emotional side. It's more just telling the facts” (interview, Feb 25, 2014). Conversely to the digital stories students created at the Welcome Centre in Spring 2013 (in which students found images and music to illustrate and support their writing, and did not include a voiceover), Ms. Mehta observed how students' “stories were richer and had a deeper context” (interview, Feb 27, 2014). In this project, Ms. Wagner remarked, “you could see that we were moving along to another level” (interview, May 5, 2014).

Ms. Wagner pointed out this project particularly “brought out a deeper level of emotion than the [first DST project].” She explained how using modes such as the visual

(e.g., finding images) and audio (e.g., finding music and using voice) to communicate meaning challenged the students “to get down to a place of ‘*how did it feel?*’ (interview, May 5, 2014). Students searched for images using adjectives such as “boring,” “exciting,” “scared feeling,” “lost,” and “sad and angry.” To help them tell their stories, they looked for music that was “happy,” “sad,” and “challenging.” This thoughtful process undoubtedly helped bring the students in touch with the heart of their story’s meaning. This kind of project, Ms. Wagner remarked, “has really positive potential for awakening the social emotional part of the student” (interview, May 5, 2014). Through engaging with a range of modalities, Mr. Scott observed, the students “were able to create a more meaningful [story], tell a better story, create more of a journey and paint a bigger, better picture” (interview, Feb 25, 2014), in spite of their struggle to communicate in written and oral English.

Multimodal Depictions of Their Identities

In their digital stories, the students presented aspects of their identities and social worlds through their deliberate and meaningful use of a range of modalities. Ms. Mehta noted how, for example, “Students were able to reach into their history and express more information, preferences and background using images which accurately expressed the sentiments and thoughts around experiences” (interview, Feb 27, 2014).

Yaqub, in his digital story, makes visible the fact that he has haunting memories that he will never be able to forget by his use of the close-up image of a child peeking through covered eyes. He also presents himself as someone who is able to overcome obstacles through his use of the “Success Kid” wearing a strong look of accomplishment and satisfaction. Yaqub further reveals the “surprise” he felt when his family received the phone call that they would be relocating to Canada through, in his words, “the picture and the voice” (excerpts from interview, Feb 26, 2014). The image of the gleeful child throwing leaves in the air, Yaqub said, is “surprised to be happy” (interview, Feb 26, 2014). This feeling of surprise at his own happiness is further communicated through Yaqub’s raised intonation when he narrates, “*I was so happy and so excited to go and get the passports.*”

Abdullahi constructs his identity as one who makes people feel pleased when fulfilling their expectations of him, as shown through the image of two women (one of whom is meant to represent his aunt) smiling widely at the camera after he explains how he learned how to fix bikes and cars. In addition, the photograph Abdullahi selected of the beautiful,

large university building is significant. Through this image, he powerfully depicts his “imagined identity” (a successful student) taking part in his “imagined community” (a grandiose university) (Kanno & Norton, 2003).

“Difficult Knowledge”

Working with images in particular enabled students to explore and effectively communicate complex knowledge, experiences, and feelings in their stories. Yaqub, who finds it challenging to express anger (“when I be angry I just keep it inside me,” interview, Feb 26, 2014), used images to help him communicate the anger he felt about being without work or money in Syria. He used an image showing the black silhouette of a man lost alone in the desert to convey his feelings of hopeless and directionless. In addition, he selected the image of a man sitting in silence with his face concealed (i.e., without an obvious angry expression) to communicate that, despite his feelings of anger, he did not lose hope. This has important implications for educators, especially those working with students of refugee background, with respect to providing students with the communicational tools they feel comfortable using to convey their knowledge and identities.

By paying close attention to the students’ use of different modes in their digital stories, the teachers were able to gain a much deeper and broader understanding of the students’ identities and imaginations. Teachers were furthermore able to uncover more information about the modes the students are most interested in, as well as their personal interests. Yaqub, for instance, used Turkish music because “This is my favourite one” (interview, Feb 26, 2014). The first image he selected to tell his story was of an actor that he really admires; he said, “I start with a actor that I really like him” (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

Students Learn About and Feel Pride in Themselves

Through carefully engaging with different modalities to communicate the process of overcoming obstacles and achieving a goal, the students gained deeper insight into their own strengths and accomplishments. As Ms. Wagner said, the project “got them more in touch with an identity that was good [positive]... one that they would have been happy to see themselves be displayed in” (interview, May 5, 2014).

In their stories, students expressed statements of satisfaction with themselves, such as, *“I am so proud that I learned to knit,” “Now I can cook,” and “Now I can understand [English] and I have a lot of friends and I can work and I can help my family.”* Lucas shared

“I never give up... And now I have many friends in Canada. And now I have one job. I’m enjoying this new life. And what language am I speaking?” This project, Mr. Scott commented, “helps [the students] to realize what they’ve come through, that they can overcome... [that] they *have* made accomplishments.” He expressed, “I know it was really good for them to help see themselves in that light, and see the victory they *have* had” (interview, Feb 26, 2014).

Moreover, the students all completed a polished-looking school assignment – another “accomplishment” – and were able to feel academic success, regardless of their English language abilities or amount of schooling. As an identity text, their projects became a “mirror” (Cummins & Early, 2011, p. 3) through which the students could see themselves as capable, intelligent, and creative. Ahmed declared, “I’m awesome!” while proudly watching his story over and over again. The students’ positive identities were further affirmed at the digital story screening event, where they received praise from their teachers, classmates, and Welcome Centre staff members, who Abdullahi called his “fans” (interview, Feb 25, 2014). Ms. Wagner and Mr. Scott both remarked how the students were pleased and impacted to know there was such an interest in their identities and experiences, and that adults were so impressed by their work.

Yaqub and Abdullahi’s sense of pride and confidence in their abilities was reinforced as they continued to share their digital stories with family and friends. Yaqub’s comment about feeling “like I’m a Hugh Jackman!” (interview, Feb 26, 2014) when he read the Facebook responses to his story strongly demonstrates the power and potential of identity affirmation online.

Yaqub and Abdullahi’s Digital Stories

It is clear that Yaqub used images in deeper and more complex ways than did Abdullahi, who selected images based on their explicit meanings. Abdullahi used music to convey the general tone of his piece, and Yaqub used the changing tempo within a song to communicate the shifting tones in his story. Abdullahi approached his story as a whole by using consistent images (i.e., using the same photo each time he referred to his uncle). Yaqub, on the other hand, created complex associations between images through juxtaposition.

Cultural Backgrounds

Ms. Wagner suggested that these students' cultural backgrounds could, perhaps, contribute to their differing approaches to design in their stories. For Abdullahi and other students of Somali background, she explained, "I think it is...probably the first time [communicating through other modalities has] ever been exposed to them.... I think...they're still actually learning what it even is" (interview, May 5, 2014). For Yaqub, however, who comes from Iraq, Ms. Wagner believes that "those concepts do exist in [his] culture." She explained, "To me [Yaqub is] somebody who already has this built into [his] system, it's just that it hasn't been able to get out" because it has not been encouraged. The project, she believes, gave him the "permission and the freedom" to express himself multimodally within a safe environment (excerpts from interview, May 5, 2014).

Story Theme

Yaqub and Abdullahi both wrote stories of accomplishment, which involved describing the process of overcoming an obstacle to achieve a goal. Yaqub wrote about fleeing war in Iraq and living through another war in Syria before finally relocating to Canada. Abdullahi wrote about learning mechanics from his uncle. The nature and depth of the emotion that exists to be explored through different modes within Yaqub's story (e.g., feelings of anger, aimlessness, and surprise) is, of course, much more varied and intense than the emotion that Abdullahi experienced learning his new skill (e.g., confusion and happiness).

Multimodal Engagement and Identity Transformation

The manner and extent to which Yaqub and Abdullahi explored the potential of the different communicative modes to tell their stories seemed to have influenced the nature of their own learnings. Ms. Wagner pointed out, "I think the more emotional attachment that we have with anything we say, the more profound it is for us" (interview, May 5, 2014). Yaqub's story powerfully explores his complex feelings and emotions through different modalities. Through telling his story, he learned of this own strength of character. In particular, he learned, "I'm patient." He also learned to "never give up," a lesson that reflects his own personal resilience (excerpts from interview, Feb 26, 2014).

Abdullahi, on the other hand, seemed to be affected through the very act of telling the story of a past accomplishment. Before Abdullahi created his own digital story, he watched his friend Ahmed's story, and said to me, "He's talking about the past. He has to talk about

the future that's coming." "Why?" I asked him. "Because the past is past," he replied. In our interview, I brought up this conversation to him, asking how he now felt about telling an accomplishment story from the past. He explained, "Actually, sometimes when you don't look at that way, and then you don't see the past as something you can learn from, but then I learned from Ahmed when I saw his story that I could do mine too" he said (interview, Feb 25, 2014, translated from Somali by a Welcome Centre settlement worker).

Abdullahi expressed that this DST project had been more challenging for him to communicate his ideas than the previous DST project we did in the spring. He explained, "the first one I always do...the project in the class...where you come from, this stuff I do it, but the second one was all about my goal." He "[figured] out" his goal when I brainstormed his accomplishments with him while we worked on his project together afterschool; he explained, "I remember to my uncle... what he teach me." An important learning for Abdullahi, then, was that "you could remember what you did in the past so you can write it now, and so I did." (Note the word "write".) Abdullahi told me that through the process of completing his project, "I learn...a lot of information of my goal and it could help me with future" (excerpts from interview, Feb 25, 2014) – specifically, "my uncle finished the college and finished the university and having him in my story it will remind me that I need to get there and become a mechanic" (interview, Feb 25, 2014, translated from Arabic by a Welcome Centre settlement worker).

Digital Storytelling, Trauma, and Identity

For the students of refugee background, who are recovering from trauma, it was extremely significant that the classroom environment was safe, supportive, and stable. Ms. Mehta expressed how "the key part of the project was that students had the support and care of the teachers, the ability to self-express in a safe and respectful classroom, support in the students' own language and there was a feeling of safety" (interview, Feb 27, 2014). Ms. Wagner explained how the project encouraged the factors that individuals need in their life to feel safe, according to Herman's (1992) first stage of trauma recovery ("safety"): trust, support, encouragement, accessibility (of teachers), and respect.

Interestingly, Ms. Wagner informed me that the two case study participants I selected, Yaqub and Abdullahi, are much farther along in the recovery process than most of the other refugee students in the class, who are still searching for a new identity. Both of these students

have begun the process of social reconnection and setting goals for a positive future. One reason I chose these two students is because they included in their digital stories their desires for the future (their “imagined identities”). Yaqub narrates “*My goal now is to graduation from the school and make my parents proud of me. I want to be a successful person in my life*” (showing the accomplished toddler with a look of determination), and Abdullahi states “*My goal is to be a mechanic when I finish school*” (depicting a “big” university building). While the students of immigrant background tended to include their future goals in their stories, most of the other students of refugee background, who are in earlier stages of trauma recovery, concluded their stories with the satisfaction of having accomplished a past goal (e.g., “*Now I can cook*”).

For Yaqub, Ms. Wagner observed, “I think for him there was a pride that he had not really allowed himself to have...with the way he and his father survived their displacement” (interview, May 5, 2014). Mr. Scott similarly observed, “I think it was something that helped him...look back and see what he’s overcome...and that also...he can also produce such a quality work.... He can invest in something and see it pay off and think, ‘I can do that! I can do that on a greater scale in life,’ whether it’s a job or a career, or university” (interview, Feb 26, 2014). Abdullahi’s story, Ms. Wagner believed, “is an affirmation for him” (interview, May 5, 2014). He had the opportunity to reflect on a previous accomplishment that connects to a future goal for his new life in Canada. In addition, Abdullahi’s project seemed to affirm for him the academic skills he has developed since arriving here (“I felt I’m student” that is now able “to write and research,” excerpts from interview, Feb 25, 2014).

Challenges

For many of the students, Ms. Mehta explained, “the concept of analyzing self-identity is very foreign and reflection about self and work is not something that is taught in other countries, thus can often be viewed as unimportant” (interview, Feb 27, 2014). As Mr. Scott noted, it was a challenge for some of the students to include details about the process of overcoming a struggle, and the teachers needed to elicit this from them. Related to this, Ms. Wagner pointed out, was “finding a safe thing to talk about...[and] how much to say about that thing,” given the trauma the students have experienced (interview, May 5, 2014).

Additionally, an aim for this project was for students to communicate their identities and ideas with an understanding that no one mode (e.g., linguistic) was more important to

their storytelling than others. Rather, each mode has potentials and limitations that, when combined, could all contribute to a meaningful “big picture.” One challenge of this project was that, regardless of the freedom extended to students to express themselves multimodally, many of the students who knew how to write in English or their L1 continued to “default” to the linguistic mode. Ms. Mehta observed, “I did notice that written text is the default button for many ELL students. In this project, even though the support to define one’s life in another modality was encouraged, students...continued to use written, oral English to self-express” (interview, Feb 27, 2014).

Also, Mr. Scott observed how students seemed to be able to identify, make a personal connection with, and understand the affordances of the modes most familiar to them – that is, linguistic (writing), visual (images), and auditory (music). However, the gestural and spatial modes, he felt, seemed to be “kind of foreign concepts to them” (interview, Feb 25, 2014). The gestural mode, of course, did not emerge as a theme in data analysis, and the data that emerged on students’ engagement with the spatial mode all related to inserting text on their digital story slides.

Finally, students of refugee background in particular often require teacher-directed instruction in the form of explicit modeling and scaffolded tasks. The tasks involved in DST are, by nature, open-ended, and are especially so when conducted in a non-sequential manner. The students 1) gather resources (i.e., collect images, artifacts, music, and write a narrative), 2) complete a storyboard, and 3) assemble their story using Photostory 3. One of the reasons this project was so successful with this group of students was because, in the B2S program, the students had access to a great deal of individualized, scaffolded support during class time (e.g., from teachers, settlement workers, multicultural workers, and classmates) and, under the guidance of teacher-facilitators and assistants, were able to work at their own pace, according to their own strengths and interests.

Ahmed, in particular, seemed to me a little lost during the first few DST sessions. I believe there were two reasons for this. First of all, Ahmed did not often have assistance from a Somali speaking settlement worker, due to limited availability. Secondly, like Abdullahi (who I worked with one-on-one to complete his project), Ahmed had taken part in the DST project we conducted at the Welcome Centre in Spring 2013 (which began with writing and focused upon general topics such as “family” and “school,” as opposed to describing an

accomplishment), and, while he began this project engaging with the visual mode, he had a difficult time understanding the more open-ended nature of the project.

Digital Storytelling: Identity Investment and Multimodal Communication

The DST project provided students with an inclusive, affirming, and empowering educational environment, in which students' cultural, linguistic, and meaning-making knowledge was welcomed and encouraged as resources for their school learning, and learning centered upon students' interests. The classroom environment and personal project theme ultimately promoted students' strong identity investment within their projects. Although the students received no mark or credit for the project, there was a high level of attendance each week. Ms. Mehta noted, "All of the students looked forward to the Friday session and willingly were engaged in the class." "Students' motivation," she described, "was very high and committed" (excerpts from interview, Feb 27, 2014). This level of deep commitment to the project extended to the screening event, which took place at the Welcome Centre during the students' vacation from school. The students, as Mr. Scott said, "made it a priority" to be there (interview, Feb 26, 2014). Their commitment to their projects was "evident by their emotions, expression and attitudes when their presentation took place," Ms. Mehta said (interview, Feb 27, 2014).

Unlike other studies on DST with students of refugee background, this project assumed a non-sequential approach to multimodal composing in digital stories, which led to several significant outcomes. First, all students (regardless of English or L1 language abilities) were able to express their knowledge and identities according to their strengths and interests in the different modes. In addition, students extended their repertoires for communication as they considered how modes meaningfully contributed to the "big picture," individually and in combination. They were also able to create more complex meanings in their stories through designing meaningful associations between different elements of their stories. Furthermore, a multimodal project provided students with enhanced opportunities to communicate complex and abstract aspects of their identities and experiences, including "difficult knowledge" (Kendrick, in press, 2014). Finally, through deep engagement with modes other than the linguistic, students became more aware of the emotions and feelings they experienced in their stories, which, in turn, brought them to a deeper place of learning about their own strengths and accomplishments.

Chapter 7: Summary and Conclusion

This study supports Cummin's (1996) assertion that teacher-student interactions which promote "collaborative relations of power" foster positive identities within students. Within the B2S classroom, teachers and classroom assistants (i.e., multicultural and settlement workers) explicitly acknowledged and communicated a respect and affirmation for students' cultural, linguistic, and meaning-making abilities. For all students, their prior knowledge and abilities served as the foundation for school learning, and as valuable/valued cognitive resources in the construction of new knowledge. The students were empowered to communicate their identities and social worlds through modes and languages of their choice, depending on their interests, strengths, abilities, and comfort-levels. In addition, the students assumed the role of expert at different times during class time, according to their capacities with different modes of communication. This fostered a democratic classroom environment, promoting within the students identities of multi-competence.

Furthermore, following explicit instruction on multimodal communication, the students demonstrated an awareness of the affordances of the different modes and a control of the elements of design in order to communicate their knowledge and identities to a particular audience. Students demonstrated knowledge of how the linguistic, audio, visual, and spatial modes communicate meaning, as well as how individual modes communicate meaning in combination with other modes (both in isolated parts of their stories and in "the big picture"). In addition, the project developed students' aptitudes with technological tools for communication (e.g., using Google and downloading images). Through the project, the students revealed complex thinking and decision-making with respect to considering how to represent their meanings, determining what content to include in their stories, and ascribing a level of importance to meaningful story elements.

Also, engaging with non-linguistic modalities led to deeper and richer stories than those the students told through writing alone. Working with the affective qualities of non-linguistic modalities prompted students to consider the emotions they experienced in their stories. A multimodal project also enabled students to make visible more aspects of their identities and social worlds. It opened up possibilities for them to explore and meaningfully communicate complex and abstract aspects of their lives and identities, including difficult knowledge.

Teachers, in turn, were able to gain greater insight into the students' identities, imaginations, and interests, and students themselves were brought to a deeper place of learning about their own strengths and accomplishments.

Pedagogical Implications

Identity Investment in Learning

From a theoretical perspective, Norton's (2000) concept of "Investment" illuminates for educators how the manner in which they position their culturally and linguistically diverse students can significantly influence the students' willingness to participate in learning activities. It is important that teachers provide opportunities for ELL immigrant and refugee students to create identity texts based on the cultural, linguistic, and meaning-making resources they *already* possess. In other words, identity texts promote a democratic, inclusive classroom environment that focuses on students' strengths, talents, interests, knowledge, and experiences, promoting their investment within and commitment to the project (Cummins, 2006). This investment, in turn, will lead to students' acquisition of the target language and development of content knowledge – two areas in which refugee ELLs in particular struggle, due to limited or interrupted schooling.

Students' identity texts act as affirmations of their knowledge and skills, mirroring to them their capabilities, intelligence, and creativity, and leading to a sense of pride (Cummins & Early, 2011). In addition, having "accomplishment stories" as a project theme encourages students' sense of achievement to be two-fold; in this case, students presented a past accomplishment through an impressive-looking digital film. This sense of accomplishment is significant for refugee students, who do not often experience feelings of academic success (Emert, 2013).

Multiliteracies in Education

In terms of practice, teachers need to respond to the New London Group's (2000) call to include a pedagogy of multiliteracies in their classrooms. First, through collaborative learning activities and a focus on students' cultural identities, students will be better prepared to negotiate linguistic and cultural differences (New London Group, 2000). Also, extending their understanding of the various modes of communication (the affordances and elements of design) will better prepare students to engage with the different "texts" in 21st Century communication. Moreover, it is important that teachers expand the definition of "literacy" to

encompass different languages and non-linguistic modes so that students of diverse capabilities and educational backgrounds can communicate their identities and knowledge through modes they “feel comfortable with” (Stein, 2007, p. 42). Multimodal DST projects, when approached non-sequentially, provide enhanced possibilities for students to begin their projects with confidence and compose their projects according to their own strengths and interests, leading to improved self-esteem.

Knowing Our Students

This study supports Stein’s (2008) work on how the visuals that one creates can shed light on his or her construction of self, and well as Kendrick’s (in press, 2014) research on how children can communicate difficult knowledge and more complex aspects of their lives and identities through images. In this study, students’ multimodal pieces opened up possibilities for them to communicate (and become more aware of) aspects of their selves and life experiences through music, and the combination of music with images.

Teachers need to provide their students with creative learning opportunities wherein which students can work within and across different modes, discovering the modes’ respective cognitive and affective qualities to design meaning. As well, Stornaiuolo, Hull and Nelson (2009) argue that teachers should actively seek to understand the complex meanings students have designed in their digital stories through probing the deliberate and strategic use and integration of their various cultural and semiotic resources, asking students “how and why they make the choices they do” (p. 386). Through being attentive to students’ use of different modes in their projects, teachers will be able to gain a much richer and deeper understanding of their identities, imaginations, and interests (Kress, 1997, 2000).

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited by the fact that it documents the process of producing DST projects in a transition program for a small class of at-risk refugee and immigrant students. In the B2S program, settlement workers and multicultural workers were available in the classroom to provide students with L1 academic assistance. Teachers and classroom assistants provided students with individualized, scaffolded support, allowing each student to work at his or her own pace. The project was conducted as a non-credit activity. Additionally, all of the students enrolled in the program are of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This study, therefore, provides little insight into using DST projects with at-

risk ELL students in mainstream classrooms, where classroom support is limited, a counsellor is not present during class, and all coursework generally meets prescribed learning outcomes.

Also, as an ethnographic case study I cannot assume that findings will be able to generalize to other individual refugee students or populations of refugee students. The data includes an in-depth examination of the DST projects produced in one transition program classroom in Surrey, B.C. at a particular point in time. My findings, however, can provide guiding principles on the benefits of DST to educators working with ELLs of immigrant and refugee background in transitions programs.

Future Research

The students in this project were encouraged to use any resources at their disposal to communicate their meanings. This included both creating and locating artifacts. However, due to the limited time period of this project, the students decided to use materials that already existed (i.e., photographs they had, or artifacts such as images and songs that others had produced). This project has great potential for students to create music and artwork. What students create on their own for the purposes of a particular project (photographs, drawings, video clips, music, and other recorded sounds) will communicate even more about their interests and identities.

In addition, the general topic of this project was “accomplishment stories,” which connected to the theme of “success” in the program name “Bridge 2 Success.” There is a great deal of potential for DST projects to be more specifically linked to curricular units taught in transition programs, as the students of refugee background work to develop both English language skills and academic content knowledge. Furthermore, Cummins and Early (2011) maintain that “there is considerable scope for identity text work to engage with, and take action in pursuit of social justice” (p. 159). In a transition program such as B2S, DST projects could be related to issues of social justice and inclusion in students’ lives, which they can critically examine through transformative pedagogy. For example, some of the socio-emotional concepts that Ms. Wagner focuses on during her weekly group talk with the students include bullying, discrimination, racism, conflict resolution, differences and similarities between cultures, or other topics that present themselves in the classroom.

Finally, the role of audience is a very important component in meaning-making that has ample potential to be explicitly and more fully explored with students in a DST project. Consideration of how a viewer may perceive one's depiction of self is especially important given the online sites (e.g., YouTube) – less “controlled” environments – available to students through which to circulate their digital stories (Stornaiuolo et al., 2009). During and after production, students can critically reflect on how the construction of their stories relates to audience (e.g, how they present their identities and communities in relation to audience, position their audience to view their stories, and elicit audience interest), the social context(s) in which the stories will be viewed, and the identities of their viewers (Rose, 2001). (An example of a multimodal project in which students explore audience gaze is Stein & Newfield, 2004.) Refugee students need to assess the risk of sharing their stories in particular social contexts if DST is to lead towards building positive identities.

Conclusion

At the end of the project, Ms. Mehta remarked, “This project took on a different approach to expression which inspired many of the students to ‘dig-deep’ in their personal histories to express and use their prior knowledge as rich sources of information and pride” (interview, Feb 27, 2014). This study has demonstrated how DST, as a multimodal identity text project, can effectively engage “at-risk” immigrant and refugee students in multimodal literacy in such a way that each student feels multi-competent and valued in his or her cultural identities. This, in turn, can lead to an invested interest in their learning, as well as target language acquisition and potential academic content development. Moreover, it has demonstrated the potential for a DST project to develop “at-risk” ELL students’ capacities for multimodal communication. In particular, it has made a significant contribution to our understanding of how “at-risk” refugee ELLs assign meaning to the elements of their stories by selecting and combining modes to communicate meaning. The students’ “holistic” approach to multimodal composition reinforces Hull and Nelson (2005), Nelson and Hull (2008), Yang’s (2012) research findings on DST with ELL and marginalized English-speaking populations. Also, through engaging with the meaning-making affordances of both linguistic and non-linguistic modes (in combination), students were able to tell rich stories depicting complex aspects of their identities and social worlds, including difficult knowledge. In doing so, the students gained further insight into their own identities and experiences.

It is my hope that the research I have conducted will provide valuable information on the immense pedagogical potential of multimodal identity texts, particularly as more transition programs and curricular resources are developed for school districts' most "at-risk" ELL students.

References

- Alrutz, M. (2013). Sites of possibility: Applied theatre and digital storytelling with youth. *Research in Drama Education*, 18(1), 44-57. doi:10.1080/13569783.2012.756169
- B.C. Ministry of Education. (2009). *Students from refugee backgrounds. A guide for teachers and schools*. Retrieved from www.bced.gov.bc.ca/esl/refugees_teachers_guide.pdf
- Barton, D., & Hamilton, M. (1998). *Local literacies: Reading and writing in one community*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- blueeyes. (n.d.). *Helping hand*. [Photograph]. New York, NY: Shutterstock, Inc. Retrieved from <http://www.shutterstock.com/pic.mhtml?id=2539252&src=Nwa9b9XIY8HreJBiiFQ8eg-4-61>
- Bull, G., & Kajder, S. (2005). Digital storytelling in the language arts classroom. *Learning & Leading with Technology*, 32(4), 46-49. Retrieved from <http://www.iste.org/archive/publications/learning-leading>
- Calgary Board of Education. (n.d.) *Teaching refugees with limited formal schooling*. Retrieved from <http://www.teachingrefugees.com/>
- Canadian Council for Refugees. (n.d.). *Talking about refugees and immigrants: A glossary of terms*. Retrieved from <http://ccrweb.ca/glossary.PDF>
- Center for Digital Storytelling. (n.d.). *Center for digital storytelling*. Retrieved from <http://storycenter.org>
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2013a). *Canada – Permanent residents by category*. Retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2012/permanent/02.asp>
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2013b). *Canada – Permanent residents by province or territory and category*. Retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2012/permanent/12.asp>
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2000). Introduction. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures* (pp. 3-8). London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Cordi, K., & Masturzo, K. (2013). Using literature and digital storytelling to create a safe place to address bullying. *Voices From the Middle*, 20(3), 21-26. Retrieved from

- <http://www.ncte.org/journals/vm>
- Couldry, N. (2008). Digital storytelling, media research and democracy: Conceptual choices and alternative futures. In K. Lundby (Ed.), *Digital storytelling, mediatized stories: Self-representations in new media* (pp. 41-60). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Cranitch, M. (2010). Developing language and literacy skills to support refugee students in the transition from primary to secondary school. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 33(3), 255-267. Retrieved from <http://www.alea.edu.au/resources/australian-journal-of-language-and-literacy-ajll>
- Cummins, J. (1996). *Negotiating identities: Education for empowerment in a diverse society*. Ontario, CA: California Association for Bilingual Education.
- Cummins, J. (2001). *Negotiating identities: Education for empowerment in a diverse Society* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: California Association for Bilingual Education.
- Cummins, J. (2001b). HER classic reprint: Empowering minority students: A framework for intervention. *Harvard Educational Review*, 71(4), 649-676.
- Cummins, J. (2003). Challenging the construction of difference as deficit: Where are identity, intellect, imagination, and power in the new regime of truth? In P. Trifonas (Ed.), *Pedagogies of difference: Rethinking education for social change* (pp. 41-60). London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Cummins, J. (2006). Identity texts: The imaginative construction of self through multiliteracies pedagogy. In O. Garcia, T. Skutnabb-Kangas & M. E. Torres-Guzman (Eds.), *Imagining multilingual schools: Languages in education and glocalization* (pp. 51-68). Clevedon, United Kingdom: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Cummins, J. (2014). Language and identity in multilingual schools: Constructing evidence-based instructional policies. In D. Little, C. Leung, & P. Van Avermaet (Eds.), *Managing diversity in education: Languages, policies, pedagogies* (pp. 3-26). Bristol, United Kingdom: Multilingual Matters.
- Cummins, J., & Early, M. (2011). *Identity texts: The collaborative creation of power in multilingual schools*. Staffordshire, United Kingdom: Trentham Books Ltd.
- DeCapua, A., & Marshall, H. W. (2010a). Students with limited or interrupted formal education in US classrooms. *The Urban Review*, 42(2), 159-173. doi:10.1007/s11256-

- Decapua, A. & Marshall, H. (2010b). Serving ELLS with limited or interrupted education: Intervention that works. *TESOL Journal* 1(1), 49-70.
doi:10.5054/tj.2010.214878
- Delpit, L. D. (1988). The silenced dialogue. Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children. *Harvard Educational Review*, 58(3), 280-299. Retrieved from <http://hepg.org/her-home/home>
- Delpit, L. (2006). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: The New Press.
- Dooley, K. (2009). Re-thinking pedagogy for middle school students with little, no or severely interrupted schooling. *English teaching: Practice and critique*, 8(1), 5-22. Retrieved from <http://edlinked.soe.waikato.ac.nz/research/journal/index.php?id=1>
- Dooley, K. T., & Thangaperumal, P. (2011). Pedagogy and participation: Literacy education for low-literate refugee students of African origin in a western school system. *Language and Education*, 25(5), 385-397. doi:10.1080/09500782.2011.573075
- Dreon, O., Kerper, R. M., & Landis, J. (2011). Digital storytelling: A toll for teaching and learning in the YouTube generation. *Middle School Journal*, 42(5), 4-10. Retrieved from <http://www.amle.org/ServicesEvents/MiddleSchoolJournal/tabid/175/Default.aspx>
- Drotner, K. (2008). Boundaries and bridges: Digital storytelling in education studies and media studies. In K. Lundby (Ed.), *Digital storytelling, mediatized stories: Self-representations in new media* (pp. 61-81). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Edwards-Groves, C. J. (2011). The multimodal writing process: Changing practices in contemporary classrooms. *Language and Education*, 25(1), 49-64.
doi:10.1080/09500782.2010.523468
- Emert, T. (2013). 'The transpoemations project': Digital storytelling, contemporary poetry, and refugee boys. *Intercultural Education*, 24(4), 355-365.
doi:10.1080/14675986.2013.809245
- Emert, T. (2014). "Hear a story, tell a story, teach a story": Digital narratives and refugee middle schoolers. *Voices from the Middle*, 21(4), 33-39. Retrieved from <http://www.ncte.org/journals/vm>

- English Language Learner (ELL) Welcome Centre. (2012). *Specialized support for immigrant youth in schools application/referral for bridge program*. Surrey, B.C.: English Language Learner (ELL) Welcome Centre.
- English Language Learner (ELL) Welcome Centre. (2013). *Save the date – I am! B2S presentations*. [Invitation]. Surrey, B.C.: English Language Learner (ELL) Welcome Centre.
- Erstad, O., & Silseth, K. (2008). Agency in digital storytelling: Challenging the educational context. In K. Lundby (Ed.), *Digital storytelling, mediatized stories: Self-representations in new media* (pp. 214-232). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Fitzgerald, J. (1993). Literacy and students who are learning English as a second language. *The Reading Teacher*, 46(8), 638-647. Retrieved from [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/\(ISSN\)1936-2714](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/(ISSN)1936-2714)
- Gauntlett, D. (2008). Creative brainwork: Building metaphors of identity for social science research. In K. Lundby (Ed.), *Digital storytelling, mediatized stories: Self-representations in new media* (pp. 254-269). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Gee, J. P. (1989). Literacy, discourse, and linguistics: Introduction. *Journal of Education*, 171(1), 5-17.
- Gee, J. P. (1991). What is literacy? In Mitchell, C. & Weiler, K. (Eds.), *Rewriting literacy: Culture and the discourse of the other* (pp. 3-11). New York, NY: Bergin & Garvey.
- Gould, D. & Schmidt, D. A. (2010). Trigonometry comes alive through digital storytelling. *The Mathematics Teacher*, 104(4), 296-301. Retrieved from <http://www.nctm.org/publications/toc.aspx?jrnl=mt>
- Griner, L. (2007). *Why I oughta...* [Photograph]. Retrieved from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/sammyjammy/1285612321/in/set-72157620597747933>.
- Hamilton, R. (2004). Schools, teachers and the education of refugee children. In R. Hamilton & D. Moore (Eds.), *Educational interventions for refugee children: Theoretical perspectives and implementing best practice* (pp. 83-96). New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer.

- Heath, S. B. (1986). Sociocultural contexts of language development. In *Beyond language: Social and cultural factors in schooling language minority students* (pp. 143-186). Los Angeles, CA: Evaluation, Dissemination and Assessment Center.
- Heath, S. B. (1988). Protean shapes in literacy events: Ever-shifting oral and literate traditions. In E. R. Kintgen, B. M. Kroll, & M. Rose (Eds.), *Perspectives on literacy* (pp. 348-370). Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Heath, S. B. (2009). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms* (18th ed.). Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Heo, M. (2009). Digital storytelling: An empirical study of the impact of digital storytelling on pre-service teachers' self-efficacy and dispositions towards educational technology. *Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia*, 18(4), 405-428. Retrieved from <http://www.aace.org/pubs/jemh/>
- Herman, J. L. (1992). *Trauma and recovery*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Honeyford, M. A. (2013). The simultaneity of experience: cultural identity, magical realism and the artefactual in digital storytelling. *Literacy*, 47(1), 17-25. doi:10.1111/j.1741-4369.2012.00675.x
- Hull, G. A., & Nelson, M. E. (2005). Locating the semiotic power of multimodality. *Written communication*, 22(2), 224-261. doi:10.1177/0741088304274170
- Hull, G. A. & Katz, M. (2006). Crafting an agentive self: Case studies of digital storytelling. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 41(1), 43-81. Retrieved from <http://www.ncte.org/journals/rte>
- Hull, G., & James, M. (2007). Geographies of hope: A study of urban landscapes and a university-community collaborative. In P. O'Neill (Ed.), *Blurring boundaries: Developing writers, researchers, and teachers: A tribute to William L. Smith* (pp. 255-289). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, Inc.
- Kaare, B. H. & Lundby, K. (2008). Mediatized lives: Autobiography and assumed authenticity in digital storytelling. In K. Lundby (Ed.), *Digital storytelling, mediatized stories: Self-representations in new media* (pp. 105-122). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Kajder, S. B. (2004). Enter here: Personal narrative and digital storytelling. *The English Journal*, 93(3), 64-68. Retrieved from <http://www.ncte.org/journals/ej>

- Kanno, Y., & Norton, B. (2003). Imagined communities and educational possibilities: Introduction. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 2(4), 241-249. doi:10.1207/S15327701JLIE0204_1
- Kearney, M. (2011). A learning design for student-generated digital storytelling. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 36(2), 169-188. doi:10.1080/17439884.2011.553623
- Kendrick, M. (in press, 2014). The affordances and challenges of visual methodologies in literacy studies. In J. Rowsell & K. Pahl (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of literacy studies*.
- Kress, G. (1997). *Before Writing: Rethinking the paths to literacy*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Kress, G. (2000). Multimodality. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures* (pp. 182-202). London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Kress, G. (2003). *Literacy in the new media age*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Kress, G. & van Leeuwen, T. (1996). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Kulla-Abbott, T., & Polman, J. (2008). Engaging student voice and fulfilling curriculum goals with digital stories. *Technology, Humanities, Education and Narrative (THEN Journal)*, 5, 38-60. Retrieved from <http://thenjournal.org/>
- Lambert, J. (2003). *Digital storytelling cookbook and travelling companion*. Berkeley, CA: Digital Diner Press. Retrieved from <http://dmp.osu.edu/dmac/supmaterials/Digital%20Storytelling%20Cookbook.pdf>
- Lambert, J. (2010). *The digital storytelling cookbook*. Berkeley, CA: Digital Diner Press. Retrieved from <http://static.squarespace.com/static/505a3ab2e4b0f1416c7df69a/51684d91e4b0cbd5dc53757/51684d91e4b0cbd5dcd5375b/1332882649047/cookbook.pdf>
- Lambert, J. (2013). *Digital storytelling: Capturing lives, creating community*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Leal-Olivas, D. (2013). *Syria-conflict*. [Photograph]. Chicago, IL: Getty Images. Retrieved from <http://www.gettyimages.ca/detail/news-photo/syrian-rebels-gather-around-a-t-72-tank-captured-from-news-photo/161448654#>

- LeCompte, M. & Schensul, J. (1999). *Analyzing & interpreting ethnographic data*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- LeCompte, M. & Schensul, J. (2010). *Designing & conducting ethnographic research*. Plymouth, United Kingdom: AltaMira Press.
- Lenette, C., Cox, L., & Brough, M. (2013). Digital storytelling as a social work tool: Learning from ethnographic research with women from refugee backgrounds. *British Journal of Social Work*, 1-18. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bct184
- livetalent. (2007). *Walking in the Gobi*. [Photograph]. Calgary, Canada: iStockphoto LP. Retrieved from <http://www.istockphoto.com/photo/walking-in-the-gobi-4295733?st=02e391d>
- Lotherington, H., & Jenson, J. (2011). Teaching multimodal and digital literacy in L2 settings: New literacies, new basics, new pedagogies. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 31, 226-246. doi:10.1017/S0267190511000110
- Lundby, K. (2008a). Editorial: Mediatized stories: Mediation perspectives on digital storytelling. *New Media & Society*, 10(3), 363-371. doi:10.1177/1461444808089413
- Lundby, K. (2008b). Introduction: Digital storytelling, mediatized stories. In K. Lundby (Ed.), *Digital storytelling, mediatized stories: Self-representations in new media* (pp. 1-17). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- McBrien, J. (2005). Educational needs and barriers for refugee students in the United States: A review of literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 75(3), 329-364. doi:10.3102/00346543075003329
- McWilliam, K. (2008). Digital storytelling as a “discursively ordered domain.” In K. Lundby (Ed.), *Digital storytelling, mediatized stories: Self-representations in new media* (pp. 145-160). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Merriam, S. (1995). Theory to practice: What can you tell from an N of 1?: Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning*, 4, 51-50. Retrieved from <http://www.iup.edu/ace/publications/>
- Merriam, S. (2002). Introduction to qualitative research. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Miller, C. H. (2008). *Digital storytelling: A creator's guide to interactive entertainment*. Amsterdam, Kingdom of the Netherlands: Focal Press/Elsevier.
- Miller, J. (2009). Teaching refugee learners with interrupted education in science:

- Vocabulary, literacy and pedagogy. *International Journal of Science Education*, 31(4), 571-592. doi:10.1080/09500690701744611
- Nelson, M. A., & Hull, G. A. (2008). Self-presentation through multimedia: A Bakhtinian perspective on digital storytelling. In K. Lundby (Ed.), *Digital storytelling, mediatized stories: Self-representations in new media* (pp. 123-141). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Nelson, M. A., Hull, G. A., & Roche-Smith, J. (2008). Challenges of multimedia self-presentation: Taking, and mistaking, the show on the road. *Written Communication*, 25(4), 415-440. doi:10.1177/0741088308322552
- New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60-92. Retrieved from <http://hepg.org/her-home/home>
- New London Group. (2000). A pedagogy of multiliteracies. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures* (pp. 9-37). London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity and educational change*. Harlow, United Kingdom: Longman/Pearson Education.
- Ohler, J. (2008). *Digital storytelling in the classroom: New media pathways to literacy, learning, and creativity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Osman. (2008). *Somali boy with prayer tablet*. [Photograph]. Retrieved from http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Somali_boy_with_prayer_tablet.jpg.
- Perry, K. H. (2008). From storytelling to writing: Transforming literacy practices among Sudanese refugees. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 40(3), 317-358. doi:10.1080/10862960802502196
- Photomak. (2010). *Serious lady cook with crossed arms*. [Photograph]. TN: Dreamtime LLC: Retrieved from <http://www.dreamstime.com/royalty-free-stock-images-serious-lady-cook-crossed-arms-image16520759>
- Porter, C. M. (2013). *Honoring counterstories: Utilizing digital storytelling in the culturally responsive classroom to investigate the community cultural wealth and resiliency of students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE)* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3608408)

- Reed, A., & Hill, A. (2010). "Don't keep it to yourself!": Digital storytelling with South African youth. *Seminar.Net: Media, Technology & Life-Long Learning*, 6(2), 268-279. Retrieved from www.seminar.net
- Robin, B. R. (2008). Digital storytelling: A powerful technology tool for the 21st century classroom. *Theory into Practice*, 47(3), 220-228.
doi:10.1080/00405840802153916
- Rolón-Dow, R. (2011). Race(ing) stories: Digital storytelling as a tool for critical race scholarship. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 14(2), 159-173.
doi:10.1080/13613324.2010.519975
- Rose, G. (2001). *Visual methodologies: An introduction to the interpretation of visual materials*. London, United Kingdom: SAGE Publications.
- Rose, G. (2007). *Visual methodologies*. London, United Kingdom: SAGE Publications.
- Royer, R. & Richards, P. (2008). Digital storytelling. *Learning & Leading with Technology*, 36(3), 29-31. Retrieved from
<http://www.iste.org/archive/publications/learning-leading>
- Sawhney, N. (2009). Voices beyond walls: The role of digital storytelling for empowering marginalized youth in refugee camps. *Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Interaction Design and Children, Italy*, 302-305.
doi:10.1145/1551788.1551866
- Schensul, S., Schensul, J., & LeCompte, M. (1999). *Essential ethnographic methods*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.
- Scott Nixon, A. (2009). Mediating social thought through digital storytelling. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 4(1), 63-76. doi:10.1080/15544800802557169
- Stein, P. (2007). *Multimodal pedagogies in diverse classrooms: Representation, rights and resources*. Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Stein, P. (2008). Multimodal instructional practices. In J. Coiro, M. Knobel, C. Lankshear & D. Leu (Eds.), *Handbook of research on new literacies* (pp. 871-898). New York, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Stein, P., & Newfield, D. (2004). Shifting the gaze in South African classrooms: New pedagogies, new publics, new democracies. *Thinking Classroom*, 5(1), 28-36. Retrieved from <http://www.rwctic.org/home/pub1>

- Stornaiuolo, A., Hull, G., & Nelson, M. E. (2009). Mobile texts and migrant audiences: Rethinking literacy and assessment in a new media age. *Language Arts*, 86(5), 382-392. Retrieved from <http://www.ncte.org/journals/la>
- Street, B. V. (1984). *Literacy in theory and practice*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Street, B. (1997). The implications of the 'New Literacy Studies' for literacy education. *English in Education*, 31(3), 45-59. doi:10.1111/j.1754-8845.1997.tb00133.x
- Street, B. V. (2004). 'Understanding and defining literacy': *Scoping paper for EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006*. Unpublished manuscript, King's College, London, United Kingdom. Retrieved from http://www.uea.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.812!Street_B.pdf
- Street, B. V. (2006). Autonomous and ideological models of literacy: Approaches from New Literacy Studies. *Media Anthropology Network*, 1-15. Retrieved from http://www.philbu.net/media-anthropology/street_newliteracy.pdf
- Sylvester, R. & Greenidge, W. (2009). Digital storytelling: Extending the potential for struggling writers. *The Reading Teacher*, 63(4), 284-295. doi:10.1598/RT.63.4.3
- Tørrissen, B. C. (2012). *The Long Hall and the Clock Tower of the UCC quadrangle*. [Photograph]. Retrieved from <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:University-College-Cork-Panorama-2012.JPG>.
- van der Veer, G. (1999). *Counselling and therapy with refugees and victims of trauma: Psychological problems of victims of war, torture and repression* (2nd ed.). Chichester, United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Vinogradova, P., Linville, H. A., & Bickel, B. (2011). "Listen to my story and you will know me": Digital stories as student-centered collaborative projects. *TESOL Journal*, 2(2), 173-202. doi:10.5054/tj.2011.250380
- Wales, P. (2012). Telling tales in and out of school: youth performativities with digital storytelling. *Research in Drama Education*, 17(4), 535-552. doi:10.1080/13569783.2012.727625
- Weidinger, A. (2011). Mechanic in Hargeisa, Somaliland. [Photograph]. Retrieved from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/a-weidinger/6452863879/>
- Willox, A. C., Harper, S. L., & Edge, V. L. (2013). Storytelling in a digital age: Digital

storytelling as an emerging narrative method for preserving and promoting indigenous oral wisdom. *Qualitative Research*, 13(2), 127-147.

doi:10.1177/1468794112446105

Yang, Y. F. D. (2012). Multimodal composing in digital storytelling. *Computers and Composition*, 29(3), 221-238. doi:10.1016/j.compcom.2012.07.001

Yang, Y. C., & Wu, W. I. (2012). Digital storytelling for enhancing student academic achievement, critical thinking, and learning motivation: A year-long experimental study. *Computers & Education*, 59(2), 339-352. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2011.12.012

Appendix A: “About Me” Card

Date:

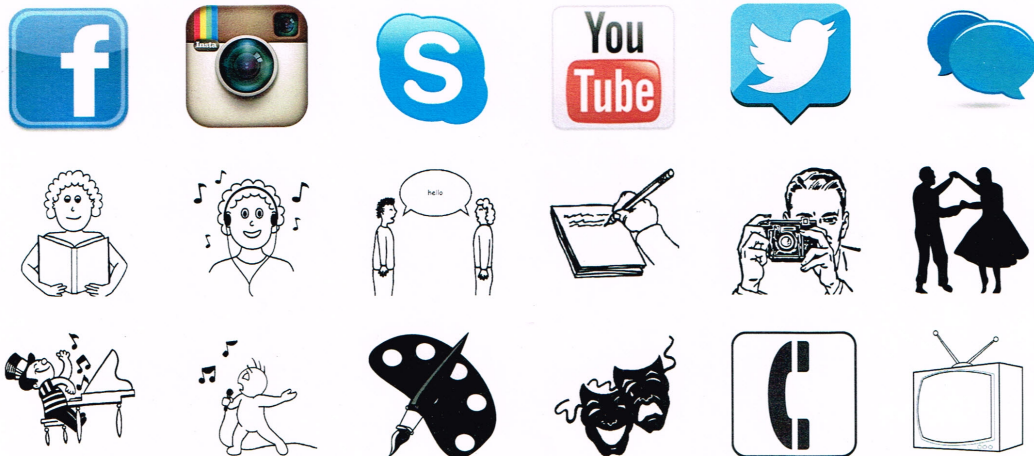
About Me!

I am a... (noun)	I am... (adjective)	I enjoy... (activity)
------------------	---------------------	-----------------------

My name is...

I speak... (languages)	I come from... (country)
------------------------	--------------------------

I like to express and learn ideas these ways: (circle as many as you'd like)



Other ways:

Appendix B: Example Interview Questions for Yaqub and Abdullahi

1. Tell me about participating in the digital storytelling project. What did you enjoy? Was there anything you disliked? Was there anything that was challenging for you?
2. In this project, we talked about different “modes” we can use to communicate. Which modes do you usually prefer using to communicate your ideas and learn information? Why?
3. Which modes did you use in your digital storytelling project? Which modes did you enjoy using the most? Were there any modes that you tried to use and found difficult or unsuccessful?
4. What did you notice about reading and writing during the project? How did you use reading? How did you use writing? Was this different from other writing projects you’ve done?
5. Let’s have a look at your digital story together. I’m going to pause after each image so you can tell me more about your story – the images, music, and words you chose to use, how you decided to put it together etc.
6. Can you tell me about certain moments during the project that really stand out for you when you were making your story? Is there one moment in particular that you remember?
7. Can you describe the classroom environment when we were working on the project? What kinds of interactions between students, and between students and teachers did you see?
8. After we finished making the digital stories we had a presentation. Can you tell me about this experience? How did you feel when we showed your digital story? How did people react to your digital story? How did that make you feel? What was the most memorable part of the presentation?
9. Have you shown your project to anyone outside of the Welcome Centre? If so, who? How did they respond? How did that make you feel? Do you have plans to share your project with others? (e.g. put on YouTube? Show (other) friends and family? Send to people?)
10. Through doing this project, did you learn anything about yourself? Did you learn

anything about your classmates?

11. What do you think you'll take away from this experience? What tools – academic and social – did you learn while doing this project that you will take with you as you begin Adult Education?

Appendix C: Example Interview Questions for Support Staff

1. In this project, we emphasized the concept of “multimodality.” What did you notice about the students’ engagement with literacy within and across the different modes?
2. Do you think a multimodal approach was helpful for the students to communicate their ideas? If so, how? Were there any students in particular that you think benefitted from a multimodal approach? Why?
3. What did you notice specifically about how the students engaged with writing? Was this different from the project we did together in the spring, in which we began with writing? How so? How did this project compare to other writing activities the students have done?
4. How would you describe these stories in relation to other stories students have told about themselves?
5. In general, can you talk about how the students engaged with the project? What were some of the challenges of the project for students?
6. Describe the classroom environment during the times we worked on the project. Teacher/assistant-student interactions? Student-student interactions?
7. Would you say this project contributed to the students’ identities? If so, how?
8. At the end of the project, we held a presentation afternoon at the Welcome Centre. Can you talk about this event? How would you describe its affect on the students?
9. What do you think students will take away from this experience?
10. What will you as [teacher/assistant manger/district resource counsellor) take away from this experience?
11. I’m going to be writing more in depth about [Yaqub/Abdullahi]’s digital story. Can you talk a little about [Yaqub/Abdullahi] as a student? What did you notice about his engagement with the project? Would you say it contributed to his identity? If so, how?

Appendix D: Student Process Charts²

Students of refugee background are identified with an “R,” and students of immigrant background are identified with an “I” beside their names.

Farrah (R) Female, 19 Iraq	Daborah (R) Female, 19 Iraq	Ahmed (R) Male, 20 Somalia/Malaysia	Yaqub (R) Male, 18 Iraq
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wrote on paper (some Arabic, some English) 2. Searched for images in Google 3. Translated script/ continued writing in English 4. Searched for more images in Google 5. Began storyboarding on paper storyboard 6. Expanded script 7. Completed storyboard 8. PhotoStory 3 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wrote on paper (point form notes in Arabic, began writing in English, decided to write all in Arabic) 2. Looked at images in Google while writing to stimulate memory 3. Translated Arabic to English with help of online translator 4. Found images in Google 5. Storyboarded using PowerPoint 6. Found more images 7. Looked for music on Youtube 8. PhotoStory 3 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Looked through Facebook photos 2. Looked for music on Youtube 3. Showed Ms. Wagner which pictures he had, and decided which pictures he needed 4. Ms. Wagner scribed story and helped complete storyboard 5. Continued looking for music on YouTube 6. PhotoStory 3 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Looked through photos on Facebook 2. Wrote on paper in English 3. Looked for photos (Facebook, Google) 4. Began completing paper storyboard 5. Searched for music on YouTube 6. Adapted script as copied to storyboard 7. PhotoStory 3

² I recorded students' individual production processes as best as I was able, however it is difficult to capture the more subtle ways the students moved back and forth between modes.

Juan (I) Male, 19 Guatemala	Abdullahi (R) Male, 20 Yemen	Li (I) Male, 18 China	Leyla (R) Female, 19 Eritrea
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Looked for music on Soundcloud 2. Opened Microsoft Word and typed in Spanish 3. Used Google Translate, translated Spanish to English writing on piece of paper 4. Found photos (Facebook and Google) 5. Separated text into sections and numbered them. Wrote corresponding numbers on a paper storyboard, along with the names of image files 6. Searched for more images 7. PhotoStory 3 8. Tried to upload one of his own songs to PhotoStory 3, and it did not work 9. Looked on YouTube for music 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Looked for photos (Facebook and Google) 2. Wrote image names on storyboard and began writing description underneath (simultaneously searching for images on Google) 3. Changed story topic 4. Started writing in English on paper storyboard 5. I cut storyboard into squares, and lay them on the table to sequence. Glued them in sequence onto new page and photocopied. 5. Completed storyboard, finding and writing images 6. Looked for music on YouTube 7. PhotoStory 3 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Searched for images on Chinese photo-sharing website 2. Wrote in English on paper 3. Brainstormed immigration story with settlement worker using graphic organizer 4. Continued writing in English, using Chinese-English translator on Google as he wrote 5. Ms. Wagner helped him edit script 6. Looked for images (Google) 7. Searched for music on YouTube 8. PhotoStory 3 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Began writing in English in Microsoft Word 2. Switched to paper, writing in English and using Somali for words she did not know in English 3. Began searching for photos (Facebook) 4. Typed handwritten narrative in Microsoft Word 5. Looked for photos (Facebook and from home) 6. Storyboarded on PowerPoint, while looking for more images 7. PhotoStory 3

Narun (R) Male, 19 Sri Lanka	Lucas (I) Male, 19 Brazil	Noor (R) Female, 19 Yemen	Zula (R) Female, 19 Eritrea
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Looked through Facebook photos 2. Typed in English on Microsoft Word 3. Searched for music on YouTube 4. Gathered personal photographs (Facebook) 5. Edited photos 6. Searched for music on YouTube 7. Used own movie making program (Vegas pro 11.0 Trial) 8. Searched for music on YouTube 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Started writing in English in Microsoft Word 2. Switched to paper, continued to write in English 3. Organized words with image titles in Microsoft Word 4. Continued writing on paper in English 5. Searched for photos (Facebook) 6. Began paper storyboard 7. Searched for more photos (Facebook and Google) to complete storyboard 8. Searched for music 9. PhotoStory 3 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Looked through Facebook photos 2. With Mr. Scott, wrote names of images on storyboard 3. Mr. Scott scribed under image names on storyboard 4. Searched for more images (Google) 5. PhotoStory 3 6. Searched for music on YouTube 	Completed digital story with Ms. Wagner (scribing) and Mr. Scott while I was not at the Welcome Centre; no data