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An Emergent Bilingual Child's Multimodal Choices in Sociodramatic Play

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Abstract

In this case study, situated in a preschool classroom within an early childhood Spanish/English dual language program, we examine how an emergent bilingual child engages with multimodal resources to participate in sociodramatic play discourses. Guided by sociocultural and critical discourse perspectives on multimodality, we analyzed ways in which Anthony, a four-year-old emergent bilingual child, engaged in meaning making during play through verbal, visual, and actional modes and in conjunction with additional subcategories in his transmodal repertoire (e.g., translanguaging, sentence types, actual versus signified use of artifacts). Our results revealed differences in the ways Anthony engaged his verbal modes (e.g., monolingual languaging versus translanguaging; varying sentence types) together with actional and visual modes to accomplish adult-centric tasks versus to creatively engage in child-centric play. His translanguaging furthered his communication in tandem with the affordances of his visual and actional resources depending on his play purposes and collaborators. Anthony's case illustrates how emergent bilingual children access a variety of modes to participate in literate discourses in complex and varied ways. This article concludes with a discussion on the importance of thoroughly accounting for the contexts and multimodal supports in interactive learning spaces.

Introduction

Multimodal approaches to the study of play have provided important insights on how children engage with an expanded repertoire of resources for meaning making and how learning produces and is produced by these mediated actions (Dyson, 2003; Kress, 1997, 2003; Rowe, 2008; Wohlwend, 2008). Whereas this has led to a greater understanding of young monolingual children's ability to utilize a range of modalities, much less is known about the ways in which emergent bilingual children engage their multimodal resources. As such, we investigated how emergent bilingual children draw on their developing bilingual language and literacy repertoire in classroom-based sociodramatic play while also engaging other modal resources to participate in play discourses using aspects of language and cultural models centered on play topics.

Play as a Source of Development

Sociodramatic play, or play that involves the acting out of scripts, scenes, and roles, offers children a plethora of learning opportunities (Bodrova, 2008; Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2008). Children's development is propelled during this activity because they enact behaviors and practices that may break from their usual behavior and/or are beyond the expectations of their age group (Vygotsky, 1978). When engaged in play with others, children negotiate real and imagined worlds and act out scripts to dramatize their thinking and understanding (Kendrick, 2005). Children engage in complex mental activity through focusing and directing their attention, using toys and props in symbolic ways, and self-regulating their behaviors to develop extended play scenarios (Bodrova, 2008; Elkonin, 1978; Istomina, 1975). Children are also involved in a process of language socialization where they draw upon their available linguistic resources to construct sociocultural and linguistic identities (Goodwin, 1990; Ochs, 1996). For emergent bilingual children, this consists of employing a variety of metacommunicative features across

their expanding language repertoire to co-create identities that support shared role-playing situations (Yun, 2008).

Beyond supporting language socialization, play also helps to promote key aspects of children's language and literacy learning such as their oral language development (Griffin, Hemphill, Camp, & Wolf, 2004), metalinguistic awareness (Garvie, 1990; Gregory, 1996), and powers of imagination (Vygotsky, 1956). In the course of carrying out their imagined play situations, children can experiment with reading, writing, and oral language to develop deeper understandings around the purpose of literacy practices in meaningful contexts (Bodrova, 2008). They explore and use a variety of communicative devices such as prompting, storytelling, and underscoring in the process of acting out imaginative or real life events during play (Dunn, 1990). Employing their diverse cultural and linguistic resources, emergent bilingual children have the opportunity to blend narrative styles and literacy practices of their home, community, and school in such child-directed activity (Drury, 2004; Gregory, 2006; Gregory, Long, & Volk, 2004).

Multimodality in Sociodramatic Play

Researchers have applied a multimodal lens to the study of play in order to examine the semiotic resources used by children and how these resources shape children's learning and participation in play activities (e.g., Blaise, 2005; Wohlwend, 2008). These investigations reveal that children are strategic in their combination of semiotic resources, which they integrate in their play to create identities for themselves and others (Blaise, 2005), to experiment with social practices, to provide spaces for peer culture, and to explore the use of objects and artifacts (Wohlwend, 2008). Due to the flexible nature of this learning forum, children are able to move easily and creatively among multiple means of communication such as oral language, gestures,

artifacts, actions, and body movement to convey their message (Jewitt, 2008; Kress, 2003). The range of semiotic resources that children can exploit supports their representation of experiences and perceptions of reality (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001), and expands the meaning of their messages in play (Kress, 1997). By drawing from a variety of complementary, compositional resources during interactive play, children can intensify, nuance, or augment their meaning in creative and complex ways in order to compose play narratives (Britsch, 2005).

Using discourse analysis (Löfdahl, 2005; Wohlwend, 2008), multimodal analysis (Wohlwend, 2008), interactional analysis (Britsch, 2005), and even network sampling (Wohlwend, 2008), researchers have documented several ways that children create and realize their play situations. To date, studies investigating children's multimodal choices in play have found that they explore and enact social and cultural practices through engaging traditionally as well as creatively with tools in the play area (Bodrova & Leong, 2003; Morrissey, 2007; Wohlwend, 2008). To this point, a growing volume of research on multimodal play has shown that (a) children self-select a combination of mediators to express their adopted roles and identities during play and to exert influence or power over other play partners (Britsch, 2005); (b) negotiate, convince, and compromise on different views of the play script through dialogue, object manipulation, and movement (Kyratzis, Tang, & Koymen, 2009; Löfdahl, 2005); and (c) combine verbal communication with other multimodal behaviors to join and maintain membership in play (Goodwin, Goodwin, & Yaeger-Dror, 2002; Piker, 2011; Taylor, 2014).

For emergent bilingual children, translanguaging—or the act of engaging in translingual discourse practices through parallel monolingual conversations or flexibly embedding features of multiple named languages (García, Starcevic, & Terry, 2011)—is a unique semiotic resource. Emergent bilinguals use their language and cultural resources to elaborate on the meaning of

objects and play events and to fluidly draw from their linguistic repertoire in order to solve problems, extend storylines, designate roles, plan and initiate play events, co-construct social roles, and internalize social identities (Gort & Bengochea, 2015) in the community of practice forged during play. Beyond alternating between pretend talk and metacommunication (i.e., commentary about the play itself) as monolingual children have been found to do during play (Bateson, 1976), emergent bilingual children are strategic around which language features they select to enact particular, purposeful functions, such as instructing younger peers (Yun, 2008), planning and acting out play (Genishi, 1983), and pretending to be imaginary or popular cultural figures (Orellana, 1994).

Much of the available research on the multimodal choices that children make during play has reflected the experiences and actions of monolingual children (e.g., Britsch, 2005; Sluss & Stremel, 2009; Taylor, 2014; Wohlwend 2008, 2011) or has focused on bilingual children's translanguaging without much attention to the involvement of their other multimodal resources as they play (e.g., Cromdal and Aronsson, 2000; Han, Benavides, & Christie, 2001; Kyratzis, Tang, & Koymen, 2009; Long, Volk, & Gregory, 2007; Orellana, 1994; Piker, 2013). The latter body of work on the translanguaging of bilingual children at play has shown that they accomplish various tasks and goals through strategic use and application of their multilingual repertoires. For example, emergent bilinguals draw from their multilingual repertoires to shift production formats and participation frameworks (Cromdal & Aronsson, 2000), to introduce important rhetorical or dramatic elements to play (Cromdal & Aronsson, 2000), to signal and index their personal perspectives of the play event (Kyratzis, Tang, & Koymen, 2009), to experiment with language and adopt cultural roles (Axelrod, 2014; Long, Volk, & Gregory, 2007), and to direct and manage the flow and organization of play (Orellana, 1994). Whereas this

research elucidates our understanding of the unique and complex ways that bilingual children use language with each other in their play, much is still unknown about how children engage translanguaging in conjunction with other modes to make meaning in play. By construing translanguaging as part of bilingual children's expansive transmodal repertoire and applying this perspective to the investigation of bilingual children's play practices, we aim to reveal how these children draw on the totality of their linguistic and non-linguistic resources—through transmodal¹ communication—to mediate social interactions in play as they construct play narratives. Specifically, our work was guided by the following questions:

- How do emergent bilinguals draw on multimodal resources to mediate social interactions in sociodramatic play?
- What is the role of translanguaging in mediating social interactions in sociodramatic play?

Theoretical Perspectives

This study is guided by sociocultural perspectives on learning and development in order to understand the relationship between young bilingual learners and their social contexts, which is mediated by their broad repertoire of linguistic and cultural resources (Vygotsky, 1978).

Through children's engagement with and growing awareness of available mediating resources, they are able to bridge existing and novel linguistic and cultural forms. That is, children deploy culturally constructed artifacts, concepts, and activities as a means of organizing their own and others' social worlds (Lantolf & Thorne, 2009). Rather than a mere reflection of children's current ability level, Vygotsky (1930) characterized sociodramatic play as an event that helped to

¹ "Transmodality" will hereafter be used in place of multimodality when signifying the ongoing, simultaneous use of embodied (e.g., gaze) and disembodied (e.g., print) modes, including all oral languages (e.g., translanguaging), for meaning-making purposes. "Multimodality" simply refers to "multiple modes," not necessarily deployed for meaning making.

propel their development forward as they create imaginary situations, adopt and act out roles, and follow rules determined by those roles. Through immersing themselves in an imaginary situation, children develop and act upon internalized representations of their environment, performing independently of the constraints represented by the physical landscape around them. These moments promote children's abstract and symbolic thinking, as they externally act on the available objects while internally operating on the meaning of the objects in relation to the rules, actors, and larger situation. This marks the transition of the child from focusing on sensory-motor and visual-representational aspects to engaging in abstract thought, exemplifying their forward development as a result of participating in play (Vyogtsky, 1933).

Our study is also grounded in the assumption that through the use of transmodality, learners intersperse and interweave available semiotic resources (e.g., linguistic, paralinguistic, and extralinguistic) to engage in meaning making and realize discourses during (inter)actions to better understand their social reality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). The investigation of how actors employ their available semiotic resources allows for insight into their lived experiences, and more specifically, how they represent meanings, carry out social practices, and realize interpersonal relations (Norris, 2004). Engaging in an expanded form of literacy during play, children produce signs through visual, semiotic, and transmodal expressions using images, objects, and their physical bodies to communicate and represent their ideas (Wohlwend, 2008). Since sociodramatic play events may prominently feature actional modes (e.g., gesture, posture, movement, and manipulation of objects) above others (Wohlwend, 2011), a critical multimodal lens supports inquiry into which modes are foregrounded, as well as how, why, and when children engage these in the service of play.

Perspectives relating to mediated discourse analysis guided our exploration of the transformative ways children draw from diverse bodies of knowledge and multimodal resources to develop more complex social forms of play in order to gain agency in their social worlds (Jones & Norris, 2005, Scollon, 2001). In this vein, oral language communication is one of many available resources with which individuals take action to better position themselves in communication with others, either along with oral language or separate from it, which in turn influences the negotiation and conception of one's own identity as a social actor. Accordingly, we view the multiple modalities perceptible during children's (inter)action in play as reflective of how they select and outwardly organize modes from their cultures' existing repertoires, effective for their particular purposes and others' expectations, to expand on and (co-)construct knowledge of their social worlds (Kress, 2003, 2011).

Our study is also guided by perspectives relating to communities of practice, which highlight how a group of children participate in collective learning while engaging in joint activities in domains of shared interest (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Within a community of practice, children are able to develop shared knowledge and create insider practices in relation to other practices that are more widely valued (Lave & Wenger, 1991). By recognizing the affordances of existing modalities in a given classroom community, children are able to collectively assemble, (re)shape, and deploy modes as compositional resources to construct narratives (Britsch, 2005), thereby furthering communication and learning (Kress, 2011). Because emergent bilingual children exhibit a broad range of bilingual proficiency and cultural knowledge across their home, school, and community experiences, they introduce, maintain, and reproduce practices that conform to communal or shared meanings around learning. Informed by these perspectives, we honed in on one particularly verbal emergent bilingual child to begin to explore how young

bilinguals enact their translinguistic/transcultural identities in play using a shared nexus of transmodal practices.

Method

Context of the Investigation

Setting. The current analysis emerged from a two-year ethnography of the language and literacy practices of emergent bilingual preschoolers and their teachers in a Spanish/English dual language bilingual education (DLBE) early childhood program in a multilingual/multicultural community in the southeastern United States. The city in which the program is located has a burgeoning population of Latinx residents, many of whom are Spanish speakers and who speak Spanish at home (McGuirk, 2004). Thus, encountering Spanish is commonplace for residents in various private and public local contexts (e.g., supermarkets, local libraries, banks, retail stores, coffee shops, local businesses) throughout the community (Lynch, 2000).

The DLBE early childhood program serves children between the ages of six months and five and a half years, and includes an infant, toddler, and preschool component. Each preschool classroom is led by two teachers, one of whom models and conducts instruction in English while the other teacher serves as the Spanish-language model. The language distribution policy of these classrooms is to alternate the instructional language (English and Spanish) on a weekly basis such that all whole group activities (e.g., morning circle, storybook reading, show-and-tell) during a given week are led in either Spanish or English. For example, on a “Spanish-as-target-language” week, the Spanish language designated teacher takes a primary role in leading all whole group activities in Spanish, while the English language designated teacher engages in the activity in a supportive role maintaining the use of English.

The “open choice” block represents a 45-60 minute time period each day during which preschool children can select to engage in writing, art, sociodramatic play, block play, or educational computer games, in specifically designated and organized centers around the classroom. Up to four children can select the play center at any given time, which involves self-initiated play in an area of the classroom that is strategically staged by teachers and parent volunteers to support theme-based play and outfitted with various related artifacts. Throughout the year, this area was staged with child-sized furniture and included a closet for clothes and shoes. Various theme-related props were also available in this area including food product containers (e.g. milk carton, juice carton, ketchup and mustard bottles), cooking utensils, plates, plastic model food (e.g., fruit, pasta, steak), and writing materials. While these objects were continuously available to students, the staging of the area changed periodically to reflect curriculum-based themes (e.g., a kitchen/restaurant, an airport/airplane, a doctor's office/hospital).

Teachers' participation in play was variable and usually consisted of teachers attending to management-related tasks, such as monitoring and assisting students in articulating, planning, and carrying out their play objectives. That is, while students typically directed their own activity in this space, teachers sometimes entered the area to inquire about what students were doing and what they were planning to do during play, as well as to make suggestions as the play unfolded. Teachers maintained their program-designated target language in these as in all other classroom interactions. In contrast, children's languaging choices were not restricted in this or any other activity, resulting in a play space where children employed agency in the use of the full range of their linguistic resources to meet their communicative needs.

Participants

The focal preschool classroom comprised seventeen children between the ages of 3 years, 4 months to 5 years, 0 months who reflected the community's diversity in terms of cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic background (see Table 1 for descriptive information about the focal child's and the overall class' performance on school-administered baseline measures at the beginning of the academic year). We chose to focus our analysis on this particular classroom because play was a daily choice activity available to children. All the children in this classroom were of Latinx heritage with varying experiences using English and Spanish at home and in the community. According to school records and teacher reports, approximately half of the children in the class predominantly used Spanish at home while the other half predominantly used English. We engaged in purposeful sampling (Maxwell, 2005) to identify the focal participant—Anthony—a native bilingual child (age 4;11 at the beginning of data collection) of Venezuelan heritage, who had been exposed to English and Spanish at home from birth, who regularly chose to participate in play activity, and who was especially flexible in his use of both languages.

(INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE)

As shown in Table 1, Anthony showed strong receptive and productive language skills in both English and Spanish on school-administered formal assessments and similarly used his bilingual repertoire in flexible ways to communicate with others in the play activity. Anthony was a focal participant in a multiple case study involving three children (Gort & Bengochea, 2015), where he was revealed to be a versatile dual language arbiter and play communicator who mediated play through managing his peers' actions and choices. We selected Anthony for the current analysis due to his dynamic languaging practices, which embody the varied ways children with differing levels of bilingual proficiency fluidly move among their languages to make meaning and engage in play with others. Given that our interest was to investigate how

children drew upon both their linguistic resources in conjunction with other modes to mediate play, Anthony's ability to engage in/across both English and Spanish rendered him a fitting candidate for our study. Because Anthony is a unique case—a very verbal, fluid bilingual language user that exhibits a variety of possible patterns in his bilingual communication—which can offer insight into possible patterns of emergent bilingual children's transmodal communication during play, we aimed to expand upon our earlier findings related to Anthony's play practices by investigating how he engaged his multimodal resources to participate in play.

Data Sources and Collection

Primary data sources consisted of weekly-videotaped recordings and ethnographic field notes collected over one academic year. Before selecting the focal classroom and study participant, the authors (all Spanish/English bilinguals) viewed the entire video corpus from the larger study in order to identify a classroom in which play was a regularly featured activity during open choice work time that routinely drew participation from a variety of children. This was the case for only one classroom, from which we identified a total of 25 video-recorded sessions of play throughout one academic year. Our current analysis originates from and extends a prior study where we explored three emergent bilingual childrens' language functions during play. The focal child in the current analysis, Anthony, was the most verbally productive child in the sample and his engagement in play served a wide variety of purposes. For this reason, we were interested in understanding how Anthony's languaging worked in tandem with other modal resources to support his play. Of the corpus of 25 play sessions, we identified Anthony as a participant in 14 of these sessions (ranging from 23 to 45 minutes and averaging 31 minutes).

Data Preparation and Analysis

We created transcripts of each play session, which involved transcribing verbatim all utterances by all children and teachers as well as various observable modes—i.e., resources for communication that are observable, or perceptible, by others, including verbal, visual, and actional—in the focal child's (inter)action with others. We relied on inductive and deductive reasoning to identify Anthony's purposeful modal choices and strategies for navigating his own and others' engagement in play. Although Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) multimodality framework helped us identify modes used by Anthony and his peers to engage in meaning making we also recognized additional subcategories in their transmodal repertoire (e.g., translanguaging, sentence types, actual versus signified use of artifacts). Expanding Kress and van Leeuwen's framework meant including Anthony's translanguaging practices (i.e., his receptive and productive enactment of his bilingualism, including parallel monolingual conversations, flexibly embedding features of multiple named languages in one's speech) as an expanded and more authentic representation of the linguistic modes at his disposal.

We defined our unit of analysis as the multiple conversational turns bound by a single topic that reflected Anthony's purposes for inter(action). For example, within the central topic of conversation about feeding a baby, if the purpose for interaction focused around finding food for the baby, all of the conversational turns and modal resources used in service of this purpose represented one unit of analysis. Within each unit of analysis, we examined how individual and combined modes supported Anthony's communicative purposes in play and better positioned him to achieve his play goals. Our analysis focused on the ways Anthony enhanced his learning and social experiences during play through the strategic integration and distribution of multiple modal resources to readily interpret and relay meaning during communication.

After delineating the units of analysis, the first and second authors independently watched the video clips for each unit (which were between 30 seconds and two minutes long). Guided by Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal framework, we compiled notes describing our coding categories according to (a) verbal, (b) visual, and (c) actional modes. Within the verbal mode, we identified Anthony's languaging practices (i.e., monolingual languaging versus translanguaging); sentence types (i.e., commands, questions, and statements); sound verbalizations (e.g., beeping and swishing sounds accompanying his actions); and whether he initiated an interaction or responded to a peer or teacher. His visual mode included gazing at objects or individuals, interacting with print, and interacting with images. In Anthony's actional mode, we identified instances in which he manipulated objects that were realia, child- and teacher signified, and child-created. Additionally, we identified the use of gestures and spatial movement as actional modes. Lastly, we also accounted for the degree of foregrounding across all modes: modes that were foregrounded versus backgrounded were those that were more versus less prominent or important within the interaction. More information on each of these categories, their codes, definitions, and data examples is available in Table 2 below. After the coding procedure, the first and second authors compared and discussed their independent coding, working as critical friends (Schuck & Russell, 2005) to question and seek clarification of codes, definitions, and examples and to resolve any differences or inconsistencies.

(INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE)

Through a recursive process, we examined when and how Anthony employed each modality and combination of modalities according to the different purposes of play. We also compared and contrasted commonalities and variations in his verbalizations, manipulation of objects, actions, and spatial movement in the presence of teachers and peers. The results of our

analysis, presented below, showcase Anthony's transmodal meaning making during play throughout the year. Featured excerpts from four play sessions (two from the fall and two from the spring) represent Anthony's transmodal meaning making during play across the full data set (i.e., the 14 play sessions), illuminating how he engaged various modal resources to participate in play discourses with peers and his teacher over the course of the academic year.

Findings

Anthony employed multimodal resources in dynamic and varied ways to participate in play discourses, drawing from available modal resources that were most effective for the purposes of his play. In so doing, Anthony recognized and was responsive to his play partners. His strategic recruitment and foregrounding of particular modes in (inter)action with his play partners enabled him to make meaning through, make sense of, and (co-)author his play, which helped bridge and further his own understandings within particular play discourses. Anthony's play competence and recognition of others' bilingualism enabled him to develop a shared nexus of transmodal practice with his different partners, as well as to use translanguaging to facilitate his varying social roles. The patterns of Anthony's transmodal practice are detailed below.

Nexus of Transmodal Practice Formed with Community Members

There were differential patterns in Anthony's modal choices as a function of his relationships with his play partners, specifically in relation to his teachers versus his peers. That is, the ways Anthony recruited and foregrounded particular modes were contingent on the degree of agency when co-constructing play narratives. Consequently, teacher-child and child-peer relationships influenced how Anthony recruited modes, providing evidence of his awareness of classroom community expectations in initiating and sustaining play narratives. With this in mind, Anthony was skillful in gaining and sustaining his teachers' and peers' membership through

complex and perceptive ways of making his ideas visible. Due to the shifts in expectations of play—generally adhering to teachers' adult-centered ways of play versus building on and challenging peers' play ideas—Anthony's transmodal communication was differentially used to (a) fulfill adult-directed play tasks, and (b) create more personalized child-centric play narratives.

Employing modes to promptly accomplish adult-centric tasks. Through his strategic transmodal communication, Anthony was able to engage in different types of (inter)action that enabled him to join his play partners and maintain adherence to their ideas. However, during instances in which play discourse did not originate from him when engaging in play with his teachers, Anthony generally selected modes to efficiently achieve shared understandings with them and adhere to their prescribed reality-based storyline. In particular, his developing transmodal/transcultural competence enabled him to engage in play with his teachers in responsive ways by strategically selecting available modes to efficiently realize his teachers' requests.

The patterns of Anthony's modal recruitment during instances where his teacher was directing his actions differed from the patterns of transmodal communication at other points during his play. In terms of spatial modality, Anthony moved across areas of the classroom, to and from the teacher as well as across areas in the play space, usually in search of the items necessary to complete her request. Once compiling the items or completing the necessary behavior, Anthony used a combination of manipulation (to position or show objects), gestures (to draw attention to the completion of the task), joint attention with the teacher (to capture her attention), and spatial movement (to move closer to the teacher) in order to emphasize his completion of the task or explain his motives for his use of objects. His use of joint attention was notable since Anthony was more apt to attend to objects rather than to look at others in the

classroom during play. Another notable pattern in his transmodal communication was his choice to use English both with the Spanish-language model teacher² (who always spoke Spanish when interacting with children and her partner teacher, regardless of what language/s they spoke to her) and with the English-language model teacher (who similarly used English in the classroom when interacting with children and her partner teacher, regardless of what language/s they spoke to her). His choice to maintain a parallel monolingual stance with teachers differed greatly from the languaging choices he made with peers during play.

The following example illustrates how Anthony met his [Spanish-language model] teacher's requests around the presentation of a customary pasta dish by foregrounding particular modes to bridge both their understandings of cooking discourse and to co-produce his identity as a chef. Specifically, Anthony engaged the following modes: verbal: translanguaging throughout self-initiated and responsive statements; visual: gaze to elicit joint attention; action: manipulation of realia and teacher- and child-signified objects, and spatial movement.

[Researcher note/RN: The play area is set up as a kitchen, with a small table and chairs, a play oven/stove top, and a cabinet containing kitchen-themed play artifacts.

Ms. Melanie: *¿Cuál era su plan aquí? (What was your plan here?)*

[RN: Anthony turns his gaze toward the cupboard away from Ms. Melanie and begins to walk toward it before responding.]

Anthony: Cook some pasta.

² We refer to Anthony's choice to produce what appears as monolingual languaging in English with his Spanish-language model teacher (despite his ability to speak Spanish) as "parallel monolingualism" to capture the nature of the English and Spanish cross-linguistic communication.

Ms. Melanie: Okay. Cuando la pasta esté lista, me llama. (*When the pasta is ready, call me.*)

[RN: Ms. Melanie begins to walk away from the play area before being approached by Anthony.]

Anthony: Pasta.

[RN: Anthony presents an empty plate by extending his two arms while holding it and setting it down in front of Ms. Melanie]

Ms. Melanie: Hay que echarle... ¿Dónde están los ingredientes? ¿Dónde está la salsa? ¿Dónde están los tomates? ¿Dónde está la sal? ¿Dónde están todos los ingredientes? (*You have to add... Where are the ingredients? Where is the sauce? Where are the tomatoes? Where is the salt? Where are the ingredients?*)

[RN: Anthony returns to the kitchen area, retrieves an item, and addresses Ms. Melanie once again.]

Anthony: Ms. Melanie, pretend this is. Pretend this is... apple? [RN: holds up and directs his attention toward a plastic apple; rising intonation for "apple?" indicating doubt/indecision about object label.]

Ms. Melanie: ¿El tomate? (*The tomato?*)

Anthony: Ms. Melanie, pretend this is, *un tomate*, okay? Pretend. Okay? (... *a tomato...*)

[RN: Anthony shows Ms. Melanie the plastic apple he grabbed from the cabinet.]

Ms. Melanie: Voy a pretender que es tomate. Okay. (*I am going to pretend it is a tomato. Okay.*)

Anthony: I'll cook it.

[RN: Anthony inadvertently drops the apple under the table as he walks around the table to approach Ms. Melanie from the opposite side. He stops to pick it up before placing it atop the pasta dish and delivering the recreated pasta dish.]

Anthony: Here, Ms. Melanie.

[RN: Anthony places the combined tomato and pasta in front of Ms. Melanie.]

In this play scenario in which Anthony's play goals are evolving in accordance with his teacher's recommendations, he largely employs his modal resources to efficiently fulfill related tasks. At the outset of this interaction, with little apprehension, Anthony recruits his *actional modes* before verbally responding to Ms. Melanie's request for his plan during play (“¿Cual era su plan aquí?” [What was your plan here?]) by swiftly shifting and directing his gaze (i.e., visual mode), toward the cupboard before moving towards it. In the efforts to readily fulfill his teacher's request—i.e., to adhere to his initial play objective—Anthony engages both his *verbal* and *actional modes*, translanguaging by holding a parallel monolingual conversation with Ms. Melanie and embedding English features in their conversation (“Cook some pasta”) as he walks toward the cupboard. Subsequently, Ms. Melanie requests that Anthony inform her when he has achieved this task (“Cuando la pasta esté lista, me llama.” [When the pasta is ready, call me.]) as she begins to exit the play area. At this time, Anthony expeditiously recruits various modes with his teacher to promptly regain her participation before her exit: using his *verbal modes* to label realia

(i.e., “Pasta” to describe pasta noodles on a plate) in tandem with his *action and visual modes* to compel her participation in the script through gaze toward and manipulation of realia (i.e., settling the dish before her) to elicit her joint attention.

After presenting his teacher with a pasta dish devoid of its customary ingredients, his teacher generates a string of questions to stimulate further thought (¿Dónde están los ingredientes? ¿Dónde está la salsa? ¿Dónde están los tomates? ¿Dónde está la sal? ¿Dónde están todos los ingredientes? [Where are the ingredients? Where is the sauce? Where are the tomatoes? Where is the salt?]). Anthony then acknowledges Ms. Melanie’s request for a more complex articulation of the components of the meal and recruits his modal resources to meet her demands. Again recognizing his spatial resources (i.e., peripheral spaces surrounding his teacher), Anthony returns to the kitchen area to gradually establish a response that is better aligned with his teacher’s expectations. As such, he verifies her agreement before integrating new realia (an apple) into their co-constructed story (“Ms. Melanie, pretend this is. Pretend this is... apple?”). In efforts to guide Anthony toward completing her prescribed play agenda, Ms. Melanie provides Anthony with a signifier (un tomate) in Spanish in place of his previous suggestion (apple), which he appropriates and embeds Spanish lexical items uttered by her in his speech (Ms. Melanie, pretend this is, *un tomate*, okay?). Subsequently, to deliver a finished product—a more fully prepared pasta dish—to Ms. Melanie, he uses his *action and verbal modes*, in combining two separate ingredients (i.e., the teacher-signified tomato and the pasta realia) and placing it on the table where Ms. Melanie is sitting as he utters, “Here, Ms. Melanie.”

Furthermore, Anthony’s strategic choices in assigning more prominence to certain modes above others enabled him to swiftly align his play with his teacher’s reality-based expectations as indicated in the previous excerpt. Notably, Anthony’s translanguaging in conjunction with

particular *actional modes* (e.g., moving across play spaces and manipulating objects to build on his teacher's suggestions) and other *verbal modal choices* (e.g., using descriptive statements to gain her approval and compel her participation) with his teacher supported the fulfillment of reality-based tasks. Accordingly, he recurrently engaged his *action and visual modes* (i.e., manipulation of objects, gaze to elicit joint attention, and spatial movement across the play area) through physical actions, necessary to propel their play forward and to abide with his teacher's prescribed real-life scenarios. However, it was through *verbal modes*—predominantly through parallel monolingual, descriptive statements to compel his teacher's participation and elaborate on his play actions—that Anthony resourcefully responded and mediated understandings for himself of objects (e.g., using tomato in pasta), roles (e.g., adhering to a play plan), and overall story line (e.g., delivering a more complex dish).

Employing modes creatively engage in child-centric play. When play discourse originated from Anthony, or was created/guided by him, he employed his multimodal resources differently, including his translanguaging practices. Rather than selecting particular modes to fulfill external requests by his teacher, Anthony used multiple modes simultaneously and in complementary ways to nuance his meanings, better position himself, and reinforce his play plan with his peers through a series of coordinated (inter)actions. These transmodal choices in effect enabled him to author a more personalized play narrative. In contrast to his play interactions with his teachers, there were differential patterns in Anthony's transmodal choices with his peers who would more readily align with Anthony's more personalized storylines.

The patterns of transmodal communication that were emblematic of Anthony's play with peers included a shift between joint attention with peers and direct attention to objects that he was manipulating. As a tactile player, e.g., using his hands and preferring to grab, grasp, handle,

and manipulate realia and child-signified artifacts, he engaged in direct attention with items for most of the time when enacting self-directed play. His use of joint attention with peers, while always brief and transient, was employed strategically during these instances to capture peers' attention and bring them into his play ideas. He wielded the modal resource of gesture to accomplish two different purposes during self-directed play: firstly, as a supplementary way of acting out his play narratives, and secondly, as a way to draw his peers' attention, either to his behavior or to a particular object. While one purpose of his spatial movements was to support his play ideas, Anthony also employed this mode as a way to maintain control of his peers (e.g., by taking away focal objects so as to impede their play) and to initiate new play storylines that would entice peers to abandon their own storylines and participate in his. Anthony also used sound verbalizations (e.g., making a swishing sound when pouring salt onto a meal) much more frequently in his self-directed play and usually in combination with other modes described above, such as gesture or spatial movement, to enhance his personalized storylines. Instead of the mostly monolingual or parallel monolingual languaging practices that were typical of his communication with teachers, Anthony was more apt to employ a broader range of resources in his language repertoire when speaking with play partners. With them, he engaged in fluid translanguaging (i.e., frequently embedding features of both of his languages), both when initiating or responding to statements, questions, or commands, and in particular with peers who used Spanish when communicating with him.

The following representative excerpt showcases how Anthony uniquely selected a variety of modes when interacting with peers who generally adhered to and supported the construction of Anthony's personalized play narrative, in this case, when he identified as a caretaker.

[RN: Anthony enters the play area, encountering his peer, Manuel, who is preparing a meal near the play stove. Anthony grabs a baby doll in the play area, begins to shriek while placing it in a high chair. He remains standing over the baby in its high chair and over the food items on the table in front of the baby. He then throws a plastic fish toward Manuel, hitting him in the back with it.]

Anthony (to Manuel): *El bebé* threwed it. *El bebé* threwed it. (*The baby* threwed it. *The baby* threwed it.)

[RN: Signaling his agreement with Anthony's play narrative, Manuel carries a tray of food items and refers to it when speaking with Anthony. Still standing over the baby, Anthony responds to Manuel.]

Manuel (to Anthony): ¿No quiere? (*He doesn't want?*)

[RN: Manuel is referring to Anthony's baby]

Anthony (to Manuel): [El bebé] Solo quiere frutas. (*[The baby] He only wants fruits.*)

[RN: Anthony shifts existing food items on the table, awaiting Manuel's delivery of additional items.]

As shown in this example, Anthony authorized and impeded the use of certain food items through *verbal modes*—sound verbalizations, declarative statements (“El bebé threwed it.” [The baby threwed it.]) and commands (“Solo quiere frutas.” [He only wants fruits.]) using Spanish and English features—as well as *action and verbal modes*—physical manipulation of objects, joint gaze affirming his stance, and remaining in the same focal space. His integration of both his

verbal, visual, and actional modes enabled him to personalize and assign an identity to an inanimate participant (i.e., a hungry, rambunctious baby), simultaneously recruit a new collaborator (i.e., Manuel), and achieve his identity as caretaker. Through his translanguaging, he drew on verbal modes of communication using commands (Solo quiere frutas. [He only wants fruits.]) and declarative statements (El bebé throwed it. El bebé throwed it. [The baby throwed it. The baby throwed it.]), flexibly and strategically embedding features of both English and Spanish. Additionally, as showcased in this example, Anthony frequently remained in the same physical space (e.g., hovering over the baby doll and center table) when declaring his play intentions to his peers in order to assert his control over the inclusion and exclusion of food items he deemed appropriate for the baby. Through his transmodal communication, he was also able to precipitously introduce a personalized storyline using a sequence of sound verbalizations (i.e., shrieking) and actions (i.e., throwing an object at his peer), as well as tapping into his bilingual communicative resources (i.e., translanguaging) as he engaged in metacommunication regarding current play events.

As consistently noted in the data, Anthony's translanguaging again served him as a flexible mode through which he was able to mediate understandings with his peers and teachers. The previous scene with his peer, Manuel, is emblematic of many play events in which Anthony generally arbitrated his peers' play actions and suggestions. Integrating both his *translanguaging with action and visual modes* enabled Anthony to control his peers' play-related actions, further develop a personalized script, and make requests for play. Demonstrating a high degree of agency in constructing more personalized play discourses, Anthony frequently recruited multiple players to participate and contribute to the design of his prescribed storyline—a result of his transmodal communication through which he conveyed his long-term intentions, in

response to the needs and preferences of his peers of varying bilingual proficiency, in order to initiate and advance his proposed play scenarios.

Translanguaging in versatile ways to facilitate social play. Anthony employed his verbal mode, particularly his translanguaging, differently across play events depending on who he was with and the purpose or expectation of play that he was executing. His languaging practices signaled the different social roles he adopted in the various play events and reflected how his manner of communicating within and across languages allowed for meaning making that had been created and legitimized in the classroom community. In particular, he engaged in flexible translanguaging moves with peers whereas with his teachers he generally showed a preference for English, engaging parallel monolingual conversations with his Spanish-model teacher, with one exception (i.e., instances in which he adopted lexical items that she suggested). In Excerpt 1 above, in which Anthony is working to fulfill Ms. Melanie's expectations of an acceptable pasta dish, he responds to her using mostly English. Recognizing his teacher's previous request for more ingredients ("¿Dónde están los ingredientes? ¿Dónde está la salsa? ¿Dónde están los tomates? ¿Dónde está la sal? ¿Dónde están todos los ingredientes?"), Anthony produces a signified object—and its Spanish language label recommended by Ms. Melanie—as a way of directly attending to her previous implicit demands.

When playing with peers, Anthony engages in languaging practices much differently, demonstrating a willingness to more flexibly cross monolingual language boundaries (e.g., "El bebé throwed it") and mirroring the language choices of his peers. For instance, in the following excerpt, Anthony invites two peers, one Spanish-preferring and the other English-preferring, to enter the play area in the hopes that they would be customers at his restaurant.

[RN: Anthony waves towards himself to signal he wants Mari, who is outside the play area and the view of the camera, to take a seat in his restaurant.]

Anthony (to Mari): Siéntete. Siéntete. (*Sit down. Sit down.*)

[RN: Mari walks past him through the play area to interact with a teacher's assistant sitting right outside the doorway adjacent to the play area. Anthony pulls Mari by the arm guiding her to the chair.]

Anthony (to Mari): Este es comida. (*This is food.*)

[RN: Despite his foreshadowing of a future meal—no food items are on the table—to which he has directed Mari, she does not comply and pulls away. She then returns to interact with the teacher's assistant. After a brief interaction, she again walks through the play area.]

Anthony (to Mari): Do you want food?

[RN: Mari begins to grab objects on the shelf bordering the play area.]

Anthony (to Mari): No, eso no es comida. Eso es basura. (*No, that is not food. That is trash.*)

[RN: Mari quickly exits the play area. Immediately after Mari's departure, Anthony's English-preferring peer, Gloria, enters the play area. Anthony lays out his hand with his palm up, signaling toward the seat near the table.]

Anthony (to Gloria): Table for one? Sit down.

[RN: Gloria complies and sits down at the table.]

Anthony (to Gloria): You want macaroni?

[RN: Anthony then offers more food options to Gloria – in English, as he refers to his handwritten menu that he had set down on the table, pointing to the various food options he had previously written.]

As noted in the previous excerpt, Anthony predominantly aligned his language choices with the preferences of both his peers, Mari and Gloria, who were Spanish- and English-preferring peers, respectively. His ability to fluidly use his translanguaging to advance his personalized narratives enabled him to swiftly invite others' participation (e.g., "*Siéntete.*" "Do you want food?" "Table for one?"), assert his ideas (e.g., "No eso no es comida. Eso es basura"), and further his play narratives upon their participation. Anthony's interactions with peers seem focused on recruiting their participation in the realization of his own play narrative. Given that both the participants and the purpose of play are different in play events with peers versus the teacher, his languaging reflects the distinctive social roles that he assumes in each context. His more flexible languaging practices with peers supports both the creative, authentic realization of his own play narrative and more aligned language choices with play partners, whose participation and interest he wants to maintain.

Discussion

This analysis provides a comprehensive account of the ways an emergent bilingual child in play interactions with teachers and peers accesses and merges different modalities and varied bodies of knowledge at their disposal to (co-)construct social worlds and participate in play discourses. Our investigation illustrates that through access and use of a variety of

complementary, compositional modes in child-directed activity such as play, emergent bilingual children are able to participate in literate discourses in complex and varied ways, using their developing transmodal (including translanguaging) and transcultural competence to describe, persuade, and collaborate in meaningful activities with peers and teachers. Through detailed analysis of an emergent bilingual child's expertise in transmodal communication with his peers and teachers, we extend current research by examining the transmodal practices that comprise young, emergent bilinguals' languaging practices—a verbal mode—in conjunction with their actional and visual modes.

Developing Transmodal Competence with Diverse Players

This study provides evidence of emergent bilingual children's propensity to both select and orchestrate their use of multiple modes according to their specific purposes, allowances of their community members, and the availability of modes that may serve them as communicative resources. Because literacy activities such as sociodramatic play offer a hybrid third space (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Tejeda, 2009) that render traditional language and modal boundaries porous, our findings reveal that Anthony, his peers, and teachers were able to develop a shared nexus of transmodal practices that legitimized varied ways of communicating across languages in tandem with other actional and visual modes. With this in mind, sociodramatic play afforded Anthony opportunities to develop a broad range of levels of transmodal competence. In particular, this study uniquely showcases the contributions of Anthony's transmodal repertoire in supporting his meaning-making efforts with different play partners of varying bilingual proficiency. Anthony's transmodal moves involved choosing available modes (i.e., verbal, action, environmental, visual) that were apt to specific purposes, bilingual audiences, and occasions of text making (Kress, 2011).

Working collaboratively among bilinguals of varying bilingual proficiency in sociodramatic play—a unique community of practice—necessitated shared understandings by all play participants of when, how, and why they engage particular modes. Under a variety of circumstances and following different objectives, Anthony's patterned deployment of different modalities to make meaning supported and reified the community of practice in this translanguaging space. In so doing, he was able to bridge cultural and linguistic understandings to orchestrate sets of identities (e.g., bilingual, student, friend, arbiter) and narratives (e.g., chef, caretaker, security guard) at particular times through his developing transmodal expertise. To this point, the unique patterns observed in Anthony's layered transmodal moves enabled him to strategically meet the adult-centric play expectations of his teacher (e.g., creating a pasta dish with varied ingredients) but also to engage in responsive, creative, and less constrained ways of performing play identities with peers while also attending to his and/or his peers' play objectives (e.g., serving a customer while enacting the role of a chef).

Instead, with his peers, Anthony exhibited a greater degree of agency that required him to deploy his modes differentially than he had with teachers. He was able to creatively and swiftly guide them to align their actions to his more personalized narratives, more frequently using varying sentence types (i.e., descriptive statements, explicit commands, and questioning), gestures and sound verbalizations, and greater abstract, fictional elements in his narratives (e.g., throwing a fish and shrieking to characterize a rambunctious baby) to support his play goals. With his teachers, Anthony's mode employment centered on responding quickly to their requests and ensuring that he demonstrated these accomplishments to them. He combined modes to find and place the necessary objects (e.g., spatial movement, attention to objects, manipulation) and

to showcase the finished product or behavior (e.g., gesturing, joint attention with the teachers, manipulation, verbally calling out and naming his creations).

Translanguaging as Transmodal Enhancement

Anthony's case study provides insight into the participation structures within which emergent bilingual children engage as they bring the expanse of their language repertoire to play activity. Similar to the extant play research examining verbal modes with emergent bilingual children in play (e.g., Axelrod, 2014; Long, Volk, & Gregory, 2007), Anthony was strategic in his languaging practices, drawing from his translanguaging repertoire for specific social and communicative purposes. This case study similarly supports findings that young bilinguals align communicative topics and language choices with those of their play partners insofar as their translanguaging contributes to creative expressions and achieving objectives in the collaborative play-based learning activities (Kyratzis, Tang, & Koymen, 2009, Piker, 2013). In particular, Anthony was responsive to his contextual demands by enlisting his modalities in specific ways to meet and match the expectations and culture of the play space.

Building on Britsch's (2005) study involving transmodal moves among monolingual English-speaking preschoolers in socio-narrative activities and others who have contributed to research on multimodal affordances in literacy activities (e.g., Jewitt, 2008; Kress, 2011; Wohlwend, 2008), this work extends existing multimodal frameworks to include translanguaging as an additional semiotic resource within bilingual children's verbal mode. Previous multimodality studies have shed light on how children use language in conjunction with other modalities to engage in classroom activities. However, many of these studies were conducted with monolingual children (Britsch, 2010) or featured language modalities that did not include the nuances of translanguaging practices in its different forms (e.g., Wohlwend, 2008).

Expanding on previous authors' work on the verbal modality (Norris & Jones, 2005), we distinguished several layers of "language choices" that are available to emergent bilingual children within this mode: translanguaging (e.g., parallel monolingual conversations, flexibly embedding features of multiple named languages in one's speech), monolingual languaging, sentence types, initiator/response, and sound verbalizations.

Using this language-expanded multimodality framework, we describe how language is negotiated in play events and the ways that language choices are maintained and reproduced in a community of practice. Anthony's languaging practices were an important resource in communicating within his bilingual classroom context and in effectively carrying out his play objectives. He used translanguaging as a versatile, verbal mode, and did so concomitantly with other modes both to achieve adult-centric outcomes expected of him by his teacher as well as to creatively engage in play with peers. Across all play partnerships, sociodramatic play afforded Anthony an opportunity to access his broad linguistic repertoire to strategically select features of English and Spanish in order to guide play in multiple directions, sustain play scenarios, as well as render scenarios more complex, a finding that aligns with previous studies showcasing emergent bilinguals' successful manipulation of features in their linguistic repertoire to meet their own and their play partners' needs (e.g., Piker, 2013; Yun, 2008). Anthony's language choices offered insight into his identity in the classroom, given that he differentially employed language resources when following his own narrative goals. In contrast to modes that may be more immutable, static, or simple in nature, we observe the verbal mode to be more multidimensional in that it offers a wide range of language features, practices, and forms of implementation that create and nuance meaning in dynamic and complex ways. The multidimensional feature of bilingual children's verbal mode is observed in other play-related

studies (e.g., Cromdal & Aronsson, 2000; Long, Volk, & Gregory, 2007; Piker, 2013). For instance, the translanguaging practices observed among bilingual children in Piker's (2013) ethnographic play study showed that Spanish-preferring bilingual children predominantly spoke Spanish among themselves but negotiated how play objects would be distributed using English to align with an English-preferring peer. In this same study, Piker asserted that mixed-language group instances provided the optimal circumstances for extensive and more complex language use. Anthony's languaging practices similarly shifted in accordance with his play partners, systematically engaging in parallel monolingual conversations (i.e., using English) with his [bilingual] Spanish-language model teacher and aligning his language choices with his English- or Spanish-preferring peers' own preferences; with more experienced bilingual play partners like himself, Anthony's bilingual languaging correspondingly became more fluid. His languaging practices also reflected Cromdal and Aronsson's (2001) findings in which bilingual children's translanguaging practices enabled them to "bracket talk," or to engage in meta-talk about play actions.

Thus, this study uniquely highlights how bilingual children's verbal mode, exhibited through translanguaging, varied sentence types, and sound verbalizations, serves as a compositional resource for furthering communication in tandem with the affordances of their environmental resources. With support from his play partners, the focal child—Anthony—was resourceful in employing actional, visual, and verbal modes to convey and/or augment his message, at times employing multiple modes simultaneously (e.g., eliciting joint attention to an object through gaze, holding up the object to bring it into focus, and translanguaging to assign a new label to the object to advance mutual goals) and at other times successively (e.g., throwing an object to gain a peer's attention, subsequently translanguaging to narrate a scenario, and later

awaiting a peer's actional response before delivering a follow-up verbal command).

Consequently, Anthony's resourcefulness in recognizing and employing complementary, compositional modes available to him enabled him to manipulate teacher- and child-signified objects, to conjure abstract ideas that departed from the immediate, physical context, and to use his expanding features of his translanguaging repertoire to generate and communicate meaning with his varied play partners while accommodating their language and play preferences.

Our findings expand on previous work suggesting that emergent bilingual children use their rich linguistic resources to solve problems, extend storylines, designate roles, and plan and initiate play events in the context of play (Gort & Bengochea, 2015). In alignment with previous research focusing on how young learners construct or alter the frame of play through their verbal mode (e.g., Cromdal & Aronsson, 2000; Kyratzis, Tang, & Koymen, 2009), Anthony employed features from his translanguaging repertoire along with his non-verbal modes to suggest and enact play themes as well as formulate and justify related actions in effective ways. Because our findings illustrate Anthony's systematic use of translanguaging practices in combination with other modal resources, they offer additional insight into how emergent bilingual children construct their sociocultural and linguistic identities (Goodwin, 1990; Ochs, 1996). Notably, Anthony's languaging practices concertedly shifted with combinations of non-verbal modes in accordance with his community members. For instance, Anthony demonstrated that he learned the languaging practices of his classroom and broader community: understanding when and with whom to use particular language features. Similarly, he also understood how to exploit (extra-)linguistic resources to carry out and build on prescribed tasks and to construct personal narratives during play. Therefore, these findings reveal important representations of how transmodal ways of communicating in play events may be maintained and reproduced in a

community of practice involving young learners of varying bilingual proficiencies with merging cultural understandings that legitimize and reinforce a nexus of transmodal practices.

Conclusion

Our study illustrates the importance of fully accounting for the contexts and supports available to emergent bilingual children in interactive spaces that have the potential to enhance their language and literacy learning experiences. Play activity provides opportunities for young bilinguals to use and augment their range of communicative and cultural resources during both teacher- and student-directed (inter)action. With the possibility of creatively using diverse modes in children's environment and the cultural tools from their broad repertoire of experiences at home, school, and in the community (Norris, 2011), play activity affords emergent bilingual children opportunities to expand on these experiences and (co-)construct their multidimensional identities with their peers and teachers. Given the wide-ranging multimodal affordances in play activity, emergent bilingual children are able to more fluidly and effectively draw from their available modal resources in order to meet their personal purposes, address particular audiences, and to meet discursive expectations in their expanding social worlds (Kress, 2011). Although we provide some insight into ways that emergent bilingual students engage with their developing transmodal and transcultural repertoires to execute play narratives in a play community of practice through Anthony's case, we do so from an observational perspective. Future research can expand our understanding of this area by eliciting personal responses from teachers and children about their intentions in this activity, and investigating how these play goals and their enactments align with the transmodal and transcultural evidence from children's participation in play.

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