

Laughter, gestures, and sips of coffee: a semiotic assemblage approach to dialogic learning

Julie Choi¹

Norfiza Mohd Zali²

¹ University of Melbourne

² Melbourne Graduate School of Education

Pre-recorded presentation link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIFXJvKKVSA>

COVID-19 has been a seismic event for Education. We now teach in turbulent times, shifting in and out of distinct spaces, each offering a unique assemblage of resources for learning. Meanwhile, pandemic-driven research reports the increased importance of strong connections in an era of remote learning. This is the one constant that remains - our ingrained need for relationships. As both pedagogy and stance, dialogic approach is a means of fostering meaningful relationships. However, rapidly evolving teaching contexts call for a posthumanist view of dialogic interactions that expands the semiotic terrain. Our study reimagines dialog by taking teacher-learner discourses beyond language, marking a shift from logocentrism by foregrounding the diverse semiotics present in any dialog. We draw on the concept of ‘semiotic assemblage’, which refers to the interactions between linguistic, artefactual, sociohistorical and spatial resources which then function in new and emergent ways. Using video recorded discussion between the two authors, we conduct a multimodal interaction analysis (MIA) to capture the rich semiotics of dialogic encounters. This methodology regards language as part of a range of semiotics, moving beyond linguistics as the primary analytical unit. Our analysis highlights how the interaction between interlocutors are inextricably intertwined with the interaction between various semiotics. This includes spatial resources such as room layout, and objects like coffee cups. We conclude that the semiotic assemblage of dialog led to emergent and synergic learning. Language alone could not account for the new and unexpected way of knowing, rather, it was a result of the interactions between people, objects, and space. In approaching dialog as ‘semiotic assemblage’, we invite both teachers and educators to reconceptualise teaching and learning spaces. For educators, adopting a lens of semiotic assemblage will enable them to effectively respond to unexpected shifts in teaching contexts by reassembling existing semiotic resources for transformative teaching and learning. For researchers, this expanded educational landscape requires a similar expansion of research foci to include more diverse teaching and learning contexts and non-normative ways of knowing. This will open up space for broader representation of teachers and learners. While the pandemic has been cataclysmic, it has also shown how deeply connected we are. Pluralising education and educational research is a way forward that forges inclusive pedagogies and relationships, allowing us to navigate an increasingly uncertain world, together.