

To work multimodally

Karen Szydlík

To work multimodally

To work

multimodally in arts-based inquiry and research is to be

multilingual.

To work

multimodally is to have access to

languages

other than your first,

languages with all their

nuance and

ACCENTS and

grammar and

contested meanings.

It is to **s t r e t c h** the **s y n a p s e s**

and **travel new pathways**

To inquire/research in one language,

and then to revisit the movement in another,

and then to revisit yet again in another,

and perhaps finally to

is

to have access to the cultures of the mode,

to have access to many ways of coming-to-know,

many ways to make meaning.

let's say movement,

say drawing,

say clay,

scribe lyrically, poetically,

Multi-modality offers *diverse* and **original** experiences, and supports us
to **see** and
feel and
hear differently.

It invites us to bracket out (the known)
to make way for **“something not yet known”**.

To work in a material or in a mode with which we are **LESS FAMILIAR** is to create

s p a c i o u s n e s s

and invite possibilities and create opportunities for unique coming-to-knows.

In the schools of Reggio Emilia in Northern Italy, one of their values is the hundred languages. This is a metaphor “for the extraordinary potentials of children, their knowledge-building and creative processes, the myriad forms with which life is manifested and knowledge is constructed” (Reggio Children, n.d.a).

Loris Malguzzi, the founder, wrote:

A hundred always a hundred

ways of listening

of marvelling of loving

a hundred joys

for singing and understanding

a hundred worlds

to discover

a hundred worlds

to invent

a hundred worlds

to dream.

The child has

a hundred languages (and a hundred hundred hundred more)

(n.d.b Reggio Children)

Coming to multi-modality in arts-based inquiry, as an adult, is akin to having 100 languages at our disposal.

It offers complexity

and layering

and uncertainty.

It is a place to wrestle and question.

It is a generative space of potentialities.

It is a place to be curious and to wonder.

Multi-modality allows us

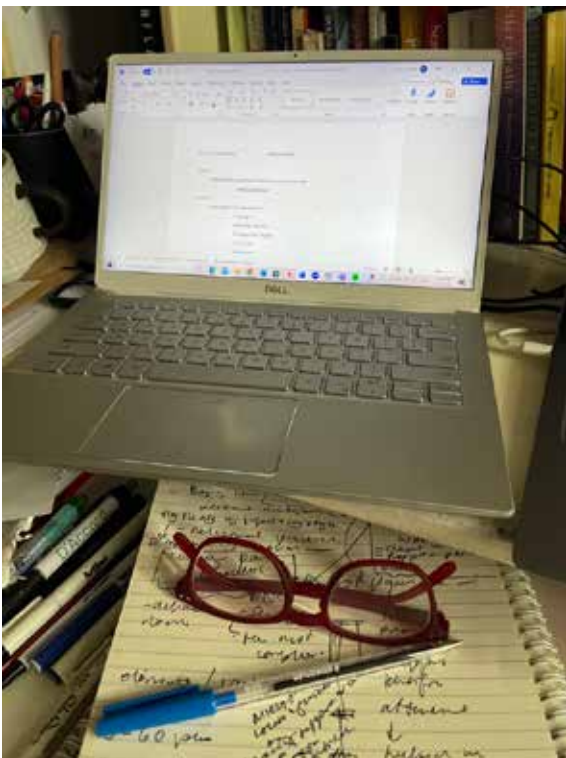
multiple layers and a

“multitude of voices” (Schaller, 2020, p.21) and

“multiple truths” (Schaller, 2020, p.23) and as Warren Lett wrote

“multimodal narratives require focus to find the voice of the symbols” (Lett, n.d., personal correspondence, quoted in Schaller, 2020c, p. 46).

In the doctoral work *A search for presence*, I wrote: “How difficult it can be to accommodate new knowing even when the learning is repeated from a diversity of sources, in my case multimodally. New knowing can be so slippery” (Schaller, 2020a, p.14). But coming to know through multimodality can amplify the newly discovered and be the site for the birth of something new. Perhaps in this place a new voice is generated, perhaps multimodality can be transformational and invite us to find new ways of being in the world.



Please visit <https://www.jocat-online.org/c-23-multimodal-szydluk> to listen to the poet recite this work.

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About the author

Karen Szydlik

Prof Doc (ThAP), Grad Dip (Movement and Dance)

Karen is the Masters Course Coordinator at The MIECAT Institute in Melbourne. She started her professional life as a kindergarten teacher, moving to drama and dance, and then eventually teaching in tertiary institutes and mentoring. When she started her doctorate “A search for presence” in 2015, she would have said then, that her “mode” was dance and movement. She spent the first-year painting and drawing and mucking about with materials. Then when the writing began, she started to wonder if the words she was putting on the page were poetry. Now she dabbles across, between and within multiple modes.



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