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Cultivating Multimodality from the Multilingual Epicenter: Queens, "The Next America"

Eunjeong Lee, University of Houston, TX¹
Sara P. Alvarez, Queens College, City University of New York, NY²
Amy J. Wan, Queens College, City University of New York, NY³

Abstract: Understanding that multimodality is a critical part of language work, this article examines the conditions for uptaking multimodality. With a focus on the material conditions and/of the labor crucial in building a culture of multimodality, we discuss how our context of Queens College (QC), a senior college in the public-serving CUNY system, where the majority of the students represents what Hall (2009) has described as the "Next America," shapes the implementation and the impact of multimodal work for our students and educators. Particularly for multilingual students, whose multimodal meaning-making potential is often disregarded as irrelevant to their "language needs" (Sánchez-Martín et al., 2019), their multimodal composing can teach us about the labor that goes into such work, including how they draw on multimodality and multilingualism dynamically as embodied and material practices. We argue that the work of building and sustaining

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¹ Eunjeong Lee is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at University of Houston. Her research centers around literacy practices of multilingual writers, politics of language, and equity and justice issues in language and literacy education. Her work has appeared in *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, *World Englishes*, and *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*. Email: elee33@central.uh.edu

² Sara P. Alvarez is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Queens College, City University of New York, NY, USA. Email: sara.alvarez@qc.cuny.edu

³ Amy J. Wan is an Associate Professor in the Department of English at Queens College, City University of New York, NY, USA. Email: amy.wan@qc.cuny.edu

multimodality along with multilingualism is also a work toward linguistic justice (Baker-Bell, 2020) that should contend with ideologies that racialize and minoritize our students and their language and literacy practices.

Keywords: multimodality, multilingual, materiality, ideologies, linguistic justice

In their *Manifesto* on multimodality, Wysocki et al. (2019) pose the work of multimodal composing as situated within the varied ecologies of institutions. Specifically, the authors argue for closer attention "to the larger curricular, departmental, institutional, and professional contexts in which we [scholars and educators] work," and how these institutional contexts intersect possibilities and materialities for multimodality (p. 22). Sustaining a culture of multimodality in our institutional locales then greatly depends on how we *language* and *labor* for this meaning-making practice within a broad range of other literacy practices and materialities that together shape the writing ecology.

Our institutional context of Queens College (QC), in the New York City borough of Queens, is often lauded for what Jonathan Hall (2009) has aptly described as "The Next America," a place where languages, cultures, nationalities and Americanisms collide and reinvent the very idea of America. "In the Next America, the Worldwide Web is truly worldwide; the filter is not set to English only, but embraces a global panoply of local knowledge and cultural specificity" (p. 35). At QC and in Queens, multilinguality and difference are an apparent and emergent norm. In fact, as Alvarez and Lee (2020) have highlighted in their collaborative teacher narrative of navigating multilingual practices at QC, in this already existent "Next America," seemingly stable linguistic, ethnic, and national categories are challenged on an everyday basis (p. 67). But the 'normality' of this occurrence does not constitute that it happens without friction given the deeply entrenched monolingual, English-only ideology. As Alvarez and Lee (2020) argued, to cultivate and sustain this already existent multilingual ecology takes "extraordinary" dispositions.

The very same can be said in our efforts to *laboring* towards multimodal meaning-making, against the logo-centric view of literacy. As building and sustaining a space of multilinguality takes working against the dominant monolingual, English-only ideology, cultivating a space for multimodality also means working against the ideology that treats our students' multimodal practices as dissociated from their multilingual and multiliteracy labor. At QC, students carefully weave in their embodied lived experiences, as well as physical and digital realities, into their communicative practices, such as when they move in and out of various mobile messaging apps, including KaKao Talk, Whatsapp, and WeChat. In this manner, QC students critically work against dominant monolingual and monomodal ideologies, as they build within and beyond the affordances, languages, networks and communities of range in their everyday lives. However, while students (and

instructors) at QC consistently engage these practices, such work is often perceived as "irrelevant" or "peripheral" to our meaning-making processes. Of equal concern, such work is often further undermined by the juncture between our students' racialized lived experiences as multilingual practitioners, and US writing classrooms' long unattained goal of linguistic justice (Lee & Alvarez, 2020).

As multilingual language and literacy scholar, April Baker-Bell (2020), critically highlights in her book, Linguistic Justice, Black Language, Literacy, Identity and Pedagogy, multilingual and multimodal practices dynamically intersect, manifest, and coconstruct identity and communities' ways of knowing (pp. 7, 53-61). In order to fully capture language-minoritized and racialized students' dynamic ways of meaning making, it is important to attend to the how and in what context and lived experience they do this labor. This means that as scholars and educators examining students' multilingual and multimodal practices, we cannot ignore or be indifferent to the societal contexts in which our students design and lead this labor. In a similar manner, Shipka (2016) argues that "attending closely to the processes of making" of all kinds of texts will "illuminate the highly distributed, embodied, translingual, and multimodal aspects of all communicative practice" (p. 253). Shipka then emphasizes the how and labor of "making" in order to cultivate "communicational or compositional fluency" (p. 255). With this definition of multimodality that focuses on the how of making, and pays attention to embodiment in unjust societal and linguistic realities, we draw attention to how language-minoritized and racialized students language, or how they labor language, as a component of their multimodal work.

As this article shows, attending to this work of cultivating and sustaining multimodality, particularly for language-minoritized and racialized students, means understanding bigger, and sometimes overlapping, writing ecologies that our students, as well as ourselves, are situated in, and have to negotiate in our languaging. As Dieterle & Vie (2015) pose, drawing on Pigg et al. (2013):

the everyday writing that students [and instructors] engage in, such as text messaging, emails, and lecture notes 'are part of a much more complex social practice that supports and sustains roles that [students] play in their communities and that are meaningful to them' (p.108). (p. 278)

At the same time, we must reckon with the reality that variant ecologies have different value systems that have ideological and therefore material bearing on the people who cohabit these spaces. As Inoue (2015) emphasizes, writing ecologies are political and ideological in their nature, constituted of layers of values embedded in the habitus that people bring in. In this sense, the work of cultivating students' multimodal and multilingual languaging must also contend with the fixidity and surveillance of unjust value systems,

and how these systems limit and seek to exclude our students' full range of ways of knowing and voicing (Baker-Bell, 2020, pp. 53-56).

Drawing on this framework of ecologies (Inoue, 2015), this article examines the conditions for uptaking multimodality in a growing multilingual and transnational US public-serving institution. As Wysocki et al. (2019) point out, not all institutions face the same material and ideological challenges in building a culture of multimodality, and "we must, therefore, attend to these differences and develop theories and practices that work across institutions and contexts and, at the same time, inform localized activity within them" (p. 25). Following Wysocki and colleagues, we examine these local conditions amidst what Horner (2019) identifies as part of the larger conditions invoked by "fast capitalism," which seek "difference"—both language and technological difference—as "new" and isolated 'competencies or technical skills' rather than continuously emergent practices (pp. 275-276). We dispute the view that treats multimodal meaning-making practices as isolated and 'desirable' skills to be solely acquired in the service of globalization. This view reiterates a monolingual and monomodal ideology that occludes the extraordinary labor and historicities that people engage in and bring with as a way of languaging within, across, and for their communities. Our examination then treats multimodality as dynamically connected to multilingualism—as an embodied practice. Our approach learns from Baker-Bell's (2020) transformative grounding of *Linguistic* Justice as one that centers Black Language for Black students' linguistic liberation, and in this manner, we view the work of cultivating conditions that center our languageminoritized and racialized students' full range of language practice as work that also moves toward linguistic justice.

Our examination makes a conscious "move toward justice" because laboring toward the intertwined practices of multimodality and multilingualism must also contend with the unequal realities for the bodies, communities, and ways of knowing that produce these rich and critical literacy practices (Kinloch et al., 2020, pp. 4-6). As Kinloch, Burkhard, and Penn (2020) explain in their introduction to Race, Justice, and Activism in Literacy Instruction, "it is a devastating reality that too many Black and Brown students do not feel safe, loved, and protected in schools, and that many do not see schools as intellectual stimulating environments that nurture their minds, souls, and spirits" (p. 4). At QC, our students contend with this reality on a daily basis, and our work looks to centralize their ways of knowing, being, laboring and voicing to sustain these literacy and activist practices (Horner & Alvarez, 2019). While the labor of instructors is certainly part of the ecological conditions we discuss here (Cox et al., 2016; Kahn, 2015), our article places specific focus on the labor that racialized and language-minoritized students, many of whom are also institutionally and broadly categorized as multilingual, do to resist oppressive and exclusionary ideological, cultural, and material forces. In this work towards linguistic justice, we confront monolingual language ideologies and look to where and how the labor of languaging is happening. And we highlight how instructors can

cultivate a culture of multimodality and multilingualism by seeing and viewing these dynamic literacy practices as embodied and mutually dependent, and as methods and methodology for us to build on one another.

In acknowledging the importance of *how* we labor and cultivating a culture of multimodality, we insist on naming these material and institutional conditions in terms of our 'diverse' and transnational student body, as well as students' resilient practices for overcoming adverse economic and migratory experiences. We do so, not for the 'exoticism' these embodied practices can often exude, but for the ways that these conditions, and the vast and varied lived experiences shape our ways of 'doing' at QC, a publicly funded, majority minority urban institution that is part of the City University of New York (CUNY). From our standpoint as transnational and immigrant-generation scholars, our efforts take ground in the struggle for linguistic justice and the need to resist monolingual ideologies and acknowledge and sustain the richness of our students embodied literacy practices in an educational system that we know to be under-resourced and inequitable. This alone makes our collective labor that much more complex and-yet-significant in generating change that pushes the ideological and material boundaries.

Laboring in the Next America: CUNY and QC on "doing more with less"

While CUNY, like many public institutions in the United States, constructs itself as serving the public, state funding at its 4-year institutions is 21% lower than a decade ago. (Lerner, 2020; PSC-CUNY, 2020; Yarbrough, 2020). This in and of itself is a telling point about the material conditions in which the largest public university system in the nation 'functions' on a consistently vanishing budget. These conditions are a stark contrast to how such public institutions are positioned as key elements of the social engine that fuel the upward mobility of students and the local economy.

Indeed, our CUNY schools are often praised for our broad range of students and grand potential for change. The CUNY system is considered the largest 'feeder' of employment and enrichment for the city and the state, and CUNY students and alumni are often sought out because the institution is viewed as a place of 'recruitment' for 'diverse' and multilingual professionals. This form of cultural capital, as Bourdieu (1984) would identify it, materializes into the vast economic capital produced for the city at large. QC, in particular, leads in many of the factors that shape the composition and making of this cultural capital that constitutes the city and the state.

An "economic impact study on the value of Queens College [QC]," based on 2017-2018 fiscal data, "showed that the college adds more than \$1.8 billion to the New York City metropolitan area and provides a return of \$4.90 for every dollar spent by taxpayers" (CUNY, 2020). This study also highlighted how QC is the leading institution for degrees in education for the city and the state, meaning that beyond its economic impact to the city, QC actively shapes the present and future of the city's K-12 education and curricula.

And to add to this, QC has historically and dramatically contributed to alumni's social mobility, ranking "fourth on a national mobility index" in 2019 (Queens College, 2019). While we do not wish to overemphasize the economic contribution of graduates as invoked by neoliberal higher education, these contributions show QC's impact in advancing the goals of a public education that answers to the multimodal and multilingual demands of a transnational context. Located at the geopolitical epicenter of multilingual practice, QC has established a number of pathways, such as those in the field of education, that demonstrate significant impact in social mobility and richer curricula for all students. But such advancement must be met with material and dispositional labor in ways that work toward justice.

As insiders to the institution, our students are well-aware that these praised social mobility 'happenings,' for instance, occur under extraordinary conditions. As a QC alum, Enoch Jemmott (2019), writes for the *New York Times* on his experience navigating New York City public schools, including QC, "I came to realize that, in every step along the way, we had to do more because we had less" (para. 12). Jemmott explains this further as, "the system feels like it is crafted to keep low-income students like us out of college. If it is, it's working: Only nine percent of people from the lowest income quartile receive a bachelor's degree by the age of 24, compared to 77 percent for the top income quartile" (para. 15).

At QC and CUNY, laboring for change is an ecological and shared effort, by which those of us, educators and scholars on the ground, as well as students, consistently labor with what we have and against deeply set institutional, material, and ideological structures of expulsion and exclusion (Kynard, 2013; Lee & Alvarez, 2020). In fact, Jemmott's poignant yet distinctly accurate argument about "doing more with less" functions as a leading metaphor for how languaging and laboring for multilingualism and multilimodality occurs at our institution.

Conditions for Languaging Multimodality at QC

In our scholar-educator work of building and sustaining a culture of multimodality amidst our material constraints, Jemmott's (2019) argument speaks volumes about conditions of institutional access to and working of the online platforms and systems that can allow our teaching to make visible the labor of languaging of our students. On the one hand, we face issues related to materialities, access, and systems, and on the other hand, we face the tension of systematized cultures that work against the cultivation of multimodality in our multilingual epicenter of "The Next America." For instance, on the very basis of platforms to communicate and create curricula with and for students, stakeholders in our institution have invested in costly operational systems that have limited functionality and access. CUNYFirst, a barebones version of Oracle's "human capital management system," and the main platform for online engagement for the entire

CUNY system, has been implemented so poorly that students, faculty, and administrators know it as 'CUNYWorst.' More so, older, less student-driven, and more-widely used university platforms, like Blackboard, create major access issues for our students as they are linked to CUNYFirst (Ahmed & Hogness, 2014). These series of decisions have led to a culture of mistrust in technology both within the university system and at the individual colleges, leading university participants to have more of a means of disengagement from 'unfamiliar' and newly institutionalized technologies. At the same time, the mistrust of institutional technologies has also led students, faculty, and administrators to engage in additional labor to find ways to work around these technological malfunctioning or alternative technologies or platforms to avoid technological failure.

The culture of mistrust in the university's choices for management systems is further complicated by the ways in which the institution has treated multimodal practice as a technical skill that requires minor attention and only demands individualized interest, one that is seen as simply an add-on to 'traditional' product-driven and alphabetic textonly approaches to writing. Indeed, as of now, QC lacks a centralized location or vision that offers students the digital tools and materialities that can aid their multimodal composing. For instance, while QC's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) provides a physical space with rich resources to practice multimodal compositions, the space is restricted to faculty use only, so instructors alone may develop their own classroom materials digitally. We see this approach as an extension of monomodality, which imagines fixidity in the creation of digital and multimodal learning materials. It does not take into consideration how students and instructors interact with and transform these materials and platforms in specific contexts and for particular purposes. And while there are spaces designed with students and their multimodal labor in mind, these are few and far between. The college's Digital Writing Studio (DWS), for instance, is isolated in a basement, limited in its physical and virtual access to the students as only faculty can enter with keypad access. Moreover, resources, like the DWS and QWriting, the campus's WordPress platform, have only been created because of multi-year efforts by the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program, not because they were fully and centrally funded projects by the college. This highlights how at QC multimodality is broadly seen as an isolated 'skill' that individuals can acquire on their own without a collective and institutional support, and a commodity necessary to show the institution as participating in innovative practices, as rather than a way of meaning making. And while we do not believe that multimodality can be only cultivated with and through digital technologies, the material constraints along with this view of multimodality as a "skill" certainly make this work much more challenging. The fact that these few spaces only exist because of the extraordinary labor led by a number of committed instructors and administrators, demonstrates how systemic and purposefully designed spaces and materialities are necessary in sustaining a multimodal culture in a multilingual landscape like ours.

Keeping resources isolated, individualized, and minimal not only fosters a scarcity mindset culture, where animosity between instructors and students can more easily unfold as the terms for *making* become less evenly distributed or accessible, but also makes it so that engaging multimodality turns solely dependent on individual instructors' own labor to support such assignments. Additionally, scattered resources require individualistic approaches, rather than more wide-reaching systemic ones, to foster a culture of multimodality. Such approaches reiterate the false assumption that it is up to one person in a specific positionality to shift an entire culture or a set of unaddressed inequalities. In the context of multilingualism, these individualistic and skill-oriented approaches also reinforce the English-only, monolingual ideology, as the design for these 'technologically-enhanced,' and 'innovative,' teaching and curriculum development spaces rarely take into consideration students' rich language practices or potential to participate in these spaces differently.

While not the focus of this article, the context of instructor labor within our underfunded institution must also be acknowledged. It is not a coincidence that as of May 2020, the three of us who are writing this article are the only full-time tenured/tenure-track faculty who teach first-year writing at Queens. Over 90% of our first-year writing classes are taught by contingent faculty, and the precarity of instructor labor does not create time or compensation for the extensive faculty development needed to make what we discuss here more widespread. As a result, text-based and product-oriented assignments prevail because this is what has been traditionally taught for decades at our institution, and this is what many of our long-term part-time faculty are comfortable doing. The 'tradition' of teaching alphabetic writing, as buttressed by our labor conditions, adds to the challenge of making cultivation of multimodality as a programmatic goal—particularly so, when coupled with the technologically constraining conditions in our institutional ecologies. The writing program (including Amy, who served as WPA for several years) implemented multiple initiatives and workshops to integrate translingual approaches to the teaching of writing and digital composing that have seen some individual impact but not necessarily taken up more broadly. For example, a long ago goal that all writing classes would integrate some element of digital composing, in way that looks toward multimodal practice, has had very minimal impact not only because of lack of physical resources like classroom spaces and software but also because of the absence of money and time to help faculty learn how to implement practices that cultivate multimodality that centers the how of making, rather than just end products. The effects of a largely contingent faculty who are not compensated or compensated very little for faculty development and the immense amount of administrative labor that goes into "managing" this faculty undermines the possibility of wide programmatic change (Wan et al., forthcoming), exacerbating the "add on" attitudes towards multimodality. By only designing 'edgy' and 'twenty-first century' classrooms without providing systematic and sustained support, the institution leaves instructors who already have the existing knowledge and commitment

to connecting multimodality to the rich multilingual language practices of students in the position of having to cultivate this critical practice on their own, and under their own 'familiar' means. While these efforts often lead to many innovative practices 'ground-up,' on the one hand, without the organized spaces and support, instructors' and students' engagement with multimodal meaning-making as well as their labor to make such work possible, remains ephemeral.

Our efforts to build multimodality in the condition of "doing more with less" are further challenged by QC's institutional history of and ideologies towards multilingual students' meaning-making practices that results in a similarly scattershot approach. As we discussed elsewhere (Wan et al., forthcoming), QC has a long history in its attempts to "contain and control" student multilingualism and language difference (Matsuda, 2006), which has fallen in recent years to institutional indifference as funding and attention to programs and curriculum has waned. This history and ongoing work of linguistic containment reflects the institution's default focus on students' language work mainly focused as monolingual and logocentric. The college's emphasis on providing more writing intensive courses across the disciplines, while seemingly positive in providing more opportunities for students to make meaning beyond writing courses offered in the English department, has not shifted its focus on 'improving students' ability' to draft a research paper—in its most traditional, monolithic, and monolingually conceived form. In this context, multimodal composing or resources for such work to occur often takes a backseat, as the work to 'fix' students' language becomes a priority.

We recognize our students' multimodal composing as an important site that not only affords more embodied, and therefore, expansive, meaning making for our students but also teaches us about the labor that goes into such work. Our students' multilingual and multimodal languaging is tied to vectors of identity and lived experience as multilingual, immigrant, Black and Brown, Queer, undocumented, religious minorities, and/or transnational-identified, and contends with monolingual and monomodal ideologies in writing—the "white racial habitus"—that dominate our institutional ecology (Inoue, 2015). Also, importantly, our students' labor in multilingual and multimodal composing reflects their resilience, resourcefulness, and resistance in their "doing more with less"—the labor of which we greatly owe recognition to. In this sense, we see working to support our students' multimodal meaning-making and their labor around and beyond the inequitable institutional structure as a move toward linguistic justice work.

Laboring of Multimodality in Multilingual QC

In this section, we build on Wysocki et al. (2019) in our efforts to "create, foster, and sustain cultures of multimodal composing in our departments and the institutions in which they are situated" (p. 22). We describe how multimodal and multilingual practices and cultures can be built and sustained, in the context of unequal social and linguistic realities

and materialities. We focus on our approach to multimodality as dynamic, often collaborative, and interactive engagement with texts and digital tools that facilitate and make visible the language and ontological labor of our students. Our approach builds on our larger goal toward linguistic and educational justice—namely that our students' languaging practices and historicities need to be centered in every aspect of cultivating a culture of multimodality, from surveying available tools to how students may engage with these tools and resources beyond the classroom and within and across their communities.

Centralizing our students' identities and languaging practices

Centralizing our students' rich languaging practices for multimodal meaning making is about establishing platforms for them to lead the production and audience narrative, as students are often familiar with these forms of voicing and participating, and have particular kinds of audience and styles they follow and like. For our students at QC, in particular, having opportunities to design with and for apps and platforms that consider the audiences of their everyday multilingual contexts supports their (and our own) transnational and multilingual community ties. As instructors navigate the digital tools of their institutions, these choices might be limited by institutional structures and decisions outside of a single instructor's control. But as we show here, instructors must make conscientious choices within these institutional conditions. And this does not mean that instructors should abandon opportunities to participate in work that can simultaneously generate systemic change. At the same time, what needs to be foregrounded in this work is careful consideration of how meaning-making opportunities with technologies intersect with students' complex positioning and languaging of their identities, historicities, and embodied knowledge-making, especially in the context of writing (Gonzales, 2018; Khadka, 2019).

Ohito and the Fugitive Literacies Collective (2020) describe how multimodal essay compositions can be a "fugitive literacy practice through which education undertaken in pursuit of freedom from whiteness and anti-Blackness can be awakened in the classroom" (p. 189). Examining students' own theorization of Blackness in their multimodal collage projects, Ohito et al. direct our attention to how multimodal composing "elicit[s] Black knowledges about Blackness [ground up] and demonstrate[s] how these knowledges epistemically trouble whiteness and anti-Blackness" (p. 189). While the practices we engage in are sometimes more subtle in their produced forms, we share a similar belief that engaging with multimodality can provide a means to centralize students' range of knowledges about their languaging practices and to interrogate and resist dominant white language practices.

Surveying the means available & making student-oriented technology choices

In making conscientious choices of digital tools, and as a "move toward justice," instructors should examine the availability, accessibility, historicities, and affordances of these tools in light of creating multimodal meaning-making opportunities to amplify and sustain students' rich language practices (Price-Dennis, 2020). As educators and scholars, we are called to surveying the tools, mediums, spaces, and resources that are already available and in 'function' with us, and how such surveying includes our very own languaging practices. The access to technology our institution provides, as well as how relationships with educational technology occur in our context, shape a lot of the work that's possible with our students. As Sánchez Martín, Hirsu, Gonzales, and Alvarez (2019) describe in their work, in promoting multimodality in our classrooms we must first assess available technologies and institutional constraints. In our institutional locale, this form of assessment has focused on both affordances of technologies for students' multimodal meaning making, and how these technologies and our students' transnational alliances can support our work toward sustaining students' multilingual practices.

Understanding and navigating the digital landscape of QC has been particularly important for us, given the technological constraints and language ideologies in our institutional ecology. Our practices of "making do" build on Hutchison's (2019) positioning of Learning Management Software (LMS) as part of the ecology of online writing instruction (p. 11). Because a specific LMS is often mandatory at many institutions, Hutchison encourages writing scholars and educators to shift focus from subverting LMS to considering how practices facilitated by available technologies can be more compatible with pedagogies and course objectives. The decision to combine more open platforms like the CUNY Academic Commons and WordPress with corporate software like Google Docs allows for conversations about how to help students build their capacities for learning how to make what is available 'work for them.' For instance, because we often face the frequent malfunctioning of Blackboard, as well as its inflexibility as an LMS, many instructors, including ourselves, have often used Google Drive and/or QWriting site, a WordPress blog space offered through QC, to facilitate students' composing work. We have made these choices in ways that account for how students may also gain a stronger sense of control, authorship, and collaboration in more transparent ways, as platforms, like Drive, for example, allow students full view of each other's contributions and document histories in real time.

Making choices about technologies, spaces, and platforms to use in the classroom also involves consulting and discussing with students how we have arrived at these choices. As scholars and educators, we should carefully attend to how students participate in and with these platforms differently, and how they labor language and communication through these mediums. We ought to continuously assess these choices with students and share with students how we have arrived at these choices, so they can also participate in the logic behind our use of these combined technologies. This form of

attention to the practice of making and building—while keeping communication with our students—helps make their work, inquiries, and goals for using and producing with these means more visible. Inquiring with students about what apps they are already using to communicate with one another, and encouraging them to make use of these platforms in the service of their classroom engagement also allows us, as instructors, to build capacity.

Approaching multimodality as an expansive and extended meaning making opportunity

In addition to surveying what digital tools are available and accessible, the goals of multimodality should be carefully considered in assessing how different digital tools can help achieve those goals in writing instruction. Robinson, Dusenberry, Hutter, Lawrence, Frazee and Burnett (2019) categorize digital tools in the writing classroom into the following: Learning Management systems (LMSs), website and wiki technology, cloud services and storage, smart mobile devices and apps, collaborative productivity software, and multimedia sharing. The integration of these tools into a writing classroom can be interpreted in a variety of ways, and not all of them may result in promoting the attention to what is typically understood as multimodality. For example, LMSs or smart mobile devices and apps, which are only being used to transfer traditional, single-authored texts from one party to another, do not uphold the goals of multimodality that we are imagining. We also recognize that building a culture of multimodal composition for linguistic justice means that digital tools should be integrated to expand opportunities for and ways to think about languaging, rather than restrict them. In this regard, composing with technology does not demand a highly technological facility with coding or the latest digital technologies, which can often feel like barriers to entry to a broad number of instructors and thus precluding their students from having the opportunity to engage in these practices. We believe that it is crucial to have as many instructors as possible understand multimodality as expansive and extended languaging and rhetorical work, rather than 'mastery' of a technology (Gonzales, 2018).

With this approach, we can think about the seemingly subtle but impactful ways that multimodality can be built into the structure of the course, including considerations of what this integration looks like from the assignment to the digital tool being used. This understanding and practice of multimodal composing, we believe, can help instructors shift their understanding of this practice as only possible among a few specialists with "expertise" with technologies and encourage them to integrate digital tools in their writing classroom, finding them a different opportunity to language for and with writing. For instance, we have pointed our students to Google doc's function of editing vs. suggesting, as a way to discuss the difference between the two terms, and how each term assumes particular relationship, engagement, and therefore, labor with the text. Also, importantly, we extended this conversation to how Google doc makes different ways to engage with text visible and why visualizing such labor is important. Building this type of classroom,

which broadly integrates multimodality to reflect how we language and work with the materialities of our classroom spaces, makes a conscientious turn toward justice.

Considering privacy and surveillance

Working towards linguistic justice via multimodal composing also requires consideration of privacy and surveillance issues. These goals to intertwine multimodality and linguistic justice within institutions of higher education do not always feel compatible with justice and equity discussions that motivate open and free software movements because access to digital tools is often shaped by institutional decisions. We must acknowledge that the reliance on corporate educational technology that assesses student engagement by tracking their clicks and other data brings with significant privacy and surveillance concerns in the efforts to steer students toward efficiency and productivity (Beck, 2016; Duin & Tham, 2020; Watters, 2017). Beck (2016) warns educators about the responsibility to make surveillance and privacy concerns part of writing instruction, including "a host of historical, social, political, and financial discussions" (para. 19) in order to foreground the potential risks for our students in using technologies. A particular concern is how vulnerable we might be making our racialized multilingual students when the technologies we ask them to use make them subject to surveillance, such as through tracking technologies in search engines and location histories or even when we ask our students to publish their writing publicly. In this regard, we recognize that seeking an available, accessible, and often corporate digital tool for multimodal composing should also centralize students' own understanding and desire of how they wish to situate their bodies, language, and knowledge production even in our intent to amplify and sustain our students' multilingual practices. We find this a crucial way of thinking and working toward justice.

One thing that cannot be understated is that in the very ways in which our QC students and their vectors of identity and language practice challenge assumed forms of belonging and languaging, we find many important layers of complexity in cultivating their sense of authorship over their ways of voicing. For instance, it is not uncommon for our students to identify as Jewish Orthodox Yiddish and Hebrew speaking women and this, in particular, poses specific ways of participating on online platforms differently. This said, many of our students who identify in these ways are thrilled to work on projects that call on them to share the richness of their cultural and language practices, and the histories of survivance and resistance in their families. In more than one occasion, because of the semester long data collected for the ethnography project that Eunjeong and Sara assign in first-year writing, Sara has had the opportunity to learn with her students about her students' families, and ways of discussing difficult and life-changing events, from the birth of a new family member, to facing linguistic and racial discrimination at work, to how a great-grandparent survived the holocaust and tries to maintain the rhythms of Yiddish language fresh in their mind. Because these stories (and ways of historicizing) are so

important and cherishable information for the families and the communities, it is important to consider how students are storing, languaging, and diffusing this community information. This is why we offer a note of caution about how broadly available online corporate platforms, which make labor of languaging visible in ways that are traditionally valued in academia, can also pose a threat to students' participation with their communities in mind. Matters of consent and privacy, and how in working toward justice with transnational, racialized, and language-minoritized student populations, our languaging for and with multimodality and reliance on the use of corporate global platforms must also pay attention to issues of surveillance and data breaching of privacy.

Practicing multimodality and looking toward linguistic justice

The labor of cultivating multilingual and multimodal composing we have discussed so far—creating accessible spaces for multimodal work and providing composing opportunities that center students' identities and languaging practices while being cognizant of the institutional constraints with digital tools—can be multilayered and complex, even more so in under-resourced institutions. Yet, attending to these considerations also allows us to reflect on how these goals are ultimately intertwined with how students practice metacognition and resistance in the name of linguistic justice.

Before we discuss our students' practice of multimodality towards linguistic justice, as well as our own efforts in this commitment, we want to reiterate our approach to multimodality as an important anchor that shapes our practice. In her study of the influence of WeChat on the writing practices of transnational students, Wang (2019) asks that writing teachers "consider curricular changes that provide students with opportunities to forge new connections across language and modes, to negotiate meaning across differences" and also to become "cognizant of the ways texts provide shape for and take shape from the contexts in which they are produced, circulated, valued and responded to" (p. 269). We see this push for metacognition and negotiation of meaning as a central part of languaging as well as multimodal composing work. Ultimately, our goals in fostering multimodality are to generate opportunities for students to engage with multimodal texts that are open, embodied, and interactive, while making meaning across our languages and modalities more collaboratively and conscientiously. Here, we want to emphasize that we see ourselves as participants in this collaborative and multimodal meaning-making engagement, as we must also language our way through 'new' platforms and practices that our students often share in our learning ecology.

Also, importantly, our approach to multimodal meaning-making moves beyond the broadly institutionalized and written goal of adding a 'digital' assignment to a textual course, a goal that is still hardly accomplished across all of our department's writing sections. In engaging this work, we consider how multimodality is integrated into the composing practices that students already do and the structure of the course. And while

at first glance it may not seem like a radical restructuring of writing instruction, this approach is one that refuses to see multimodality through the fast capitalist lens and its values—"its incessant demands for what it defines for us as the new, different, and innovative, and for flexibility in our production and deployment of these" that are grounded in monolingual and monomodal ideologies (Horner, 2019, p. 280). In countering this view of multimodality, our approach seeks to better acknowledge students' labor in languaging in composition by seeing their uptake of multilingual and multimodal practices as laboring embodied experiences, knowledge, and ways of knowing and being rooted in community and ontological practices. While we offer some examples here, what we hope to model is not necessarily specific assignments but the context of how these examples are composed and the considerations our students and ourselves make in this context to highlight our practices and languaging of and toward multimodality. Rather than simply replicating these practices, readers are urged to consider their own students' embodied languaging practices and historicities and local contexts to build and sustain multimodal ecologies that work towards linguistic justice. In this manner, we draw on Baker-Bell's (2020) critical reflection on her own languaging practices, and ways of capturing her research and knowledge in the vision, design, and formulation of her book, to emphasize our goal for treating multimodal and multilingual meaning-making practices as embodied ways of languaging and extending multilingualism. Baker-Bell (2020) writes:

I assembled the book using a collection of images, dialogues, charts, graphs, instructional maps, images, artwork, stories, and weblinks, to capture the multifaceted ways that I see, understand, and interact with Black Language on a daily basis. Indeed, engaging in multimodal practices provided me with space to fully capture the richness, complexity, and dynamism of Black Language. (p. 7)

Baker-Bell offers us a rich and critical window into the 'how' of language practice, and its plural, amplifying and embodied intersections with multimodality. We see this as an important guiding point for understanding and centralizing how our language-minoritized and racialized students often make meaning in a multiplicity of forms that move beyond the alphabetic-text essay. In the following section, we show how we and our students worked toward goals and practices rooted in this understanding of multimodality.

Building collaborative, interactive meaning making opportunities

One way we have integrated multimodality in our classroom is to create spaces to publicly and collaboratively language multimodal practice through Google docs so students recognize the 'doing' and 'making' of language labor they engage in. In Amy's class, two students are assigned in each class period to take class notes on Google docs over the course of the semester. She provides students with a few guidelines about how they might best capture the main points of each class meeting and they discuss as a class

what would be the most helpful in terms of structure and organization. The multiple goals of this ongoing assignment include providing a record of each class meeting, creating opportunities for students to practice note-taking and to see how others perform this task, and developing a collaborative and living document for the class. Also, importantly, this assignment makes the labor of composing visible, from the decisions about what to write to the composing itself. This assignment is a simple, straightforward, and flexible way to integrate multimodal composing and make attending "closely to the processes of making" (Shipka, 2016, p. 253) and negotiating language production as a daily part of the classwork and classroom community.

In a way, this collaborative work shows us the kind of embodied meaning making our racialized students already engage in. In contrast to an LMS discussion board, students can gain a greater sense of ownership over what and how a topic is discussed. They use the document, both in the text and with the comments function, to be in dialogue with one another and ask each other questions, share relevant links and use GIFs to respond. All of these engagements not only show our students' approach to meaning making beyond an alphabet-based text but also reflect their conscientious labor and consideration in this embodied meaning making. Students start to develop their ideas in this seemingly low-stakes and admittedly messy space and they do so collaboratively. Students also get to mess with this platform, and find ways that help them organize ideas. This mode of engagement is integrated into traditional classroom discussion, providing additional spaces for student voices and writing. The class can lean on it more or less, depending on the circumstances of the course; for instance, in spring 2020 when all classes moved to emergency remote learning, our students already had an established space where a lot of the classroom work could happen. Through this assignment, students build and practice a sense of ownership over multimodal composing and the knowledge generated through such languaging beyond the monolingual understanding of what's considered as "articulate" language (Lee & Alvarez, 2020).

Our use of Google docs has also made visible a great deal of students' language work, more specifically on how much they engage with each other's language and ways of seeing, writing, thinking about their worlds. In Eunjeong's class, students comment on each other's drafts on Google docs during the peer review process, using the comment function. And in their own literacy uptake, students often use the comment function to directly respond to the suggestion that the reviewer has left, or to ask clarification questions. They also frequently use the chat function when oral discussion time is limited, and they want to address further inquiries. In their comment, students often note a new word they learned that is tied to each other's cultural practices, providing a translation suggestion.

Additionally, Eunjeong often makes it a point to disagree with reviewers' readings of a manuscript, providing her own interpretation of the language, which then creates an important learning point for both the author and the reviewer: For the author, the

difference between Eunjeong's and the classmate's uptakes on language provides an opportunity to think further about how much the readers negotiate over their text while situating this negotiation in the purpose of the writing to make a decision as an author. At times, this exchange has offered students an opportunity to see how we all labor with each other's language differently, and how such decision is not only shaped by material conditions (e.g., lack of time, what technologies are involved to do the reading), but also dependent on individual readers' willingness to engage with text and attitudes towards readers' role in meaning making. While all of this collaboration and engagement with the text can occur in face-to-face classroom settings, Google docs allows us to make this labor of collaborative languaging more visible, facilitating students' reflection and metacognition about their own meaning making.

In taking up these classroom and assignment practices with specific digital and technological platforms, students along with instructors are negotiating language production in real time. Most importantly, they are—together—building languages on composing multimodally. Google docs and Drive folders lend themselves to this languaging practice, in particular. As Sara has found in her teaching, students in our classes may be familiar with terms such as upload, download, folder, edit, insert, format, but through the process of 'doing,' and talking about such doings, they are building on these practices, and figuring out their own meanings for them. In this very languaging practice of naming and familiarizing ourselves with the terms and functions of these tools, we are changing the possibilities and expectations of multimodal and multilingual meaning-making. More so, these platforms, and the classroom practice of discussing the uptake of these technologies opens up opportunities for students to reflect on the value and richness of their languaging and labor.

Contesting dominant monolingual ecology via multimodal composing

Our students' multilingual practices and lived experiences often shapes the discussion of and contention to the dominant monolingual ideology and the white gaze. We cultivate spaces and dispositions to inquire, discuss, and contend with how the monolingual space of education is constructed through and with many different modalities. For instance, in Eunjeong's class, students reflect on what writing they engage in how and where, and who and/or what influenced their learning and practice of language at the beginning of the semester to better understand the multilingual space that our students build together. This prompt at first often returns with responses such as "of course, English," or "I only do writing in English, so English." Yet, students' reflections point to their awareness of how their language choices are shaped by technologies available on campus and on their personal devices, and how different dynamics around multimodality are also tied to their varied historicities and practices across different languages.

Also, importantly, students' critical gaze extends towards online spaces, and more specifically, how even digital spaces such as Google Docs are often set as monolingual English-only as a default setting where accents are considered 'special characters,' which then requires additional labor in their composing work. And often, this discussion circles back to how semiotic design of every space—both physical and digital—is influenced by the ideological assumption about what language is set as "default," and the weight of such default setting falls back on linguistic Others as seen through a white gaze, multilingual students, who yet again have to learn how to navigate a monolingual space online. With this discussion, students understand the act of writing their own or an author's name that requires this additional labor as an act of recognition and respect, and ultimately, linguistic justice for multilingual writers.

Encouraging metacognition and embodied meaning making

In extending the questioning of dominant monolingual and monomodal assumptions in writing, we often task our students to engage and inquire about multimodality along with their current writing. For instance, alongside the preparation for the literacy narrative assignment, Eunjeong has asked students to include a concrete artifact that can further support their meaning-making in their paper. Students often bring a screencapture of a personally meaningful literacy artifact such as their diary, journal, poem, previous school writing projects, or their childhood pictures. While this artifact is still incorporated in their writing as an example 'supplementary' to their main text, students engage in discussion of how choosing the artifact takes a lot more serious consideration than what they originally thought of as just picking a 'supplementary' example. Throughout the process, students think about not only why the artifact connects to the meaning that they try to communicate given their embodied experience with the object but also how the artifact can be 'read' by the audience differently, and therefore, may invoke different readings based on the audience's own linguistic and cultural experiences.

Our "remix" assignment, an assignment that Eunjeong and Sara have often led in various forms in different courses, has fostered opportunities for all of us teaching writing in the English department, to see students' labor with multilinguality and multimodality even more explicitly. The assignment asks students to repurpose what they learned from the course by situating their work beyond our classroom while also engaging with additional research. In doing so, students actively think about their multimodal meaning-making practices as an opportunity to address an issue and the audience that they would like. As they take the position of an activist for the message that they aim to bring forward, our students show in-depth engagement with multimodal choices that they make in their work and ways to promote their composition.

Through this remix assignment, students also continue their reflection on their own writing and language practices while thinking deeply about how their meaning making practices are constantly mediated by different technologies and online platforms,

including smartphones, laptops, and social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Students often pursue technologies that best fit their purpose of multimodal composing and effects that they would like their audience to experience from. This also means they carefully survey technologies publicly available and examine them based on their own goal of meaning making, which also involves self-learning of the tools and sharing the strategies to navigate with the rest of the class, including ourselves, instructors. Students in our classes report that it is often this "remix" culminating assignment that requires the 'most work,' but greatest opportunity for self-expression. We, too, find that this is the case, though students can often dismiss that they have been building on their multimodal experience from the very beginning of the semester, and in their own schooling and community practices prior to entering our classrooms.

Our students' multimodal engagement also highlights their rhetorical and language work of considering and designing their future multilingual and professional selves. While many of our writing courses encourage instructors to have a 'remix' assignment this uptake is different for every instructor, and the goals established for that course's curricula. But because 'the remix' assignment resonates so well with our QC students, and because QC is an 'educator' institution, in Sara's Rhetoric and Writing in English Education, a course designed for pre-service Secondary English Language Arts (ELA) educators, the 'formal' remix assignment exists but is also built into a number of classroom activities, thus, allowing students to cycle back into it in a number of ways. Such cycling allows for preservice educators to get to know a plural number of technologies and ways of voicing their ideas. One such remix activity is introduced toward the end of the semester, where students are asked to combine their remixed teaching philosophy statement videos with their English Education and linguistic justice statements. This activity is called the "Educator Ethos Selfie." While in many occasions students in our writing courses may choose to not publicize their videos or display their faces on something they have created digitally, this activity cultivates in students and soon-to-be educators the idea that positionality and stance in English Education is tied to all the many and embodied vectors of their identity, their ways of knowing, and languaging in the world. Students are tasked with using their phone's camera function, to take a selfie and add pieces that allow them to express their teaching philosophy, as well as their ways of making sense of English Education. They are then asked to choose a social media platform of preference to post these selfies. As their instructor, Sara also participates in the activity but instead of offering her philosophy, she reflects on how that particular manifestation of the course (which is taught every Fall semester) has transformed one of her educational views.

As students begin to develop their "Educator Ethos Selfie," and they realize that they work with different phone cameras, and have different app functions available for editing and labeling photos (i.e., WeChat, Whatsapp, Messenger), what often happens is

that they begin to circulate their photos (and sometimes take their photos) with each other's phones or apps, cultivating collective ways of remixing their embodied practices. Students also contend with the value of these selfies, as they language back and forth on what words, named languages, emojis, expressions, terms, and/or styles they want to have on the image. The activity encourages a visibility of our culturally and linguistically diverse student body, and their strongly developed research and lived experience eye toward English Education, as a field and profession. Because the activity directs students to 'their' own known audience, not their instructor, they often design these selfies to highlight how their racialized and transnational bodies ground their knowledge and scholarship. Through this activity students write and rewrite themselves into their world, and their future imagined worlds, and it is often the case that in these re-writes students make it that much more apparent that their accents and ways of languaging (in a number of named languages) and ways of seeing the world have great value. It is also often the case that students' uptake focuses on publicizing this work and extending it to their instructor in public and professional ways. For instance, students often tag Sara on her public twitter account. Through this activity, multilingual students show us how critically they draw on multimodality as embodied practice, to labor their scholarship and expertise in their worlds and vice versa.

Similarly, our students' multilingual and multimodal work has shown that they already engage in a careful consideration of the connection between technology-mediated meaning making and accessibility in their meaning making. In thinking about how to best reach out to the audience that they aimed to address, our students often question how institutional platforms, such as LMS or WordPress sites that require institutional log-in credentials, become a barrier to get their message crossed as many students would like to speak for their multilingual family, friends, or community, or the public. At the same time, some students show reservations about posting their work on their personal social media account beyond the institutional boundary. For instance, Eunjeong's students actively sought out a compromise between the concern of visibility on a public platform and the desire to share their knowledge-making beyond the institution. Collectively in Spring 2020, the students pursued a public Instagram account where all members of the class have access to and control of posting and editing their materials.

Our students' critical and careful engagement has taught us how multimodal composing provides a means to express different knowledges grounded in their embodied language and community practices. At the same time, all of their work allowed us to see that our students already engage in complex rhetorical work—both linguistic and multimodal, across different platforms—while working against and around the institutional constraints and monolingual, English-only ideology. Such engagement and labor include actively interrogating monolingual spaces afforded through technologies, negotiating with each other's language and rhetorical work, pursuing a platform,

technology, and modalities that better facilitate their meaning making while thinking about and for their own and their communities' multilingual positioning, and teaching each other and us, instructors, how to language with(in) a 'new' technology. All of this labor challenges us to think about how multimodal composing for multilingual students expands the way we often language for, about, and around writing, and also importantly, how students themselves are pushing forward the work of linguistic justice through rich, complex, and dynamic multilingual and multimodal composing.

Implications and Conclusions: Ecologies of multilingual and multimodal composing

The dynamic multimodality that we have described here is designed alongside students' language practices, rather than as an additive assignment that leaves intact the underlying logic of dominant monolingual and monomodal writing instruction. Yet, promoting multimodality for our multilingual students can also be challenging, particularly as we see these practices in service of the larger project of justice. Addressing language ideologies is a central way we see multilingual and multimodal practices working together. and as a result, we expect to encounter resistance as part of the process. Just like no one is safe from the stronghold of the English-only monolingual ideology, students have often shared the concern that echoes the logo-centric view towards writing, showing resistance towards laboring for multimodal composition work. Such concern often weighs along with varying degrees of limiting resources and constraining material conditions on students' own time and space, namely that it is 'easier' to write papers. But we recognize that this concern is also a byproduct of years of our and our students' socialization into the monolingual and monomodal writing instruction. Therefore, finding ways to confront language ideologies as an aspect of multilingual and multimodal language work must be central, especially with our goal to move toward justice.

This often means considering how classroom practices are deeply affected by the context of its students and the institution in which they sit. Understanding the complexities of multimodal composing and how multilingual writers engage in it means understanding the larger ecology in which their language practices reside—including, but not limited to, ideologies about language use, racialization of multilingualism, and inequitable institutional resources. While ideologies around language use and the racialization of multilingualism have clear connections to the language work that is often done in writing classrooms, we ask that instructors also recognize and work with the resources available to their students. The lack of institutional resources cannot be an excuse to avoid multimodal work with our multilingual students, because as we have shown here, it is possible to integrate this work in subtle ways with the barest of resources. To facilitate students' multimodal composing and their ways to language about writing and composing, we realize that it is important for instructors to adopt a makerspace mindset. Taking a

makerspace mindset means that we also need to be creative ourselves to repurpose a tool or a space, just like our students have shown us to do so. And it also means we, as instructors with some institutional power, must speak loudly and work to change institutional contexts in whatever way we can, whether through influencing dispositions and norms, creating an opportunity to share examples and principles of integration of multimodality across campus, changing curricula and other structures of writing education and administration, or arguing for increased funding so more instructors can more easily support this work. In this way, we advocate for not just a consideration of the larger ecology but an acknowledgement of our own roles in shaping it and potential to change it for language justice for our students.

With this acknowledgment, we want to make visible our choice to rely on what the institution has made available to us, which helps in our efforts to be more accessible but also results in the use of the more mainstream platforms for our students at times. By relying on the most available platforms and software to students, we acknowledge the participation in thorny privacy and surveillance practices, but also work to provide spaces to reflect on and critique the use of these tools—ones that will likely continue to be part of our students' languaging and composing practices beyond our classrooms. But particularly because our students are often marginalized and particularly vulnerable to surveillance strategies, we recognize that there's space to be more critical and activist about student privacy issues as our students compose and share those compositions through various platforms and with our administrations as they cycle through a variety of expensive technological choices. We also look toward alternative accessible spaces so that the tools that we use can better reflect our justice goals, such as open-source spaces such as the CUNY Academic Commons, a collaborative and community-oriented networked learning environment created in contrast to the institution's agreements with Microsoft, Google and Blackboard (Gold, 2011). The choices around digital tools are a balance of what is accessible, available, and just. While these choices are often imperfect, as we have discussed here, their imperfections, such as with further discussions about the implications of privacy and surveillance, should be made part of the class and part of the decisions we make for future classes. It is also for us, as educators and scholars looking toward justice, to think more critically about the roles of institutions of higher education as places that can 'change' and 'serve' all students, when they have historically and presently been exposed as places of exclusion (Grande, 2018). This is a larger conversation for us to consider, as our institutions reflect more and more our world's growing multilingualism because of our racialized students.

As our institution (and many public institutions like it) has been severely defunded over the last two decades, our current moment of crisis of the global pandemic has brought warnings of further disinvestment. In preparation for the fall 2020 semester, our department was asked to prepare for severe budget cuts, in which it is possible that up to half of our part-time faculty, the ones who teach more than 60% of the classes at QC,

will be let go (Weingarten, 2020). While the department was able to prevent the worst case scenario, it was only able to do so by increasing class sizes for an entering first year class at QC that is 30% over expected enrollments, even while CUNY overall is experiencing a 3.7% decrease in enrollments (Sandoval, 2020). These budget constraints, overcrowded classrooms, and overworked faculty enhance the already existing inequities of our institution and among our students. Writing for *The New Yorker*, political theorist and professor of political science at Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center of CUNY, Corey Robin (2020) highlights how students at CUNY as well as their communities have been the most gravely affected by the world pandemic, which has disproportionately affected communities of color in the US context. The global pandemic also widened existent inequities as continued teaching of online with the digital tools and constraints that we've described above. These students, who are without high speed internet and phone connections or safe and private spaces to work, who are sometimes displaced and are battling health and financial concerns and family loss (Kisilevsky, 2020), are navigating "remote learning," which can be designed to either reinforce or acknowledge all of the imbalances and inequities from the physical classroom. In these newly online spaces, we see the opportunity to think carefully about how composing multimodally can better reflect and attend to the languaging of our multilingual students and the conditions they work in. But this only works if institutions provide resources and attention to this, rather than just attempting to replicate the physical classroom space and its assignments in the online classroom.

It is in this ecology that students and instructors are laboring. And by describing it here, we seek to make visible the labor that goes into multimodal composition in multilingual contexts. We find it crucial to acknowledge, not only the richness of students' multilingual and multimodal language practices, but also the work that goes into navigating this ecology as they 'make do,' often with fewer resources and in inequitable spaces. In doing so, we strive to build sustainable and just spaces for the multimodal and multilingual meaning making practices of our students.

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