Introduction

With often generous amounts of drawing materials provided in kindergarten settings, children are encouraged to engage in creating drawings of their own choice and at their own leisure. Through drawing, children objectify their inner thoughts and images on a piece of paper (Hope, 2008). In the process, they often review, reflect on and further develop their ideas. The drawing experience of many children presents opportunities for engaging them in deeper and more holistic learning if their creativity is appropriately supported through the process.

The study presented in this article explores children’s creative dispositions, thinking styles and creative processes in drawing, in relation to graphic-narrative-embodied modes of meaning-making. It also explores how interlocutor–child interactions support children’s creativity and multimodal meaning-making.

Before proceeding to the study methods and findings, the following sections will briefly indicate the place of creativity in recent international educational policies, define creativity and its importance, provide sociocultural perspectives on drawing and explain further the elements of graphic-narrative-embodied play.

International educational policies on creativity

O’Donnell and Micklethwaite’s (1999) International review of curriculum and assessment frameworks revealed that creativity was included in guiding documents for early childhood education in Australia, England, France, Germany, Japan and Netherlands. The Swedish Government’s National Development Plan for Preschool, School and Adult Education (Swedish Ministry of Education, 1997) stressed the need in education to provide conditions for developing creative skills. The UK Department for Education’s (2014) Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework listed ‘creating and thinking critically’ (p. 9) as one of three characteristics of effective teaching and learning.

In the Australian Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) (DEEWR, 2009), creativity is highlighted as an important learning disposition: ‘Developing dispositions such as curiosity, persistence and creativity enables children to participate in and gain from learning’ (p. 33). The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLF) (DEECD & VCAA, 2009) recognises the necessity of developing creative thinking and inquiry processes for children’s lifelong learning.
What is creativity and why is it important?

Creativity can be understood as the process of generating novel ideas and products that are appropriate and of high quality (Stemberg & Lubart, 1995). All acts of creativity must involve some creative thinking (Robson, 2012, p. 28) and creative thinking can be a predictor of creativity (Hargreaves, 2012). Torrance (1974) described creative thinking as:

A process of becoming sensitive to problems, deficiencies, gaps in knowledge, missing elements, and so on; identifying the difficulty; searching for solutions, making guesses, or formulating hypotheses about the deficiencies; testing and retesting these hypotheses and possibly modifying and retesting them; and finally communicating the results (p. 8).

Children’s creative thinking experiences are strong foundations for their learning in the early years and beyond. These foundations also equip children to understand and appreciate the meaning of becoming literate and numerate through their schooling years (Robinson, 1999). Moreover, Marzollo and Lloyd (1972) believe that creativity cannot be developed in later life if not engaged with in the naturally creative years of early childhood. Torrance (1970) found that preschool children, aged three to five, show more spontaneous creativity compared to children aged six and above. For these reasons, supporting children’s creativity from the early years, termed the ‘golden age of creativity’ (Gardner, 1982, p. 86), is both important and well worth pursuing.

Sociocultural perspectives on drawing and learning

This paper examines children’s drawing in terms of graphic-narrative-embodied play, meaning-making and creativity rather than as developmental stages or pre-writing skills. Through the creation of drawings, children often revisit ideas and experiences linked to their particular sociocultural contexts. Children also tend to draw alongside each other and with adults, where much social learning takes place. This social drawing space has been studied by many, including Anning and Ring (2004), Brooks (2006), Coates and Coates (2006), Dockett, Einarsdóttir and Perry (2011), Richards (2009), Ring (2010) and Wright (2014a), with the aim to understand and support children’s understanding of self and the world. These studies examined children’s narratives as they interact with their drawings, peers and the adult interlocutor.

The adult interlocutor facilitates the surfacing of the child’s voice, enabling better understanding of the child’s creativity in drawing (Wright, 2011). The interlocutor’s task requires tuning sensitively into the child’s drawing (Anning & Ring, 2004), listening to the child’s narratives, observing the child’s non-verbal communication, entering into reciprocal dialogues with the child and allowing ‘air time’ for the child to take the lead as much as possible.

This study further delved into the question of how interlocutor–child interactions support children’s creativity in graphic-narrative-embodied play. The academic enquiry is informed by literature on quality adult–child interactions (Ramey, Sparling & Ramey, 2012; Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden & Bell, 2002) in the context of children’s drawing (Anning & Ring, 2004; Wright, 2011).

This paper investigates interlocutor–child interactions as holistic processes stemming from curiosity about the child’s action, thinking, learning and artistic vision, and responding to the child genuinely, so that the child feels respected (Paley, 2007). Interaction ... is enhanced when built on trusting relationships in play, including vivid and metaphoric descriptions of experience that produce emotional engagement’ (John-Steiner, Connery & Marjanovic-Shane, 2010, p. 8). The findings illustrate how three children’s interactions with the interlocutor are built on trusting relationships. It foregrounds how both child and adult engage each other in relation to their own personal experiences, and build upon these experiences in imaginative ways.

Multimodal meaning-making through graphic-narrative-embodied play

Wright (2010) describes three modes of meaning-making that children use in their drawing processes: graphic, narrative and embodied. The graphic mode features drawn and written art elements, symbols, icons and iconic devices, and spatial relationships. The narrative mode features verbal and vocal discourse that may be non-fictional, literal, fictional or metaphoric. The embodied mode features descriptive action, expressiveness and dramatisation. Through the act of graphic-narrative-embodied play, children engage in multimodal meaning-making processes in which their creativity is surfaced.

Play, as noted by Vygotsky (1978), is a specialised form of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), in that it is:

a process of becoming sensitive to problems, deficiencies, gaps in knowledge, missing elements, and so on; identifying the difficulty; searching for solutions, making guesses, or formulating hypotheses about the deficiencies; testing and retesting these hypotheses and possibly modifying and retesting them; and finally communicating the results (p. 8).

In play, children put emphasis on the process rather than the product, and tend to harness intrinsic qualities such as willingness, enthusiasm, freedom from fear and engagement (Howard, 2002). Playing in drawing, therefore, presents a powerful exploratory tool for children to work with ideas and information (Ring, 2010), many of which are drawn from the children’s sociocultural lives.
Methods

A practitioner-based case study was undertaken in which the researcher (first author) was also the adult interlocutor. The researcher was not an employee at the early childhood setting, but had known the children through a professional teaching placement.

Data collection

Ethics approval was obtained from The University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee before the recruitment process in November, 2014. Informed consent was obtained from 13 parents, and 10 of the 13 children willingly participated in graphic-narrative-embodied play with the interlocutor when asked if they would like to come and draw at the drawing area set up for videoing. The drawing area was situated at a corner in the kindergarten room (four to five-year-olds) to provide children with a familiar, but quieter space for the activity and the ease of videoing (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Drawing area set up

The corner consisted of a table, a chair for the child and a chair for the interlocutor. A front camera was set up to capture the child’s facial and embodied expressions and a back camera was set up to capture the unfolding graphic elements from the child’s eye view. Both cameras were set up and adjusted to an appropriate height and angle by the interlocutor before the start of each child’s drawing experience.

The interlocutor and the child were sitting at corner positions as illustrated in Figure 1, so that the child possessed the drawing space whereas the interlocutor, similar to an audience, is able to observe the child’s facial expressions and the drawing unfolding at the same time. This sitting position allows good eye contact and friendly conversations between interlocutor and child.

Children were encouraged to take turns to participate in the experience so that one-to-one interlocutor–child interactions could be facilitated. Children could sit and watch from a distance (around one metre) or come back for their turns when the previous child had completed his/her experience.

Any video images of children who did not provide consent were blurred so that they cannot be identified. Participant anonymity was protected through the use of pseudonyms.

Data collection methods included footage of children’s graphic-narrative-embodied play (original drawings were returned to children after data analysis), and transcriptions of the interlocutor–child interactions. These triangulated sources enabled the selection of three distinct cases to illustrate children’s creativity and interactions with the interlocutor. The goal was to examine conditions favoring creativity and possible approaches to co-create these conditions with the child.

Data coding and analysis

Video data was transcribed in relation to graphic-narrative-embodied modes of meaning-making and interlocutor–child interactions. Transcripts were then coded in relation to the following:

- The Analysing Children’s Creative Thinking (ACCT) framework. The ACCT framework identifies behavioural dispositions of creative thinking. These include exploration (e.g. engaging in new activity and knowing what you want to do), involvement and enjoyment (e.g. trying out ideas, analysing ideas, speculating and involving others) and persistence (e.g. risk taking and completing challenges) (Robson, 2014).
- Thinking styles and creativity. Wright’s (2003) description of thinking styles and creativity includes visualisation, experimentation, analogical/metaphorical thinking, logical thinking, predicting outcomes or consequences, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.
- Creative processes. These include problem finding and solving, flexibility, fluency, elaboration, transformation, objectivity, selectivity and aesthetic appreciation (Wright, 2010).

Analysis of interlocutor–child interactions was built upon coding of children’s creative dispositions, creative thinking and creative processes. A range of references on quality interactions were drawn into the analysis process, which will be elaborated in the following examples of a child’s drawing experience through interactions with an interlocutor.

Findings: Three child examples within the practitioner case study

The following discussion examines three children’s graphic-narrative-embodied play encounters while interacting one-to-one with the adult interlocutor (first author). Play, creativity and interactions are discussed through extracts of video transcriptions.

In the extracted transcriptions ‘I’ stands for interlocutor and the initial of the child’s first name (pseudonym) is used to stand for the child.
Drawing actions, images and embodied communications are round bracketed and interpreted speech meanings are in square brackets.

**Molly**

Molly (girl, five-year-old) begins by drawing black clouds and adding blue strokes among the clouds (Figure 2). Under the clouds, she draws a house with pointed roof, two windows and a door, and herself, standing outside the house.

![Figure 2. Lightning and thunder: A house under the stormy night.](image)

She points to the house and the clouds and thunder in her drawing and animates the storm with thundery noise (see Extract 1).

**Extract 1. Thunderstorm**

M: And look! (points to the house) There’s a house under the stormy night. Those are the clouds. (Uses her finger to swipe across the sky to illustrate) That’s … (lifts drawing up with both hands, at the same level as her head to symbolise the sky being up in the air. Looks at drawing).

I: A lot of clouds … Is it going to rain?

M: Yea … and that’s thunder … (points to the strokes among the clouds).

I: Thunder …

M: Thunder, thunder, thunder, thunder, thunder … (shakes her drawing paper back and forth in the air making a sound similar to thunder).

In this example, I raise Molly’s awareness of the connection between her drawing and her real life experience to potentially expand on her meaning-making capacity. Molly draws upon memories of personal experience to make meaning and to elaborate on the ideas of thunder’s sound and action as part of her graphic-narrative-embodied play and interactions with me as audience/participator. Molly uses the creative process of elaboration, crossing over from the graphic mode into the verbal and embodied modes by (a) voicing the sound of thunder through the words ‘thunder, thunder, thunder, thunder, thunder …’ and (b) flapping the paper to emulate the action and crackling sound of thunder.

Molly also engages in the creative process of problem setting/solving and the creative dispositions of speculating and involving others when demonstrating a newly acquired graphic skill—cross-hatching. She uses cross-hatching on the roof of the house, the two main windows and the window in the door of the house. She invites me to witness her cross-hatching technique with the question, ‘Do you know how to make that window?’ When I respond that ‘I didn’t know’, she explains the steps to drawing the cross-hatch window while simultaneously demonstrating these, graphically. She uses a cross to divide the window into four subdivisions and then fills each subdivision with a cross, as illustrated in Figure 3 and elaborated verbally and gesturally in Extract 2.

![Figure 3. Sequence of cross-hatching a window](image)

**Extract 2. Making the window**

M: So, first you do that … (points to the upper right-hand quarter of the right window—a square that has already been divided into four parts. She draws a vertical line in this segment) And then you do … (adds a horizontal line to the segment. Completes the window by drawing another cross in the upper left segment, lower left segment and lower right segment).

I: Crosses and crosses …

M: Got-cha! [I did it! I connected the lines.] (Bounces up from the chair in excitement.)

I: That’s great!

M: Sometimes I … Sometimes it [the crosshatching] tricks me.

I: It’s tricky sometimes?

M: Ya, I just do a little bit like that [wobbly lines between segments]. (Points to the alignments on the right window) Ah I forgot to do it right here (fills in a horizontal line in the upper left-hand segment, which she had overlooked).

Molly showed the creative disposition of exploring graphic-mathematic strategies to complete the window schema. My comment that I didn’t know how to make the window was an invitation for Molly to show me her approach to making the window. Molly seized the opportunity to show me her skills by talking me through her cross-hatching process.
Through this demonstration, she practised and built on her current learning and strengthened her sense of agency as an artist.

My noticing and describing what Molly was drawing let her know that I was listening and tuning into her graphic-narrative-embodied play. This tuning-in created moments of sustained shared thinking (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002), in that we were describing and reflecting on the drawing process as a collaborative experience. Sustained shared thinking (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2004) refers to the moment when two or more individuals work together ‘to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate an activity, extend a narrative etc.’ (p. 5). Having shared and completed a challenging drawing process, we could celebrate the achievement together. This required me to empathise with Molly so that she felt comfortable to openly share details about her drawing, which improved my understanding about her meaning-making. Repeating part of Molly’s narrative also helped me seek clarification and show acknowledgment.

See

See (girl, five-year-old) begins drawing a yellow dress near the centre of the page, with ribbons to tie around the left and right sides of the dress (thick rectangular shapes attached to the bottom ‘corners’ of the triangular dress) (Figure 4). When I ask See, ‘Who is wearing the [yellow] dress? She nominates me, thus involving me as a character in her play and inviting me into the role of playmate. After adding a head and limbs to the yellow dress, she moves on to drawing the sun, the pink swirly clouds, a pony with tied up wings eating hay (bottom right), a ball in the sky and herself in pink dress right under the sun.

Extract 3. Ball in the sky
S: And there’s the ball up there.
I: There’s the ball … [trying to comprehend, thinking that See was referring to a toy ball, rather than a dance-based event].
S: Up there in the sky …
I: In the sky …

When See says the person (me) is on the cloud and is going to a ball held on another cloud in the sky, I tried to comprehend by repeating what See said. This clarifying process took a few verbal exchanges and required me to suspend disbelief before shared understanding was achieved. Such understanding is foundational in establishing sustained shared thinking.

See’s thinking style of visualisation is highlighted in her ability to imagine and depict the unfolding plot and the spatial orientation and movement of each character (see Extract 4).

Extract 4. Going up to the sky
I: How am I going up to the sky?
S: (Smiles. Colours the sky.) There was a lift, which was this lift cloud (points to the several circles strategically placed in the negative spaces between the characters in the plot).
I: The lift!
S: And then you just ‘boink’ over to this cloud … this cloud … this sun … boink … boink (uses finger to illustrate the jumping sequence as the imaginary character bounces off each of the named objects).
I: Boink … boink … boink
S: And then here’s the ball … (points with a pen to the cloud nearest to the sun).
I: Oh, the ball is there …
S: When you jump to here [the sun] (points to the sun), it was hot. (Smiles.)
I: I jump to the sun?
S: Yea. (Adds more light blue to the sky, colouring over the clouds.)
I: It was hot. So will I get caught [on] fire?
S: (Stops colouring and smiles.)
I: Because the sun is too hot.
S: (Smiles and shakes head, indicating ‘no’.)
I: No? Just … just nice?
S: Yea. (Draws arrows between clouds starting from the left-hand side of the person in the yellow dress.)
She gestures with her finger and draws directional arrows to show two different pathways to the ball: (a) one pathway for the people (purple arrows going clockwise from the person on the left, to the sun, then counterclockwise from the sun to the ball located at the top right corner of the page) and (b) another pathway for the pony (brown arrows ascending from the pony to the top right corner of the page). See clarifies the role of the pony by saying, ‘This pony has wings’ and adding wings to the back of the pony. Being given a role in See’s drawing provided me with a more personal sense of her play, in that I could use ‘I’ when referring to the person in the drawing. While getting closer to See’s play, it was important that I maintained the drawing activity as a child-led experience, so that See’s true voice and interest could be surfaced. Like other children, See’s drawing reflected her interests, knowledge and skills, which See and I were keen to explore further as she engaged in graphic-narrative-embodied play. Knowing the child’s interests would enable me to personalise support for her to further explore her ideas.

My acknowledgement of See’s thinking processes seemed to promote her agency and sustain her interest in creating new understanding of how to depict spatial-temporal concepts on paper, accompanied by narrative and gestural signs (i.e. pointing, and repeating the word ‘boink’ to onomatopoetically accompany the action of bouncing across clouds and the sun). I provided nudges (Ramey et al., 2012) prompting continuation and fluency (creative process) of See’s imaginative graphic-narrative-embodied play by repeating some of her narrative as questions.

I modelled curiosity by asking open-ended questions about See’s drawing. For example, ‘How am I going up to the sky?’ was an acknowledgement as well as a curious response to See’s drawing and her description of a ball in the sky. I suspended my disbelief and went with the flow of her imagination by immersing myself in understanding See’s spatial positioning and re-positioning of characters and objects, which illustrated movement through space and represented change over time.

**Dahlia**

Dahlia (girl, five-year-old) begins by drawing a row of flowers across the bottom of the page and leaves a space in the middle for her to ‘go in’ (Figure 5). She then creates a large flower in full bloom on the left-hand corner and adds blossoms to the remaining flower stems, explaining that these are still growing up. She draws herself in a long dress with hula hoops whirling around her waist and adds long hair. Although it is a sunny day, it is also raining, so she draws a ladybird umbrella over her head with a handle to hold onto. Later, she adds muddy puddles and a duck snowman. She plans (creative disposition) and carefully selects colours (creative process) for her drawing, especially the flowers and her dress.

**Figure 5. Flowers, wind and rain: Playing in the garden**

Dalia systematically carries out her plan to construct grassland that she could ‘enter’ to have fun. She tells me what she is going to draw next and what colours are to be used to make the flowers. I listen to her narrative, watch her drawing the details and occasionally acknowledge her work, seek clarification and provide complimentary comments (see Extract 5).

**Extract 5. Making flowers**

D: (Dahlia starts by drawing green vertical lines along the bottom of the page moving from left to right, stopping prior to the centre of the page.)

I'm going to make some flowers
(opening her arms wide suggesting the flowers will span the full page).

I: Some flowers ... on the grassland?

D: Yup. (Draws green vertical lines of different heights, starting from the bottom right hand corner moving towards the centre.)

I: Lots and lots of flowers ...

D: That's the ... I'm gonna' go in (points to the space left blank between two rows of green lines along the bottom of the page.)

I: You're gonna' go in?

D: Yup, I'm gonna’ go in [I’m representing myself in this depicted event].

I: Great.

D: (Picks yellow, purple, pink, light blue and blue pens). These are some colours for the flowers. They're nice colours, don’t you think? (Draws a round flower head connecting to the top of the green stem at the bottom left hand corner of the page.) Yellow nectar ... Buzz. zu...zu...zu ... (fills flower head in yellow while vocalising the sound of a bee, in search of nectar).

I: Oh, yellow middle.

D: (Picks light blue and adds dots on yellow center) Nectar. (Smiles.)
I:  

D: (shakes arms to show movements of a bee, buzzing around the flower. Adds pink petal outlines, surrounding the green circle).
A pink flower ...

I:  

D: Very nice flower ...

I:  

D: Er ... now [I’ll] get blue (fills petals in blue). Ah [I completed this] ... (points to flower and smiles to show satisfaction).

My compliment to Dahlia on her drawing of the flower was sincere and aimed at acknowledging her creativity and drawing experience, rather than me making a generic comment such as ‘good girl’ or ‘well done’ or ‘nice work’. This tuning into Dahlia’s drawing (Anning & Ring, 2004), as an attentive observer, was aimed at supporting her learning, by encouraging and providing support for her creativity. My focus on Dahlia’s careful, graphic details seemed to lead to her sense of satisfaction, reflected in her ‘Ah’, pointing at the flower, and smiling in relation to her drawing. Perhaps this acknowledgement of Dahlia’s careful attention to detail lead to a playful, dialogic interchange related to her drawing of the main character’s hair, which involves a bit of fantasy in terms of hair colour and length (see Extract 6).

Extract 6. My hair

D: (Draws pink curved lines on both sides of the head of the central, main character, ‘herself’.) With really long hair ...

I:  

D: (Because I have long hair ... (touches her tied-up hair).
I:  

D: (Adds more pink hair.)
I:  

D: It’s [your hair] all over the garden ...  

D: I know ... (smiles).
I:  

D: Doesn’t matter. I can tie my hair up.
I:  

D: Tie your hair up?
I:  

D: (Adds purple hair.)
I:  

D: Purple hair!
I:  

D: And (laughs) ... sometimes when the wind blows ... it blows on my neck. (Moves hand to show movement of the wind.)
I:  

D: We both have pony tails.
I:  

D: But I have a plait in mine [my hair] (touches her pony tail).
I:  

Dahlia narrates her drawing process, describing her hair as really long, and relates this to her hair in real life. I acknowledge Dahlia’s perspective and extend on the concept of length by comparing Dahlia’s hair to my own. There is silence, while Dahlia focuses on her ‘graphic dialogue’. For example, when Dahlia adds more hair to her drawn character’s head, I quietly observe the drawing progress for a while, and then comment when I notice the hair growing vastly. Dahlia responds with delight and suggests she can tie her hair up as an alternative.

Positive climate (Teachstone, 2011) is evident through the frequent smiles and laughter when Dahlia and I understand each other in the conversation and have fun with the drawing process. The Pre-K class dimensions guide (Teachstone, 2011) describes positive climate as a condition when teachers and children develop warm and supportive relationships, enjoy being together and hence are more motivated to learn. Dahlia is motivated in her creative play, most likely because she feels happy, relaxed and connected to me (Teachstone, 2011) as we gradually get to know each other through the drawing experience.

Dahlia’s drawing experience lasts for about 30 minutes, and she often pauses and talks to me in between subsections of her drawing. For instance, after completing her drawn character’s hair, Dahlia comments about the ponytails she and I both have in common, while also distinguishing detailed features of the ponytails. Although these social conversations may seem unrelated to Dahlia’s immediate creative processes of drawing, they serve as part of her meaning-making process, which is fundamental to the surfacing and development of the child’s creativity (Wright, 2010). Engaging in social conversation helps enable Dahlia and me to build aspects of a genuine learning relationship. Because Dahlia is self-motivated and directs in her own drawing process, my physical presence, genuine interest and sensitive responses seem to support her creativity.

Discussion

This study built upon several studies on children’s drawing processes (Anning & Ring, 2004; Brooks, 2006; Coates & Coates, 2006; Wright, 2014b), children’s creativity (Robson, 2014; Wright, 2010) and adult–child interactions (Ramey et al., 2012; Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002; Teachstone, 2011; Wright, 2011). Analysis on conditions and approaches to support children’s creativity through graphic-narrative-embodied play and interlocutor–child interactions were guided by Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory, specifically child’s play and adult’s support for learning.

Despite the individuality of each of the girls’ graphic-narrative-embodied communications, there were common themes that emerged in the three play episodes, such as the girls’ focus on spatial relationships between characters, objects and events. Spatiality was played out on the page and was articulated through narrative and
gestural description and expressiveness (e.g. the ‘up above’ sky was particularly important in the ensuing plot, which featured clouds, thunder, lightning, the sun, rain and wind). In addition, intertextuality was evident in two of the play episodes, reflecting an interest in popular media in these girls’ lives, which they appropriated within their imaginative, meaning-making processes while drawing and talking.

Summarising findings from excerpts of Molly’s, See’s and Dahlia’s graphic-narrative-embodied play episodes, it is this paper’s assertion that creativity was promoted in visible ways through the following conditions:

- the girls taking the lead
- the girls practising their agency
- the girls feeling secure, happy, relaxed and connected to the interlocutor.

The interlocutor’s role involved a number of interweaving practices that promote children’s creative experiences, such as:

- observing, listening, inquiring and wondering with the child
- tuning into the child’s drawing processes, providing opportunities for the child to generate, explain and reflect on ideas
- developing shared understanding, sustaining shared thinking (e.g. asking open-ended questions, seeking clarification, repeating key words of the child’s narrative)
- suspending disbelief, entering the child’s imaginative world and co-playing with the child
- attending to the child’s graphic, narrative and embodied modes of expression, and how children shift between these modes to best communicate their meaning
- providing positive, explicit and meaningful descriptions of the aesthetic and creative aspects of the child’s work.

Interlocutor–child interactions are sensitively attuned to each child’s learning interests. These interactions require the interlocutor to be physically present, tune in, imagine and co-create with the child in order to better understand and support each child’s meaning-making. The shared understanding established between each of the girls and I facilitated the conditions for creativity. Through play, the girls’ interests and meanings were acknowledged and encouraged. This is different to that of focusing only on the artworks themselves, or assessing the young artists in terms of drawing ability.

Enacting the role of interlocutor, and engaging young children in graphic-narrative-embodied play, could be adopted by teachers in early learning contexts as part of the regular program to promote children’s creativity as an important learning disposition. Such interactive play experiences provides opportunities for educators to know each child better through undivided attention and support for each child’s learning, based on his or her emerging thoughts, interests and multiple modes of communication. Imaginative, play-based dialogues with young children support children’s emergent speech and language(s)—which can be challenging in a multicultural and multilingual learning environment. Taking the time to slow down and intimately interact on a one-to-one basis with a child nurtures reciprocal dialogue, cross-generationally. Documenting and sharing such graphic-narrative-embodied dialogues enriches our understanding of young children, what they value, how they communicate sophisticated meaning in multiple ways and how we might enrich their learning through imaginative and creative ways.

The analysis of graphic-narrative-embodied play described in this paper identified the modes of meaning-making, creative dispositions, creative thinking and creative processes of three girls. These children’s creative learning was further analysed in relation to the interlocutor–child interactions. These analyses revealed meaningful links between children’s creativity and favourable conditions for co-created understanding through interlocutor–child interactions, and approaches to support these conditions. It is hoped that these insights are useful for practitioners, academics, researchers and families, which, in turn, may provide greater voice for young children’s creative learning through graphic-narrative-embodied play.

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**References**


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