

Understanding The Vietnamese Child's Authoring of The Self Through Multimodal Stories

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ABSTRACT

Guided by Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, we understand that children's identities emerge from an open-ended process in which they articulate external resources and integrate them into their ideas to author themselves. This qualitative study draws on Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and a semiotic lens of multimodality to discuss how Linh, a Vietnamese four-year-and-half girl, authored herself in her multimodal stories across home and preschool. Linh's stories were gathered through close observation and were analyzed in connection with her parents' and teachers' narratives. Two narrative chains of her stories were chosen to describe how the child articulated adults' utterances and cultural resources via her multimodal language to express her emergent identities. Findings initiate early childhood education (ECE) teachers and researchers to see children's stories and identities in ongoingness and attend to the fluidity within children's ECE settings, homes, and cultures.

Keywords: Dialogism, Self-Authoring, Children's Identities, Children's Multimodal Stories, Vietnamese Preschools

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1. INTRODUCTION

Every child is a network of stories waiting to be told. Children are natural-born tellers who weave words, gestures, rhymes, and arts to generate fruitful stories (White et al., 2021). The mainstream discourse of narrative research with young children is written from a rational view that stories mainly exist in verbal language (Woolf & Nicolopoulou, 2021). Few studies have explored the relationship between children's multimodal language and their identity formation in different settings (Kuby & Vaughn, 2015; White et al., 2021). Framed within Bakhtinian and semiotic approaches, this paper explores a young Vietnamese child's identities through her multimodal narratives across home and preschool. In this paper, stories go beyond verbal speech and embrace all other forms of language (e.g., music, visual arts, gestures, and body movements). Guided by a dialogical lens, the construction of children's identities is conceptualized as an ongoing process in which they articulate external resources and integrate them into their ideas to develop new knowledge of themselves and the world. In this sense, young children are competent meaning-makers of their identities (Dyson, 2016). Our respect for children's competency is presented through our approach of closely observing children and thinking with stories (Frank, 2005, 2010) to interpret their emergent identities. This respectful perspective also allows us to add to the literature of young Vietnamese children's voices that are not fully attended to in research.

The research context for this study is Vietnam, a developing South Asian country. This section provides brief information on the perception of the self concerning culture and the ECE system in Vietnam. Traditionally, the notion of the self as a unique individual was strange in a collectivist society such as Vietnam (Tran, 2016). A principle of collectivism is "một người vì mọi người, mọi người vì một người" (one for all, all for one). Individuals are expected to dismiss or, sometimes, sacrifice their needs and desires for the sake of their community. People, therefore, are bound by their social duties and obligations. A person's self-perception is not considered at the individual level. Instead, the individual finds the significance of their existence in their social responsibilities toward others. In 1986, the Communist Party launched the Economic Renewal *Đổi Mới*. Since then, the Vietnamese government has opened to integrate with countries worldwide, especially Europe and the United States. In parallel with globalization, western values of liberality and human rights have contributed to economic, social, and cultural changes in Vietnamese society. Since the 1990s in Vietnam, the social trends have been "towards diversity and freedom of choice" (Marr, 2000, p. 35), significantly changing Vietnamese people's mindsets. Liberal values that every individual has the right to choose and that these personal ideas should be listened to become popular in contemporary Vietnamese culture (Tran, 2016).

Since the Economic Renewal 1986, the Vietnamese government has significantly invested in the early childhood education (ECE) sector and tackled action plans to boost children's rights in society. Children's participation is a significant development goal in Vietnam's National Plan for Early Childhood Education Development 2018-2025 (Prime Minister, 2017). However, children's participation in Vietnam's ECE context is still restricted (Save The Children, 2020). Not many studies have explored young Vietnamese children's ordinary narratives and their identities from their perspectives (Burr, 2014; Rydström, 2001). This study, hence, was conducted to fill these gaps, valuing Vietnamese children as "persons with voices" (Hallett & Prout, 2003, p. 1) in constructing their identities.

Our manuscript is a part of the larger research project on young Vietnamese's multimodal literacies and their meaning-making process, funded by the Ministry of Education and Training.

There are 20 participating children aged 4-6 from 5 preschools, their parents, and their teachers in the broader study. This manuscript addresses two research questions: 1) How does the child author herself in multimodal stories across home and preschool?, 2) What are influential factors in the child's self-authoring?

For this paper, we purposely select multimodal stories of Linh. A four-year-and-half girl, to describe how the child's identities emerged across home and preschool. Linh's stories are chosen because they provide a unique example of the ongoing process of children's multimodal narratives across time and settings and children's interests in integrating social and cultural resources into their languages to author themselves.

2. METHOD

A qualitative dialogical narrative approach (Frank, 2012) was employed as the methodological background to identify how the children expressed themselves in their stories. Inspired by Bakhtin, Frank (2005, 2010, 2012) created an approach in which research becomes a living dialogue, and researchers are engaged witnesses who think with stories to understand participants' lives. Frank (2012) limited dialogue to words as he worked with written stories. We are aligned with Frank's viewpoint on the dialogical approach and integrate with a semiotic lens of multimodality to expand our work of narratives beyond oral language. Ethical principles of informed consent were noticed throughout the study. Parents, teachers, and the preschool manager consented to participate in our study. For the children (Linh, her siblings, and her peers), we explained the procedure to them verbally first, being willing to answer their questions, and sent assent forms to them via their parents. The children read assent forms together with their parents and were suggested to color in a happy or sad face on the forms to express their satisfaction with participating in the project. The research committee board of the Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training approved all ethics forms. In subsequent sections, brief information about the child Linh and a description of the data collection and analysis procedure.

The child Linh

Linh is a four-year-and-half girl in Hanoi, Vietnam. She lives with his parents and two brothers in a three-floor house in a suburban city. Her mother, Nga, works as a pharmacist, and her father, Trung, is a government officer. Linh has another nickname, Mochi, which her mother named. After the class, Linh plays with her brothers. Her hobbies are watching cartoons on YouTube and dressing up. Linh is enrolled in Binh Minh, a private preschool in her neighborhood. The preschool is newly built and has well-decorated facilities. The outdoor area is arranged with a playground with slides, a swing, a sand corner, a climbing mountain, and a small garden for children to plant vegetables. The national ECE curriculum and project-based learning are applied in Binh Minh Preschool. Linh is in Hoa Sen's Class with Ha and Lan as teachers. Both teachers have a Bachelor's in ECE and one year of preschool teaching experience. The class serves ten children aged 4-5 years old. In the mornings, the class activity is based on project-based learning, and in afternoons, teachers organize early literacy and numeracy activities for children to "prepare for their school readiness" in the following year (Lan, informal conversation, 26 December 2022).

Data collection

The data collection started when the first author engaged with the narrative flow of Linh, her parents, and her teachers. I (the first author) learned to become one of the child's friends and saw the world(s) with her (Dyson, 1997). I spent one month getting familiar with Linh, the surrounding people, and the settings, which allowed me to become a natural part of her ordinary life (S. et al., 2010). The warm-up time was vital to clarify my role and research details and build a connection with the participating people. Children's multimodal stories emerged in various forms of language (saying, gestures, gazes, body movements, and artmaking) when they played or interacted with their parents, teachers, friends, and siblings. Linh's multimodal stories were documented through multimethod, including close observation, informal conversations with her, and a collection of artifacts she made during observation sessions. I engaged with Linh during naturally occurring activities over ten weeks, two to four times weekly, for 4 to 7 hours per week. I observed the child at home (1 hour per week) and preschool (3–4 hours per week) to gather her multimodal stories. Observation sessions were video-recorded. During observations, I also had informal conversations with Linh, her parents, teachers, siblings, and peers to clarify the meanings of Linh's stories. Linh's artifacts during observation sessions were photographed. Two semistructured interviews were used to collect narrative accounts of parents and teachers about Linh to understand the role of contexts in her self-authoring. Field notes were kept to record critical events and the researcher's reflections and questions during observation.

Data analysis

Drawing on Frank's (2010, 2012) dialogical approach, we established three layers of analysis to explore Linh's self-authoring via her multimodal stories and influential factors on the emergence of her identities. In the first layer, we distinguished narrative chains that might be created by the child's stories (Brown, 1998). One story was considered with another because "two stories are necessary for thinking because each opens a critical distance from the evocative of the other" (Frank, 2010, p.47). A chain included at least two stories generated by the child and related narratives of her parents, teachers, and the researchers. When some stories referred to one event and conveyed the child's ongoing ideas, sayings, actions, and feelings, they could be considered in one chain for further analysis. The interconnection between the first author, the child, her parents, and teachers provided insights into identifying narrative chains.

In the second layer, Linh's integration of external resources to author herself in every narrative chain was clarified. We distinguished direct and hidden interlocutors in Linh's stories and imprints of external resources (e.g., others' narratives and acts, media materials) in her storytelling (Aveling et al., 2015). The first author saw videos, read transcripts, and documented the child's multimodal forms of language (gestures, facial expressions, body movements, speech, and his artifacts), positioned these forms with her previous and subsequent stories, and other related narratives of her parents and teachers. Afterward, the second author saw videos, read narrative chains, and familiarized herself with the first author's observation. Then, we created a dialogical space for seeing Linh and discussing how to understand her identities. Gradually, we produced a preliminary interpretation of Linh's identities in between narrative chains over time, which also addressed the first research question.

The third layer of analysis answered the second research question. In this layer, Linh's multimodal stories, her parents' and teachers' narratives about her were positioned in the social and

cultural contexts to see the reciprocity between contexts and the child's identities (Dyson, 1997). We acknowledged that the child was not a passive recipient of the contexts but an active agent in making sense of herself. Specifically, we re-read transcripts and watched videos to examine how contexts provided resources for Linh's self-authoring and how Linh integrated all these resources to develop new knowledge of herself and the world.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In total, our research gathered and analyzed 11 narrative chains of Linh's multimodal stories. Next, we chose two narrative chains to present how Linh wove social and cultural resources into her ideas to author herself via multimodal language across home and preschool. The former reveals Linh's stories to defend herself under a new name, Momo. The latter conveys Linh's stories of making new clothes based on her knowledge of Vietnamese traditional costumes and folktales. In each chain, we start by describing the reason for connecting stories, Linh's interlocutors, and the relationships between them. Then, we illustrate how Linh utilized multimodal language to articulate external resources and integrate these resources into her ideas to author herself in between stories. Finally, influential factors in the child's self-authoring are identified.

1. "Momo is my favorite name": Linh' self-authoring in defending her new name.

Linh has a nickname, Mochi, that Nga, her mother, gave her. Nga shared that she liked eating Mochi, a Japanese rice cake, during her pregnancy with Linh, then she used this name for her daughter. Linh got familiar with the nickname Mochi before she knew her official name as Linh. She is called Mochi when she is at home and sometimes at preschool. Once, Linh initiated the idea of her new name, Momo, with her mother and then with her teacher and friends. Linh's diverse responses to defend the name Momo across home and preschool were a reason to bring the following two stories into one chain.

Story 1:

After dinner, Linh and Nga, her mother, sit together on the sofa in their living room.

Linh : "Mẹ ơi, con muốn đổi tên" [Mum, I want to change my name]

Nga : "Sao lại muốn đổi tên? Con không muốn tên là Linh nữa sao? [Why do you want to change name? You don't want the name Linh?]

Linh : "Không phải, tên ở nhà của con là Mochi ấy. Con không thích tên ấy nữa" [No, I want to change my nick name Mochi. I don't ever like it]

Nga laughs and gazes at Linh, and Linh gazes at Nga.

Nga : "Mẹ thấy tên Mochi ấy hay mà, là tên bánh Mochi của Nhật ấy." [Mochi is a beautiful name. Mochi is Japanese rice cake name]

Linh : "Đó là tên mẹ đặt. Con quyết định sẽ đổi tên". [It is name you gave me. I decide to change my name]

Nga : "Thế con thích tên gì?" [what name do you like now?]

Linh : "À, con đổi sang là Momo." [Ah, I want to turn to Momo]

Nga : "Momo là cái gì?" [What is Momo?]

Linh : "Momo là tên ví Momo ấy." [Momo is wallet Momo]

"Sao tự nhiên con nghĩ ra thế?" [How do you know it?]

Linh : "Con nhìn thấy quảng cáo bạn ví điện tử Momo trên YouTube ấy. Con sẽ là cái ví giữ tiền cho mẹ." [I see an advertisement of Momo online wallet on YouTube. I will be a wallet to keep your money]

Nga : “Sao mẹ lại cần con giữ tiền?” [Why do I need me to keep my money?]

Linh : “Tại mẹ bảo mẹ nghèo không có tiền mua búp bê cho con. Giờ mẹ đưa tiền cho con cất, con giữ tiền cho mẹ, để mẹ không nghèo, mẹ có tiền mua đồ chơi cho con.” [Because you say you are poor and do not have enough money to buy me dolls. Now, you can give me money to save, than you are no longer poor and have money to buy me toys]

Nga laughs and kisses Linh's head.

Nga : “Nhưng mọi người ai cũng biết con là Mochi rồi, giờ làm sao đổi sang Momo được? [But everyone knows your name as Mochi. How can you change to Momo?]

Linh : “Thì con đi nói. Mai đến trường con sẽ nói với các bạn và cô giáo là, “Từ nay tớ không là Mochi nữa mà là Momo, Momo mới là tên yêu thích của tớ”. [So, I go to say. Tomorrow, I will go to preschool and say with teachers and friends that, “Since now I am no longer Mochi. I am Momo. Momo is my favorite name] (Observation, Linh's home, 8th January 2023).

In this story, Linh's personal interest (Momo is my favorite name) was why she proposed using it in imaginary talk with teachers and friends. Linh's diverse explanations demonstrate her as an intelligent negotiator whose social capability emerged as flexible depending on different situations and interlocutors. Linh talked directly to her mother (direct interlocutor) and her teachers and friends (indirect interlocutors). Linh insisted on informing and persuading her mother to support her idea of making a new name. While Mochi was a given name that she received from her mother, Momo was her chosen name that she invented for herself. Linh's differentiation conveyed that Momo was her idea to mark herself as a visible and determined person in interactions with her mother. Linh also provided different reasons to defend her new name as Momo. Initially, she explained that Momo was the name of an online wallet she knew from YouTube. This reason supported her to make a new idea (becoming her mother's wallet) to re-negotiate with the past narrative when Nga told her that she was poor and could not afford to buy new toys. At the end of the conversation with Nga, Linh initiated a hidden dialog with indirect interlocutors (her teachers and friends at preschool) and discussed how she would introduce them to her new name. When Linh asked Nga to buy toys, Nga usually used "not having money and being poor" as an excuse not to follow her requests. As Nga reflected, "Not having money is not true but a simple answer for kids" (2nd interview). This story was an opportunity for Linh to re-negotiate with her mother and make a new solution to her mother's excuse of "not having money." Linh took the idea of having a new name as a profound idea. Nga did not refuse the child's intention, but she did not yet consider it essential as "it is just a funny and cute idea of her small child" (Nga, second interview).

Story 2:

Three days later, the researcher visited the preschool. Linh already informed the teachers and friends of her new name. Today, Linh brings her handbag from home to the classroom. In the free-play time after the writing lesson in the afternoon, Linh comes to ask teacher Ha to help her write the word Momo. "Teacher, I do not know how to write Momo. Help me, please," says Linh. Ha instructs Linh to write. Linh already knows how to write the letters M and O. Ha asks Linh to write M first, then O, and repeat the sequence. After completion, Linh is so happy. She asks Ha to give her scissors. She uses scissors to cut around her recent writing to make a name tag. Then she sticks the paper piece with Momo in her handbag. She shows Ha the handbag, "Teacher, look at my new bag." Ha replies, "Wow, it is so nice," and Linh says, "I create it" (Observation, Linh's preschool, 11 January 2023).

The story between Linh and her teacher portrays the child's emergent literacy competency through her interest in the new name, Momo. Her claim in this story, "Look at my new bag,"

interested us because we knew from observation that she had owned the handbag for a long time. When the first author asked Linh, "Why is it new?" Linh said, "Because my name on this bag is new" (Linh, information conversation, 11 January 2023). The handbag was remade with the new name tag Momo, considered Linh's innovative artwork. The name tag was created in connection with her previous knowledge in Story 1 of Momo as the name of an online wallet she learned from YouTube. In situ, Linh integrated media resources with an actual item (the handbag) and her handwriting (name tag) to visualize her new name, Momo. The bag was an accessory and artwork representing Linh's creativity and pride in being Momo. Under the status of Momo, Linh might have the power to express herself as a creative designer.

The teacher, Ha, noticed Linh's interest in having a new name, but she did not positively respond to it. Instead, she considered it "a meaningful learning moment" (Ha, second interview) to nurture Linh's writing interest. Ha shared later that Linh was sometimes distracted in writing activities. She did not want to practice writing tasks (learn to write strokes and letters). Ha, however, found Linh's questions about writing the new name as an opportunity to facilitate the child's writing motivation. Although the teacher's pedagogical approach was good at instructing the child step by step to write the new name rather than writing for her, her approach might need to include the dialogical in valuing the child with her genuine interest, that is, the new name rather than writing activity.

Two stories, 1-2, reveal Linh's multimodal language in defending her new name, Momo. She authored herself as a flexible and confident meaning-maker. She brought the idea of Momo from YouTube to home and from home to preschool. She interconnected this resource with her verbal language, handwriting, and knowledge of reading signs and symbols. Adults' responses to Linh raised critical questions about considering children's participation. Although adults accepted the child's idea of a new name, they provided few opportunities for the child to follow her interests and make meanings in her ways.

2. "It is my play": Linh's self-authoring in making a new costume

Two stories convey Linh's unfinalized idea of remaking a Vietnamese character, Tam, in her knowledge. She learned about the character Tam from the preschool (story 3) and then created a stage to play Tam at home (story 4). Her articulation of Tam is a knot to tie two stories 3-4 into one chain.

Story 3:

This morning, in the storytelling activity, teacher Ha sits in the middle, and the children of the Bong Lua Class sit on a chair around her. Ha introduces a book of Vietnamese folktale, "Tám Cám," with the children. This story is about the life of Tam, a poor girl living with her step-sister and stepmother to overcome many challenges and lives to become a Queen. One incident in this story is when Tam grows a small fish named Bống. When the teacher points to the character Tám in the picture (see Figure 1), Linh raises her hand, "Teacher, what do Tám wear?" Ha answers, "Ah, Tám wears váy tứ thân (four-part dress), a Vietnamese traditional dress for women in the past, an origin version of áo dài (long dress) we wear now." (Linh's preschool, 2 February 2023).



Figure 1. The picture of Tấm in váy tứ thân (four-part dress)

Story 4:

Linh and I (the first author) are at home in the evening in the living room. Then, Linh enters her bedroom and opens the wardrobe to find her traditional red dress, áo dài. She wears this dress and asks me to help her zip it up. I ask her why, and Linh says, "It is my play." Then Linh comes to her play corner to find some toys. Linh puts a plastic basketball hoop on her head and says, "It is a hat ." She wears two magnetic pieces on her ears and says, "My earrings." Afterward, she picks up a red plastic fish from her fishing toy, holds the fish in her hands, and says (see Figure 2).

Linh : Cá ơi, chị yêu em lắm. Em ăn cơm đi nhé. Em đừng đi theo Cám.” [Bóng bóng I love you. Let’s eat rice, fish. Do not go with Cám].

The researcher : “Con đang làm gì đấy?” [What are you doing?]

Linh gazes at me and smiles.

Linh : “Con làm chị Tấm cho em Bóng ăn chứ sao” [I plays Sister Tấm who feeds fish Bóng] (Linh’s home, 2nd February 2023).

Stories 3-4 happened on the same day, expressing how Linh carried ideas from preschool to her play at home. In story 3, she knew about Tam and traditional Vietnamese costume (four-part dress) from a dialogue with her interlocutor, teacher Ha. Story 4 featured her ongoing articulation and recreation of Tam, whom she had learned before. In story 4, Linh played Tam, who interacted with the human interlocutor (the researcher) and the non-human interlocutor (the plastic fish). While the character Tam wore a four-part dress and a headscarf (Figure 1 story 3), Linh created a new artwork—Tam’s costume—in story 4. The child turned familiar toys into her accessories (basketball hoop to a traditional hat; two magnetic pieces to earrings) and combined them with her long dress (áo dài) to make this character’s costume. Home became a temporary stage where Linh expressed herself as a performance artist who combined multimodal language (verbal talk, body actions—holding plastic fish in her hands, and her designed clothes) to enact Tam.

The second narrative chain conveys how Linh “read” diverse resources (i.e., the book Tam Cam, teacher’s explanation) and embraced these resources into her play via multimodal language to gain new learnings. She wove speech, body actions, and knowledge of traditions (áo dài) and

contemporary cultures (girl accessories) to enjoy playfulness and experiment with emergent roles as a story-reader and artist.

DISCUSSION: LOOKING ACROSS STORIES

The two narrative chains contribute to understanding the ongoing flow of children's multimodal language and vital influential factors in their self-authoring. First, this paper reveals the flexibility of Linh's multimodal language, which adds a vital perspective to reconceptualizing children's narratives and the artmaking process. Linh's multimodal forms are verbal speech, early reading and writing, body actions, postures, and artworks. She flexibly combined, transformed, and played with these multimodal forms of language to compose her stories. Linh responded differently to direct and hidden interlocutors to defend her new name (story 1). The child interwove talking and writing into her artwork (the handbag with the new tag Momo) (story 2). She also crafted speeches, postures, and other remade accessories to design a new costume for her play (story 4). The dominant stream in research on children's narratives globally (Nicolopoulou et al., 2021) and locally in Vietnam (Nguyen, 2021) has been based on the belief that stories are spoken or written. Linh's multimodal language demonstrates a need to understand children's stories in diverse forms beyond verbality. Our study highlights the child's innovation in making new meanings for regular items in her artmaking process, which both adhere to and differs from prior research. Linh switched familiar toys (used handbag, hoop, magnetic pieces) to open-ended materials for play and artmaking. This study supports the findings of prior researchers (Kinnunen & Einarsdottir, 2013; Richards, 2014; Sole, 2017) that artmaking processes open hybrid spaces for young children to reimagine the world, exercise their interests, and author themselves. Previous authors, however, focused on specific kinds of art, such as visual art (Kinnunen & Einarsdottir, 2013) or music (Sole, 2017). Among children's visual art studies, artifacts were mainly found on paper (Kinnunen & Einarsdottir, 2013; Richards, 2014). No substantial studies have explored multiple forms of art and the intersection of art and other modes of language (e.g., verbal speech, body movements) in children's narratives. Linh's stories in our paper clarify how a young narrator wove verbal speech and postures with different art forms (visual and performance arts). Her artworks were performed in situ (the new handbag) and via her body (the costume). These examples convey that there is no boundary in children's art creations. For children, the world is art-in-progress. We, thus, suggest that early-year researchers should break down conventional ideas of arts and invite different lenses (White, 2020) to "read" children's languages.

Second, the ongoingness in Linh's multimodal stories highlights interconnection and openness in her self-authoring. The child brought the idea of Momo as the name of the wallet from story one into making a new handbag to defend her name in story 2. She articulated resources from folktales and the teacher's sayings in story three and integrated them with her ideas and interests to create a new design in story 4. The unfinalized chains of narratives show Linh's intersecting and emergent identities. Linh's identity as an artist is interconnected with her identity as a meaning-negotiator and emergent literacy learner. Dialogical researchers (Cengiz, 2016; Ødegaard, 2007) claim that children's identity formation is an open-ended process. Aligned with them, the web of stories in this study reveals that children's identities are under construction. Adichie (2009) asserted that "there is never a single story" (p. 6) about any person. My research, thus, raises a need to see young children in an unfinalized chain of stories rather than in isolated speech episodes and distinct modes. Parents and educators should attend to the flow of children's multimodal stories to understand their complex

and dynamic identities. Narrative identity research needs the analysis of these multimodal stories to reach a holistic view of young children as open-ended subjects in their daily lives.

Third, adults' responses, culture, and the child's interests were vital influential factors in the child's self-authoring. Underpinned by a dialogical view, we understand that a child "at one time... established all cultural values and is bound by them" (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 35). Children both remake and are (re)made by their culture. Taking this sense, we identified an interplay between the child and her culture. We specifically attended to the impact of traditions and social media. Imprints of traditions might be found in the Vietnamese folktale Tam Cam, the dress ao dai and hat that Linh wore. Social media's influence was embedded within Momo's information on YouTube. Some researchers (Hedges, 2011; Kelly-Ware, 2018) have identified the impact of customs and media on children's ordinary narratives. These authors assess that culture serves children as a knowledge resource (Hedges, 2011), and children can use this resource in their identity-making. Resonating with this idea, we found that traditional and popular cultures enriched children's stories. Hedges (2012) and Kelly-Ware (2018) emphasize the influence of popular culture on children's interests and meaning-making processes in kindergartens. Our research demonstrates the interplay among cultural resources, the child's multimodal narratives, and her identities in and across home and ECE settings. Linh's stories showed that she used multimodal language (i.e., talking, drawing, designing, acting) to remake culture and experiment with new roles based on her interests, which was vital to show her provocation (Sairanen et al., 2020). In turn, the meanings of culture-related objects (her new handbag and costume) were reconstructed under her provocation. This study further explains the reciprocity among the child's everyday narratives, identities, and culture.

Regarding adults' responses, Linh's mother and teachers raised questions about how much freedom a child can have to author herself in the Vietnamese context. The mother seemed not yet to consider the child's idea of having a new name as a severe idea to her further thoughts of changing the parental approach, for example, reconsidering her utterance "not having money" with Linh on the next occasion. With teachers, she focused on her instruction of making the child enthusiastic in writing rather than attending to the child's original interests of having a new name. Her practice is attached to the favored approach of ECE settings in Vietnam, in which guiding children to be familiar with reading and writing is essential for school readiness (Vu, 2021). Her practice encourages Linh, but it seems not dialogical enough for the child to have more "open and free spaces" (Kuby & Vaughn, 2015, p. 459) to draw her learning pathway.

4. CONCLUSION

Our paper has described a thick case study of the Vietnamese child's self-authoring through multimodal narratives. Findings reveal the child as a competent and confident teller who weaves oral language, gestures, written text, drawing, and play materials to defend her ideas and learning interests. The article suggests Vietnamese ECE practitioners and teachers critically rethink their approaches and their perspectives of the child. The child should be seen as confident subjects rather than vulnerable and innocent objects. When teachers can deeply understand children's participation by discussing and presenting their interests in every practice and change, they see potential implications in inviting children's interests and cultural knowledge to join their curriculum-making. ECE settings should be seen as something other than a monologic space with pre-designed programs to teach children literacy and numeracy to prepare for primary school (Si 'Ulta et al., 2023). Instead,

ECE settings should be seen as a dialogical zone with emergent curricula, in fluidity with children's homes and cultures.

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