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Nicole E. Siffrinn

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Article

Making the Language System Stutter: Linguistic Creativity beyond Representation

Nicole E. Siffrinn[1]

Résumé : En linguistique appliquée, la créativité a traditionnellement été conceptualisée comme une activité anthropocentrique où les ressources sémiotiques sont utilisées comme outil de médiation pour générer de nouvelles significations. Cet article conteste ce point de vue en explorant les forces non représentationnelles qui vitalisent la créativité pour faire bouger la langue dans un jeu théâtral joué avec des jeunes multilingues et des enseignants de langues en formation. Plus précisément il opérationnalise la notion de bégaiement de Deleuze pour cartographier les contours du mouvement linguistique dans l'activité de littératie. Cet article s'oriente aussi vers la rethéorisation de la créativité comme différence en elle-même, se séparant ainsi des recherches précédentes où la créativité est déterminée sur la base de sa relation à autre chose. Les implications comprennent le besoin d'explorer la créativité sur ses bases générales, et la créativité linguistique en particulier au sein d'un agencement mobile d'agentivités, de corps et de forces humaines et non-humaines.

Mots clés : Deleuze, créativité linguistique, littératie multilingue, néo-matérialismes, bégaiement

Abstract: In applied linguistics, creativity has traditionally been conceptualized as an anthropocentric activity where semiotic resources are used as mediating tools to generate new meaning. This article challenges that view by exploring the non-representational forces that vitalize creativity to keep language moving in a theatre game played with multilingual youth and pre-service language teachers. In particular, it operationalizes Deleuze's notion of stuttering to map the contours of linguistic movement in the literacy activity. This paper also gestures toward retheorizing creativity as difference-in-itself, making a break from previous research where creativity is determined on the basis of its relation to something else. Implications include the need to explore creativity in general on its own grounds, and linguistic creativity in particular as part of a moving assemblage of human and non-human forces, bodies, and agencies.

Keywords: Deleuze, linguistic creativity, multilingual literacy, new materialisms, stuttering

Creativity has long been a topic of interest within and across subdisciplines of applied linguistics. From first and second language acquisition (Bell, 2012; Cook, 2000) and stylistics (Hall, 2007, 2016) to sociolinguistics (Deumert, 2014), discourse studies (Jones, 2014), multilingualism (Kharkhurin, 2012; Wei, 2011), and literacy (Pietikäinen & Pitkänen-Huhta,

[1] School of Education and Human Development, University of Southern Maine, Gorham, Maine, United States.

Correspondence should be addressed to Nicole E. Siffrinn, School of Education and Human Development, University of Southern Maine – Gorham Campus, 37 College Avenue, 8 Bailey Hall, Gorham, ME, 04038-1032, United States; email: nicole.siffrinn@maine.edu.

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2013; Yoon, 2019), the research on creativity has been wide-reaching. Notwithstanding theoretical and methodological variation, what connects this scholarship is generally attention to the following: semiotic resources, individual cognitive processes, discursive practices, and the outcome of interaction between them (Jones, 2016). Yet, while this interplay has contributed to understanding creativity as bound up in routines of everyday meaning making (Kress, 2003; Maybin & Swann, 2007), replacing the more traditional and popularly held Western belief that ingenuity is a product of individual genius (Carter, 2007), few have questioned that the concept remains grounded in human design and activity (see Bangou, 2019, and Pennycook, 2007, as exceptions).

In examining discourses on creativity, Nelson (2016, p. 172) described the evolution of the creative idea as a culturally constructed "human possession." Similarly, Shao, Zhang, Zhou, Gu, and Yuan (2019, p. 2) referred to it as "a key product of human culture and a tool for enriching [it]." Nowhere, perhaps, is the anthropocentric nature of creativity more apparent than in relation to language, however. Whether viewed as a result of play (Cekaite & Aronsson, 2005), poetic expression (Rosenhan & Galloway, 2019), identity construction (Lytra, 2008), or everyday interaction (Carter, 2004), it is often language that is thought to make creativity possible. As Jones (2016, p. 7) explained, creativity is "a fundamental *potential* embodied in the linguistic resources on which people draw," resources that are, in effect, rendered social, even in more cognitive traditions (Langlotz, 2016). To theorize language as a human-driven vehicle of semiotic activity is thus to theorize creativity as a product of the social world as well.

Outside of applied linguistics, however, there is an emergent area of scholarship on more-than-human creativity. Inspired by new materialist philosophies, which blur the lines between nature/culture and mind/body (Coole & Frost, 2010), this work collectively explores the role of non-human agencies in creative practice. In architecture, for example, building materials have been conceived as active participants in the design process (Voyatzaki, 2018). In geography, affect has been given attention in space and place making (Boyd & Edwardes, 2019), and, in new media studies, friction and other bodily sensations have become part of the artistic ecology of producing autonomous sensory meridian response videos (Łapińska, 2020). Indeed, this work foregrounds the co-productive relationship between human and non-human entities in order to draw out and on the ontological processes of creative practice.

While such a notion of creativity has yet to be fully realized in applied linguistics, use of new materialist theories has started to reorient current thinking on language, thereby setting the stage for such work to take place. From this perspective, language is viewed on the same ontological level as matter, given that "there is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author)" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 23). In other words, everything is entangled from the start. Language thus does not enter experience as a contextually determined object (Canagarajah, 2018) nor as the property of a speaking subject (Pennycook, 2018). Instead, it inheres in "unholy mixtures" (Lecercle, 2002, p. 74) composed of words, bodies, affects, things, and so forth. As Gurney and Demuro (2019, p. 14) affirmed, "this potentially disruptive thinking invites us to reconsider what language *is* and how it manifests – as a practice, product, or other."

One challenge is that the flattened relationship between discursivity and materiality in new materialist thought demands a move away from representational logic or the idea that the world and the linguistic systems used to describe it are detached from one another

(Olkowski, 1999). Applied linguists putting new materialist theories to work therefore have a responsibility to reconceptualize language outside of a communicative model where representation is used to "[construct] a liveable world around us...[through] the production of stable meaning and stable subjects to exchange it" (Lecercle, 2002, p. 60). Indeed, stepping beyond such logic, which is not the same as denying it exists, allows us to grapple with language as material expression (MacLure, 2013). As de Freitas and Curinga (2015, p. 256) have explained, "expression is never simply a matter of a subject representing, describing, corresponding or complying to that which is outside of it, but rather produces instead a force field of activity, where intensity flows across the space of potential energy." In this way, language might be conceived in terms of the non-representational or "asignifying particles" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 4) that disrupt meaning-making expectations and invite new, potentially even creative uses of language that are always already bound up with other dynamisms and bodies.

Given the above, this article aims to explore the non-representational forces that vitalize creativity with attention to how language opens itself up to tension and movement that necessarily manipulates spatiotemporal boundaries. Using Deleuze's (1997) notion of stuttering, I consequently map the continuous renewal of linguistic creativity during a theatre activity in an arts-based after-school program. To begin, I provide an overview of research on creativity in relation to multilingual literacy practices as a means to further contextualize how the concept has been taken up in similar work. I then theorize creativity-in-itself before illustrating how it moves language onto other modes and materialities. The article ends by considering what a Deleuzian theory of linguistic creativity affords language researchers and educators.

Creativity in multilingual literacy practices

In studies of multilingualism, creativity has generally been conceptualized as a collaborative process of transformative action (Lexander, Gonçalves, & de Korne, 2020). Who or what is involved in this collaborative process varies, however. Sometimes, collaboration is a result of participatory interaction (Wei, Tsang, Wong, & Lok, 2020). Other times, it is a result of engagement with modes that are digital (Lotherington & Jenson, 2011) or nonlinguistic (Pahl, 2011). In what follows, I highlight some of these processes to illustrate how creativity has been taken up in relation to multilingual literacy practices from the complementary perspectives of multimodality, translanguaging, and linguistic–semiotic landscapes. I draw on these areas, as each plays a role in the after-school program.

Multimodality

Multimodal approaches have been highly influential in illustrating the creative literacy practices of multilingual learners. With their focus on new text forms and twenty-first-century communicative competencies (Early, Kendrick, & Potts, 2015), this work foregrounds the range of resources that learners draw upon to make meaning (Jewitt, 2008). Design is thus a key theoretical construct in multimodality, as learners select from available resources in "a dynamic process of subjective self-interest and transformation" (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008, p. 203). Learner agency therefore plays a significant role in the creative process, which is defined by one's ability to generate new forms of meaning.

Recent work on identity texts and digital storytelling provides evidence of this conceptualization of creativity by illustrating how multilingual learners make particular design choices to achieve a specific goal. Anderson and Macleroy (2017), for example,

demonstrated how four young people in England purposefully integrated art forms such as freeze dance and stop-motion animation into narrative videos to express their intercultural identities. Similarly, Hirsch and Macleroy (2020) showed how objects of personal and cultural significance were used as stimuli to collaboratively write and film a spoken-word performance about belonging. In addition to reflecting on language choices such as "we," these multilingual youth experimented with different angles and filmmaking techniques, allowing creativity to be defined "as finding ways to reach [their] good stories" (p. 46). What this work highlights is not only the agentive, goal-oriented nature of the design process but also the role of *re*design in creative practice. In recontextualizing symbolic resources and constructing meaning in sign systems different from the ones in which the meanings were initially encoded, the young people brought new representations into the world and, by extension, new available resources for future use (Kress, 2000).

Translanguaging

Translanguaging perspectives have also, in recent years, brought multilinguals' creativity into clearer view. As a discursive practice, translanguaging occurs when an individual makes full use of their linguistic repertoire as opposed to treating the languages they speak as separate systems (Canagarajah, 2011). In line with the notion of design in multimodal pedagogies, García (2012, p. 1) described the translanguaging process as one where multilinguals "select features *strategically* to communicate effectively." In noting that these selections can originate from other communicative systems as well, work in this area has expanded to include *semiotic* repertoires, integrating the full range of learners' communicative competencies. Wei's (2011) scholarship on translanguaging space, for example, incorporates the performative aspects of multilingual users' beliefs and experiences in different contexts, breaking down boundaries between named languages and modalities as well as the cognitive and physical dimensions of meaning making.

While nuances in perspectives on translanguaging exist, general consensus is that such practices are linked uniquely to multilinguals' creativity (García & Wei, 2014). Whether "exercising a voice that is one's own" (García, 2018, p. 42) or generating a space for "new identities, values, and practices" (Wei, 2011, p. 1223), creativity is emblematic of the translanguaging repertoire's manifestation. It also involves an element of criticality where multilingual users must make decisions about when and how much to move beyond established norms and boundaries (Wei, 2018). In an ethnographic case study of a Korean migrant youth residing in the United States, for example, the flexibility of the learner's communicative repertoire could be seen as she interacted with local and transnational audiences by drawing on different semiotic resources (Kim, 2018). In choosing to make more fluid use of visual modalities at school and linguistic modalities with friends and family, she pushed and preserved the socially recognized boundary between Korean and English. Indeed, as multilingual learners make decisions about which aspects of their translanguaging repertoire to use, they necessarily shape the contexts in which such usages occur, making creativity a transformative process of resemiotization, much like in multimodality.

Linguistic–semiotic landscapes

As perspectives on language have expanded, so too have discussions on creativity in relation to multilingual space making. While much of this work has taken shape under the heading of linguistic landscapes with the aim of understanding "the symbolic construction of social places" (Ben-Rafael, Shohamy, Amara, & Trumper-Hecht, 2006, p. 8), more recent

work emphasizes a broader semiotic landscape in which multilingual and multimodal displays are explored (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010). The idea behind this work is that sign systems combine with other materialities in inventive ways to generate space, which, as a result of a constantly shifting semiotic landscape, is always being recreated.

In bringing this scholarship together with perspectives on translanguaging, Gorter and Cenoz (2015) argued that multilingual learners' semiotic repertoires could be understood as linguistic landscapes. Pennycook (2017), however, went one step further, noting that not all resources serve a communicative purpose, nor do they necessarily exclude the materiality of a place in a space's construction. In other words, multilingual users' spatial repertoires play an active role in their translanguaging practices, making the concept itself a creation of holistic "interactions between people, artefacts, and space" (p. 277). Indeed, Pennycook's (2017) perspective opens up the possibility for a more-than-human notion of creativity in that multilingual users aren't perceived as autonomous agents in the production of linguistic–semiotic landscapes. Yet this perspective is just starting to gain traction (see also Higgins & Ikeda, 2019), as creativity within linguistic–semiotic landscapes is still quite dependent on sign makers "who rely on the malleability of semiotic resources" (Moriarty & Järlehed, 2019, p. 3). Recently, this reliance has worked to generate interest in business (Hult & Kelly-Holmes, 2019), express oneself through body art (Roux, Peck, & Banda, 2019), and produce a documentary on a neighbourhood (Dagenais, Moore, Sabatier, Lamarre, & Armand, 2009). Indeed, much like in the previous scholarship on translanguaging and multimodality, creativity is bound up in an intentional or agentive reconfiguration of meaning.

Theorizing creativity-in-itself

As the literature on multilingual literacy practices revealed, creativity is viewed largely as a function of human activity even when other modes and materialities are involved. Additionally, it is semiotic in nature, making it dependent on one's ability to repurpose something that is already in existence (Deumert, 2018). This conceptualization of creativity thus involves an identification of boundaries and norms, given that, to recognize a creative practice or product, it must stand out as "new" (Thurlow, 2012). In other words, creativity is generally understood as a difference from something of the same kind, not as a difference in itself. In this section, I will theorize creativity from the latter perspective using Deleuze's new materialist[1] philosophy.

Deleuze as a philosopher of difference

For Deleuze (1994), difference is often associated with the logic of representation. His philosophical project, as such, is aimed at overturning this logic. The basis of his critique is that representational logic is sedentary and fixed in that it subordinates difference through "four shackles of mediation": identity, opposition, analogy, and resemblance (p. 29). The problem, as Deleuze saw it, is that difference is always bound up in an external relation to something else. For example, differences between syntactic units are subsumed under the identity of syntactic categories that exist in analogous relations with lexical and phrasal categories. These categories are broken down further, enabling differences between syntactic units to manifest through negation (e.g., a transitive verb is not an intransitive verb) and likeness (e.g., transitive and intransitive verbs express action). This categorical and hierarchical ordering means that, through the logos of representation, variation is determined via comparison, making difference a *re*-presentation of something already in existence (e.g., *this* verb is different from *that* verb), much like the determinations of creativity discussed previously.

To challenge this logic, Deleuze (1994) developed a concept of difference that is not grounded in sameness. In so doing, he foregrounded movement and proliferation, both of which characterize how unique forces converge without aim or end to produce an event of becoming. Rather than positing that change begins with an origin of being, which would indicate a "difference between already identifiable things or terms" (Hein, 2016, p. 135), Deleuze affirmed the inimitable in everything. In this way, even when a structuring process like representation occurs, pure difference, or the idea that difference isn't dependent on a relation for its existence, is still acknowledged, given that the circumstances of production are always unique or singular.

Creativity as an event of becoming

To think creativity-in-itself is not an easy task, especially since it has to be renewed repeatedly. When an event or confluence of forces comes together and is actualized (i.e., becomes something), it is caught by what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) referred to as strata. Strata decelerate flows of difference by imposing organizing principles upon them. They are layers of capture that "consist of giving form to matters, of imprisoning intensities" (p. 40). While there are strata at work everywhere, the three most dominant are the biological, physical, and linguistic. Far from preventing change, they structure states or bodies that retain their own openings to a potential world of variation, however constrained that potential might be.

As the potential within a particular convergence of intensities and forces, an event marks an ontological transformation. To understand this change as creativity-in-itself, however, requires seeing the event of becoming not as a disruption of a constant state but rather as an immanent divergence and disassociation from what was actualized (Olkowski, 1999). To put it simply, events are original. They are not constituted in an image of likeness. When the flows of difference divest an actualized state or body from one of its organizing principles, the change produced is "an opening out on to a time of becoming" (Colebrook, 2006, p. 102), where each moment of actualization is new. Newness, then, would not be determined by perceivable variation in the actualized state or body but rather by variation in the confluence of forces that constituted it. For example, the exclamation "I object!" could be uttered twice in succession by the same person, but the forces that bring each utterance to life would inevitably be different, making what was actualized – the "I object!" – not a mirror image of those forces but rather a "*product* of [their] synthesis" (Stagoll, 2010, p. 90). As Olkowski (1999, p. 122) explained, "when [forces are] actualized, this actuality in no way resembles or represents the [forces] it materializes, and this is what opens the way to creative evolution." In other words, creativity-in-itself is predicated on a process of emergence that cannot be apprehended within the structure of what has already been actualized or formed. In this way, creativity frees itself not only from being founded on what is already known but also from the well-intentioned human subject who has been traditionally thought to be the lone producer of such creativity.

Stuttering and silence

In considering how language factors into an understanding of creativity-in-itself, another concept is needed: stuttering. For Deleuze (1997), stuttering is a strain on language, one that pushes it to its limits. To recognize that language comes into being as part of an assemblage and is not a product of individual speakers, however, is to recognize that there cannot be a speaking subject who stutters. Deleuze (1997) thus uprooted the concept of stuttering from

its clinical definition as a fluency disorder and reterritorialized it as a creative operation of making language stutter as such. In this way, stuttering could be viewed not as affecting words that are already in existence but as "itself [introducing] words it affects" (p. 107). That is, words and stutter are linked via "an affective and intensive language" (p. 107) that, at first glance, may seem to resemble work on linguistic performativity but actually opens out onto a wider field of dramatization (Palmer, 2014).

Drawing on J.L. Austin (1962), Deleuze took up the inherent relation between saying and doing to conceptualize stuttering as word and action. In so doing, he illustrated that stuttering occurs in the form of content just as it occurs in the form of expression. While it is not difficult to imagine the latter (i.e., the physical act of stuttering), to imagine the former (i.e., how language itself stutters) requires recognition that there is "an atmospheric quality, a milieu that acts as the conductor of words" (Deleuze, 1997, p. 108), and this milieu is precisely where the singular forces and intensities that drive creativity-in-itself come into play.

To show that stuttering is not merely a phenomenon of *parole* but an instance of *langue*, however, Deleuze needed to invoke the poetic function of language via Jakobson (1960) as well. As Deleuze (1997, p. 110) explained, "language is subject to a double process, that of the choices to be made and that of the sequence to be established: disjunction or the selection of similar, connection or the consecution of combinables." That is, stuttering, in affecting both the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes of language, creates "an oscillating vibration that separates as it connects" (Doruff, 2016, p. 485). Syntactically speaking, this process is one where words self-divide and redouble in a kind of linguistic experimentation that emerges from the middle of a creative event such as when utterances become list-like, functioning less like propositions. This creative event, importantly, is what places the language system in a constant state of variation, one that repeatedly marks the outside of language as it bends toward other modes of expression, manipulating spatiotemporal boundaries in the process. As Palmer (2014, p. 125) explained, "there is a palpable urge in Deleuze's thought to reconfigure language so that it bypasses or short-circuits all mediating systems, and the spatiotemporal dynamisms are the source of this urge," not to mention the source of the creation of the new.

To get at these spatiotemporal dynamisms necessitates moving beyond the logic of representation, however, and stuttering helps in this regard. Rendering the conventional categories of language meaningless, stuttering aims to "make palpable the insensible, the invisible, the inaudible, the unsayable" (Bogue, 2004, p. 23) in a way that does not reduce the particulars of their creative event to an image of likeness or to textuality. Drawing attention to the movement of language and the atmospheric qualities that bring it into and out of existence, such as when a loud burst of laughter becomes contagious and shifts the body of a room, is thus key to accounting for linguistic creativity as subversion on its own grounds.

In an extension of the concept of stuttering, Deleuze (1997) described three stages of pushing language to its limits "with [supposed] logical passage from one to the other" (Lecercle, 2002, p. 4): the language of names, the language of voices, and the language of images. While he developed these stages in the context of Beckett's narrative praxis, they show how language surpasses logic by resisting syntactic arrangement (names), how words disappear as a result of not being understood (voices), and how language reaches its limits by turning into silence (images). This movement is what makes visible the non-representational aspects of linguistic creativity as an event that carries with it forces of difference such

as when the repetition of a phrase like "I object!" results in nonsensical clapping instead of a coherent continuation of what was being objected. In other words, the movement from stuttering to silence dramatizes creativity-in-itself, a movement that would otherwise be missed upon its actualization in the world of representation. Stuttering, as a result, becomes an involuntary act of linguistic creativity that is always transcending its limits by leaping "onto other dimensions and other registers" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 8) via a dramatized intensity.

Modes of inquiry

In line with recent new materialist work in applied linguistics (e.g., Fleming, Waterhouse, Bangou, & Bastien, 2018), this article merges theory and practice by operationalizing Deleuze's (1997) notion of stuttering as a mode of inquiry. Elsewhere, this methodological process has been described as thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) or using philosophical concepts as or instead of methods (Lenz Taguchi & St. Pierre, 2017). In what follows, I describe the after-school program that the concept of stuttering gets plugged into, along with how I determined which data to "freeze" for analysis.

The arts-based after-school program

During spring 2018, middle-school multilingual youth came together with pre-service language teachers and university researchers to take part in an arts-based after-school program. The program's aim was to explore issues that youth saw as relevant to their lives using different forms of literacy such as storytelling, photography, land surveying, and theatre. The school, which is located in a semi-rural area in the southeastern United States, was undergoing construction at the time of the program. This construction afforded an opportunity for youth not only to identify an issue in the school but also to design and present a proposal for change to their principal, who was overseeing the budget for construction.

While the number of youth in attendance varied from week to week due to commitments such as sports and band, there were eight youth who consistently participated in the program. In comparison, there were fourteen pre-service language teachers and three university researchers. Yet, because the program was premised on youth-led inquiry, the young people were in complete control of their projects, even if that meant abandoning them to hang out in the space provided instead. As tended to be the case, however, different bonds and groups formed and reformed throughout the participants' time together, leading to the creation of a range of different projects via engagement with one another, the space, and the materials in it.

The program ran from January to April, with participants meeting once a week for two hours at a time. Typically, each session began with gameplay, followed by an arts-based activity and work session that often evolved in unforeseen ways. Data collected included over 50 hours of video footage and 98 reflections written by the pre-service teachers and university researchers. For the purposes of this article, the video footage was used for analysis and the reflections for contextualization.

As a point of entry into the data, I reviewed my own reflections to see if there was anything that came up repeatedly or if there was anything that called out for attention (MacLure, 2013). In relation to a series of theatre activities that had always baffled me, I wrote,

> So much fun. So much nonsense. What an exercise in creativity! Yet, something happened in the cacophony that I still can't articulate. It wasn't just the embodied play. It was its

> intensity? Its energy? Its none-of-this-makes-sense-but-it-seems-to-be-doing-something? What was that something? Or better yet, what was it doing? (Field notes, February 27, 2018)

I then located the series of activities in the video footage and mapped the contours of their movement with particular attention to how language and other modes of expression functioned. This mapping was important, as it enabled me to identify points of stratification (i.e., stillness and rigidity) and rupture (i.e., movement and breaks in expectation). Still not knowing what to make of these activities, however, I turned to the concept of stuttering, as they seemed to have an intensity that disrupted representational thinking.

Making the language system stutter

While the theatre activities were intended to build youths' conceptual understanding of argumentation in preparation for presenting their proposals to the school principal, they ended up serving many other unanticipated functions. One of the favourite activities that youth and pre-service teachers engaged in was called "I object!" As part of the activity, participants were asked to gather together and take turns physically stepping out of the crowd to oppose one another's ideas on a particular topic. They were also asked to offer a new idea that was logically linked to the last. The transcript below highlights how the activity unfolded around the topic of whether or not cats should be allowed in the house.

PARTICIPANT 1: *Cat scurries behind the school building.*[2]
PARTICIPANT 2: We are here today to debate the very serious issue of whether cats should be allowed in the house or not.
CROWD: *Giggles.* // MMM.
PARTICIPANT 2: I object! Cats are dirty creatures and they should remain outside always. They have
CROWD: // *Laughter*.
PARTICIPANT 2: // <i*naudible*> and really actually I think they should all be killed.
CROWD: WHOAAA!
PARTICIPANT 2: =That's what I think!
PARTICIPANT 3: // I object!
PARTICIPANT 4: // I object!
PARTICIPANT 5: // I object!
PARTICIPANT 6: =I object! How dare you say that about the cuddly, beautiful creatures. Cats are loving animals. Sure, they may try to dig and paw <*inaudible*>
PARTICIPANT 4: // Preach!
CROWD: =*Laughter*.
PARTICIPANT 6: // and they have vampire-like eyes, but they're cuddly and loving. If you treat the cats right, they will treat you right.
PARTICIPANT 5: I object! They'll be sitting there all cuddly next to you on the couch and then the next moment something falls in the kitchen and they jump all over and scratch your legs and it's terrible because you just are sitting there doing your homework and
PARTICIPANT 2: =I object! People should also not be in houses.

25 **CROWD:** *Laughter.*
26 **PARTICIPANT 7:** They create a mess.
27 **PARTICIPANT 3:** I object! If we don't have houses, we'd have to live under a bridge.
28 **PARTICIPANT 6:** I object! Back in the old days, in my <*increasing speed*> great, great,
29 great, great, great, great, great grandma's days, they were out there hunting for
30 animals and they killed them and they ate them 'cause it felt good.
31 **CROWD:** =*Laughter*.
32 **PARTICIPANT 7:** I object! I think everyone should eat Oreos all day so they can
get fat.
33 **PARTICIPANT 6:** I object! We've gotta eat healthy every once in awhile.
34 **PARTICIPANT 4:** // Come on, man!
35 **PARTICIPANT 6:** // Vegetables and fruit are good for you. Oreos are terrible.
36 **PARTICIPANT 4:** =Eggplants are disgusting.
37 **PARTICIPANT 5:** =I have an eggplant-colored dress and it's my favorite.
38 **CROWD:** *Cheering that becomes clapping.*

As seen in line 1, the topic of discussion for the activity was incited by a non-human actor, a cat "[scurrying] behind the school building." While the activity was not intended to be entirely serious, it is important to note that this encounter set the activity in motion and was thus equally part of the forces and materialities that actualized it as a whole. As Dagenais, Toohey, Fox, and Singh (2017, p. 277) explained, whether animate or not, non-human "co-participants" have a way of "shifting flows of activity," and in this particular case, it was a cat that visibly became part of the ecology of the embodied and collective banter.

It is in lines 8–13 where the language system starts to stutter, however. After the shock of hearing participant 2 say that cats "should all be killed," the crowd lets out a collective "WHOAAA!" and there is an overlap of "I objects" that produce an incantatory vibration. Here, language is "no longer an affectation of the one who speaks" (Deleuze, 1997, p. 107) but a "swelling noise" (p. 108) that explodes the created world and sends language racing down "a witch's line" (p. 5). Indeed, this disruptive crescendo functions as an instance of sonic creativity, or what Storch (2018, p. 56) described as "binding together voice, noise, and sound." That is, while little changed between the participants physically, the body of the atmosphere transformed drastically, having been affected through the language of the collective. The sonic disturbance, as such, did not function to represent as much as it did to intervene.

As language moves back into a less intensive state, there are still subtle instances of stuttering. In lines 20-23, for example, the rhythmic use of "and" creates a continuous line of syntactic variation:

> I object! They'll be sitting there all cuddly next to you on the couch AND then the next moment something falls in the kitchen AND they jump all over AND scratch your legs AND it's terrible because you just are sitting there doing your homework AND

While the above excerpt does not appear to produce anything novel, what it illustrates is how language creatively proliferates through the periodic repetition of "and." In Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) philosophy of language, "and" "carries enough force to uproot the verb 'to be'" (p. 25). It is what makes language grow from the middle and what incites movement between states of affairs and bodies. The rhythm of its use, as such, lies in the

difference it creates by enabling one event of language to pass into another. As Young (2014, p. 266) explained, rhythm is an arrangement that living things get swept up in not only when "improvising, but also when they are...being constituted anew." In other words, each event of language in the excerpt is continuously "singularized out of a population rather than determined in a form" (Deleuze, 1997, p. 1), making the logic of "and" a surreptitiously inventive coming and going of the linguistic system.

There are, of course, other instances of repetition throughout the activity, all of which take on the same rhythmic quality. In lines 28-29, for example, Participant 6 uses the word "great" eight times in row. While the participant is clearly doing so to indicate that their ancestors foraged for food, this repetitiveness provides a literal example of stuttering that is both exaggerated and obsessive. In noting that this recurrent usage comes out at an increasingly more rapid pace, the language system can be said to stutter the speaker and intensify again in that such usages eventually get defined less by what makes them "a signifying thing" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, p. 133) and more "by what causes [them] to move, to flow, and to explode" (p. 133). Repetition is also most obviously built into the activity itself through the phrase "I object!" In fact, each new usage brings about an entirely altered event. As Pennycook (2007, p. 580) pointed out, while repetition has the appearance of sameness, it is actually "an act of difference, recontextualization, [and] renewal" in that no two moments can ever be the same due to the singularity of their forces of actualization.

It is in the moments where this repetitiveness dies down that language shows signs of reaching its limits, however. In lines 34-37, the participants forgo using "I object!" and start rattling off their opinions about food in rapid succession, sometimes even talking over one another. This "disjunctive, abrupt, jerky" (Lecercle, 2002, p. 7) series could be likened to Deleuze's (1997) language of names, where the stuttering becomes so intensive that it is difficult to finish a sentence because another one has already been started. There is also an asignifying rupture in line 37, where Participant 5 shifts the topic from food (i.e., eggplants) to the colour of their dress (i.e., eggplant-coloured dress). While still taking up the theme of the previous utterance, this statement creates enough of a digression that the collective fails to engage with it as meaningful. Indeed, this line exemplifies the language of voices in that the participant's "only point of contact with the world of [their] reality is the Voice that no longer makes sense" (Deleuze, 1997, p. 5). As a result of being unable to generate meaning from the expression, language dries up and the collective responds by cheering and clapping. It is at this stage, the language of images, that lingual asthma (i.e., stuttering) becomes lingual exhaustion (i.e., silence). That is, language reaches its limits and "turns into...another medium" (Lecercle, 2002, p. 5) or, rather, another mode of expression, manipulating spatiotemporal boundaries in the process (i.e., moving beyond language).

Discussion

Although just a brief activity, the theatre game provides an expansive example of the forces and intensities that make the language system stutter. While more palpable than visible, these creative progressions manifested as vibration, variation, rhythm, repetition, and digression until language reached its limits and took on another mode of expression altogether. While this movement might be thought of as a microgenetic or moment-to-moment rendering of linguistic creativity (e.g., Cekaite, 2018), it is important to bear in mind that

the affective sequence was happenstance and that each new language event was not only an unfolding but also an *en*folding or implication of forces and materialities that may not have been amenable to the observable reality of the autopoietic process in its totality (Semetsky, 2004). In other words, it would be an oversight to claim that each turn in the transcript was a simple reaction to what came before it, as there was "a proliferation of entry and exit points...that [erupted] outward and often [looped] back" (de Freitas, 2013, p. 290), as evidenced by the repetition of the phrase "I object!"

As it relates to the intensification of language, affect played a critical role in producing a continuous line of variation within or, perhaps, rather out of the theatre activity. More than a feeling, affect functioned as the "transitional product of an encounter" (Colman, 2010, p. 11) between atmospheric, linguistic, and human and non-human bodies. When, for example, the words "they [cats] all should be killed" met the ears of the participants in a reverberating collision, a transformation occurred that shifted the environment of gameplay from friendly to aggressive. Elsewhere, Waterhouse and Arnott (2016) have described affect as having a disruptive quality, and indeed, in this example, there is a palpable jolt to the participants' collective experience. As language moved beyond its representational bounds to register this momentum, the body became an expressive event that had to "transmit the reality of the shock" (Massumi, 2002, p. xxxi). The participants, as a result, did not consciously decide to stutter. In a creative double move, it was the collision that forced the language system to stutter as such, a stutter that was simultaneously mimicked in the body of their collective experience.

What the theatre activity also highlights is the ways in which creativity manifests as a more-than-human activity. While the cat provided a very obvious example of how a non-human actor can reconfigure a language event, it is imperative to understand that inanimate objects do the same, as do affects and intensities, despite often existing out of sight. It would be an ontological misstep to suggest that these non-human entities act alone, however. In making themselves known, they become part of an entanglement that constitutes an event or an experience as a whole (de Freitas & Sinclair, 2013). In relation to multilingual literacy practices like the theatre activity, what this means is that humans can no longer be thought of as intentional designers of meaning, as there will always be a relational encounter that moves thought in another direction (Toohey & Dagenais, 2015; Wohlwend, Peppler, Keune, & Thompson, 2017).

Even in focusing on the movement of language itself, it was shown that linguistic creativity is not a property of individual speakers, echoing some of the work discussed previously on linguistic–semiotic landscapes. As Deleuze and Parnet (1987, p. 51) explained, "the utterance is the product of an assemblage – which is always collective, which brings into play within us and outside us populations, multiplicities, territories, becomings, affects, events." Indeed, no one person made the language system stutter. It stuttered as a result of a confluence of bodies and forces that could not have been predicted in advance. Even in moments that demanded repetition, any expectation of what might come next was shattered, as each repeated utterance functioned to "[open] up a new connection to new concepts and structures" (Atoofi, 2019, p. 676).

Conclusion and implications

Throughout this article, I have sought to demonstrate how linguistic creativity might be understood as a continuously renewed event that emerges among a singular set of forces and

materialities. In attending to how language moved rather than what it meant, I showed how language exceeded the general features of its expressive typology. Importantly, however, this movement and excess were not measured against anything pre-existing, making a break from the larger body of scholarship on language and creativity, which typically defines the latter in terms of sign makers as redesigners of meaning.

As new materialist work continues to expand how language is conceptualized in applied linguistics research, it is my hope that we avail thinking of the forces of difference that not only place language in a constant state of variation but also push it to its limits. While stuttering was a useful concept for mapping the non-representational aspects of linguistic creativity, the concept also affords exploration of how everyday uses of language are minorized to create disequilibrium in dominant or privileged systems of meaning making. In the context of language and education, I foresee such thinking as a powerful means of affirming what might be considered nonsense or contextually inappropriate. I also foresee it as a way of affirming other ways of knowing and becoming that are always already more than linguistic.

Moving outward to considerations of creativity in general, there are two points that demand further consideration. On the one hand, this article advocates for a more-than-human approach to creativity. On the other hand, it leads to the question, does creativity-in-itself void the concept altogether, given that each actualization of an event can be considered creative on account of its singular genesis? To the first point, I'll add that while work on non-human creativity has already begun taking shape via the disruption of more traditional research methodologies in applied linguistics, we might consider thinking more deliberately about, or perhaps even revisiting, how we identify creativity in our data. What, for example, are the representational structures at play even when the non-human is brought into the mix? To the second point, and in line with Thurlow (2019, p. 98), I agree that there is "no neat binary to be drawn between 'creative' and 'non-creative.'" However, through Deleuze's new materialist philosophy, we can both affirm the creativity inherent in all that happens *and* make representational determinations about newness, value, and so on. Creativity-in-itself, most importantly, asks us to consider the event, the practice, the product, or the other on its own grounds, and in so doing it frees us from the comparative trap that measures an instance of creativity against something else. In both language research and language education, this shift in thinking could radically open a field of possibilities for exploring creativity as an ontology of irreducible experience that, to paraphrase O'Sullivan (2009), both breaks and makes a world newly.

Nicole E. Siffrinn is an assistant professor of literacy, language, and culture at the University of Southern Maine. Her work explores the materiality and movement of language and meaning in multilingual teaching and learning contexts.

Notes

1. While I prefer to use "transcendental empiricism" to describe Deleuze's philosophical project, I use "new materialisms" throughout the paper to maintain consistency with other work in this special issue.
2. I have included the cat in the transcript to highlight its role as a non-human participant in the gameplay. This data excerpt came from my field notes.

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