



## Aestheticising readers' experiences of 'reading' research: making visible emotional trajectories in learning

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Nathalie Sinclair's MERGA (2024) keynote challenged us to communicate video data in ways that provide readers with more holistic and embodied experiences of our data. She argued for 'aestheticizing' readers' experiences drawing on Dewey's (1934) notion of experience as characterized by 'internal integration and fulfilment' (p.42). In this methodological paper we took up this challenge—reimagining what constitutes a learning experience and how to communicate these (more fully) to others. Through video analysis of a pre-school child (Lila) and her mother (Mellony) engaging about counting in threes (prompted by the layout of numbers on a television remote) we addressed: How can we provide a more 'sensory' experience of data? How might we share learners' shifting facial expressions and body language over time to reveal their emotional trajectories? We critiqued our earlier analysis (Abtahi et al. 2017) of this learning event for our focus on what was said. Here instead we focused on Lila's evolving expressions and body language across a series of linked learning experiences across the learning event. We communicated our analysis using a series of sequential 4-frame time-stamped 'video strips' constructed by cutting 'still images' from the video. Following Dewey, images were categorised as indicating continuity/cumulation, anticipation, tension, and or fulfilment along with listing visible emotion/s. Transcripts of what was said with an explanation of each episode accompanied this data. We proposed this as a productive way to analyse, interpret and communicate data more fully (than focusing only on words and actions as evidence of cognitive drivers)— providing readers a broader experience of the data. We highlighted that emotions are not secondary to learning; they actively shape interactions and decision-making. Ignoring emotions in video analysis not only reduces the depth and validity of our interpretations but risks implying that children's emotional experiences are irrelevant in mathematical learning. While sharing children's facial expressions requires ethical navigation, we argue that these enrich our understanding by providing a more humanized embodied perspective on learning. The integration of emotional and cognitive analysis offers a more nuanced and holistic view of learning experiences revealing the deeply interconnected nature of emotion and cognition.

### References

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For more information, please refer to the following paper presented at the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of MERGA in July 2025.  
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