Plurilingual Students' Navigation of Learning in an Undergraduate Business Program: A Qualitative Study of Language, Discourse, and Practices

by

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Abstract

This research was designed to provide insight into the learning strategies of plurilingual students in an undergraduate business program in Western Canada, with a specific focus on how the students draw on their plurilingual and pluricultural competences. To investigate relevant phenomena, a qualitative methodology was used; data was collected primarily through interviews, with supplementary sources being follow-up communications and the collection of relevant documents (such as course notes) which participants shared. In addition to lines of inquiry related to students' plurilingual practices while navigating learning, the role of discourse was also explored and analyzed. Participants shared a wide variety of learning strategies in which not only their L1, but also their greater plurilingual and pluricultural repertoires played an important role. Additionally, participants shared the ways in which discourse shaped their practices; this included discourses around such topics as linguistic purity, English-only policies, and deficit perspectives toward English as an Additional Language students. Notably, participants also shared instances in which they resisted their positioning into harmful discourses or were open to revisiting beliefs held about language.

Keywords: Plurilingualism; Discourse; Pedagogy; Practices; Identity

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List of Acronyms

CBI	Content Based Instruction
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
WCCU	West Coast Canadian University

Chapter 1.

Introduction

This study explores the learning experiences and language practices of plurilingual undergraduate business students in a comprehensive university in Canada. Through interviews, examination of artifacts provided by students (e.g., course notes), and reflections on my own experiences as an instructor in relevant classrooms, I examine how students navigate discourses around language use and exercise their agency to make use of their varied linguistic repertoires while learning. While anchored to their current/recent experiences in the Canadian university, students' experiences in other contexts will also be discussed. These contexts include (but are not limited to) learning in their home countries in both mainstream and language learning contexts, secondary school in Canada, and a variety of other college and university settings.

1.1. The Increasingly Diverse University Classroom

The Metropolitan Area of Vancouver, which is the context for this thesis, has considerable cultural and linguistic diversity. According to Statistics Canada (2019a), as of the 2016 Census, 44.8% of residents of Metro Vancouver report a "mother tongue" (the term used in the census), other than the official languages of English and French – meaning either immigrant (44.7%) or indigenous languages (0.0005%). This figure represents 1,093,305 individuals with mother tongues other than English or French, up steadily in each census since 1996, when the figure was 622,480 individuals (Statistics Canada, 2019a). Statistics for Canada as a whole put the percentage of non-official language mother tongues at 22.9% (Statistics Canada, 2019b), with some other major metropolitan areas mirroring Vancouver's diversity, such as Toronto at 46.6% (Statistics Canada, 2019c). Moreover, Canada has an official policy of multiculturalism, which was first adopted in 1971 (The Canadian Encyclopedia, n.d.) and later codified into law as the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988 (Government of Canada, n.d.-a)

Diversity is also a hallmark of today's higher educational/post-secondary institutions, in which there has been a strong internationalization push in recent decades. De Wit and Altbach (2021) note that "during the past half-century, internationalization in

tertiary education has evolved from being a marginal activity to becoming a key aspect of the reform agenda" (p. 303) and identify Canada as an emergingly important receiving country due to "open immigration policy, lower costs, and a more welcoming environment than in neighboring U.S." (p. 317). This trend is confirmed in a recent BC government report which indicated that international student enrollment "has nearly tripled over the last decade, increasing from 21,943 in 2007/2008 to 58,591 in 2016/2017" (Government of British Columbia, 2018, p. 14). The report also revealed that six BC post-secondary institutions had international enrollment above 15%, with ten others between 14.9% and 10%. Broken down by category, Research-Intensive Universities (RIUs) had the largest proportion of international students, averaging 19.7%. Importantly, this report only covered international students, defined as "any non-Canadian citizen who does not have permanent residency status in Canada and is participating in a program of study at an education institution in Canada" (Government of British Columbia, 2018, p. 4). The major implication of this definition is that much of the linguistic diversity captured in the census (discussed in the paragraph above) is present among students who would be classified as domestic by post-secondary institutions, based on having permanent residency or citizenship.

In recent months, the Canadian government has announced a change in policy to place stricter limits on new international student permits (Government of Canada, n.d.-b). While acknowledging the contributions of international students to Canadian communities, the government statement stressed the need to restrict entry to stabilize issues with available housing and health care services. The linguistic and cultural diversity present in regions such as Vancouver has strong implications for education, as a larger share of students navigating English-dominant educational contexts are speakers of English as an Additional Language (EAL). Beyond the more obvious issues related to language, students may also be adjusting to the new cultural context, including differing expectations and orientations in the culture of education. Furthermore, transnational movement and immigration often bring with them an exploration of issues around identity (Duff, 2015; Li & Zhu, 2013). With students possessing a wider variety of linguistic skills, bringing more diverse cultural experiences and backgrounds into the classroom, and more regularly navigating issues of identity, it is natural to ask what the response should be from educators. Does pedagogy match the diversity present in such classrooms? And beyond meeting the basic needs of students, how could educators be

a positive influence as students navigate complicated discourses around topics such as language, culture, identity, privilege, and equity?

Thoughtful and critical examination of questions such as these is necessary to overcome what can often be, throughout levels of education and across different contexts, a default toward discourses of deficit regarding EAL students and English-only policies (Galante, 2020a; García, 2009; Lau, 2020; Lau & Van Viegen, 2020; Lin, 2020; Marshall, 2010; Marshall & Moore, 2018). Moreover, many students for whom English is an additional language are paying higher tuition and fees due to their designation as international students. And these fees may be exempt from governmental safeguards on tuition increases, such as in British Columbia where a policy linking tuition increases to inflation and limiting annual increases in tuition to 2% does not apply to international tuition and fees (Government of British Columbia, n.d.). In highlighting trends and challenges related to the internationalization of higher education, de Wit and Altbach (2021) argue for the need for an "inclusive and social internationalization that addresses ethical concerns, instead of being exclusively focused on revenue, soft power, and excellence" (p. 323). Without this ethical consideration – and improvements to pedagogy and student support that match the new reality of the increasingly diverse classroom – we risk a status quo in which some students pay significantly *more* for an education that is *less* tailored to their needs. Notably, the government's statement announcing restrictions on new international student permits acknowledged exactly this issue, recognizing that "some institutions have significantly increased their intakes to drive revenues, and more students have been arriving in Canada without the proper supports they need to succeed" (Government of Canada, n.d.-a). While educators may not be able to control government (or even institutional) policy, we can exercise our agency to adapt to meet the needs of the students in our classroom (Marshall & Moore, 2018). And, on the issue of pedagogy, "as ethically responsibly educators, we need to continue to engage with difficult questions" (Kubota, 2020, p. 318). This thesis will engage with some of those difficult questions around language use and associated discourses, as well as students' agency within an English-dominant context and how a plurilingual pedagogy may open possibilities for deeper learning and push back against harmful discourses.

1.2. A Long and Winding, but Practical, Path

In addition to my belief in the importance of the topic, as discussed above, I have chosen this research focus and the plurilingual lens for how it resonates with my own personal experiences, pedagogy, and past research endeavors. In terms of my personal experiences, I came to my interest in language and associated issues of culture relatively late in life – at least, compared with the participants in this research. Growing up in Portland, Oregon (USA) in the 1980s and 90s, I was not surrounded by significant cultural or linguistic diversity. Though I had language courses throughout early schooling, they were generally not taught with any expectation of developing much communicative competence. In one instance, my high school Spanish course was taught by a French teacher, simply due to lack of availability of Spanish speaking teachers at the school. My first true interest in language and culture developed in my mid-20s, after securing a job that offered me disposable income for the first time, and with it, the possibility for international travel. That experience of traveling overseas impacted my future plans in a far more dramatic way than I anticipated.

The first trip I planned was to Tokyo. I honestly remember only parts of how I arrived at Japan as my chosen destination. However, I do know that I was drawn to visiting a place that I perceived as being very different than the United States. Regardless of my motivations at the time, I went, preparing beforehand by studying some basic Japanese with a local tutor. I stayed at a *ryokan* (traditional Japanese inn) which had been the top ranked budget accommodation in a travel guidebook that I had purchased. One morning, early in my trip, I noted the innkeeper spelling my name over the lobby telephone while I was eating breakfast in the common area. As chance would have it, the inn was going to be featured as part of a domestic travel program that introduced various neighborhoods in Japan. Knowing that I had explored local neighborhood sights as well as the more famous Tokyo tourist traps, the innkeeper had recommended to the program's director that I could be a potential guest to be featured in the show. A meeting with the director turned into an offer to participate in a few hours of filming, which turned into two or three more days of filming and meals together with the director, crew, and translator. In addition to being an unexpected and memorable experience, it was an opportunity to make deeper connections with several locals and build a deeper understanding of the culture than my original travel plans would likely

have offered. To this day, I credit this trip as important as a turning point in my career (and educational) path.

Travel ignited a passion which led, within months, to enrolling in several linguistics courses at Portland State University (PSU). In one early course, on Sociolinguistics – whose reading packet, compiled by a print shop near campus, I still possess – I was exposed to the idea that the differentiation between a “language” and a “dialect” is not precise and technical, but a construction of society and politics (Romaine, 2000), to codeswitching (Myers-Scotton, 1988), and to a range of perspectives on societal ideas about which languages and language acts are valid and in what contexts. These were all issues that privilege and growing up in Portland – a liberal city but lacking in diversity – had largely exempted me from needing to consider up until that point in my life. With a few classes under my belt, I was already fascinated by the field; still, I felt somewhat of an imposter among peers who frequently had far more developed plurilingual competencies and deeper connections to other cultures, which I could not yet relate to. I knew that I wanted to move abroad and to truly experience and engage with the ideas I was learning about in these classes. But having a practical orientation – a recurring theme in this thesis – I knew I was not the type to simply move overseas with no plan and no job. And so, I enrolled in the MA TESOL program offered through PSU’s Applied Linguistics Department. My hope was to challenge myself to develop further linguistic and cultural competences by putting myself in new environments, surrounded by diversity that I had not previously experienced, while also potentially finding a career path guided by my emerging interests in language and culture.

As I write this thesis, I have now lived in three countries outside of the United States and have a bevy of my own personal experiences in navigating other linguistic and cultural contexts and developing plurilingual competency. Having spent four years living in Tokyo, I developed good communicative skill in Japanese and strong knowledge of the culture. Though I always received strong marks in my past language courses, I found that I truly thrived in language learning outside of the classroom, and I took great pleasure in sitting at the counter at restaurants and making conversation with the staff and other customers. I found the restaurant and bar culture in Japan revolved around being a regular customer at local establishments and becoming friends with your fellow customers. I embraced this and tried to build strong friendships, but also challenged myself to continue visiting new shops to further hone my communicative skills in more

challenging conversations with strangers. Still, language learning has been a challenge – especially as someone who began in later life. Navigating Japanese's complex writing system with its *kanji* (the Japanese word for characters borrowed, and adapted, from Chinese) remains a trial to this day, and my reading and writing skills do not match my spoken communication. I have often struggled with what my unbalanced competencies mean for my status as a "bilingual" person – a struggle I have also seen in or discussed with my students. And yet, I can also acknowledge how much I have gained from pursuing the development of my linguistic and cultural competences. A plurilingual lens validates the idea that, while I may struggle to answer the question "are you fluent in Japanese?" with an affirmative response, the competences that I have developed are still valuable. A plurilingual lens normalizes the idea that "plurilingual and pluricultural competence generally presents itself as unbalanced or uneven in one or more ways" (Coste et al., 2009, p. 11). As language learners, we too often feel inadequate. Though I must again acknowledge my privilege as a speaker of English with its dominance on the global stage, I have had occasion to experience a small slice of that feeling. And in my students, peers, and colleagues from linguistic backgrounds with less privilege and power ascribed to them, I have seen a higher stakes struggle with feelings of inadequacy. With that acknowledgement, this research was motivated by a desire to explore this phenomenon and gain a deeper understanding of how an educator may encourage students to overcome deficit perspectives and positioning related to their own competences. Plurilingualism offers a compelling lens through which to do so.

Alongside my linguistics skills, experiences abroad helped me develop my cultural competences. In Tokyo, I sometimes felt frustrated or homesick as I navigated personal and professional relationships. I believe I gained skills from learning to overcome these challenges, and from being active in trying to gain a deeper understanding of cultural practices in Japan. However, I must admit that Japanese culture often felt well-matched to my personality. The deference to others and avoidance of conflict in public fit my own instincts and anxious tendencies. While my time in Japan primed me for developing cultural competences, in some ways, nine months spent living in Hungary may have offered a more significant challenge with which to stir my development. By spending time in a third culture, I began to further understand the process of cultural adaptation and develop my pluricultural competence. Though I also developed strong friendships in Hungary, I found it to be less of a fit for my natural

tendencies and needed to learn to be more flexible. When my schedule and finances allowed, I also traveled within Europe, encountering other cultures, and further gaining an appreciation for the diversity therein. Today, I can both recognize how much I have grown and appreciate how much more there is to learn and understand. And, despite any imbalances in my development, I have leveraged my competences toward successful communication in many contexts around the world and with speakers from a wide range of backgrounds. The participants of this research are likewise in varied stages of the process of adjusting to Canadian culture and the development of cultural competences. Again, plurilingualism offers a compelling explanation for how partial competences and lessons learned in a variety of cultural settings can come together as more than the sum of their parts to facilitate successful interactions across cultures.

The self-examination of my own competences through a plurilingual lens adds a layer of depth to the exploration in this thesis - as I explore the experiences of the participants of this study, there are overlaps with my own experiences. At points, this comes through clearly in the co-construction of knowledge that takes place in the interviews with participants (Brinkmann, 2018; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). However, there are important issues of privilege to acknowledge. In some moments during my time abroad, I was uncomfortably aware of my privilege – when, for example, my Japanese skills fell short in an interaction and my interlocutors profusely apologize for not speaking English. This never sat right with me, and even in the moment I was able to reflect on how impatient Americans often are with those whose first language is not English. I was aware of often being assigned some inherent “coolness” due to being a White American in the Japanese context. At the time, it sometimes frustrated me when people wanted to be friends based only on my being foreign or American. Now, I also see that experience as a clear demonstration of my privilege, which is not experienced by all foreign individuals who reside in Japan. Through my studies in this PhD program, I have become more practiced in being actively aware of my own privilege. This includes in my professional life, where I was once uncritical about the preference for native-speaker language teachers – a phenomenon now thoroughly explored in the Japanese context, notably by Oda (2017, 2022). I can now acknowledge that while I was enthusiastic and diligent, I arrived in Japan as a novice teacher who was, at times, woefully underprepared for what I was taking on. Likewise, while my students may have been motivated by having a native-speaker instructor – as some outwardly seemed to be –

this motivation may have been (at least in part) due to misguided discourses about the value such a teacher inherently brings and the language ideologies (Piller, 2015) that are dominant in the context. As illustrated by these examples, while acknowledging some similarities in experience between myself and my participants, I simultaneously recognize that for many of my participants the experience of arriving in Canada and navigating a new country and language departs meaningfully from my own experiences living, working, and learning language abroad – in which I have carried with me the privilege unfairly associated with being a White American male (among other privileged aspects of my identity). In the methodology section (chapter 4) of this work, I explore more deeply the importance of being reflexive and acknowledging this privilege – including reflecting on the implications for this research.

My professional and research experiences and goals also inform my choice of this research topic. I have taught in four countries on three continents. While teaching at university in Tokyo, Japan, I did my best to offer opportunities for students to develop their plurilingual competence. For many (but not all) of my first-year students, my classroom was the first time they had been asked to use English to communicate authentically, after many years of grammar focused instruction. At times, I perceived willingness to communicate (Yashima, 2002) in English to be low in many students, and I found myself enforcing English-only rules – something I am now more conflicted about. For some, I was one of the few non-Japanese individuals they had interacted with deeply up until that point in their lives. I helped students prepare for study abroad and then watched them return with news skills and new confidence in interactions with diverse populations. I remember one student in particular, a terribly shy first-year student who visited my office hours for extra help preparing for the IELTS exam. A few years later, after returning from study abroad, I saw her on campus confidently leading a group of international students on a tour around campus. I wondered how the experience abroad changed her. In fact, entering this PhD program, my early ideas for a research project involved study abroad programs, eager to understand the navigation of identity that occurred in these periods and how a well-structured study abroad experience could guide this exploration for students. Later, teaching in the Metro Vancouver context, I encountered classrooms with more linguistic and cultural diversity than any I had experienced up until that point. All of these professional experiences guided me towards a study grounded in a plurilingual lens, through which I could understand students' (and

my own) experiences of developing plurilingual and pluricultural competence, using agency to navigate the structures of their context, and navigating new experiences and discourses that may shape identity.

From a research perspective, my interests have skewed toward the practical since my first foray into graduate school. Entering my MA program, I felt as though I was playing catch up on my understanding of educational theory, having some grounding in sociological theory from my bachelor's degree in sociology but not in theory for education or linguistics or any significant training in pedagogy. As my comfort developed, I found myself drawn to issues such as students' language learning motivation (Dörnyei, 1994; Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2001) and beliefs about language learning (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005; Horwitz, 1988). In my MA thesis research, I explored the interplay between participants' beliefs and past language learning experiences and the choices they made in informal learning scenarios. In this way, I sought to conduct research that would help me better understand the student experience and benefit my pedagogy. I continued this trend while teaching at university in Japan, contributing academic articles to the university's journal that explored students' language learning motivation and misconceptions about English proficiency exams (Amburgey, 2015, 2016). While the issues being explored in this research may be more complex, the focus on building practical understanding that can benefit pedagogy remains a priority for me.

1.3. A Lens for Exploring Complex Questions

Having explained the choice of topic, both through its importance to the changing landscape of higher education and to my personal motivations, I must also briefly introduce the lens through which I will engage in this exploration. As mentioned in the section above, I have found that plurilingualism (Council of Europe, 2001) offers a compelling route to examine the experiences of the student participants in this study, the learning that takes place in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms, and the implications for pedagogy in such classrooms. Though far from the only theoretical framing from which to pursue these questions – Marshall & Moore (2018) note the emergence of a *panopoly of lingualisms* which all aim to build on or replace existing frameworks related to bi/multilingualism – plurilingualism offers a compelling lens to examine these complex issues. To briefly differentiate between the related terms of

multilingual and *plurilingual* (a larger discussion will take places in chapter 3 of this work), this thesis will be using an understanding of these terms as laid out by Marshall & Moore (2013) in which *plurilingual* is used to discuss the "distinct aspects of repertoire and agency," while *multilingual* refers to the larger social context and situation in which languages interact (p. 474). I have chosen to explore these through a plurilingual lens due to my interest in issues related to students' practices in the classroom. Plurilingualism, with its focus on agency and repertoire (Marshall & Moore, 2018), can help to illuminate how students navigate the structures of their learning context and both resist or enact dominant discourses that they may encounter regarding language and learning. In the case of this study, this means an exploration of how participants navigate an English-dominant university learning environment and discourses around language use, while using their agency to draw on their various linguistic resources in a way which maximizes their learning experience and personal growth. Moreover, it offers an opportunity to reflect on pedagogy, where instructors also navigate expectations of the structures within which they are employed and use their agency to encourage learning among a diverse group of students.

1.4. Research Questions

As established above, Canada is one location in which the internationalization of higher education has become a firm reality and in which institutions profess a prioritization of diversity and inclusion; however, the educational experience is not necessarily tailored to best facilitate learning amongst linguistically and culturally diverse groups of students (especially considering that those designated as international students are also paying highly elevated tuition rates). These dual realities should necessitate a diligent consideration of the quality of education that is provided to students from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, I have chosen to focus this research on plurilingual students who study in the Canadian higher education context (more on context and participants in the following chapter). To better understand the participants' experiences and perspectives on language and learning, the following research questions (and sub-questions) were established:

> **RQ1:** How and why do participants use languages in their daily lives (in non-academic contexts)?
>
> **RQ2:** What roles do languages other than English play in participants' learning in an English dominant academic context? How do their practices in learning align with or differ from their language use in daily life?

Within each of these research questions, I will also consider the sub-question of how participants' language use (and conceptualization of language use) relates to theories of bi-/multi-/plurilingualism, as well as to examine the role of discourses and the formation of identity in constructing their practices. Through RQ1, I endeavor to gain a baseline understanding of participants' plurilingual repertoires and how they use, and think about, language in their daily lives. RQ2 explores similar phenomena – however, with an emphasis on learning – while offering an opportunity to contrast language use in daily life and learning and explore the reasons for any differences in practices in these arenas.

In exploring both of these research questions, and concluding with thoughts on how plurilingual inspired pedagogy may improve equitable education, the goal is to build on the work of previous scholars of plurilingualism in the Canadian higher education context (Corcoran et al., 2023; Galante, 2018, 2019; Galante, et al., 2022; Galante, et al., 2023; Galante & Dela Cruz, 2024; Lee & Marshall, 2012; Marshall & Moore, 2013, 2018; Piccardo & North, 2020, 2023; Schmor & Piccardo, 2024; Spracklin, 2018; Lau & Van Viegen, 2022). Through exploring themes related to the research questions in interviews (and other forms of supplementary data collection), the aim is to understand with depth and breadth the participants' linguistic biographies, histories of learning experiences, and engagement with discourses around language use in the multiple contexts in which they have lived and studied. In doing so, this thesis can contribute to the understanding of how the summation of such experiences may be impacting participants' perspectives and learning practices – with a particular emphasis on participants' choices to use (or not use) their varied linguistic resources while studying in an English-dominant context. Through the perspectives of the participants, there is potential to better understand how they engage with societal discourses around both the ideas of language and of language use, including (but not limited to): what it means to be bi-/multi-plurilingual, what constitutes "proper" language use, deficit perspectives, and the hegemony of English. This thesis will also conclude with consideration given to how pedagogy may be improved to overcome harmful discourses and mitigate negative

outcomes such as constraints on students' agency to draw on their full linguistic repertoire to learn in ways that they deem most effective and comfortable. Through the presentation of data analysis, this research will contribute to the understanding of how plurilingual students engage in learning in English-dominant contexts, and the role that discourse plays in constructing their practices.

1.5. Organization of the Thesis

In the following chapter (Chapter 2), I will introduce important background information for the study. This includes a description of the university and the specific department in which it takes place. I will explain my own positioning within the study as lecturer in the department and the course that served as my site for interaction with some of the participants of the study. In Chapter 3, I will present a review of literature on relevant theory and concepts, most notably plurilingualism, translanguaging, discourse and practice, and theories of identity. Chapter 4 will introduce the methodology for this study, beginning broadly with the justification of a qualitative approach and continuing through to specific procedures such as the use of semi-structured interviews and data analysis. Chapters 5 and 6 will present an analysis of the data, with each focusing on different aspects of the research questions. Chapter 7 will conclude the thesis with a summary of findings, implications for pedagogy, and thoughts on future directions for research in a similar vein.

Chapter 2.

Background: Context, Researcher, and Participants

The context for this study is a medium-sized university in the Metro Vancouver area, which will be referred to as West Coast Canadian University (WCCU). The university has upwards of 25,000 undergraduate students[1]. In keeping with the diversity discussed in the previous chapter, WCCU has tended to have international student enrollment rates around 20% of the total undergraduate population. In recent years, the most frequent countries of origin for international students have been China and India, but there is also representation from many other countries across the globe (in smaller numbers). This study will focus specifically on the experiences of students taking courses in the business department, which will be referred to as West Coast Canadian Business School. WCCBS has a larger percentage of international students than the overall university average. In data covering the Fall enrollments from 2018 to 2022, international students made up roughly 21% of the full WCCU undergraduate population. In the same period, the business school did not dip below an international student rate of 26.6% - and this figure came in Fall 2021, when lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were likely still an important factor. Data indicates that the business school held the highest or second highest rate of international student enrollment in most of the past 10 years. With such high rates of international enrollment, WCCBS presented an intriguing context within which to explore students' plurilingual learning practices and consider implications for pedagogy in multilingual contexts.

West Coast Canadian Business School has recently taken some positive steps towards acknowledging the pedagogical implications of such diversity, including the introduction of a new required course which will be referred to as BIZ 200: Second Year Business Writing. This course was co-designed by representatives of the business school and a unit in the Faculty of Education concerned with supporting EAL students. Though that student support entity was lost to budget cuts and restructuring and no longer provides active support, the impact to curriculum remained (described in following paragraph). As originally envisioned, this thesis was to involve a significant participant-

[1] When presenting statistics about the site of the research, no citations will be included in order to maintain confidentiality.

observer component, situated in the classrooms of BIZ 200 where I was an instructor. However, in gaining the approval of the faculty to conduct the research, I was asked not to collect data from students that were currently in my courses. As a result, while some lines of inquiry in the interviews were inspired by experiences and reflections on teaching in the context, this was the extent to which occurrences in my own classrooms played a role in the research. Additionally, ethics approval was gained during the disruption to in-person learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which further limited my ability to draw on concurrent teaching experiences to inform the research. Nonetheless, BIZ 200 remained an important background to the study as it was a topic in many interviews, and it was in my capacity of lecturer in the course that many of the participants first knew me (my positioning will be further discussed in section 2.1). Therefore, I will elaborate on several aspects of the course in the paragraphs below.

In this thesis, consideration will be given to the potential benefit of implementing a plurilingual pedagogy in diverse educational contexts such as the classrooms in many Canadian universities. A plurilingual pedagogy is marked by features such as a foundational understanding of "linguistic repertoires as unitary, fluid, dynamic and evolving" (Van Viegen & Lau, 2020, p. 326) and an intentional development of students' repertoires and active promotion of the value of developing linguistic and cultural competence (Galante, et al., 2022; Van Viegen & Lau, 2020). While not designed specifically with a plurilingual-inspired pedagogy, BIZ 200 has elements of a Content Based Instruction (CBI) or Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) pedagogy, with which plurilingual approaches have some overlap. Lin (2016) provides a comprehensive overview of closely related terms such as CBI and CLIL, concluding that they represent "pedagogical approaches involving (varying degrees of) integration of language learning and content learning" (p. 4). Cammarata et al. (2016) similarly describe CBI as the "concurrent and balanced teaching of both *language* and *content*" (p. 12). Advocates of CLIL and CBI pedagogies have also argued for the creation of a space for the use of L1 in learning – one area in which there is an overlap with a plurilingual approach. Lin (2015a) has been one such voice, noting that CLIL pedagogy does have "plurilingual goals" (p. 81) and writing that CLIL approaches that fall closer to a monolingual immersion pedagogy "need to give way to a new era where there is more systematic planning and evidence-based research in future conceptualisation and enquiry of the potential role of L1 in CLIL" (p. 87). Though plurilingual pedagogy may

have a more explicit goal of developing cultural awareness and competencies, CBI and CLIL pedagogies can also open up space for such skill building (Cammarata et al., 2016; Lin, 2015a). Aspects of BIZ 200's curriculum which are the result of influence from CBI/CLIIL pedagogy do have notable overlap with plurilingualism and plurilingual pedagogy. The course's focus on building competence for intercultural interactions through examination of practices and communication in other contexts, for example, mirrors the goals set out by the Council of Europe (2001) for curriculum to develop not only language skills but pluricultural competence, which includes cultural awareness, curiosity toward the unknown, and an interest in otherness.

BIZ 200, as a mainstream university course with both native English-speaking (potentially from a variety of countries) and EAL students, differs from the typical CBI and CLIL classrooms that are often comprised completely of language learners. However, as a lower-level (meaning in years one and two) business communication course, typically taken by students early in their degree, it could be said that many students are learning the language of business discourse for the first time. In that sense, the course is composed entirely of language learners; though, this may be a generous interpretation of that criterion. However, the focus on language can clearly be seen in certain course contents and assignments. One example of a learning module with an explicit focus on language and culture is an early presentation assignment in which students are tasked with researching the culture and business practices of a chosen country and presenting them to the class under the auspices of a short training session to prepare the audience members to succeed on a business trip to that country. The lecture materials leading up to this presentation focus on dimensions of culture (Hofstede Insights, n.d.) which can be used as a lens for exploring students' chosen culture and contrasting it with Canadian culture. Instructors may supplement this discussion with other materials – in my own teaching, I used a YouTube video focused on a day in the life of a Japanese delivery driver to highlight how cultural attitudes towards uncertainty avoidance[2] can have a practical impact on business procedures. Presentations are relatively superficial explorations due to time constraints, but students are encouraged to provide practical advice and examples that help explain life and work

[2] Uncertainty avoidance relates to a culture's attitude toward risk and ambiguity. The clip highlights the rigorous standards of Japanese delivery services and the safety checks required at the start of each driver's shift.

in their chosen country. In many instances, a cultural insider is present in? the groups. This results in the opportunity for some students to share about their own culture, both with teammates during preparation and with the class during the presentation and a short question and answer period. Some groups also chose to teach key words and phrases to the audience, such as greetings and ritualized expressions.

Outside of culture and language specific modules, certain course materials used throughout the semester reflect explicit language support provided to students. An example of this is the worksheets published alongside business articles that comprise the major course readings. The worksheets reveal CLIL influence through their focus not only on the main takeaways from the readings, but their explicit highlighting of language used in the articles. Worksheets may draw students' attention to advanced or business specific vocabulary or phrases. They may also highlight the use of rhetorical devices such as metaphors. Lectures (and presentation slides) also frequently have an explicit focus on language, such as how to construct effective arguments using a premise, reason, and conclusion structure and the employment of indicator words/phrases (e.g., "due to the fact that," "consequently"). In this way, students are not just provided with general thoughts on the register of business communication but are also provided with specific linguistic guidance on how and why vocabulary and rhetorical devices are used.

The hybrid focus on language and content is further reflected in the "teaching team" present in each classroom. The primary member of this team is the instructor/lecturer, who may have traditional business qualifications such as an MBA but, not infrequently, is someone with an advanced degree in English or Applied Linguistics. The other two members of the teaching team are teaching assistants (TAs), but with different backgrounds and roles. The first TA has a business content focus, and this position is typically filled by current undergraduate students in the business school who have completed their required writing courses with high marks. On occasion, this role is filled by a graduate student in the business school, but this is in the minority of cases. The second teaching assistant role has a language focus and is filled by a graduate student from either a language and culture focused education program or from the linguistics department. In the majority of cases, these roles are filled by PhD students, with a preference for those with experience teaching language or working with plurilingual students. There is a division of labor in marking assignments, whereby business content TAs are primary markers on business content aspects of rubrics, and

language TAs likewise mark the language-oriented aspects of assignments (represented in rubric categories such as mechanics/grammar, clarity, and tone). All three members of the teaching team hold office hours, and students are encouraged to attend the office hours of the member whose specialty best matches the issues they would like to discuss.

As noted above, BIZ 200 did not become a site of direct observation for this thesis research; however, it is important in that it served as a site for generating ideas for interviews and the site of my interaction with students – some of whom later became participants. I will expand on those roles and my positioning within the study below; for now, I will note that my presence in the classrooms of BIZ 200 allowed me to witness students' learning practices firsthand, as well as to learn about their backgrounds and the plurilingual competencies they brought into the classroom. In this thesis, experiences from this context will periodically be raised through my own reflections or as part of discussions with participants with whom I shared a classroom. As a final note on context, as part of an effort to gain a deep and well-rounded understanding of participants' learning experiences and practices, participants were also asked about, or raised discussions of, learning in other contexts. For most participants, this included discussions of learning at various ages and levels in their home countries. For a few participants who immigrated to Canada at a younger age, this included discussions of learning in Canada prior to their post-secondary experiences, typically in late high school. A number of participants shared learning experiences at local colleges which they attended before transferring into West Coast Canadian University. For many, this learning often took place at an international college affiliated with WCCU, which serves as a pathway for international students to gain eventual admittance.

2.1. The Researcher's Positioning in the Study

While a more developed discussion of positionality, reflexivity, and privilege will be located in the methodology section (chapter 4) – including how these factors impact this research – a description of my role(s) at the university is relevant as background information to the study. In addition to being the researcher in this study, I was a member of the BIZ 200 teaching team (described above) for many of the participants. As my qualifications matched the requirements for the language-specialist TA role in this course, I was invited to participate in the first post-pilot semester for BIZ 200. I continued

in this role for two years, as the course developed and eventually became designated as compulsory for business undergraduates. As an early member of the larger team, I was able to have a role in curriculum development. I helped with the creation of new CLIL-inspired worksheets to guide students through important readings and gave input on the rubrics. In one instance of input on rubrics, I advocated for the grouping of similar minor errors (e.g., article use) in the mechanics and grammar category to avoid overly harsh markdowns on the papers of EAL students who were otherwise demonstrating strong communication of ideas. As I progressed through my PhD studies, the course coordinator eventually raised the possibility of becoming an instructor. And, after completing my comprehensive examination, I did have the opportunity to teach the course for several years.

My priorities as an instructor needed to shift to a more balanced emphasis on both business and language aspects of learning. However, my focus on language and culture certainly informed my approach to teaching. I sought to create an atmosphere where all languages and cultures were acknowledged and appreciated. An example of the small ways that I did this can been seen in the self-introduction which students complete in the first week of the course. In the prompt for this short writing activity, after listing some idea of what students could choose to write about (work experience, thoughts on writing courses, etc.), I added the following: “As a personal note - as a PhD Candidate focusing on learning in multilingual classrooms, I'm also interested in hearing what languages are represented in our class and how you might use other languages in your learning process.” When introducing myself in the first lecture period, I shared my own experiences living and working in other cultures and identified myself as an active language learner. The impact of this sharing could occasionally be felt in interactions with students. One participant of this research, a learner of Japanese like me, concluded her self-introduction essay for the course with “はじめまして、どうぞよろしくお願いします” (ritualized expressions in Japanese when making new acquaintances). In another example of how my perspective on education in multilingual contexts impacted my teaching, when encouraging students to share aspects of their experiences during classes, I often explicitly noted that these experiences were valid wherever and in whatever language and cultural context they may have taken place. This invitation was extended not only during our module on international business culture but in all discussions.

My course materials were also influenced by my views on education in multilingual contexts. In writing the business cases that were the basis for the primary written assignments, I implemented diverse representation in the names and backgrounds of the fictional individuals. In two instances, I wrote the case for the final group writing assignment – which is used across all sections of the course (including those with other instructors). Both of these cases had a deliberate international focus. In one case, students needed to provide a recommendation for a new sister city partnership after researching several candidate cities. The candidate cities included representation from Australia, Ghana, Mexico, Romania, and Sweden. In the other final assignment case, I collaborated with a Japanese friend to create a real-life case based on his workplace and the Japanese beverage industry. As a supplement to the case, we recorded a short interview style video in which the friend introduced his workplace, the industry, cultural considerations, and business challenges. In planning lectures, I consciously tried to avoid relying solely on examples from the English-speaking North American context when discussing business concepts. For example, in introducing a type of business analysis know as a PESTLE (Political, Economic, Socio-Cultural, Technological, Legal, Environmental), I played a video clip discussing the impact of South Korea's move to a standardized 5-day work week. With all of this being said, there were also times when the rigors of the curriculum, and the strong focus put on consistency across sections of the course, meant not being able to provide as much explicit focus on culture or linguistic support as I would ideally have hoped.

I share the above description of my work to illustrate both my approach to the curriculum, which some of the participants experienced, and how I positioned myself in the classroom. Beyond being someone tasked with evaluating students' work, I actively positioned myself as a passionate educator, a fellow student (albeit at the graduate level), an emerging researcher focused on the learning that happens in multilingual contexts, someone with experience living and working in other contexts, and a language learner. As I further reckoned with my own privilege through my PhD studies and preparation for this research, I also increasingly sought to position myself as an ally (or *accomplice*; see Bhattacharyya et al., 2024) to students who do not carry such privilege into the classroom. This was often a challenging endeavor. As I acknowledge at multiple points in this thesis, in both my teaching and research it is crucial to remain vigilant in remembering that having knowledge of critical issues and some shared experiences with

my transnational and plurilingual students does not mean I have truly lived their experiences. Likewise, “there are also pitfalls to avoid while offering allyship, including appearing to be trying to “represent” or explain people of another identity” (Sister Scholars, 2023). Additionally, efforts at positioning myself as an ally were sometimes constrained by the competitive environment of the business school and its rigorous marking expectations. A critical lens may ask whether the educational philosophy behind promoting such intense competition amongst students is grounded in an uncritical assumption that an unbiased meritocracy can be created in the academy (see Kirkpatrick, 2020 for a thorough exploration of this and other blind spots that are often a symptom of White privilege – even amongst aspiring allies).

While acknowledging the occasional difficulties involved in balancing these different aspects of positioning, I believe that my efforts at positioning myself and my approach to classes are significant to this research for two reasons. First, I sought to create an environment where discussions of language and culture were the norm. This, perhaps, led to more frequent opportunities to actively consider language and culture as a factor in students’ learning and to develop research questions and lines of inquiry in interviews. Second, discussing such topics may have facilitated development of rapport and comfort with students who later became participants in this research. For ethical purposes, and to honor an agreement with the business school that was struck while gaining permission to recruit participants for my research, I did not invite any of my students to participate until they had completed my course and received their mark. In most cases, I waited a further several months beyond this. However, my positioning with regard to the participants who had passed through my classrooms did include this aspect of being their instructor. And the participants who had not been my students were also aware of my status as part of the faculty. The positioning of the researcher in a qualitative study is complex and a researcher can find the need to re-consider how they are viewed by the participants in their research (Ilieva, 2014). Despite my careful consideration of positioning as a lecturer, there were complex dynamics involved in how my participants may have perceived me, which will be discussed further in chapter four of this thesis.

2.2. Participants and Recruitment

As introduced above, recruitment of participants for this study was limited to those who studied in the business school; however, not all were sole business majors. Several students were in a joint-major program and others had started in other disciplines before transferring to the business school. Participants were at a variety of stages in their undergraduate careers at the time of their interview, ranging from recently having transferred to West Coast University and primarily taking 200-level (second year) courses to nearing graduation and actively engaged in job hunting.

Participants were recruited both through general invitations (e.g., emails to, or presentations in, a given class) and through specific invitation to students who had discussed relevant learning practices (e.g., in classroom conversations or their self-introduction). As with many studies conducted in this period (from anecdotal evidence), recruitment of participants was both delayed and complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent abrupt transition to remote learning. Plans for physical visits to relevant classrooms to introduce the research were replaced by Zoom drop-ins and emails which offered less engagement with potential participants or opportunity to build rapport.

I was able to supplement data with my own reflections and field notes. In addition, the explicit emphasis on language and culture in BIZ 200, and my own disposition towards these topics, meant that topics relevant to this research were not uncommon. I made informal notes of students' plurilingual practices or interesting occurrences around language or culture that I thought I may wish to reflect on in this thesis. In some instances, I was able to retroactively discuss specific classroom occurrences that I had made note of with participants. Moreover, recruiting past students meant that some rapport had already been established. As Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) argue, interviewing is a craft that must be learned; the necessary skills, including "the establishment of good rapport in the interview situation rest largely on tacit knowledge acquired through practice and by working with experienced interviewers" (p. 75). Though I had some past experience in research interviews and have benefited from working on the projects of more experienced qualitative researchers, my experience in building rapport as an educator is far more extensive. As a result, a positive effect of having more former students among my participants than expected was that I more frequently

benefitted from existing rapport that was built in the classroom and which might have extended into the interview scenario.

Chapter 3.

Literature Review

This chapter will establish the theoretical grounding for this research through a review of the relevant body of literature. These theories will later be referred back to as data is analyzed and the research questions are addressed. The chapter will be broken down into four main sections, with each containing subsections related to the overall theme. In the first part, consideration will be given to the evolving conception of "language." It will discuss the idea of disinvention of language, as well as the *panoply of lingualisms* (Marshall & Moore, 2018) that have emerged in order to better describe language and the way speakers use it. The second section will give specific consideration to plurilingualism (Council of Europe, 2001), which is the grounding theory of language for this thesis. That discussion will extend to how plurilingualism is enacted as pedagogy, as well as criticisms of plurilingualism (Flores, 2013; Kubota, 2016, 2020) and rebuttals to common critiques (Canagarajah, 2017; Marshall & Moore, 2018). The third part will establish the importance of a plurilingual approach through discussion of how plurilingual students engage in learning practices that expand beyond the language of instruction. It will further give consideration to the way that these practices are constrained by structure and discourse (Bourdieu, 1990, 1992; Gee, 2005), establishing the interplay between these realities and student agency. The fourth section will discuss identity, including the interplay between language and identity and the impacts of transnational movement on identity construction. It will also examine the idea of discoursal and plurilingual identities. The chapter will conclude with a synthesis of the above ideas into a theoretical framework. In turn, this framework will guide this research toward an exploration of how engagement with discourses around language use impacts participants' perspectives on language and their language practices – with a final emphasis on use of linguistic resources in learning.

3.1. Theories of Language

Discussion in scholarship around the concept of language has gone through stages of change, as have associated terms such as monolingual, bilingual, and multi-/plurilingual. Previously, it had long been accepted that things such as English, French,

and Japanese exist as relatively simple, definable and quantifiable constructs; as Reagan (2004) argues, "linguists and language specialists, as well as the lay public, have generally viewed language from a perspective that is, at its heart, fundamentally positivist in orientation" (p. 42). However, an argument has been made in recent decades that a given language is more societal construction and less something that can be said to exist definitively in a positivistic sense (Calvet, 2006; Canagarajah, 2007; Makoni & Pennycook, 2005, 2007; Reagan, 2004). Languages do not have static boundaries, nor can their features and vocabulary be catalogued definitively. Rather, they grow and evolve alongside the people that use them. New words and meanings are regularly added to dictionaries, though even this official recognition of language evolutions fails to approach a true appreciation of the greater variety in the practice of speakers of a language, as language variety occurs "not only over time, but also from place to place, social class to social class, and individual to individual" (Reagan, 2004, p. 44). As Busch (2012) points out while arguing for an understanding that focuses more on repertoire and speech, "individual languages should not be seen unquestioningly as set categories" (p. 506). Similarly, delineation between languages is difficult, because it is influenced by political and national agendas (Romaine, 2000). This can be demonstrated by the high mutual intelligibility of certain Scandinavian languages, which are considered as separate, while varieties of Chinese with little or no (spoken) mutual intelligibility have been popularly accepted as dialects of the same language. Beyond the issues of inaccuracies in attempting to define and delineate languages, there are crucial issues of power involved. The definition and objectification of language can be co-opted into discourses around "who is entitled to the 'ownership' of the language" (Reagan, 2004, p. 47). With language barriers to entry into such arenas as education, employment, and even citizenship, there is ample room for abuse of such objectification of language. Makoni and Pennycook (2005) explore some such abuses, specifically with regard to European colonialism and its legacies.

Given these issues, it is no surprise that academics in applied linguistics and associated fields have recently been pushing the evolution of our understanding of the concept of language beyond the idea of languages as bounded, concrete systems (Canagarajah, 2007; Makoni & Pennycook, 2005, 2007, 2012; Reagan, 2004). This change in understanding would, likewise, necessitate moving away from viewing bilingualism and multi-/plurilingualism as sets of bounded, concrete systems which exist

in separation from each other (Makoni & Pennycook, 2005, 2012). Not all have embraced the idea of complete disinvention of language put forth by Makoni and Pennycook (2005, 2007). Piccardo (2018) notably pushes back against this idea, writing that "such relativistic positions are at least as problematic as the opposite, absolutistic, ones they aim to replace" (p. 216). However, there has been a generally accepted movement towards an understanding of language use that is hybrid and fluid. The implications of the shift went well beyond simple definitions. Writing of the important history of Francophone contributions to this emerging understanding, Moore & Gajo (2009) discuss how:

> These orientations enriched and expanded analytical horizons and orthodoxies of traditional applied linguistics, acceptable teaching methodologies and normative expectations of performance and competence. Key notions of applied linguistics, such as linguistic resources, communicative competence, language transfer, interference, learning strategies, were revisited through a lens where variety, multilingualism and bi/plurilingualism were considered the norm, both at the societal and individual levels (p. 141).

The reexamination of the construct of language and attempts to better describe the ways that languages are used in practice resulted in a *panoply of lingualisms* (Marshall & Moore, 2018), an emerging set of terminologies to explain the phenomena of language and language use. Among these terminologies are translanguaging (García, 2009; García & Li, 2014; Li & García , 2022;), trans-semiotising (Lin, 2015b, 2019), metrolingualism (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015), and plurilingualism (Coste et al., 1997, 2009; Council of Europe, 2001). While these resulting lenses, theories, and terminologies have their different points of emphasis, they share a perspective "that recognises hybridity and varying degrees of competence between and within languages" (Marshall & Moore, 2018, p. 3).

3.2. Plurilingualism

The term which is of most importance to this research is *plurilingualism* (Coste et al., 1997, 2009; Council of Europe, 2001). It is important to begin the discussion of this term by saying that many of the terms in the *panoply of lingualisms* (Marshall & Moore, 2018) mentioned above are used in different and nuanced manners by different researchers, necessitating a clear definition of the term plurilingualism. In establishing the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the Council of

Europe (2001) clearly delineated their operationalization of the terminology "multilingualism" and "plurilingualism." In this delineation, multilingualism can refer to the existences of multiple languages within a context or an individual's knowledge of multiple languages. Plurilingualism, on the other hand, is differentiated by the fact that it:

> …emphasises the fact that as an individual person's experience of language in its cultural contexts expands…he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 4).

Moore and Gajo (2009) discuss the important differentiation that emerged in Francophone research, which was at the forefront in the development of knowledge on the topic – though belatedly acknowledged in English-speaking academia. Noting the identical etymological roots of terms such as multilingual and plurilingual, Moore and Gajo (2009) highlight that the shift to pluri- wordings "embodies the focus on the individual as the locus of linguistic and cultural contact" (p. 142). A similar establishment of definitions to distinguish languages in societal contact (multilingualism) from a focus on the individual's competencies and their agency in using them (plurilingualism) can be seen in other works on the topic (Coste et al., 1997, 2009; Marshall & Moore, 2013, 2018). This thesis will follow these conventions, using the term multilingual (and multilingualism) when discussing society and contexts, such as the multilingual nature of classrooms in many Canadian universities. And when discussing the linguistic and cultural competences of individuals and how they enact them, the thesis will use the term plurilingual (and plurilingualism). It is important to acknowledge that this distinction between multilingual and plurilingual is not followed by all scholars of linguistics, multi-/plurilingual education, and other relevant fields. In a work exploring the "tangled web of lingualisms," Marshall (2021) introduces the many terminologies used to describe theories of language. He notes that terminologies may evolve alongside our understanding of the phenomena they seek to explain. For example, Marshall (2021) argues that while "many features of what plurilingualism is generally considered *not to be* can be found in historical/traditional views of bilingualism" (p.47), modern scholars on the topic of bilingualism now use the term to describe a view of language that is often in alignment with plurilingualism. In this thesis, a variety of terminologies and viewpoints are presented when introducing relevant theory and perspectives on the nature of language. Additionally, as we negotiated meaning, discussions with participants in

interviews often departed from the plurilingualism/multilingualism binary described above based on participants' comfort and familiarity with various terminology. For the sake of facilitating conversation, I also, at times, mirrored participants' terminology. However, the analysis of data presented below is consistently through a plurilingual lens due to several unique opportunities afforded, such as by its consideration of agency (Marshall & Moore, 2018), incorporation of a simultaneous focus on pluricultural competence (Coste et al., 2009), and the explicit value placed on partial competences (Council of Europe, 2001; Galante, 2020).

In discussing the history of the term plurilingualism, a common starting point is the development of the Council of Europe's (2001) CEFR. The purpose of this document went beyond providing a standard for assessment of language ability and providing tools for developing educational materials. The CEFR was also explicit about defining and promoting plurilingualism, which it stressed as being more than just a compartmentalized knowledge of different languages. It advocated for the ideas of moving away from an idealized native speaker goal, embracing exposure to many languages and cultures, and building motivation in students to continue exploring language and culture beyond the classroom (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 5). It introduced the idea of an individual's linguistic and cultural knowledge and experiences as *plurilingual and pluricultural competence*, stating that an individual can call "flexibly upon different parts of this competence to achieve effective communication with a particular interlocutor" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 4). This discussion of plurilingual competence was further developed by Lüdi and Py (2009), who conceptualized an individual's competences as *verbal resources* (p. 157). In this model, an individual can draw on these resources which can be utilized and combined in a flexible and varied manner, depending on a variety of factors such as the situation, the other speaker(s) present and their competences, the individual's past experiences, and their understanding of expectations in that moment (Lüdi & Py, 2009; Marshall & Moore, 2013).

Another important aspect of plurilingualism is the acceptance of imbalance (Council of Europe, 2001), meaning that aspects of an individual's competences need not be equally developed. This position has been another result of the evolving understanding of how speakers actually use language to communicate, and that evolution can also be seen in the work of scholars on bilingualism. In García's (2009) major work on that topic, the author traces this evolution:

> Early scholars of bilingualism, in particular Bloomfield (1933), only considered native-like control of two languages as a sign of bilingualism. But later scholars, such as Einar Haugen and Uriel Weinreich, had much broader definitions of bilingualism, perhaps because as bilinguals themselves they were aware of its complexity…Haugen (1953) considered even minimum proficiency in two languages a sign of bilingualism. Weinreich (1953) labeled someone who alternated between the two languages as bilingual (p. 45)

García (2009) continues on to note that an updated model of "dynamic bilingualism" has significant overlaps with the term plurilingualism as developed in the European context (pp. 53-55). Scholarly work on plurilingual competence has continued to emphasize the idea of competences as incomplete or partial, and developing and changing over a lifetime (Coste et al., 1997, 2009; Lüdi & Py, 2009; Marshall & Moore, 2013, 2018; Piccardo, 2013). As Marshall and Moore (2018) state clearly, under a plurilingual view "competences are never full or complete" (p. 4), a stance which lends itself well to combatting deficit discourses around language competence that have grown out of monolingual-oriented perspectives on bi/multi/plurilingualism.

In this thesis, a plurilingual lens will be utilized to better understand plurilingual students' practices while learning and completing coursework. This lens will be informative for interpreting student practices, as it takes the perspective of languages and cultures as "interrelating in complex ways that change with time and circumstances, and which depend on individuals' biographies, lived experiences, social trajectories, and life paths" (Marshall & Moore, 2018, p. 4). Such a lens is important, firstly, because it enables the students in a classroom to be viewed as more than a sum of separate parts. Students, and their plurilingual competences, can be viewed with a depth that goes beyond simple archetypes, such as a Mandarin speaker with limited English proficiency or a native English speaker who has traveled internationally and taken a number of French courses but with no real fluency in the language. Instead, a plurilingual lens is concerned with:

> …the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social actor has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures. This is not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the social actor may draw (Coste et al., 2009, p. 11).

Through a plurilingual lens, it is recognized that the Mandarin speaker described above may draw on their skills in that language to supplement their learning process while in an English-dominant context. Likewise, the native speaker of English may draw on cultural knowledge which they have gained from experiences such as travel or previous classroom interactions to bridge gaps with students from backgrounds different to their own while collaborating on group work.

Secondly, a plurilingual lens is useful for exploring the experiences of participants, their diverse life paths, and the discourses they have encountered around language and education because it places the focus on the individual. A plurilingual lens considers an individual's agency and actions in social contact (Council of Europe, 2001; Coste et al., 1997, 2009; Marshall & Moore, 2018; Moore & Gajo, 2009). A plurilingual lens allows for understanding the *plurilingual social actor* whose choices around language are entangled with the context in which they occur (Coste & Simon, 2009). As articulated by Moore and Gajo (2009):

> The speaker can throw in light or shade certain zones of his/her competence, (dis)activate, (re)invent and negotiate his/her multiple resources in context. Depending on how the speaker (and her/his interlocutors) interpret and categorise the situation of communication, she/he can be encouraged to use her/his repertoire as a bilingual or as a learner and sometimes, even, as a monolingual (p. 142).

In this way, a plurilingual lens allows for exploration of students' use of, or potential abstention from, plurilingual strategies in their learning processes, while also exploring their agency in the process and how they have experienced and engaged with discourses around language use.

Past studies have shown that despite hegemonic norms that dictate the use of English, specifically in the register of academic English, in institutions such as West Coast Canadian University, students still employ their plurilingual competences in the course of completing work that meets these standards (Galante, 2020; Marshall et al., 2012; Marshall et al., 2019; Marshall & Moore, 2013). Moreover, students "include the *multi* and celebrate it in spaces that are freer; and at times, for fun the students appropriate and subvert the norms of the academy" (Marshall & Moore, 2013, p. 494). However, the role that students' diverse experiences and competences play in learning may still be often misunderstood, or even considered a detriment by instructors – a

problematic outcome given that “if students’ linguistic repertoires, identities and prior lived experiences are undervalued or ignored, plurilingual speakers’ linguistic practices will remain marginalized” (Galante et al., 2020, p. 92). In this thesis, participants’ use of their full linguistic repertoires will be explored, whether it is part of their process in completing formal work for their studies, informal learning that deepens knowledge as part of practical application and meaning making, or a social outlet that offers fun or comfort.

3.2.1. Plurilingual Pedagogy

Beyond establishing the normalcy of imbalance and the ability of plurilingual individuals to draw on diverse sets of competences to communicate and to learn, the CEFR also envisioned how the promotion of plurilingualism could be accomplished within the broader school curriculum (Council of Europe, 2001). The goal of this incorporation of plurilingualism would not only be to foster plurilingual competences but also to promote language awareness and the values of tolerance, understanding, and respect for diverse linguistic backgrounds and identities toward the betterment of society. Coste and Simon (2009) articulate the importance of school in accomplishing these goals:

> The justification for languages in the curriculum in school ought not to be viewed merely as a profitable investment. Rather, languages contribute to broader educational aims such as recognising the linguistic and cultural plurality of the environment, giving visibility to these dimensions and placing value on them. Furthermore, language education can contribute to the complexification and deepening of perceptions that social actors have of this plurality, encourage acceptance of difference and tolerance, enhancing social inclusion and cohesion.
>
> Let us not underestimate the power wielded by school with regard to the attribution of symbolic value and legitimisation. Therefore, if school as an institution is able to recognise, in whatever modest way, a language or linguistic varieties which in some cases are even denigrated by the speakers themselves, then it will succeed not only in enhancing the self-image of the youngsters concerned, but also in creating suitable conditions for the development of a complex identity which includes these extra-scholastic languages and varieties as well as heritage languages, rather than excluding them systematically as is so often the case (p. 177).

The Council of Europe (2001) laid out two possible scenarios for implementing this curriculum, with a focus on primary and secondary school education in European

countries. However, plurilingual pedagogies have begun to be implemented across different contexts and levels of education. For example, Aitken and Robinson (2020) describe a project in a remote part of Canada where a plurilingual pedagogy was adopted in a third-grade class with a strong presence of Indigenous languages. The pedagogy was assisted by the inclusion of grandparents – "the knowledge keepers of the Naskapi and Innu languages" (Aitken & Robinson, 2020, p. 87) in that community – and showed evidence of improving metalinguistic awareness and ownership over learning of English, while potentially raising awareness of important issues around power and language rights. Lopez Gopar et al. (2020) introduce a similar project undertaken through a library in Oaxaca, Mexico, which similarly sought to speak "back to discourses that present certain languages and cultures as better than others" (p. 110). Additionally, Oyama and Yamamoto (2020) implemented a pluralistic approach in a Japanese university course on language learning theory, noting improvements in metalinguistic awareness and arguing for further implementation of curriculum that develops plurilingual competence in that context.

Plurilingual pedagogies have also been implemented in the higher education context. Piccardo (2013) also offers advice for implementing plurilingual pedagogy, including using activities that facilitate the raising of awareness of languages, reflecting on intercultural experiences, and comparing the grammatical and lexical features of multiple languages (languages of origin, target languages, tertiary languages). And Lin (2013) discusses successful implementation of plurilingual pedagogies in the Hong Kong context. Writing of translanguaging pedagogy, which has overlap with plurilingual pedagogy in philosophy and the use of L1, Tian (2020) discusses how the incorporation of translanguaging into TESOL teacher training could equip teachers to better promote the value of bi/multilingualism among students and implement a critical approach to language education. Galante (2020a) shares observations from implementing such pedagogy in two classrooms in Ontario, Canada. The author makes recommendations on best practices, including considering what languages are present in the classroom and what opportunities exist for using the target language outside the classroom – acknowledging that in EFL contexts, more use of the target language in the classroom may be preferred by instructors. And Galante et al. (2022) contributed a guide to implementing a critical plurilingual pedagogy in language classrooms.

Canadian universities, such as the context for this thesis, have also seen the implementation of plurilingual pedagogies as well as research into the practices of plurilingual students (Galante, 2019; Marshall & Moore, 2013, 2018; Spracklin, 2018). As discussed above, globalization has led to universities in Canada becoming increasingly diverse, with students from many cultural and linguistic backgrounds. However, despite the increase of discourses of acceptance and multiculturalism on campuses, Marshall & Moore (2018) argue that there still remains a need for challenging the "monolinguistic institutional discourse of deficit and remediation" (p. 13) and discuss the benefits of plurilingual pedagogy through the example of an academic writing course in Vancouver. Galante et al. (2019) describe the implementation of a plurilingual pedagogy in an EAP course at a university in Toronto, with the aim of raising "students' awareness that their linguistic repertoire is a rich resource for learning any language, including English" (p. 129). The authors advocate for a variety of pedagogical strategies, including use of students' full linguistic repertoire, comparison of languages, active promotion of translanguaging, and explicit presentation of the ideas of plurilingual and pluricultural competence.

Beyond the examples above, recent works on the topic of plurilingualism have catalogued efforts across the globe, discussing goals and benefits and giving advice on best practices (see Chen et al., 2022; Choi & Ollerhead, 2018; Lau & Van Viegen, 2020; Piccardo et al., 2021). Plurilingual pedagogy challenges "traditional diglossic, compartmentalizing views of language in classroom" (Marshall et al., 2019, p. 4) and promotes "plurilingualism as a potential resource rather than necessarily a barrier to language and content learning" (Lin, 2013, p. 522). It seeks to create a learning environment in which students have greater agency and comfort using their diverse linguistic resources (Chen et al., 2022; Council of Europe, 2001; Lin, 2013; Marshall & Moore, 2013, 2018; Marshall et al., 2019; Piccardo, 2013; Van Viegen & Lau, 2020). It also promotes an understanding that "language learners have already gained many life experiences; possess many cognitive abilities based on their personalities, previous learning experiences and contacts, motivation and/or anxieties about learning/speaking" (Piccardo, 2013, p. 609). A plurilingual pedagogy also places explicit value on these abilities and knowledge and sees the educator as an agent who can work towards reversing harmful discourses (Marshall & Moore, 2018; Van Viegen & Lau, 2020). It promotes language awareness and affirmation of identity, while challenging deficit

discourses, which can have positive impacts beyond the classroom, such as facilitating the development of improved self-esteem (Chen et al., 2022; Galante, 2018; Marshall et al., 2019; Piccardo, 2013). Through seeking a deep understanding of participants' history of learning experiences and engagement with discourses around language, this thesis contributes to the understanding of plurilingual students' needs and how a plurilingual-inspired pedagogy may help mitigate the impact of negative discourses and encourage student agency in use of their plurilingual resources.

3.2.2. Criticisms of Plurilingualism

Flores (2013) offers a cautionary critique of plurilingualism, particularly in the realm of TESOL, based on perceived overlaps with neoliberalism, which the author defined as "the coalescing of institutional forces in support of the free flow of capitalism in the ways that benefit transnational corporations and economic elites" (p. 503). The author argues for the existence of a dangerous parallel between the ideal subjects of plurilingualism and of neoliberalism. The ideal plurilingual subject is a lifelong learner and flexible user of language who can adapt to many situations, while the neoliberal subject is similarly flexible and constantly developing human capital (in an economic sense), with "both subjects depicted as emerging naturally from the changing global political economy and as the inevitable and desired outcome for all of the world's population" (Flores, 2013, p. 513). Flores also offers the global TESOL market as evidence of continuing efforts towards Anglo-dominance. Kubota (2016) builds on these critiques, noting that it is still a concern that "assimilationist monolingual ideology continues to predominate in many countries" (p. 483), and while plurilingualism among English-speakers who represent the elite in societies is praised, for much of the world's less privileged populations "hybridity may be a site of struggle rather than celebration" (p. 484). Kubota (2016) goes on to specifically address academia, and the expectation "to conform to the conventions of academic writing and standard language ideology" (p. 484) which are often found therein, a very relevant concern in the increasing diverse context of North American higher education that continues to attract students and scholars from around the world.

However, Canagarajah (2017) pushes back against critiques of the multi/plural turn having too great an overlap with, or complicity in, neoliberalism. He notes "of course, neoliberalism might profess ethical values and democratic concerns; but it can't

adopt or practice them without abandoning its material and ideological interests. After a point, neoliberalism cannot appropriate ideologies and practices without sacrificing its interests of profit accumulation" (Canagarajah, 2017, p. 3). Still, heeding the importance of warnings from Kubota, Flores and others, he acknowledges the need for vigilance as educators and urges consideration of "how the communicative practices, language ideologies, and learning styles of multilinguals can be brought inside the classroom and formal learning contexts" (Canagarajah, 2017, p. 60) to challenge dominant neoliberal expectations. In their own rebuttal to critiques, Marshall and Moore (2018) make a case for the value of plurilingualism in raising awareness and promotion of minority languages. In a point which is relevant for decisions around pedagogy and curriculum in many contexts, Marshall and Moore (2018) argue:

> We need to be pragmatic in our critical stances as educators…our job is to help students succeed, to raise awareness of all languages, to share ideas about equity and their position in society and the academy/workplace. That is our agency. It is their decision what to do with the knowledge they learn in our class. (p. 8)

In taking this position, Marshall and Moore (2018) reference the critical-pragmatic stance discussed by Benesch (2001). Writing specifically of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and the broader English for Specific Purposes (ESP) field, a setting relevant to the BIZ 200 course which serves as one context to this study, Benesch argues for a critical-pragmatic approach which pairs *rights analysis* with the *needs analysis* that educators commonly implement to guide curriculum and instruction. In doing so, educators in the EAP/ESP context can go beyond simply helping students meet expectations in assimilating to genre conventions by also engaging students on issues of power and offering strategies to help students take more ownership of the educational experience, including by challenging the status quo.

In a discussion of CLIL pedagogy, Lin (2016) advocates for a similar approach. The author acknowledges the 'access paradox' (Janks, 2004), which can be described as a situation in which marginalized students need access to the dominant language to close societal gaps, but in gaining access to it (and potentially conforming to the expected norms), the dominant language has its dominance further reinforced. In advocating a critical pragmatic approach, Lin (2016) argues that:

> If a curriculum can be designed that provides students with access to the dominant linguistic resources while at the same time alerting

students that the dominant language varieties/genres/registers are dominant mainly because of their gate-keeping functions (e.g. in public examinations) and not because they are naturally or universally superior and that there can be diverse ways of meaning-making (e.g. everyday, non-academic genres) that are not inferior, the access paradox can be partially overcome (p. 162)

This thesis will take a similar stance. The participants in this research have chosen to study in an English medium university, many coming from overseas to do so. They bring their own reasons and motivations with them. My agency, as researcher and educator, is to gain a better understanding of how such students undertake the process of learning, to share this understanding, and to, perhaps, make recommendations on how pedagogy may be improved to better promote learning among all students in the diverse classrooms typical of higher education in major Canadian universities. The critiques offered by Flores (2013) and Kubota (2016, 2020) are important to consider, and all teaching and research should be undertaken with critical reflection. However, some level of pragmatism and decisiveness to act based on the best current assessment of student needs are also crucial. As Kubota (2020) closes out a recent critique of plurilingualism in which she advocates for a closer alignment of plurilingualism with critical multiculturalism, "as ethically responsible educators, we need to continue to engage with difficult questions" (p. 318). On this point, advocates of plurilingualism may already be in closer alignment than its critics may fear. As discussed above, the Council of Europe's (2001) CEFR may have been aimed at a practical model of language teaching, but its establishment was built on difficult questions about how to accomplish societal aims such as awareness of, and respect for, diversity, and democratic citizenship.

3.2.3. Challenges to Implementing a Plurilingual Pedagogy

Beyond the criticisms above, there are also challenges to implementing a plurilingual pedagogy. Marshall et al. (2019) highlight one relevant struggle in successfully enacting such a pedagogy:

> For a plurilingual-inspired classroom to succeed across the disciplines in higher education, both teachers and students need to exercise their socially situated agency to open up spaces for other languages and cultures to be used successfully in the learning process. This can be a challenge for students as well as their instructors (p. 4).

In discussion of the implementation of a plurilingual pedagogy in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course at a Canadian university, Galante (2018) also acknowledges the potential difficulties for both students and instructors. For students in Galante's study, there were sometimes difficulties in finding a place for plurilingual learning strategies while simultaneously trying to be inclusive towards monolingual classmates. In reflecting on a task on idioms, several students also described concerns that other students may have a negative opinion of their incorporation of relevant idioms from their L1, potentially due to a lingering societal view of code-switching and translanguaging as a sign of deficiency. Students may also experience "feelings of anxiety and unpreparedness regarding using a broader spectrum of semiotic resources" (Chen et al., 2022, p. 19) due to unfamiliarity with such a pedagogical approach. Both Galante (2018) and Piccardo (2013), note how a plurilingual pedagogy can create elements of a role reversal, where students become the expert when sharing about their language or engaging in mediation with classmates. Allowing this space for students to be the expert or to engage in scaffolding outside the language of instruction can be rewarding. However, it may also be a challenge for educators, as their role often includes monitoring students to keep them on topic, and this scaffolding requires trust in students' ability to self-regulate. For this, and other reasons, instructors may struggle with overcoming a disposition towards English-only in their classrooms (Galante, 2018; Marshall, 2020a).

Institutional discourses and monolingual ideologies can be difficult to overcome (Chen et al., 2020; Galante et al., 2020; Marshall, 2020a), though plurilingual pedagogy is not alone in needing to overcome obstacles to implementation. Writing of applied linguists' attempts to implement an embedded model of support for EAL/multilingual students across the disciplines in a Canadian university context, Ilieva et al. (2019) make a relevant point regarding how the process of engaging with content faculty (and the institutional decision makers at large) to implement innovative pedagogy "can be fraught with challenges, especially in relation to negotiating inflexible institutional structures" (p. 89), and this is a struggle that implementation of a plurilingual pedagogy is also likely to face. The authors highlight, specifically, the process of identity shaping and struggle that the group of applied linguists go through while negotiating their positionality and building legitimacy for their place and their potential contributions to pedagogy across the campus.

However, these struggles towards gaining institutional approval, negotiating with established content-oriented instructors, and overcoming any initial student hesitation do not negate the potential benefits of implementing a plurilingual or plurilingual-inspired pedagogy. Despite the challenges discussed by Galante (2018), the results of analysis of student diaries, student focus groups, and instructor interviews indicated that perceptions towards the plurilingual pedagogy implemented were “overwhelmingly positive” (p. 135, 156). In other instances, opposition or hesitance towards plurilingual pedagogy may not be as strong as initially perceived. Marshall (2020a) gives the example of an instructor with a “stated English only stance” (p. 263) who nonetheless employs aspects of a plurilingual approach by actively employing TAs with linguistic repertoires that overlap with the languages represented in the classroom and displaying empathy regarding the linguistic struggles of students. Similarly, acknowledging the discomfort that an educator can feel when trying to understand and support a student who relies on a language outside of the language of instruction, and which the educator does not share, Van Viegen and Lau (2020) advise that an educator can “tap into the pool of cultural and linguistic resources in the classroom, school and community” and “involve a peer or language buddy” from within the same classroom (p. 330). These positive examples and strategies illustrate how hesitance may be overcome by highlighting the practical benefits of a plurilingual approach to pedagogy and the resources available to implement it.

3.3. Plurilingual Practices

Given the acceptance of a plurilingual individual’s varied competences coming together as a unified repertoire, as discussed above, it is natural to then accept that such an individual is likely to draw on these competences in the process of learning – even when schoolwork may be required to be submitted in a specified language. In Lin’s (2013) discussion of an emerging move towards plurilingual pedagogy in TESOL, she touches on the recent interest in topics such as translanguaging and codemeshing, and notes that “central to these developments is the recognition of the plurilingual nature of classroom interactions and communicative repertoires of both learners and teachers in multilingual settings” (p. 522). As classrooms and campuses in major cities around the world have become increasingly diverse, the use of not only a diverse array of languages but also hybridity in language use has become a simple reality that needs

greater recognition. In implementing plurilingual pedagogy in an English for Academic Purposes classroom in Canada, Galante et al. (2019) found that students were able to use their linguistic repertoires in discussions, board work, and analyzing and comparing syntax across languages. The authors discuss the natural, everyday nature of students' plurilingual practices:

> While studying in Canada, international students often make use of more than one language to perform everyday tasks such as reading an article, communicating with friends, or using online tools. These tasks may require the use of different languages and/or a mix of languages, all linguistic behaviours in which these students naturally engage. (Galante et al., 2013, p. 123)

Marshall and Moore (2013) similarly noted that students engage in plurilingual practices in the completion of coursework, even in the face of strict language expectations for submitted work, writing that "although the final products that students presented for assessment as high-stakes academic writing were in norm-confirming, monolingual English, students creatively exercised their plurilingual competence in the process of producing these high-stakes texts" (pp. 493-494). In a later work, Marshall and Moore (2018) describe a student's use of Korean in a collaborative in-class exercise, which, when positively received by the instructor, resulted in other groups of students augmenting their work with other languages from their respective repertoires.

Students may also engage in plurilingual practices through *mediation*, which is a strategy "to make communication possible between persons who are unable, for whatever reason, to communicate with each other directly" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 14) and in scaffolding (Piccardo, 2018). Piccardo and North (2020) provide a thorough discussion of the many forms that mediation may take, including classroom contexts. These forms include instructor-facilitated mediation, which may be unstructured (e.g., for classroom management or elaboration in response to student questions) or pedagogical mediation (e.g. planned delivering of instruction in multiple languages). Piccardo and North were also instrumental in an update to the CEFR to provide new descriptors of mediation practices (Council of Europe, 2018). This update sought to expand the idea of mediation beyond interpretation and translation.

Another related learning strategy that plurilingual students may engage in is the idea of *languaging* (Swain, 2006; 2010), from which the ideas of *translanguaging* and

plurilanguaging (L üdi, 2015; Moore, et al., 2020; Piccardo & Galante, 2018) have also developed. This collection of terminology refers to how an individual may actively use language to make meaning. A learner may, for example, take notes using multiple aspects of their linguistic repertoire – creatively drawing on these resources to best make the concepts they are exposed to in their courses meaningful.

A primary goal of this research is to further explore how students are drawing on their plurilingual resources in the course of learning in an English-dominant university. This exploration will include use of multilingual materials or resources, mediation with others (including instructors, peers, and family), and plurilingual practices in drafting assignments, among other strategies.

3.3.1. Practices as Discursively Constructed

As discussed above, plurilingual students are often able to draw on their diverse competences in their learning process; however, it should also be acknowledged that they cannot do so without limitation or constraint. Students' agency is constrained by the structures within which they study, and their practices are discursively constructed. Gumperz (1960) is credited with developing the concept of the *linguistic repertoire*, which represents a foundational piece in arguing for the type of plurilingual practices (and pedagogy) explored in this study, but he also noted that "the social etiquette of language choice is learned along with grammatical rules and once internalized it becomes a part of our linguistic equipment" (Gumperz, 1964). Here, Gumperz is writing of the social constraints applied to language use. Just as a poststructuralist approach to the process of identity understands it as something *articulated* through both discourse and agency (Hall, 1996), a *performance* alternatively in-line with or resisting discourses (Weedon, 2004), so are there discourses around language practices that can be either embraced or resisted. Below, I will highlight several connections in the literature between discourses and language use, before discussing the importance of this topic to the context of education (and this study).

Bourdieu (1990) discusses the concept of a person's *habitus*, which are their practices, patterns of behavior, or socialized norms. Habitus is created through an individual's experiences and interactions in society. It may shift over time or change subtly in different social scenarios. Bourdieu (1990) writes that "types of behaviour can

be directed towards certain ends without being consciously directed to these ends, or determined by them" (p. 8-9). The habitus is a person's "feel for the game" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 63), and a well-developed feel for the social game allows an individual to excel, while simultaneously constraining them within the rules of the game. This idea of habitus is quite relevant to language practices. Historically, societies have often established legitimacy of certain language(s) or dialect(s) and the language practices that go along with them, either through legislation and political discourse or societal expectations. As an individual navigates these expectations and interacts within a given society, their habitus will develop to match – or they can express their agency to resist these expectations, though there may be potential societal repercussions.

Casanave (2002) makes explicit this connection to language practices in discussing her work with academic writing, and how individuals navigate the expectations of academia. Casanave argues that academic writing is social practice and a metaphorical game that players must learn the rules of – being constrained by these rules but also finding opportunities to use agency in navigating or bending them. These "rules" are about legitimacy; and, crucially, "all linguistic practices are measured against the legitimate practices, i.e. the practices of those who are dominant" (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 53). And individuals within a given social domain will be pushed to operate within what has been established as legitimate. With legitimation inevitably comes power, such that those who are more adherent to the linguistic norms, or those whose existing practices the norms were established around, have advantages in social mobility, commonly supported by law or political structure.

Bourdieu (1992) posits that "the factors which are most influential in the formation of the habitus are transmitted without passing through language and consciousness, but through suggestions inscribed in the most apparently insignificant aspects of the things, situations and practices of everyday life" (p. 51). He notes that the formation and enforcement of norms may take place through such simple things as disapproving glances. And worthy of mention here is Bourdieu's (1992) assertion that "in the process which leads to the construction, legitimation and imposition of an official language, the educational system plays a decisive role" (p. 48). In the classroom, the formation of and enforcement of language practices could occur through everyday means similar to those Bourdieu describes: perhaps an instructor who regularly glances towards students communicating in a non-dominant language, a project group in which speakers of a non-

dominant language or dialect are marginalized (regardless of the nonexistence of conscious effort or intent to do so), or the gradual cementing of seating patterns which divide classes along language lines. This sort of daily occurrence could signal to students that in order to maximize their social capital, and possibly their learning potential, they need to assimilate into dominant language practices.

Gee (2005) writes that "it is sometimes helpful to think about social and political issues as if it is not humans who are talking…but, rather, the Discourses we represent and enact, for which we are 'carriers'" (p. 27). In many ways, we play a role that has been made available through long histories of discourses. These discourses make it possible for us to "be Canadian", "be an academic," or "be an international student." And within these big "D" discourses there is room for more specific characteristics: an individual can enact discourses, or be positioned by others within discourses, of being "a *new* Canadian" or a "*true* Canadian." In the case of the international student, an individual can be "one of the good international students" (perhaps, one who assimilates – depending on who is defining the term). In this way, discourses are inseparable from identity, they help us enact who we want to be or, conversely, are applied by others to seek to tell us who we are.

While these discourses interact powerfully with identities, they do so equally with our actions. Gee (2005) writes of the problem of "recognition and being recognized" (p. 26). As an example, he highlights what it takes to be recognized within a certain category, positing that it takes a complex combination of speaking, engaging, thinking, and using "in the 'right' places and at the 'right' times" (Gee, 2005, p. 21). Bourdieu (1977b) further argues for the importance of language in constructing and maintaining power differentials through conceptualization of competence:

> A person speaks not only to be understood but also to be believed, obeyed, respected, distinguished. Hence the full definition of competence as the right to speech, i.e. to the legitimate language, the authorized language which is also the language of authority. Competence implies the power to impose reception. (p. 648)

Biases remain ingrained within academia, and the discourses around language practices in the classroom, or in institutions at large, can be powerful forces, whether they are an explicit prohibition (e.g., "English only") or a less visible pressure to assimilate into the English dominant environment typical of many Canadian universities.

These powerful forces of discourse may result in a student identifying that the “right ways” of using language involve the self-regulation of some linguistic resources and strategies (such as mediating in L1) available to them, potentially to the detriment of their learning process. Consequently, as plurilingual students navigate the discourses available to them in the context of North American higher education, they may find that there are certain “right ways” they need to speak or behave – and a certain “right language” that they are expected to use.

Bourdieu (1997b) also writes of the problem of *misrecognition*, that “every established order tends to produce (to very different degrees and with very different means) the naturalization of its own arbitrariness” (p. 164). Social practice which is reproduced over time can come to be accepted as simple reality. In the same way, in the process of classification, the “subjective principles of organization” can become conflated with, or hidden by, objective categories (Bourdieu gives the example of age or sex) and resulting in a misrecognition that “the natural and social world appears as self-evident” (p. 164). In a later work, Bourdieu (1984) specifically discusses the problem of misrecognition in education:

> Misrecognition of the social determinants of the educational career – and therefore of the social trajectory it helps to determine – gives the educational certificate the value of a natural right and makes the educational system one of the fundamental agencies of the maintenance of the social order (p. 387)

In the case of the English-dominant academy, there may be a misrecognition of the privileged position of standard academic English – which the plurilingual subject may also come to embrace and reenact.

In the classroom, an additional result of discourses around what is considered proper language use may be that plurilingual students “feel that the course carries an institutional identity of deficit and remediation, despite the fact that they bring considerable multicultural and multilingual assets to the university” (Lee & Marshall, 2012, p. 66). Writing of the Canadian higher education context, Marshall et al. (2019) discuss a situation in which a Mandarin speaker struggled in a mainstream course, but through mediation with, and instruction from, a Mandarin speaking classmate and tutor was able to succeed in the course. The authors use this as an example of an L1 being able to be viewed simultaneously as a hurdle to be overcome and an asset in learning,

representing “an ambivalence that is not only personal and idiosyncratic, but also discursively constructed by social and institutional discourses around multi/plurilingualism” (Marshall et al., 2019, p. 14-15). In this instance, the student felt comfortable using Mandarin as a tool, at least outside of the classroom (Mandarin-medium study groups are also discussed); however, the authors go on to note that deficit discourses are still prevalent and there are instances where participants acknowledge being aware of them and adjusting language use to match. One plurilingual student in the study considered it an accepted fact that communication in English is the norm, limiting how multilingual the context really was. In this sense, this understanding of (and opinion on) language use norms represents an awareness and engagement with the discourses that shape language practice in the institution.

This thesis recognizes that participants are engaging with these discourses, even in moments when they are not consciously aware of doing so. This is even the case when participants describe navigating discourses based on a *feel for the game* or motivated by seeking recognition in the classroom. This recognition helps to understand their plurilingual practices or, potentially, the lack thereof. As Marshall et al. (2019) write of the Canadian context, students “need to be able to employ complex strategies about how, when, and where to use languages other than English” (p. 3). It is precisely these questions of how, when, and where (along with why) that this project will seek to explore, in order to further knowledge of how discourses can shape student perspectives and practices. In turn, this deeper understanding of participants’ lived experiences and learning practices can be a crucial component in informing how a plurilingual pedagogy in the classroom or more authentic plurilingual posture within the larger institution might better serve to support and maximize the potential of plurilingual students.

3.3.2. Agency

Another important discussion related to participants’ practices is the issue of agency. Do students truly have the ability to exercise agency in how they draw on their plurilingual competences in daily life and learning? The answer to the question depends on one’s view of society – including the structures and constraints within – and of the social actor. This thesis will take the position advocated by Giddens (1984) on that issue. Giddens argues that structures should not be conceived of as something disconnected from the social actor. Instead, “the social systems in which structure is recursively

implicated…comprise the situated activities of human agency, reproduced across time and space" (Giddens, 1984, p. 25). In this way, structures within society can certainly constrain the social actor; however, it is also social actors who – through repeated actions over time – either confirm and reify or defy and alter these structures. That said, it should be noted that in many instances, university students may be more likely to reproduce the institutional structures that constrain them rather than challenging them through agentive practices (Archer, 2003). Nonetheless, Giddens' take on structure and agency ties in well with my theoretical focus as it allows me to examine individuals' plurilingual practices from a more agentive perspective within the constraints of higher education. The application of this idea to plurilingualism was previously discussed by Marshall and Moore (2018) in their counterargument to a criticism of plurilingualism that it is over-agentive. The authors argue that viewing "the individual as the locus of interaction can focus both on agency and the lack of it due to structural constraint" (p. 6). In educational settings, this means that through a plurilingual lens, the focus on students as social agents can include an examination of both how they wield their agency *and* how they are constrained by structures embedded in education settings. Galante (2020a) notes how plurilingual learners naturally and effortlessly exert agency over their repertoire on a daily basis, including in the classroom" (p. 240) through actions such as translating, using a bilingual dictionary, mediating, and flexibly alternating languages to best communicate with a variety of interlocutors. Though they may feel constraint in the exercise of this agency in some contexts, they can also benefit from encouragement to exercise their agency, something which Galante – writing, in this case, of TESOL contexts – argues is crucial for instructors to do.

This makes the agency of teachers another important factor in the classroom (Galante, 2020a; Marshall & Moore, 2018). Teachers can also be constrained in their agency. As acknowledged in the opening chapters of this thesis with regard to my own experiences in BIZ 200, teachers may experience constraint due to expectations placed on them with regard to issues such as curriculum and assessment. Nonetheless, teachers may also often use their agency to create space and offer encouragement for students to draw on their full plurilingual repertoire to maximize their learning or by taking steps "to raise language awareness and foster intercultural awareness and competence to support learning in the class" (Marshall & Moore, 2018, p. 6). Galante (2020a) also gives a concrete example of how educators in the Canadian context may encourage

students to exercise agency in their plurilingual practices. Drawing on a combination of plurilingual ideas and Freire's (1970) concept of *conscientização* – conscientization or critical consciousness – Galante (2020a) suggests that an educator could engage in a co-examination of important laws in Canada, such as the Canadian Multicultural Act, "to develop understanding of their rights as Canadian residents, in case they are confronted with xenophobic, racist or discriminatory behaviours" (p. 241). By doing so, students may feel more confident in exerting agency.

In this thesis, participants' exercising of agency in their uses of their plurilingual competences will be considered in both daily life and in learning. Consideration will also be given to instances in which participants express feeing constrained and how they respond to this constraint, such as by exerting agency in defiance of constraint or by conforming to structures in the social systems they encounter. An example of this line of inquiry is the idea of English-only policies in educational contexts and how participants may have responded when encountering them. Finally, in the concluding chapter, consideration will be given to the implications that participants' navigation of agency and constraint may have for different groups of stakeholders within the university context.

3.4. CLIL, EAP, ESP, and Business English

While this thesis will primarily analyze data from the perspective of plurilingual theory and pedagogy, it is important to acknowledge the work being done in several other fields. This includes CBI/CLIL pedagogy, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and English for Academic Purposes. These fields of research are relevant given the content and pedagogy of BIZ 200. As discussed in Chapter 2, BIZ 200 is a touchstone I share with the participants of this research and, with some, a former shared classroom. It was designed to teach two powerful forms of language: English for business communication and academic English. In recognition of the multilingual classrooms at WCCU, the course incorporates aspects of CBI/CLIL pedagogy. As discussed more extensively in Chapter 2, there are several overlaps between CBI/CLIL and plurilingual pedagogies, including opening space for the use of L1 (and other languages) in learning and a consideration of culture alongside language. Lin (2019), for example, argues that content-based education should help students "connect their familiar everyday linguistic and cultural patterns with the target linguistic and cultural patterns" (p. 14). And BIZ 200 had tasks that worked towards such goals.

Additionally, as a communication course with a multilingual and multicultural student base and explicit focus on building language skills, BIZ 200 has significant overlap with several topics within the field of English for Specific Purposes. Given the strong focus on business communication, this includes an overlap with Business English (Bargiela-Chiappini & Zhang, 2012) and English for the Workplace (Marra, 2012). The literatures in these fields raise compelling themes and critiques, which could offer guiding perspectives for the research design and data analysis of a study such as presented in this thesis. Bargiela-Chiappini and Zhang (2012), for example, note how:

> the Business English "brand" continues to be strongly influenced by Western preferences, especially in terms of which (native) English is deemed to be acceptable, and what theories and methods of international business and crosscultural management are taught alongside or as components of business communication programs (p.194)

Given that the participants of this research may very well choose to return to their home countries at some point in their careers, after having learned business communication and theory in Canada, such discussions are incredibly relevant. And, while the analysis below will not draw extensively on research from these fields within ESP, it is the result of a pragmatic choice to devote the time and space available to a thorough exploration of phenomena through a plurilingual lens, and certainly not a critique of the value in the ESP literature.

Likewise, as undergraduate students, the participants of this research were actively engaged in honing their abilities in academic English at the time they participated in interviews. And BIZ 200, as the first required writing course in the major, was also responsible for explicitly guiding students with regard to expectations around academic English. This creates an overlap with research in the field of English for Academic Purposes. Research and perspectives from EAP contexts will be included in the analysis of data (Chapters 5 & 6) and have already featured in this review of literature (see 3.2.1). This includes several recent publications from Galante (2018, 2020b), who has produced influential work on the intersection of plurilingual pedagogy and EAP classrooms in Canada. To the extent that broader perspectives from the literature on EAP do not feature more heavily, it is once again a pragmatic choice to narrow the focus and deeply explore participants' perspectives and practices through a plurilingual lens.

3.5. Poststructural Perspectives on Identity

Just as the discussion of the concept of language has evolved, so has the discussion around the concept of 'identity.' In particular, a poststructuralist view pushes back against essentialist understandings of identity (as something static and knowable) and instead "depicts the individual – the subject – as diverse, contradictory, dynamic and changing over historical time and social space" (Norton, 2000, p. 125). Some of the early challenges to the static conception of identity came from feminist critiques aimed at gender identity, such as that of Butler (1990) who defines gender as "the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance" (p. 33). Building on these ideas, Weedon (2004) illustrates the performative aspect of identity through the example of femininity, explaining "feminine identity, manifest in dress, ways of walking and behaving, does not give rise to this femininity but is the product of it. It is acquired by performing the discourses of femininity that constitute the individual as a feminine subject" (p. 7). In this way, Weedon highlights the complicated interplay between discourses, agency and performance.

In a similar vein, Hall (1996) offers a definition of identity that combines the importance of both discourse and agency in the process of identity, and which builds on the more structuralist ideas of Althusser (1971), in which a subject comes to be a subject when they respond to another's 'hail'. Hall (1996) writes:

> I use 'identity' to refer to the meeting point, the point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate', speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken'. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us. (Hall, 1996, p. 5-6)

In this definition, Hall (1996) emphasizes that identity is an "articulation" (p. 6), meaning that it can neither be constructed for us, nor can we construct it for ourselves in isolation – both discourses and agency are important parts of the construction. These ideas of Butler (1990), Hall (1996), and Weedon (2004) highlight how identity is far from a simple and fixed concept. This acknowledgement has led to the description of identity through the use of active terms, such as those above – *repeated stylization* (Butler, 1990),

performance (Weedon, 2004), *articulation* (Hall, 1996) – as well as *production* and *process* (Hall, 1990) and *site of struggle* (Norton, 2013; Darvin & Norton, 2015).

As Weedon (2004) notes, "identities may be socially, culturally, and institutionally assigned, as in the case, for instance, of gender or citizenship" (p. 6). Individuals may choose to embrace and perform these assigned identities or to negotiate or resist them (Butler, 1990; Weedon, 2004). An individual may discover, for example, that what it means to them to be American changes over the course of time and experience. Similarly, another individual may find that a gender descriptor no longer suits their own conception of their identity. With these shifts may come new and different perceptions and performances of identity. That these new performances of identity may begin a process that results in an eventual assigning of their identity into a new category (Canadian, male/female/non-binary, etc.) only serves to highlight the futility of attempting to affix a static, permanent identity to an individual. The discourses of society may play a role in identity construction; however, poststructuralists "conceptualize the determination of subjectivity as partial or incomplete in that discourses also create the possibilities for autonomy and resistance" (Morgan, 2007, p. 952).

Therefore, both social structures and agency must be taken into account when considering the topic of identity (Darvin and Norton, 2015; Morgan, 2007; Norton and Toohey, 2011). Discussing discourse and identity, specifically in the context of mature students writing for higher education, Ivanic (1998) argues that "identity is not socially *determined* but *socially constructed*" (p. 12). The author continues on to highlight the interplay between discourse, agency, and constraint in a manner also relevant to the higher education context and participant population of plurilingual students in this research: "individuals are constrained in their selection of discourses by those to which they have access, and by the patterns of privileging which exist among them, but this does not dry up the alternatives altogether" (Ivanic, 1998, p. 23). Viewing identity through a poststructuralist lens in this research project allows for a more nuanced understanding of the identity of participants. Such a position takes into account that participants are continually engaging with discourses in their university life (and elsewhere) and that their decisions to accept or resist identity categories assigned to them will lead to shifts in their identity over time.

A poststructuralist view on identity also posits a strong relationship between language and identity. Discussing both Weedon's (1997) groundbreaking feminist perspective on identity and Norton's (2013) earlier work, Darvin and Norton (2015) write of a "poststructuralist's assertion that language constructs our sense of self" (p. 36). Similarly, Lin (2007) highlights "the dialogic, discursive, interactional, and interlocutionary, that is, *social* nature of identities. Who I am or what I make out my identity to be...seems to be always situated in a consideration of *where I am speaking from and to whom*" (p. 203). As many of the participants of this study are international students, with others immigrants to Canada, and still others born and raised in Canada with recent family histories in other countries and cultures, there may be important identity dynamics that result from both the languages they speak or are learning, as well as the social circles these students take part in and construct for themselves and their engagement with dominant discourses around identity. This leads to the consideration of transnational and plurilingual identities.

3.5.1. Transnational Identity

The dual forces of globalization and the advancement of technology, especially digital technology, have had strong impacts on the experiences and identity formation of those who undertake transnational migration. Li and Zhu (2013) describe how transnationals "live their lives in more than once place" and "develop meaningful ties to more than one home country, blurring the congruence of social space and geographical space" (p. 517). Darvin and Norton (2014) also discuss the resulting erosion of boundaries between country of origin and of settlement, which allows migrants to "operate as *transnationals* who are able to maintain ties with their home country, while building new relations within their host or adopted country" (p. 56).

Li and Zhu's (2013) study of a diverse group of students with varying forms of Chinese identity resulting from different migration patterns gives rise to some important considerations regarding how identity can be positioned in such situations. Rather than defining their identities through difference alone, depending on factors such as whether they were born in Great Britain, Mainland China, Tawian, or Hong Kong or which dialect or regional variety of Chinese they spoke, instead the participants of the study took "control over positioning themselves flexibly" (Li & Zhu, 2013, p. 531-532). Through translanguaging practice, the students created a *transnational identity*, in which "they are

Chinese students at universities in London…and they want to accentuate the here-and-now" (Li & Zhu, 2013, p. 532). As migrants negotiate and struggle with their identities in light of transnational movement, they may also be struggling against how they are being positioned in their new country. Darvin and Norton (2014) note that individuals in the adopted country may form opinions on the nature and purpose of immigration based on a migrant's country of origin. They argue that "the racialization and marginalization of specific ethnic groups can thus be read as corollary to subordination within neocolonialism and global capitalism. The very act of migration itself sometimes becomes understood as the natural result of the underdevelopment of specific countries" (Darvin & Norton, 2014, p. 58).

Similarly, the participants of this study may have migration histories that impact how they view themselves. And, in keeping with a post-structuralist view on identity as fluid and a site of struggle, the way a participant positions themself may change depending on the interaction. As one participant in Li and Zhu's (2013) study noted regarding whether he identifies as Chinese: "with non-Chinese people, I do. But they think I'm Chinese Chinese, like, I'm from China. Well I was. But I'm also from New Zealand and Singapore. I'm not from China Chinese" (p. 526). The important implication for this proposed research is that as positioning changes, whether it be due to a change in interlocutor or other factors, so may language practices change. Understanding, or at least giving due and careful consideration to, the complex identities that may accompany the migration histories and current situations of participants may be necessary for understanding why they choose to make use of plurilingual practices in some instances, but perhaps not in others. Likewise, understanding the impacts of transnational movement on identity and position has implications for pedagogy. On this topic, Darvin and Norton (2014) argue that "by recognizing migrant learners as rich resources of linguistic and cultural capital, language teachers can construct a classroom environment where bilingualism and multicultural, multimodal communicative practices are valued, and where students gain a sense of belonging, legitimacy and membership" (p. 60) – a proposition in alignment with the values of a plurilingual pedagogy. Through understanding participants' experiences, perspectives, and needs, this thesis similarly aims to deepen understanding of how pedagogy and classroom environment may be improved to better serve today's diverse student population, especially plurilingual/EAL students.

3.5.2. Plurilingual Identity

In her dissertation research, Galante (2018) encouraged participants to explore the idea of their *plurilingual identity* through a number of classroom tasks, which included classroom discussions of plurilingual and pluricultural identity, diary entries, and a language portrait. These tasks resulted in “many of the students report[ing] a realization of their plurilingual identity for the first time” (p. 92). In a passage that excellently sums up many of the issues discussed in the pages above regarding discourses of deficit, plurilingual practices, and issues of identity, Galante (2018) noted that:

> students realized that they often perform or engage in practices such as code-switching, translanguaging, comparons nos languages, intercomprehension and cross-cultural comparisons. While these are legitimate practices students engage in daily, they are typically not validated in educational settings. Having their plurilingual identity validated by their instructors and the plurilingual tasks was a positive surprise. (p. 144)

These issues discussed by Galante raise several important implications for this research. Firstly, students may be at various stages in recognizing their own plurilingual identities. A student in a more advanced stage of recognition of this identity may adopt a more *plurilingual posture* (Galante, 2018; Jeoffrion et al., 2014), a greater disposition towards employing plurilingual practices in their learning. Additionally, Galante (2018) notes the importance of the validation of plurilingual practices by the instructor and that such validation is not always found – such as when encountering English-only discourses in the classroom.

While plurilingual practices may come naturally to students with a diverse linguistic repertoire, these practices may be minimized, whether consciously or unconsciously, when a student is either told directly or perceives (again, whether consciously or unconsciously) that plurilingual practices are not accepted in the classroom. This understanding will be useful in the process of interpretating plurilingual (and, potentially, monolingual) learning practices encountered during observations in the research context. It may also inform the questions in, and interpretation of, participant interviews. Whether it be from an explicit ‘English only’ discourse that the participant has experienced in the institution, the specific classroom, or a past learning context, or from not fully embracing a plurilingual posture/identity, participants may not realize or not implement their full plurilingual potential in the process of learning. The perspectives

shared by participants of this research can become another useful source of knowledge to help to inform future pedagogy.

3.6. Summary

This chapter has analyzed the theories of language, practice, discourse, and identity which are the grounding for the research in this thesis. In order to fully appreciate and understand the choices that students make in the course of their learning, it is necessary to understand that these choices result from several realities. First, that an individual's linguistic repertoire is not made up of separate and isolated parts, but rather is "unitary, fluid, dynamic and evolving" (Van Viegen & Lau, 2020, p. 326). Second, that despite the natural instinct to use language in a hybrid manner or fluidly move between aspects of the linguistic repertoire, students' agency to do so is constrained by structures, such as the expectations of academia and the societal discourses around language use that they encounter. And third, that an individual's learning and use of language and engagement with diverse cultures, including through transnational mobility, are not only about acquisition of knowledge and skills but are also significant factors in an individual's navigation and construction of identity. As Norton (2016) articulates, "*language* is not only a linguistic system of words and sentences, but also a social practice in which identities and desires are negotiated in the context of complex and often unequal social relationships" (p. 476).

With these theoretical lenses in place to understand students and their experiences, the role of the educator and pedagogy can also be examined. This includes consideration of how the access paradox (Janks, 2004; Lin, 2016) can be overcome in language classrooms, CLIL/CBI contexts, or EAP/ESP programs, as well as in contexts which adopt some of the characteristics of the aforementioned, such as BIZ 200 and its business communication curriculum. Understanding the student experience in such classrooms may help to illuminate ways to adopt a critical pragmatic approach (Benesch, 2001; Marshall & Moore, 2018) to curriculum instruction. Moreover, these lenses allow for a consideration of the educator's role in students' identity negotiation as put forward by Lin (2007):

> If language is the primary medium mediating the construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of identities, then perhaps educators can explore ways in which language can be creatively used to provide more

fluid discursive resources for students to achieve new, multiple ways of understanding themselves–to create new languages of self-understanding in more multiple, positive, and empowering ways (p. 215).

As students' practices and experiences are examined in the following chapters, and implications for pedagogy are considered, they will be examined and considered through the theoretical grounding introduced above. The theoretical framework, and goals of this research, are visualized in the diagram below (Figure 3.1):

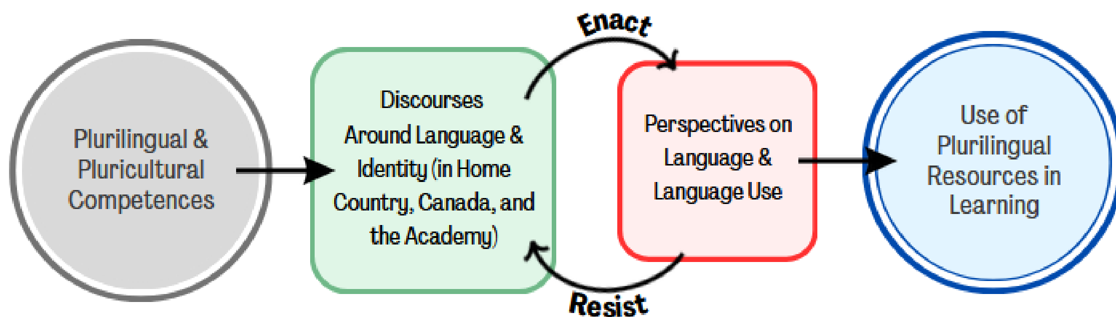

Figure 3.1. The Theoretical Framework for the Thesis
Note: Taking participants' plurilingual competences as a starting point, this thesis aims to understand how engagement with discourses around language use (in various contexts and stages of learning) impacts participants' perspectives on language and their language practices – with a final emphasis on use of linguistic resources in learning.

In the following chapter, I will introduce the methodological design of the study, including justification for taking a qualitative approach and the use of interviews for primary data generation. The chapter will also include an introduction to the participants of the study and data analysis procedures, and consideration of both ethical concerns and researcher positionality.

Chapter 4.

Methodology

In this chapter, I will detail the methodology for this research. I will begin by discussing the history and characteristics of qualitative research and justify this approach, including through discussion of epistemology and ontology. I will consider how qualitative research sees the exploration of subjective realities as meaningful and will contrast this with traditional positivistic approaches to research. Following this will be the introduction of participants. In the third and fourth sections, I will discuss the specific strategies employed for data collection and data analysis, respectively. The final section will conclude with a discussion of ethical issues, limitations, and researcher positionality and reflexivity.

4.1. Qualitative Research

The early standards for research in the social sciences were taken from the positivist approach of the hard sciences. In the late 20th century, qualitative approaches, which had been in practice in some form for centuries, began to carve out a more legitimate place as a tool for addressing the needs of critical and feminist research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). As a result, “by the early 1990s, there was an explosion of published work on qualitative research; handbooks and new journals appeared” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 5). However, the criticisms from proponents of positivist research persist, with some still seeing the development of qualitative approaches as a threat to the scientific pursuit of knowledge. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) note that some “politicians and hard scientists call qualitative researchers *journalists* or ‘soft’ scientists” (p. 8). The struggle for legitimacy of qualitative research is centered on ontological and epistemological differences from the positivist viewpoint often associated with quantitative studies in the hard sciences. Whereas a positivist perspective holds that all knowledge is scientifically verifiable, “when researchers conduct qualitative research, they are embracing the idea of multiple realities” (Creswell, 2007, p. 16). Qualitative research may be concerned with the subjective experiences of those being studied, as it is with hard truths, and therein lies the ontological dilemma for staunch positivists. Where the hard sciences are primarily concerned with *empirical* evidence, that which

can be verified experientially, social and cultural sciences may deal more with *a priori generalization*, which “are claims that can be justified other than experientially and may be contingent or noncontingent” (Heap, 1995, p. 285) – meaning they may be true in all cases or dependent on case.

Epistemologically, qualitative research also differs from research conducted within a positivistic paradigm. Under a positivistic paradigm, experimentation and repeatable processes delivering confirmable results are used to determine objective truths, with the researcher aiming to minimize the impact of their presence. In contrast, qualitative researchers often strive to acknowledge their role within the research; Altheide and Johnson (2011) refer to this practice as “how we account for ourselves” (p. 591). The differences in claims discussed above require different methodologies and manners for considering validity and adequacy. For example, to ensure adequacy of study, Heap (1995) argues that a qualitative study may not turn to a large sample size but rather seek to justify a claim through “becom[ing] internal to the culture that the data exemplifies” (p. 287). Qualitative researchers engage in the field and “try to get as close as possible to the participants being studied” (Creswell, 2007, p. 18). It is this closeness that allows a researcher to claim some knowledge of phenomena. In fact, many authorities on qualitative research discuss the need for building rapport with, and even developing an empathetic posture towards, participants in a study (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Creswell, 2007; Packer, 2018). While this closeness also means that researchers may be bringing their own preconceptions and values to the research, “qualitative researchers like to make explicit those values” (Creswell, 2007, p. 18).

The often-subjective nature of qualitative research also leads to the epistemologically related question of validity. In a positivistic study, repeatable results demonstrate validity, but how can we demonstrate validity in an exploration of subjective lived experiences? Some qualitative researchers go as far as to reject the applicability of the (positivist) rooted concept of validity. Wolcott (1994) writes “I do not accept validity as a valid criterion for guiding or judging my work” (p. 369). For other qualitative researchers, the approach is to take a more “open conception of validity” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 282) predicated on whether or not a study investigates, diligently and ethically, what it sets out to investigate. The research described in this thesis has taken such positions on adequacy and validity: seeking a deep understanding of the culture being described and using diligent and ethical measures to understand and report the

choices and experiences of participants, subjective and messy though they may be. The choice of qualitative methods for this research is not a dismissal of the value of the contrasting positivistic paradigms of the hard sciences, it is simply an affirmation of the unique value that qualitative research can bring in cases of exploring critical issues or seeking greater understanding of the messiness of the lived human experience. This study will seek to explore some of that messiness: the subjective experiences, conflicting realities, struggle and process of identity, and other topics related to the human experience of participants. Specifically, it aims to better understand how participants use various language skills in their learning, while engaging with discourses and exercising agency. To do so necessitates a closeness with participants, through observation and interviews, and an understanding that the subjective nature of participants' experiences does not diminish their value for understanding phenomena important to the educational experience of plurilingual students.

4.1.1. Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is difficult to define, as it draws on many traditions and does not "have a distinct set of methods or practices that are entirely its own" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 12). However, the general definition given by Denzin and Lincoln (2018) is that qualitative research is an approach that makes use of "a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (p. 10). These practices may include techniques such as observations, field notes, interviews, and the collection of various texts and artifacts for analysis, with the combination of methods varying significantly across studies.

However, there are some hallmarks across qualitative studies, such as an emphasis on understanding meaning through the eyes of those being observed, interviewed, or having their texts and artifacts collected, and on understanding phenomena in their natural settings (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). And the texts resulting from such research often feature *thick description* (Geertz, 1973) of the environment and phenomena and "includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem" (Creswell, 2007, p. 37). As qualitative research allows for the existence of multiple realities, this may, at times, mean multiple and conflicting interpretations. Another hallmark is that qualitative research often features an emergent design, meaning that "the initial plan for

research cannot be tightly prescribed, and that all phases of the process may change or shift after the researchers enter the field to begin to collect data" (Creswell, 2007, p. 39).

This thesis research is concerned with human experiences, as well the actions, beliefs, and identities of those who are sharing them. This makes a qualitative approach a natural choice to answer the research questions outlined in the opening chapter. As Denzin and Lincoln (2018) write, "the province of qualitative research, accordingly, is the world of lived experience, for this is where individual belief and action intersect with culture" (p. 9). Additionally, this project has been flexible in responding to unexpected phenomena or avenues of discussion in interviews (assuming they are reasonably within the realm of inquiry), which makes the emergent design typical of qualitative studies an important characteristic.

4.1.2. Ethnography

Ethnography is a strategy for studying a culture-sharing group with an emphasis on close, extended observations in the natural setting (American Anthropological Association, 2004; Creswell, 2007; Erickson, 2018; Marshall, Clemente, & Higgins, 2014). When conducting ethnographic research, "the investigator is immersed in the ongoing everyday activities of the designated community for the purpose of describing the social context, relationships and processes relevant to the topic under consideration" (American Anthropological Association, n.d., para. 4). Ethnographic research can be useful when seeking "to describe how a cultural group works and to explore the beliefs, language, behaviors, and issues such as power, resistance, and dominance" (Creswell, 2007, p. 70). The latter part of this definition highlights the use of ethnography to investigate critical issues in society and advocate for change.

Working off the explanation of ethnographic research above, this study matches parts, but not all aspects of the definitions. For the purposes of this study, plurilingual students in the Canadian university context may be considered a sort of culture-sharing group. Though there are disparate backgrounds and experiences represented in the group of participants, they are sharing a crucial experience which is the focus of this research: being a plurilingual student in an English-dominant university. As discussed in the previous chapter, such students may share common experiences such as navigating identity following transnational mobility and struggling with deficit discourses or

otherwise being positioned in an oversimplified manner (e.g., into the role of "international student" and accompanying stereotypes). Though they may not characterize the traditional interpretation of a "culture sharing group," plurilingual students in an English-dominant university do share some important and relevant cultural features.

The descriptive criteria of being immersed in the activities of the studied group has also been partially met in this study. Through my role as teaching assistant and instructor in the faculty, I spent more than three years and worked with more than 20 class sections in the context for this research. These roles brought multiple forms of observation and interactions with the plurilingual students who are the population for this study, including in lectures, office hours, email inquiries about assignments, and the many other contacts that come along with these roles. While these collectively amount to significant opportunity for observation and interaction, there are aspects of participants' experiences that were not observable. This includes students' review of course materials and work on assignments that takes place at home. Interviews and the collection of student texts and artifacts (discussed further below) were implemented to help overcome these limitations.

The goals of this research project are in closer alignment with the traditional definition of ethnography put forth by Creswell (2007), in terms of exploring culture and issues of power and resistance. There are crucial issues of power with regard to the privileged position of English and institutional discourses of deficit around plurilingual students. And this study will seek to understand the ways students use their agency in employing their linguistic repertoires, including in opposition to discourses around language use that they encounter. Given the ways that the research both does and does not match commonly accepted definitions of ethnographic research, it may best be described as *partially ethnographic* (Marshall, 2014).

4.2. Participants

The participants of this study were all enrolled in West Coast Canadian University and taking courses in the business school, with several in a joint major program. As established in the introduction chapter, WCCU's classrooms typically have considerable linguistic and cultural diversity. Therefore, an effort was made to recruit

participants from a variety of backgrounds. In the initial research design, recruitment was intended to take place primarily in the classrooms of BIZ 200 – both through announcements in my own courses and visits to sections led by other instructors. However, as acknowledged previously (see section 2.2.), both the COVID-19 pandemic and agreements with the faculty impacted these plans. The pandemic made classroom visits more difficult and, potentially, less effective for recruiting participants given lingering uncertainties and discomfort around close contact with others. Likewise, the agreement with the faculty to not collect data from current students was a limiting factor. While making an announcement in my classes may not have been explicitly prohibited by that agreement, it certainly was a grey area in terms of the spirit of the faculty's request – ensuring that students would not see the possibility of favoritism tied to participation. One result of the difficulties described above was that a larger percentage of participants than expected were former students of mine. It is possible that previously established rapport – through the student-teacher relationship – helped mitigate some of the additional uncertainties of the pandemic era and ease the recruitment from this group. This aspect of participant recruitment is important to acknowledge given the co-constructive nature of data collection in interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Mishler, 1991) which will be discussed further in the section below (4.3). While established rapport can be a positive, there may also be unanticipated effects related to this pre-existing relationship, such as a participant's potential avoidance of raising negative, but relevant, aspects of their experience in the classrooms within the faculty.

Sampling was also affected by the difficulties and constraints of recruitment. While several participants accepted invitations early in the pandemic period, the process of reaching the goal of at least 15 participants was slow, taking well over a year. As a result, most students who expressed interest in the study were selected. The exception to this were students who, upon learning more about the topics to be discussed, shared that they didn't feel they had much to contribute. Among these were several plurilingual students whose first language was English. While these potential participants would certainly have their own interesting themes to share, they would differ from the core themes of this research around adjusting to an English-dominant educational context and navigating related discourses. Moreover, each expressed not drawing on languages other than English in their learning. As such, the sampling could be described as a purposeful sampling, in which "the inquirer selects individuals…because they can

purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Cresswell, 2007, p. 125). Although, functionally, there were aspects of other strategies in both recruitment and sampling: *maximum variation sampling*, in seeking participants from a diverse range of linguistic and culture backgrounds; *snowball/chain sampling*, in that several participants referred peers who also subsequently took part; and *convenience sampling*, in that no participants who matched the criteria and focus of the study were rejected (Cresswell, 2007).

The final distribution of participants included individuals from several of the most represented countries of origin among international students in the faculty: first (China), second (India), third (Vietnam), fifth (Bangladesh), sixth (Indonesia), and eighth (Iran). There were also participants from Japan, which was outside of the identified 14 most represented countries; instead, Japanese students were counted as part of the "other" categorization. The key characteristics of participants, as well as their pseudonyms can be found in Table 1 (below).

Table 4.1. List of Participants

Pseudonym	Country of Origin	Languages Beyond English	Arrival in Canada (School Stage)
Omar	Bangladesh	Bengali (Bangla), Hindi	International College
Ping	China	Mandarin	International College
Esther	China	Mandarin, Some Japanese	Secondary
Cynthia	China	Mandarin	International College
Simu	China	Mandarin, Cantonese	WCCU
Asha	India	Hindi, Punjabi	International College
Rita	India	Hindi, Punjabi	International College
Linda	Indonesia	Indonesian (Bahasa)	College
Zohreh	Iran	Farsi, Some French	Secondary, Grade 12
Leila	Iran	Farsi	WCCU (Secondary in Denmark)
Hassan	Iran	Farsi	WCCU
Yuri	Japan	Japanese	WCCU
Miho	Japan	Japanese	WCCU (1-year in US Secondary)
Keisuke	Japan	Japanese	WCCU (K12 International School)
Thao	Vietnam	Vietnamese, Some French	Secondary, Grade 10
Yen	Vietnam	Vietnamese, Some French	WCCU
Lan	Vietnam	Vietnamese, Some Mandarin	Secondary, Grade 11

Note: Additional relevant information about schooling in parenthesis. “International College” indicates a pathway school from which students transferred into West Coast Canadian University. “College” refers to any other local post-secondary institution from which a student transferred.

4.3. Data Collection (Generation)

Participants in the study were invited to participate in two forms of data collection. Interviews were the primary method, which all participants took part in. Additionally, participants were invited to share texts and artifacts which evidenced their plurilingual practices, such as class notes or drafts of assignments. This data was supplemented by my own observations, field notes, and researcher reflections. The use of multiple forms of data, often referred to as triangulation, is an important aspect of rigorous study (Creswell, 2007; Flick, 2018), though not without past criticism. Flick (2018) details several of these criticisms, such as the danger of assuming different forms of data collection can be combined to form a confluent picture of a single phenomenon or that triangulation can provide validation, in the positivistic sense. However, even without the ability to provide validation of conclusions, triangulation still serves the important function of “aiming at broader, deeper, more comprehensive understandings of what is studied” (Flick, 2018, p. 449). Additionally, interviews were enhanced by the other forms of data collection, as observations and texts shared by participants frequently led to discussions relevant to the research which may not otherwise have arisen.

4.3.1. Semi-structured Interviews

The primary data for this research comes from interviews. Rather than being a “data collection” tool in the traditional positivistic sense, interviews can be understood as entailing the co-construction of meaning, as “interviewers and respondents, through repeated reformulations of questions and responses, strive to arrive together at meaning that both can understand” (Mishler, 1991, p. 65). Interviews offer the potential “to understand themes of the lived daily world from the subjects’ own perspectives” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 27) and to “reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible” (Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2018, p. 669). Due to these benefits, interviews are often the foundation of qualitative research (Brinkmann, 2018; Mason, 2018; Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2018).

Interviews exist on a spectrum from relatively unstructured to relatively structured (Brinkmann, 2018). For this research, a semi-structured approach to the interviews was chosen, which more closely resembles a dialogue and allows the researcher to have "a greater say in focusing the conversation on issues that he or she deems important in relation to the research" (Brinkmann, 2018, p. 579). A semi-structured interview aims to strike a balance between maintaining consistency in questions across participants while allowing flexibility to pursue interesting avenues for investigation that may arise. This research focused primarily on the plurilingual practices of students, so most questions revolved around language use or related topics (see Appendix for the full list of guiding questions). Examples of core questions included:

- What role do your various language skills play in your daily life?
- Do languages other than English play a role in your learning process, or have they in the past?
- Have you ever been asked or advised to use English-only and, if so, what were your thoughts on that approach to learning?

After leading with such questions, I encouraged participants to share their experiences and answer in whatever way was most meaningful to them. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), introducing what they call a *semistructured life world interview*, discuss how this style of interview is meant to cover a sequence of themes and uses suggested questions to accomplish this. They also note: "yet at the same time there is openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up on the specific answer given and the stories told by subjects" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 150).

In this research, the semi-structured format was departed from when necessary. Some participants sought guidance, for example, on what kind of plurilingual practices I was interested in. In these instances, a more structured approach was taken by asking follow-up questions, giving prompts or examples. In interviews with several participants, there were specific classroom occurrences that I wanted to explore, necessitating more structured questioning. Additionally, at the conclusion of the interviews, participants were asked a final open-ended question along these lines: "At this point in the interview, you now have a good idea of the major themes for this research. Before we conclude, is there anything else you would like to share or that you would want people to know about your experience as a plurilingual student?" This combination of semi-structured,

occasionally more structured, and open-ended questioning allowed for consistent discussion of themes relevant to the intended topic, while also allowing for participants to depart to related themes that were meaningful to their experiences and may impact the way they draw on their plurilingual competences.

I conducted interviews with an understanding that they are “not an interaction between disembodied intellects but a joint accomplishment of vulnerable, embodied persons with all sorts of hopes, fears, and interests” (Brinkman, 2018, p. 997). The interview is a social interaction between two or more people who are negotiating an understanding of the topics at hand. In doing so, they bring to the table things such as their own perspectives, subconscious biases, histories and experiences, and understandings of concepts. As such, the knowledge produced in these interactions “contrasts with a methodological positivist conception of knowledge as given facts to be quantified” (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 21). Rather it is knowledge that can’t be separated from contextual factors such as the day it took place, the location of the interview, and the interlocutors who are present (Brinkmann, 2018; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Packer, 2018). In engaging in interviews and the analysis of data that resulted, I have endeavored to acknowledge that I brought my own history, agenda, and perspective on the issues discussed. For example, my own experiences with learning and using language may color my expectations for participants’ own practices. Through transparency and reflexivity, I aim to present the perspectives of participants in line with their own subjectivities and world views in the contexts of an intersubjective interview.

Beyond the acknowledgement of interviews as a co-construction, it is also important to consider ethical issues inherent to the interview structure. Despite the effort towards a dialogue with participants, as Brinkmann (2018) points out, “it is illusory to think of the research interview as a dominance-free dialogue between equal partners” (p. 588). Ultimately, power is asymmetrical in the interview. This power imbalance was furthered by my position as faculty member at the university – despite my active attempts to position myself as an empathetic and student-centered instructor, the power imbalance between student and teacher is inevitable. As Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) argue, power imbalances are an unavoidable aspect of human relationships and “the point is not that power should necessarily be eliminated from research interviews, but rather that interviewers ought to reflect on the role of power in the production of interview knowledge” (p. 38). Additionally, the development of rapport with participants is

important, but not fully unproblematic. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) note that “although it seems impossible to be ‘against empathy’ as such, it seems that the call to be empathetic is associated with certain ethical risks that are not always given enough attention” (p. 99). Among the concerns associated with this empathetic stance are using it as a tool to recruit hesitant participants or to broach topics which the participants are not fully comfortable speaking on. Through all stages of the interview, from preparation through interview and representation in this final product, I have sought to engage in careful reflection on the ethics and power dynamics involved in the qualitative interview.

Acknowledging the ethical concerns above, interviews offered a unique opportunity to document students’ plurilingual practices that are not easily observable. This includes how students use various languages internally, such as in their thought-process or to enhance meaning-making, as well as plurilingual practices that were at one point documented but have not been preserved. Examples of the latter include uses of languages other than English in the drafting of assignments or during the course of learning in past contexts.

4.3.2. Collection of Participant Texts and Artifacts

Denzin and Lincoln (2018) write of qualitative research that it “involves the studied use and collection of a variety empirical materials…that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives” (p. 10); among these materials are texts and artifacts. Creswell (2007), likewise, names the collection of documents as one of four basic sources of data for qualitative studies, alongside interviews, observations, and audiovisual data. Accordingly, participants of this study were invited to share any relevant texts or artifacts related to their coursework in which they engaged in plurilingual practices. While discussions of plurilingual participants’ practices involved a variety of texts, participants most commonly shared their class notes, as other texts were not preserved or plurilingual practices which were present in drafts were erased in the course of becoming a final version for submission in a course. Beyond participants’ created texts, items such as bilingual dictionaries or instructional videos were shared by participants. In most cases, participants shared these texts and artefacts during the interview as an illustration of the plurilingual practices that were discussed. In a vein similar to the visual methodology of photo elicitation (Margolis & Zunjarwad, 2018; Prosser, 2011), these materials also served the purpose of further informing a line of

inquiry during interviews with participants. Some participants shared texts in the days following their interview; in these instances, member checking was employed through follow-up questions if any clarifications were needed on what the content of the texts or artefacts represented or meant to the participants.

For ethical purposes, all participants were carefully and clearly informed that they were under no obligation to provide texts or artefacts and should only share what they were comfortable with. Participants were also given a consent form in advance, which included a consent to make or receive copies of artifacts and an explanation of procedures to maintain privacy and anonymity. The form was created in consultation with, and approved by, the institution's Office of Research Ethics.

4.3.3. Observations and Field Notes

Observation is another core technique for collecting data in qualitative studies (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011; Bratich, 2018; Creswell, 2007; Emerson et al., 2001; Mason, 2018). Emerson et al. (2001) describe the practice of observation as "establishing a place in some natural setting on a relatively long-term basis in order to investigate, experience and represent the social life and social processes that occur in that setting" (p. 352). The observer's status in the context may range from strict observer to participant observer, and they may be considered an insider, outsider, or oscillate somewhere between these positions. A researcher may also make use of field notes to document relevant occurrences while observing. There are several important considerations that go into the process of taking field notes. The researcher must make decisions regarding such issues as whether to take notes while observing or immediately after leaving the research site, whether notes should be taken openly or in a more secretive manner, and how extensive and detailed the notes will be (Creswell, 2007; Emerson et al., 2001).

As with interviews, one ethical concern with regard to observations and field notes is the need to accurately represent the phenomena being explored. Mason (2018) notes that one reason for engaging in observation can be a belief that "the kind of *data you require are not available in other forms* or ways" (p. 143). An example given by Mason is the belief that retroactive descriptions of practices may be lacking or inadequate. However, Mason (2018) also stresses the importance of being "reflexive

and self-critical about your own ability to transcend the partiality of any perspective of a setting" (p.143).

For this study, my observations came through my role as a lecturer in the faculty, making me a participant-observer. This meant that I had the benefit of strong familiarity with the context, including course structure, content, and assignments, which assisted with contextualizing occurrences. However, in keeping with my agreement with the institution, I did not directly collect data from students currently enrolled in my courses. As such, observations and field notes that have informed the research in this thesis most frequently took the form of reflections on general student practices that I have observed in my time in the context. In a lesser number of cases, I will present observations related to a specific occurrence in class or interaction with a student; however, this will only be done in cases where the student who is a party to the occurrence has later agreed to be a participant in the study and has the opportunity to share their perspective on the phenomena. Through critical reflexivity and consulting directly with participants on the practices that I have observed, I have endeavored to minimize the potential for misrepresentation.

4.4. Data Analysis

Qualitative researchers often pursue an inductive approach to analysis (Creswell, 2007; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Inductive analysis "is the process of observing a number of instances in order to say something general about the given class of instances" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). This process differs from deductive analysis, which typically begins with a testable hypothesis and then seeks to disprove it through controlled testing. Deductive analysis, which is typical of research in the hard sciences, is more closely associated with positivist approaches to research whereby a theory is first established and then tested through experiment. While deductive analysis could be described as "top-down," Creswell (2007) calls inductive analysis "bottom-up" (p. 38), in that it "involves researchers working back and forth between the themes and the database, until they establish a comprehensive set of themes" (p. 39). Similarly, Mason (2018) simplifies the difference by delineating deductive as "theory comes first" and inductive as "theory comes last" (p. 228).

A common inductive approach is found in *grounded theory* (GT), an approach developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). In the opening to their edited volume on GT, Bryant and Charmaz (2007) describe it as a method "designed to encourage researchers' persistent interaction with their data, while remaining constantly involved with their emerging analyses" (p. 1). A simplification of the idea of GT would hold that it allows the theories to emerge from the data; however, the ability for theory to self-emerge without contamination from a researchers' pre-existing knowledge, experience, and ideas has been pushed back against (Reichertz, 2007; Mason, 2018). In practice, GT may frequently also have elements of abductive reasoning, in which other established concepts and the researchers' experiences are also crucial elements in the back and forth between data and theory development. In the words of Mason (2018):

> I would argue that researchers with widely differing theoretical orientations do actually engage in the practice, associated with abductive reasoning, of iteratively moving back and forth between the data, experience and wider concepts, whether or not they always explicitly recognize this as part of their research strategy (p. 229).

In approaching the data analysis for this research, it has been my intention to remain open-minded about the themes in the data; however, I acknowledge that this research has not taken place in a *theoretical vacuum* (Mason, 2018) unaffected by my developing theories or understanding of existing related concepts.

In analyzing data, I categorized themes through a process of *coding* (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Creswell, 2007). This coding began with simple steps, such as making notes in the margins of interview transcripts and field notes. The coding has moved through stages, beginning with *open* coding, in which rough categories were formed. Engaging in open coding means entering the analysis without pre-set themes or categories, allowing for unexpected themes to emerge. This was followed by *axial* coding, "in which the researcher identifies one open coding category to focus on (called the "core" phenomenon), and then goes back to the data" (Creswell, 2007, p. 64) to further analyze around this phenomenon. From this point, the most compelling themes were selected for discussion and theorization in this thesis.

Coding is not without its criticism or ethical issues. MacLure (2013) articulated the issue with researchers simplifying the utterances and actions of others into codes, writing that "coding does little to prevent the arrogation of interpretive mastery to the

analyst” (p. 168). Discussing the coding of interviews, Brinkmann (2018) similarly notes an ethical concern exists in the fact that the interviewer has sole control of the interpretation of data. While a valid and important concern, coding can still be a valuable approach to data analysis when precautions are taken to collaborate “with the participants actively, so that they have a chance to shape the themes or abstractions that emerge from the process” (Creswell, 2007, p. 39). I have endeavored to engage in such collaboration at all stages of this research, including through reflexivity and acknowledgment of the biases or preconceived notions that I bring into data analysis and in member checking (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Creswell, 2007), both within interviews and in the data analysis phase, when clarifications were needed. And in reporting themes, participants’ voices have been prioritized to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that the final product of the research best represents the experiences and perspectives of the participants. On a number of occasions, this process included follow-up communications and, in one case, a short follow-up interview. During these, I sought both additional information on themes that I identified as salient and confirmation (or correction) of my interpretation of participants’ intentions with their words and perspectives.

4.5. Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

As Creswell (2007) notes, “qualitative researchers today are much more self-disclosing about their qualitative writings…no longer is it acceptable to be the omniscient, distanced qualitative writer” (p. 178). As researchers, it is important to be *reflexive*, such as by seeking to understand and be transparent about what we bring to the table, what we are doing, and our reasons for doing so (Altheide & Johnson, 2011; Creswell, 2007; Mason, 2018). Mason (2002) encourages *active reflexivity*, involving habitually “scrutinizing your own changing perspectives and assumptions” (p. 22). This means being critical of your own actions as researcher and asking “difficult questions” (Mason, 2002, p. 4) of yourself. Lin (2015c) adds to this discussion by encouraging researchers to begin by exploring the following questions:

- Why (do you do) research? What kinds of interest motivate you?
- What kind of knowledge will you produce?

- What is the possible impact of your research (or the knowledge that you will produce), and for whom?
- Is there any value-free or interest free research? Why/Why not? (p. 22)

These complex questions raise important implications for research and required me to be transparent and reflexive in all stages of this thesis research.

4.5.1. Power and Privilege

As acknowledged in the opening chapters, my positionality in this study is complex. I began my work with West Coast Canadian Business School in a teaching assistant role, focused on language support. Some participants of this study came to know me in that role. For others, I had already advanced into the role of lecturer. For most participants, I had at one point directly evaluated their work in these roles. With a few, I did not share a classroom, but they knew me to be part of the faculty in their department. This contributes further to the power imbalances discussed above in the interviewer-interviewee dynamic. While the participants of this study and I share experiences around living abroad and language learning, which at times was evident in the interviews; this does not necessarily mean that they have viewed me as insider to their experiences. Moreover, my desire to be student-focused as an educator and the actions I take to minimize feeling of distance (being highly available, encouraging first name address) do not, in reality, mean that the power balance has been minimized.

Furthermore, it has been necessary for me to be reflexive regarding the privilege I experience as White, male, English speaker. A compelling argument has been made that too often efforts to improve equity in education have focused solely on the marginalization of minority groups, rather than examining the role of the dominant culture; as Levine-Rasky (2000) argues, “interrogating whiteness emerges with the realization that the failure of equity education initiatives is attributable to a misidentification of change object” (p. 272). To be a change agent towards a more equitable higher education experience, as is my goal, it is vital to reflect on and acknowledge the privilege that I have in this context (and many others). In her influential essay on the “invisible knapsack” of privileges that are carried by white individuals, McIntosh (2017, originally published in 1989) notes many of the ways, both large and small, that people with privilege experience daily life differently than those without it.

McIntosh argues that people with privilege too often have been influenced by dominant culture to feel that their privileges are natural and attributable to things such as being a good person, without problematizing these privileges in relation to those who do not have them. Building on McIntosh's ideas, Vandrick (2015) offers a similar list of the privileges that are not afforded to most American university students for whom English is not a first language – a list which broadly applies to participants of this study who are students at a Canadian university. The list includes what should be basic affordances to all students, such as "I can expect that my professors and fellow students will hear what I say and not just how I say it" and "my classes are not usually labeled *remedial, service courses, precollege courses*, or *skills courses* simply because the students enrolled in them are multilingual" (p. 57).

Critical reflection on my own experiences, including those that may have some overlap with the participants of this study, reveal the privilege that I carried with me in many scenarios. My first move abroad, for example, was to Tokyo, Japan. I moved to Tokyo with a guaranteed job teaching English and business communication at a well-respected university. Though I could feel myself positioned as an outsider in many situations, I rarely experienced discrimination; conversely, it could be said that my privileged position as a white American male often translated into that context. Likewise, the international prestige of English has meant that I have on many occasions had people apologize to me for not speaking English well, even while in their country where it is my language skills that are lacking. Even in items from Vandrick's (2015) work where I did lack privilege afforded to the dominant culture, remedies were made available to me. An example of this is item 19, "landlords are not wary of me because of my nationality or privilege" (Vandrick, 2015, p. 58). In Japan, landlords may deny housing to foreign individuals without penalty, and this is a struggle for many – I witnessed a friend with non-Japanese Asian heritage break down in tears during a housing search. However, I bypassed any issues with this, as my university provided subsidized housing to me as part of my contract to teach – a contrast which attests to my privileged status as both white and English-speaking. In a final example, I did experience racial profiling by police in Japan - a topic that has recently been gaining greater recognition (Kasai, 2024; Kim & Ueno, 2024). On the most notable occasion, I was walking down a busy street after meeting a Japanese colleague for dinner when a police car pulled up next to me with lights flashing. The officers stepped out and stopped me, asking for my identification.

While this experience was jarring, the police officers were also quite polite and enthusiastically complimented my Japanese skills. Here too, my privilege shows, in that I was certainly stopped by police less often than other visible minorities in Japan may be. Kasai (2024) reports that residents from Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East were most likely to be stopped. Moreover, given the continuing problems with racial profiling in my own home country – an unfortunate number of which end with discriminatory application of the law or even violence and tragedy – there is again a clear contrast with my own personal experience with this issue.

Many positives have come from my time living abroad, especially in Japan and Hungary. This includes the development of my plurilingual competence, the opportunity to reflect on my experiences in American culture from abroad, and gaining a small appreciation for the experience of being a visible minority. However, I often maintained my privilege, even abroad. And uncritically extrapolating my experiences to mean that I have an inherent understanding of, and commonality with, the experiences of my participants would be an error. In fact, significant research has established the issues with whiteness, native-speaker bias, and the overall privilege attached to English in TESOL contexts, including (but certainly not limited to) in Japan (Appleby, 2016; Kachru, 1997; Kim & Lee, 2017; Kubota, 2011; Kubota & Lin, 2006).

Reflexivity about my privilege is crucial for this research, not insignificantly because of the co-generational aspect of knowledge produced from interviews. In my teaching, I seek to create an environment in which students feel empowered to share their experiences and knowledge – at times, taking on the expert role in the classroom. With plurilingual and international students, I highlight that I have also lived abroad and understand the experience of being a language learner. I have high expectations for myself when it comes to being approachable and creating an accepting and respectful learning environment in my classrooms. When it comes to student evaluations, it is measures of such categories that I care most about and take the most pride in – though, even here, I must acknowledge privilege, as research has shown a bias in favor of both white and male instructors on such evaluations (Chavez & Mitchell, 2020; MacNell, et al., 2015). As a researcher, I carry a similar posture and may benefit from displays of empathy and the rapport building work that I have done as instructor. However, while I may hold both a sympathetic and empathetic posture towards the participants in my research due to certain overlaps in experience, it is important to avoid “unfounded

assumptions to be able to act as the students' representative" (Ilieva, 2014, p. 78). In the research described in this thesis, I have endeavored to interrogate my own privilege to minimize bias and allow the participants to be their own representatives, through their own voices and the perspectives that they have shared.

4.6. Ethical Considerations

The research described in this thesis has been approved by the university's office of research ethics as a study with "minimal risk." This approval was gained after submitting a detailed description of the research plans and carefully implementing ethical guidelines, such as in designing recruitment scripts and the interview and artifact collection consent form and outlining procedures for maintenance of privacy and anonymity. To maintain the confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms are used throughout this document, as introduced in the table of participants in section 4.2 (above). Moreover, to further protect against the possible identification of participants, the names of institutions that they currently study at or have studied at have been changed, as have the course numbers and names of any classes referenced in the course of interviews. All participants have completed consent forms which outline these confidentiality procedures, including their right to withdraw their consent at any point in the study.

Despite the designation as minimal risk, continued diligence has been given to the ethics of the study, given the unavoidable issues around power and representation (discussed above). As Mason (2018) argues, "you must be aware that 'the Ethics Committee' is not all there is to research ethics, and especially that you will need to exercise situated ethical judgement" (p. 86). In this research, there has not been an intention to directly question participants about potentially traumatic experiences; however, I have entered into my interactions with participants without naivety about the potential for there to be trauma or discomfort associated with transnational movements or the deficit discourses which participants may have been subject to. In interviews, I made situated judgements about pursuing topics that may be sensitive for participants. In most cases, my focus on practical use of language in daily life and learning meant there would be little benefit to lines of questioning on more serious and potentially traumatic topics. At the start of each interview, participants were encouraged to share only what they were comfortable with; when participants did raise sensitive topics, I have

striven to approach those discussions with the care and caution due to individuals who are vulnerably sharing their life experiences.

Acknowledging that prevention of harm can never be fully guaranteed, this study has been designed with the intention of bringing benefit to participants, as well as the researcher and community. For myself as a researcher, this thesis represents the final step in my PhD and an opportunity to hone my skills as a scholar. For participants, taking part in the study has provided an opportunity to share the experiences and challenges they face as plurilingual students in an English dominant context. Moreover, the intention of the study is to contribute to the understanding of how plurilingual students engage with discourses around language, especially those which may be harmful (e.g., deficit and English-only discourses), and to suggest implications for improving pedagogy to better facilitate an equitable learning environment.

4.7. Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the methodology and procedures for this research, including data generation and analysis. This thesis takes a qualitative approach which embraces the subjective perspectives and experiences of the participants. It has been designed around interviews as a primary data generation technique, which can help reveal students' practices across time and contexts. Moreover, interviews offer an opportunity to build a better understanding not only of how participants use their linguistic resources, but also what motivates or constrains those choices. Through focusing on participants' perspectives and experiences, this study aims to deepen the understanding of the experiences of plurilingual students in English-dominant university contexts.

As acknowledged frequently in this chapter, there are certain potential ethical concerns related to qualitative research. Understanding these concerns, I have taken great care to avoid harm to participants or misrepresentation of their experiences and beliefs. In closing this chapter, I acknowledge that diligent attention to all factors of research is crucial, and I have approached this project with a concern for "quality of craftmanship" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 283). Moreover, as Brinkmann & Kvale (2015) rightfully note, "based on the quality of his or her past research in the area, the credibility of the researcher is an important aspect of fellow researchers ascribing validity

to the findings reported” (p. 283). I understand this thesis research project, as part of the requirements of my doctoral degree, to be a crucial step in establishing my credibility as a researcher and have approached all aspects with the diligence required to match that reality.

Chapter 5.

Data Analysis (Part 1)

Data analysis will be presented in two chapters, with each divided into sections oriented around one or more aspects of the research questions established in the introduction. In this first data analysis chapter, I will address themes related to the first research question:

> **RQ1:** How and why do participants use languages in their daily lives (in non-academic contexts)?

Within this question, I will also consider the sub-question of how participants' language use – and conceptualization of language use – relates to theories of bi-/multi-/plurilingualism, as well as consider the role of discourses and the performance of identity. Exploring these questions will help to establish a baseline understanding of participants' language competences and their practices, which may serve as a useful comparison point with their language practices in learning (to be discussed in chapter 6). Moreover, it is important to understand the constraints on language practices that participants experience, such as those that may result from societal discourses around language use; these too may impact the learning habits of the participants. The data presented in this chapter comes primarily from participant interviews, with supplementation from follow-up discussions and conducted through email and one instance of a short follow-up interview. As salient themes are presented below, a strong emphasis will be given to the participants' own words and explanations of their experiences, practices and beliefs, while also analyzing these through the lens of the relevant theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3. As interview excerpts are presented, a system of two dots ("..") will be used to indicate a speaker self-correcting or being interrupted by their interlocutor. Three dots ("…"), a standard ellipsis, will be indicative of the omission of a word or words from the original quote.

This chapter will be divided into two subsections. The first section (5.1) will primarily focus on how participants report using language in their daily lives. It will include descriptions of practices both in Canada and, in some instances, participants' countries of origin. Consideration will also be given to what participants' responses

reveal about their conceptualization of the nature of language and its use. In the second section (5.2), I will discuss areas in which participants' experiences and beliefs more directly reflect an engagement with discourses around language use, such as what it means to be bi/multi/plurilingual, or raise topics related to identity. The intention behind this ordering is to first establish a baseline idea of language competences and use, and then to delve into a deeper exploration of how discourse, agency, and constraint may be shaping participants' practices. Within both 5.1 and 5.2, data will be presented in sub-sections oriented around the experiences and perspectives of one or more core participants for whom the themes were most salient. The experiences of other participants may also be shared, to a lesser extent, to further confirm the importance and/or prevalence of a topic. The chapter will conclude with a synthesis of ideas shared by participants.

5.1. Daily Language Use: Conceptualizations, Plurilingual Interactions & Transnationalism

At the start of each interview, I began by asking participants what languages they used in their daily lives, and the role that each language played. While intended first and foremost as a baseline from which to compare to the role (or lack thereof) of languages other than English in participants' learning (the topic of the following chapter), the responses also served to highlight other relevant themes, including their conceptualization of their language practices, histories of plurilingual interactions, and diaspora and transnational networks. These themes will be explored below, in sections oriented around the participants Simu, Leila, Cynthia & Esther, Yen & Lan, Rita & Asha, and Zohreh & Linda.

5.1.1. Simu: Clear and Distinct Zones of Language Use

In some interviews, participants' initial descriptions of their daily language practices were presented in a fairly simplified manner. These presentations often involved separation of languages into different domains of use, and few (if any) mentions of hybrid practices. However, as interviews progressed, my additional questions and participants' continued reflection often led to a deeper interrogation of their own practices, and further complexity and hybridity often emerged. My discussion with Simu

illustrates this negotiation of language practices that occurred over the course of the interviews and, in Simu's case, into a follow-up conversation:

> Interviewer: I usually just start with something simple, which is can you remind me about the languages that you speak?
>
> Simu: I do speak Mandarin and Cantonese and some Shanghainese, it's like a dialect in Shanghai, but it's not as popular as Mandarin and Cantonese. And some subcategory in Cantonese, like there are like thousands of them. But I can speak two or three of them, yeah. And English, of course.
>
> Interviewer: And…first, just like on a daily basis right now in your life in Vancouver, what role do different languages play? How much are you using English? And in what situations? How much are you using Mandarin or Cantonese and in what situations are you using those languages?
>
> Simu: In my personal life, it's Mandarin based like most of the time. Because it's the most convenient way to communicate with most people around me. But in social life, I have to communicate in English, so that's the primary way to contact like in school or in a in classroom with my classmates and stuff…And even if we meet like a Chinese friends in the school, we still prefer to use English...like it's school zone, and the friend zone, and family zone there. Kinda clear. Very distinct.

While Simu describes having a linguistic repertoire made up of quite a few different competences, he also presents a compartmentalized view of his use of languages. While he hedges somewhat with the use of wordings including "most," "primary," and "kinda," his response is oriented around different "zones" of language use, and he goes as far as to describe the delineations as "clear" and "distinct." This conceptualization of practices strongly emphasizes discrete uses of language. Certainly, plurilingual individuals may choose to use language in discrete ways – Lee and Marshall (2012) discuss the idea that an individual may "perform monolingually in specific contexts" (p. 65) when it is necessary or to their advantage. However, it is notable that Simu's initial description of practices highlights the separation; Piccardo (2019) argues that "plurilingualism and pluriculturalism, on the contrary, have been conceptualized since their appearance to stress permeability and porosity of languages and cultures" (p. 189-190). As such, a plurilingual view of practices may instead highlight how Simu's languages come together as components of a more unified communicative competence which he may draw on flexibly, including in a hybrid manner (Council of Europe, 2001; Marshall & Moore, 2018; Marshall, 2021).

As the interview continued, Simu and I had an opportunity to discuss theories of language. Simu engaged enthusiastically in this discussion and asked for clarifications and examples. We discussed the idea that delineation between languages can often be a societal and political distinction. To illustrate this idea, I shared the example of how Mandarin is often considered standard Chinese with Cantonese labeled as dialect of Chinese – despite the two having very little mutual intelligibility, at least phonologically. This conversation led into an opportunity to discuss the nature of language and how it is used in practice. As we did so, Simu began to reflect more on the hybridity in his own practice:

Simu: Yes, yes. Especially, when…you talk about the different language in one conversation. Like in my family, my parents speak Cantonese, and I'll respond in Mandarin, and we have no problem in communication. It's like you speak English, and then I reply you in Mandarin…But I never thought that was like kind of irregular stuff. It's kinda like abnormal like you speak one language, and then the other one just reply with the completely different language, and then you have no problem communicating.

Interviewer: Yeah, but in the real world, it's very normal. People do it every day, all the time..

Simu: Yeah, so we don't notice that.

In the discussion above, I led Simu through a co-constructed example of how societal ideas around language can be oversimplified, through the use of something familiar to him: Mandarin and Cantonese simplified as "Chinese," despite low mutual (spoken) intelligibility. I sought to make a connection from this point to the simplification of language practices of plurilingual individuals. Simu acknowledged that he had "never like thought this matter in this way," and began to offer examples of his language practices that don't have the clear and distinct language use zones from his previous framing. His presentation of interactions in his family in this exchange may still fall short of hybridity; he discusses each interlocutor as using one language, though a different one than their partner. Still, this specific form of communication – the use of multiple languages in an interaction, and each speaker drawing on different aspects of their competences to navigate an imperfect overlap in language competence or preference – is consistent with the ideas of plurilingualism (Council of Europe, 2001). Simu's presentation of these interactions also belies how language is truly used around the world. In a relevant point, Moore and Gajo (2009) discuss how outdated understandings

of bi/multilingualism and native-speakerism have “obscured the normalcy of bilingualism almost everywhere” (p. 139). Simu’s description of these situations as “irregular” and “abnormal” may be evidence of the dominances of the discourses that Moore and Gajo highlight.

However, Simu also demonstrates an openness to rethinking his conceptualization of language practices. And in our final interaction, a follow-up message several months after the interview, he shares this:

> Simu: Ever since the interview, I occasionally paid attention to language usage…it’s interesting to find that my family has seven spoken languages (2 languages and 5 dialects). One of our leisure activities is to mix them together in one sentence/conversation to create kind of a trolling effect. Though such conversations sound funny, we get quite used to extract meanings without translating any language from another. This has also trained me to adapt and switch languages more smoothly.

While presented as a comedic practice, Simu’s closing thought does ultimately demonstrate true hybridity in his use of language. Furthermore, his framing of these interactions as training that benefits him through development of adaptability are consistent with the Council of Europe’s (2001) ideas of both plurilingual and pluricultural competence, a core feature of which is the development of flexibility to adapt to different linguistic and cultural scenarios. Within this flexible use of language, there is also a strong element of creativity, as Simu’s family’s practices illustrate. Piccardo (2017) writes of plurilingualism that it “integrates the idea of imbalance, adopts a perspective of development and dynamism, and encourages risk-taking through a flexible and creative use of the language” (p. 5) and continues on to discuss “creativity in appropriating language” (p. 8). In the comedic interactions described by Simu, the family’s intentionally hybrid interactions can be seen as taking ownership of the languages they speak and their ability to use them creatively.

5.1.2. Leila: It’s Hard to Speak Completely English with Her; Language Use as 50/50

Leila was among a group of participants who enthusiastically responded to my opening questions about her languages and experiences in different cultures, speaking for several minutes without my interjection. As I attempted to refocus the

discussion towards how she uses language in her present, daily life, she described a separation of languages similar to Simu's:

> Interviewer: So, these days in your daily life, what languages are you using regularly and in what spaces?
>
> Leila: Uhm, so that's like actually such an interesting question. Because like I'm in my own space, kind of. It's just me and my mom…With my mom is mostly like Farsi. We barely like speak English even though my mom is studying English right now, but it's still…so hard to speak like completely English with her because she wouldn't understand. So, with her like fully Farsi. And then with my friends like, uhm, my friends are all like speaking English. I don't have many friends who speaks Farsi…it's kind of like a 50/50, I would say, proportion of language.

Leila downplays the degree to which she uses language in hybrid manner, as can be seen in her description of her interactions with her mom – which she describes first as "mostly like Farsi" and shortly after as "like fully Farsi." Additionally, the framing of her description of interactions with her mother ("it's so hard to speak like completely English with her"), alongside her mention that her mom is studying English, suggests an assumption that the natural goal of her mother's study of English is to use only this language. This implication may be a reflection of commonly held goals of language learning in which the idealized native speaker is the ultimate target of comparison – a goal which plurilingualism pushes back against (Coste et al., 2009; Council of Europe, 2001; Moore & Gajo, 2009). In fact, the Council of Europe (2001) clearly sets out a different goal for language learning from a plurilingual perspective:

> The aim of language education is profoundly modified. It is no longer seen as simply to achieve 'mastery' of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the 'ideal native speaker' as the ultimate model. Instead, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place (p. 5).

Leila also summarizes her language use as "50/50" English and Farsi, a fairly simplistic description of language practices. It may be worth noting that, while not as explicitly stated as Simu (in the section above) who directly acknowledged not having deeply interrogated his language practices, Leila does flag my question about language use as "that's like actually such an interesting question." Perhaps, this can be read as a

similar acknowledgement of not previously having given careful thought to her language practices.

5.1.3. Cynthia & Esther: Friends and Language Use

The framing of language use in percentages was not limited to Leila's response to initial questions but was a recurring theme across several participants. For some participants, the use of percentages may have resulted from a co-construction of knowledge in which their short answers prompted my ever more specific follow-up questions to draw out further information. My discussion with Cynthia illustrates this well. After my opening line of general questions did not result in extended answers from Cynthia, I asked more directly about her language use in daily life.

> Interviewer: And what would you say, you know, in a normal day or a normal week, how much Mandarin do you use? How much English?
>
> Cynthia: Uh, I think like maybe half English, half Mandarin. 'Cause like my classmates... in the classroom, I sit with my friends. And most of my friends are Chinese. Yeah, like even I have some like foreigner friends, but like we don't talk too much compared with like my Chinese friends. And I always take course with my Chinese friends, and we like…definitely, we will use like our home language like to communicate with each other. Yeah, and even for the course concepts.

While some participants responded to questions with depth, Cynthia gave rather short answers, prompting me to seek further information through more scaffolded questioning. As part of this, I asked "how much" she uses each of her languages. While it may not be a surprise that this simplified question resulted in a simple answer, her response does still frame her practices as compartmentalized. In Cynthia's description, English is for "foreigner friends." It is unclear whether Cynthia is here referring to non-Canadian friends or to friends who are foreign from her perspective, meaning not Chinese. In either case, this seems to be a reference to non-speakers of Chinese. In contrast, when talking with Chinese friends, even about course content, Mandarin is the preferred language. Choosing a language based on interlocutor is both logical and in-line with the tenets of plurilingualism; the Council of Europe (2001) notes that "person can call flexibly upon different parts of this competence to achieve effective communication with a particular interlocutor" (p. 4). However, there is still some degree

of continuation of the theme that conceptualizations presented by participants early in their interviews tended to be characterized by their highlighting of the delineations of language use, rather than the hybridity. In contrast, a plurilingual lens would view as equally important the moments when Cynthia and her Mandarin-speaking friends do use English to communicate or discuss coursework or where Mandarin serves to help mediate communication, for example with a classmate from China who speaks a different language or dialect . Plurilingualism emphasizes that a speaker "builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 4). In the opening part of our interview, Cynthia also mentions briefly that she had learned some French. However, she quickly dismisses the importance of that experience, calling her knowledge "just like daily language" and saying that she has forgotten most of it. Through a plurilingual lens, this experience could also be seen as quite valuable; the development of even basics skills in French could, for example, facilitate a successful interaction with French-speaking interlocutors in Canada, where French is one of two official languages.

Discussions with other participants also followed a similar pattern to Cynthia's description of language use, as illustrated by this exchange with Esther:

> Interviewer: Well, let's just say now your life at [university]. Are you using Mandarin regularly? I mean do you have like friends who are also [university] students who you communicate a lot in Mandarin or is it mostly English or what does that look like for you?
>
> Esther: I would actually say it's half Mandarin, half English. Like part of the reason is because I'm already pretty fluent in English, so that I don't have any troubles like making friends who only speaks English.

Esther similarly discusses her use of languages in percentages and presents the same delineation as Cynthia in which English is primarily for those who don't speak Mandarin. However, for Esther, some of the division of languages was intentional. She discussed being approached by some Chinese international students who, seeing her strong English skills, sought her help, which she described as "almost like unethical tutoring, in a sense." Themes, such as this, around language hybridity (or lack thereof) in learning contexts will be further discussed in the following chapter (6).

5.1.4. Yen & Lan – No Separation Exists Between Languages

While some participants slowly built towards a more nuanced discussion of their language use, others quickly brought up the hybridity in their practices. Yen's perspectives offer a good example of how simplified conceptualizations of language sometimes quickly gave way. My discussion with Yen starts similarly to the those in the section above – asking about what languages she speaks. Interesting, much as Cynthia had done, Yen discusses learning French in school but immediately discounts it as a language that she "used to speak a little bit of." As the discussion focuses in on the languages that she uses most, Yen also puts her language use in percentages and mostly delineates it cleanly based on interlocutor:

> Interviewer: OK, so, primarily Vietnamese and English. And I usually also like to start out kind of basic and just ask…just in your daily life, how much do you use English? How much do you use Vietnamese?
>
> Yen: Oh uhm, I feel like even now here when I'm here in Canada, I still use Vietnamese for most of my daily activities just because I hang out with a lot of Vietnamese friends. And also, I don't really have that many Canadian friends at all. So, most of the time when I call home, uhm, or just hang out with my friends, I will be using Vietnamese a lot…even though [I am] here in Canada, I only use English for like 40% of my time, I think.

Yen's initial comments suggest a separation of languages into specific areas of her life. This separation is matched by Yen's separation of friends into either Vietnamese or Canadian – a potentially false dichotomy that doesn't account for Vietnamese Canadians with whom she may interact or have friendships. To explore this idea further, I framed my follow-up question in those terms. Yen's response reveals more complexity in her language practices:

> Interviewer: Are there certain areas of your life where you kind of tend to use Vietnamese and maybe some other areas of your life where you tend to use English? Is there kind of a separation into different aspects of your life?
>
> Yen: Uhm, not really, I suppose. Uhm, for now, I know that I'm trying to make some connection to get a job and the manager in the job is actually Vietnamese. And we try to use Vietnamese around each other a lot. But that is just for now. But because I feel like most of the people I know here in Canada also speak both languages, so we kind of mix them together. Like, yeah,

> when we talk to each other we kind of mix them together and there's no separation between two languages for me.

Yen's acknowledgement of frequent mixing of language and conclusion that "there's no separation between two languages for me" is consistent with the idea that a speaker with multiple competences "does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 4). In contrast to other participants' early conceptions of language use, Yen highlights an instance where there is not much hybridity as an exception and an intentional choice ("we try to use Vietnamese around each other a lot"), and highlights that mixing languages together is the norm for most of her interactions with friends who share her languages.

Similar themes emerged in my discussion with Lan, another Vietnamese speaking participant. The trajectory of the initial discussion of her language use also began in a simplified manner, but quickly moved into an acknowledgement of hybridity:

> Lan: If I'm in Canada, I would say I use mostly English, 'cause I'm not staying with any like Vietnamese students and…Vietnamese people. And I'm also going to class and I'm doing all my classes in English. So, mostly in English, but I also…message Vietnamese friends and stuff. So, I still use Vietnamese. And when I talk with my family, I still use Vietnamese. And when I go like back home it would be like 100% Vietnamese.

Similar to Yen, Lan's initial description of practices is quite segmented. Use of English is explained by the English environment of the university and the fact that she does not live with any Vietnamese roommates. Likewise, Vietnamese is used when in Vietnam or messaging Vietnamese friends. However, this clean division quickly erodes as we discuss her language use further:

> Interviewer: OK, so let's start with here in Canada. So, there's a little bit of Vietnamese?
>
> Lan: Yeah…only when I hang out with Vietnamese friends and when I text with them, then I would use Vietnamese…The thing is, it's kind of interesting how, uh, most of my friends…also know English pretty well. So, sometimes we would use English even though we're like both Vietnamese, we can understand Vietnamese. But since…we're studying in like a foreign country, we're using English in like our daily life. Sometimes, we just like talk to each other in English 'cause it's like easier to express

some kind of ideas in English and not in Vietnamese. Yeah, for some reason, I don't know why, but yeah.

Lan seems to mark the hybridity in her practices as something unusual – qualifying these practices with "it's kind of interesting" and "for some reason, I don't know why" – when, in fact, this hybridity is a natural way for plurilingual speakers with overlapping competences to communicate (Council of Europe, 2001, 2018; Marshall and Moore 2018; Piccardo 2013, Piccardo 2017). In a study on the effects of plurilingual instruction in an EAP context in Canada, Galante (2020) observes initial surprise among students when they are encouraged to draw on their full linguistic repertoires; she posits that "their creative language use had not been previously validated" (p. 569). Lan was certainly not alone amongst the participants in this research in having difficulty expressing why she fluidly and creatively drew on her linguistic repertoire. And, as discussed above, some participants even struggled to recognize their hybrid use of language until we further interrogated their practices in the interviews. It may be that many of the participants of this thesis research had commonality with the participants of Galante's (2020) research, in that their creative use of language had not often been validated.

Interestingly, in asking both Yen and Lan for further examples of their hybrid language practices, their responses were markedly similar. Both gave the example of moving from Vietnamese to English in order to express emotion:

> Interviewer: What does that look like for you? Like can you give an example of something typical for one of those interactions?
>
> Yen: When I'm gossiping with my friends, for example…I'm telling her like a statement or like a fact that I just found out and I will, uh, throw in some phrases like "what the heck is that?" or "I cannot believe that." Something like that. And then continue with my Vietnamese gossiping story…I feel like if something is pretty extreme, I will use English for that, but if it's kind of normal, I won't. I use Vietnamese.

~

> Interviewer: If you had to like kind of think about it, can you give any examples of a situation where English is easier?
>
> Lan: I'm not used to express my emotions in Vietnamese. So, like things like "oh, I love you" or like "I really like you," and like "I really like how you did that" and stuff. So, I'm not used to…like expressing that in Vietnamese. So, normally when I like…write

an appreciation post or…wish them like a happy birthday and…saying like, "oh yeah, like you've been like a really good friend" and stuff like that…I would tend to write it in English and not in Vietnamese.

Interviewer: Yeah, that that's interesting. Is that a cultural thing? Is it not usual to express those things in Vietnam so directly, or?

Lan: I guess most people in Vietnam, they don't express like emotions that like directly. But some like...some people do. But I guess they wouldn't just go out and say like "I love you" to like you know other people. And like many families, they just don't like between parents and like children, they don't like really say like "I love you" like you know like everyday stuff like that…So, I guess maybe it's a cultural thing…And I I think…a lot of my friends also feel that way like…when they get into kind of like a more like cheesy kind of situation…they would like tend to…write it in English, so that it wouldn't get too weird saying this thing in Vietnamese…so, I find it kind of interesting.

While beyond the scope of this thesis, some research has been done (through a codeswitching lens) on the link between bi/multi/plurilingual individuals' choice of language and expression of emotion (Dewaele, 2010; Javier & Marcos, 1989). It is also worth noting that both examples given were of quite limited mixing of languages. Galante (2020), incorporating terminology from codeswitching into a discussion of plurilingual ideas of hybrid language use, described a variety of ways in which languages may be interspersed. Yen and Lan seem to share examples of *insertion*, "when words of another language are inserted in a sentence" (Galante, 2020, p. 556). These examples stand in contrast to Yen and Lan's explanations of general practices, such as Yen's strong statement about there being no division between her languages. This difficulty in sharing an instance of more thoroughly hybrid use of their linguistic repertoires may reflect the unmarked nature of such use of language for plurilingual individuals. In a plurilingual view, individual language competences come together to form a "composite competence" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 168), with some later works going further by referring to a single or unitary competence (Council of Europe, 2020; Marshall, 2021; Moore & Gajo, 2009); as such, this hybridity is not seen as unusual and something to take note of. Yen and Lan's sharing of discrete instances may also be a continuation of the theme that some participants had some level of difficulty conceptualizing their practices in a hybrid way, perhaps lacking the metalanguage to do so comfortably and quickly (within an interview format).

5.1.5. Rita & Asha – A History of Plurilingual Interactions

Interviews also revealed that some participants grew up in environments where multiple languages were used dynamically and flexibly. Among the participants, Rita and Asha exemplify this, with both establishing their history of plurilingual interactions quickly. Rita shared about her languages and language use enthusiastically from the first question:

> Rita: I basically speak three languages. It's English, Hindi, and Punjabi. And Punjabi is my mother tongue…my parents, they speak Punjabi, but like my sister and my brother, they can't speak Punjabi. They speak Hindi for some reason, because in our school we're always taught, you know, to speak Hindi…And my mom, basically she belongs from East India, Assam side. So, she was also like not good in this language. That's why we have different languages in our house. My mom even speaks Bengali and Manipuri. She knows so many languages. But the first language now she prefers speaking at home is Punjabi. And after coming to Canada, I started conversing more in English.

As can be seen in the excerpt about, Rita's family members have strongly developed plurilingual competences. However, Rita described a situation in which the competences of her family members did not perfectly overlap, and different members had different preferred languages. As such, I followed up to ask what typical interactions between the family looked like:

> Interviewer: I see. These conversations with your family, then, if there's multiple people involved, are you speaking different languages to each other?
>
> Rita: Yeah, I speak Hindi with my brother and sister. And I speak in Punjabi with my mom and dad. So, it's kind of..I mean, I'm used to it.
>
> Interviewer: So, what about an interaction where it's like your brother or sister, you, and your mom? How do you navigate the different languages in that situation?
>
> Rita: Well, between Hindi and Punjabi, they're not that different.

Rita describes switching languages depending on her interlocutor. This presentation of language use, on its surface, may still reflect a view of languages as compartmentalized – using one language with one interlocutor and a different language with another. However, the communication scenarios amongst her family members which Rita

describes - in which there is an imperfect overlap between the language competences and preferred languages of the speakers involved - are in line with plurilingual expectations of how speakers use language use. Though Rita does not explicitly discuss plurilingual mediation in these interactions, this topic did come up in other areas of the conversation. Rita shared how when she was younger, she needed to mediate for her mother by translating school-related texts. Rita undertook this translating so that her mother could help her study for her coursework. As Marshall (2021) writes, “a key feature of interactions that can be defined as plurilingual is the idea that not everyone in a group of speakers needs to understand all of the languages being spoken; in such cases, individuals can carry out mediation roles where gaps in comprehension exist” (p. 47). While Hindi and Punjabi are similar languages – as Rita herself notes – and there is clearly significant overlap between the competences of speakers in the complex interactions Rita describes, these are still valuable experiences that contribute to her plurilingual competence. Comfort with flexibly and dynamically moving between languages and a history of translating for others are skills that can be applied in future plurilingual interactions where lesser overlap in competence may exist. After discussing her language use with her family, I asked about how she uses language in her daily life since coming to Canada:

> Rita: I have a mixed community of my friends. I have both Indian friends and friends from other countries. But mostly I spend time with my Indian friends, and they speak Hindi as well. So, I also converse with them in Hindi. I feel like my first language is kind of turning from Punjabi to Hindi because like most of my friends…are used to speak this language…other than that, my best friend, she's from Iran. She speaks English. So, whenever we are like talking to each other or doing assignments, we converse in English.

While already possessing a strong competence in Hindi, Rita’s comment that her “first language is kind of turning from Punjabi to Hindi” may be an acknowledgement of the changing of her dominant language. Grosjean (2010) discusses how an individual’s dominant language may change over time, arguing that “the waxing and waning of languages is a dynamic process” (p. 85). In this regard, plurilingualism similarly sees an individual’s language competences as dynamic, rather than static, and responsive to the evolving needs of the individual in their social realities (Coste & Simon, 2009; Council of Europe, 2001).

Asha similarly had much to share about the variety of languages that are commonly used in India. She was in India at the time of her interview, which offered an opportunity to discuss her interactions in that context in more depth. As we began the interview, Asha described a similar linguistic repertoire to Rita:

> Asha: Other than English, I speak two main Indian languages, that is Hindi and Punjabi. Yeah, and that's like most widely used in India, like both of them. Although, English is the second language in India. But people prefer to talk in *their own languages* [emphasis added by researcher] because it…varies from state to state.

Of note in the excerpt above is Asha's comment about people in India preferring to speak "their own languages," rather than English. A potential implication of this statement is that English is not seen as belonging to people in India – at least, not in the same ways as languages like Hindi and Punjabi. This implication stands in contrast the reality that "the number of speakers of English in India ranges between 50 and 125 million today – which makes Indian English the second-largest variety of English worldwide" (Mukherjee & Bernaisch, 2020, p. 165). The discussion around ownership of English is both deep and critical. Pennycook (2020) writes of the efforts by fields such as World Englishes "to argue for a vision of English as a language of the Global South. By insisting that English is the property of all" (p. 685). However, Pennycook also highlights the ingrained power structures and need to decolonize English for significant progress to be made in that direction. This issue of ownership raised by Asha is crucial for educators in multilingual contexts; Bourdieu (1977) introduces the concept of "legitimate speakers," arguing that if a speaker lacks a feeling of ownership of a language, there are significant power issues around the right to speak and be heard.

As we continued on to discuss how she used her languages on a daily basis in India, Asha described how interactions with family members often involved navigating different preferred languages due to geographic (place of birth) and demographic (age) differences:

> Asha: Yeah, so, how can I explain it? I use both Hindi and Punjabi, actually. Because if it's with my grandparents, they prefer to speak in Punjabi. But if it's with my parents, they prefer to speak in Hindi. It's just because me and my brother…In India, usually the high schools, it's mandatory for you to speak English because all the textbooks and everything is in English, considering it's the second language in India. So, besides that,

> Hindi is the major language that we speak. But again, it depends from state to state, because in the north side of India it's all Hindi and Punjabi. But if you go to the south side, there's Tamil and then other languages which I don't know about.

In the original interview, we continued on to other topics from this point. However, in a follow-up conversation, I asked Asha if she could further discuss interactions amongst her family, given the variety of languages involved:

> Asha: Coming from India, yes, it's common to have discussions with people, within the family or outside, where they prefer to speak in the language they are comfortable with or overlap with different languages. *It's hard to explain how one can navigate these discussions because, for the most part, it comes naturally* [emphasis added by researcher].

Asha highlights how "natural" it is to flexibly draw on aspects of her linguistic repertoire to navigate plurilingual interactions in her daily life. This indicates that, for her, the movement between languages may not be something that requires a conscious, intentional shift. Instead, her description is consistent with the plurilingual idea of a single, hybrid competence on which a speaker can draw flexibly in complex communication scenarios (Council of Europe, 2001).

Asha continued on to discuss how her parents actively and intentionally used scaffolding strategies to help her develop her linguistic competencies in several Indian languages:

> Asha: I have always communicated in Punjabi with my grandparents since I was a child, so whenever I talk to them, I prefer to use only Punjabi. However, if I'm explaining something to them for which I don't know the Punjabi equivalent, I might use words from either Hindi or English. The scenario is a bit different with my parents, and I feel that the main reason behind that is my schooling. In my high school, students were encouraged to only use Hindi or English and avoid using Punjabi so that students from different provinces feel included. That being said, I do want to mention that Punjabi is only widely used and spoken by people from the Punjab province. Therefore, my parents have always communicated with my brothers and me in those two languages because they were aware that we were more comfortable with them. Since Hindi and Punjabi are somewhat similar, they tried to overlap these languages so that we could also learn how to speak Punjabi at the same time.

Asha then describes the importance of cultural knowledge in navigating interactions in India:

> Asha: While I'm not sure if this applies to all countries or cultures, in India, you can often determine the language a person prefers to speak just by knowing the province or city they belong to and their religion. For instance, if you're talking to someone from New Delhi (the capital of India), you can assume that they would prefer to speak Hindi. So, just by knowing where someone is from, you can pick up on these languages to navigate discussions.

Asha demonstrates an understanding of the importance of cultural knowledge to navigation of plurilingual interactions. This important connection is a core tenet of plurilingualism – with its focus on both plurilingual and pluricultural competence (Coste et al., 2009; Council of Europe, 2001); Previous research, such as Galante's (2020a) exploration of the impact of plurilingual tasks incorporated into an EAP classroom, have demonstrated this importance in educational settings. In reflecting on the plurilingual tasks, the participants of that study identified the importance of pluricultural knowledge in successful intercultural interactions, such as in greetings and instances when there are "values, beliefs and ideas that need to be respected" (Galante, 2020b, p. 572). Asha navigates her plurilingual interactions through a combination of linguistic and cultural competence. Her knowledge of several Indian languages, as well as English, comes together with knowledge of the cultural context of India to inform how she uses her languages in a given interaction. Having developed these skills, Asha can further apply them in other multilingual settings, such as the diverse context of her Canadian university.

In the excerpts from Rita and Asha above, there are clear examples of plurilingual and pluricultural interactions in their conversations with family members in the Indian context. Moreover, while they did not discuss their hybrid interactions in the exact way (or with the same metalanguage) that a text on plurilingualism may explain them, their history of these interactions seemed to offer insight into the topic. In defining plurilingual and pluricultural competence, Coste et al. (2009) highlight the importance of social and family paths, as well as "a high degree of familiarity with otherness" (p. 21). Through interactions in their families, local communities, and the greater Indian context, Rita and Asha have had experiences which have offered opportunities for development of their plurilingual and pluricultural competences and gained a familiarity with such otherness, outside of their own family and language groups.

5.1.6. Zohreh & Linda - Diaspora and Transnational Networks in Metro Vancouver

Some participants chose to share about the role of diaspora and transnational networks in how they used language in their daily lives. The two participants who most explicitly brought up these topics were Zohreh, speaking on the Persian diaspora in Vancouver, and Linda, who shared the role of connections made through Indonesian churches. As I opened the interview with Zohreh, asking about the languages she speaks, she discussed growing up in Iran speaking Farsi and learning some English at her mother's encouragement. As we moved into a discussion of her language use in her current daily life, Zohreh's responses highlighted the strong Iranian community present in British Columbia:

> Zohreh: I speak Farsi, I guess, like except for my Co-op. I think the majority of the day, I just speak Farsi because my family speaks Farsi. My friends speak Farsi. Everywhere I go to restaurants or the stores around me they all speak Farsi. So, that's just Farsi. But English right now, like 90% of my day, I'm speaking English because I'm just at work and most of the customers are not Persian.

According to census data, there are over 62,000 speakers of "Iranian languages" in British Columbia, with a concentration of around 22,000 individuals in the North Shore region of Vancouver alone (Statistics Canada, 2021). The census includes a number of languages in this family, with "Persian languages" (Dari, Iranian Persian, Persian Farsi) being the most common at 57,700 speakers. Speakers of languages such as Kurdish and Pashto are also included, with smaller representations of 2,775 and 1,365 speakers, respectively. The Iranian diaspora and contributions to local culture have been an important discussion in the Greater Vancouver Metro Area, such as in a recent spotlight and panel discussion sponsored by the Museum of North Vancouver (Museum of North Vancouver, n.d.). In Zohreh's comments, the impact of living amongst this diaspora – and, specifically, amongst speakers of Farsi - on the languages that she uses in her daily can be clearly seen.

Zohreh continues on to discuss how she perceives this heavily-Farsi oriented environment around her to be impacting her development of plurilingual competencies:

> Zohreh: I think something that could be more helpful like towards actually learning English, like for communication and

> everything, if I had more English-speaking people around me. So, that would just help with the daily expressions that we use or like the communication…I wish I had more people that they were native, and they knew English since they were born.

In this excerpt, Zohreh's comments may reveal the impact of several prevalent discourses around language. Despite having competence in English strong enough to succeed in a competitive business school at an English-medium university, Zohreh seems to take a deficit perspective towards her current English abilities in discussing needing to actually learn English. Furthermore, she posits that the best way to improve her abilities would be to be surrounded by more native speakers. This final thought stands in contrast to modern perspectives on nativism, including the move away from the idealized native speaker in fields such as plurilingualism (Council of Europe, 2001).

Another important theme that emerged from what Zohreh shared was a dismissal of the lesser developed competences in her linguistic repertoire. Mirroring what was previously shared by Cynthia (5.1.3) and Yen (5.1.4), Zohreh shared that she knows "a bit of French, but that doesn't really count because it's just beginner's level," noting that her mother is a French teacher. This sentiment of minimizing certain aspects of competency was not uncommon in participants' accounts of their language skills. Even so, Zohreh's comments that her French competence "doesn't really count" is notable for its directness, and how it stands at odds with a plurilingual understanding of the value of even partial competences (Council of Europe, 2001). One further notable example of this theme that was shared by a participant came in my interview with Omar, a student from Bangladesh, who had shared on his self-introduction for BIZ 200 that "I also can speak a little Hindi." However, over the course of our interview, it became clear that not only does Omar have a strong command of Hindi, but it sometimes plays an important role in his learning. Omar's perspectives, and other discussion of language in learning, will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

While Zohreh was the participant who most frequently discussed the impact of diaspora on her linguistic development and language use, other participants raised similar themes in more general discussions of transnational networks. Linda, a participant originally from Indonesia, was one such example. The Indonesian-speaking community in British Columbia is fewer in number than the Persian community, with recent census data revealing only 4,080 speakers of Indonesian (Statistics Canada, 2021). A separate category for Malay (365 speakers) was also included; however, while

this is a common language in Indonesia, this count likely also includes many speakers with heritage from Singapore, Brunei, and Malaysia. Beyond this, there is little other data on languages common to Indonesia, as the remainder of census data on Austronesian languages primarily focuses on languages spoken in the Philippines. The final subcategory in this language family "Austronesian languages, n.i.e." (not included elsewhere) had 945 speakers, which may possibly include other languages common in Indonesia such as Javanese or Sundanese. Despite the comparatively small number of Indonesian speakers, Linda reported participating in a tightknit Indonesian community. And her participation in this community impacted the languages that she used in her daily life in Canada:

> Linda: I only speak two languages for now. My mother language is Indonesian, like Bahasa, and also English for my school…in school, obviously, I'm use English all the time. But, also, when I'm taking classes with the other Indonesian, obviously, I'm going to use Bahasa more than I use English with them.

Linda's comments above contrast with what was shared by some other participants about using English while at school. For some previously discussed participants, such as Simu (5.1.1), the university is a place to use English. In contrast, Linda presents as an obvious fact that she would also use Bahasa in that context when with Indonesian friends.

As we discussed further, Linda began to introduce her experience with the Indonesian community in Vancouver:

> Linda: There's lots of Indonesian students, so we Indonesian tend to take classes together…We already have like the community, so we already know like…which people gonna take these classes…and if we know that like those people gonna take the same classes, then yeah, then we're gonna like try to take the same classes with the same instructor.

I followed up on Linda's comments about the community of Indonesian students at the university, asking if there was some kind of official campus group through which they became acquainted. However, Linda instead highlighted the role of church in creating this community:

> Linda: So, the Indonesian community in Vancouver is pretty strong. Probably 'cause like we…like the population of Indonesian in Vancouver is not as much as like the Chinese people or the

> Indian people, so…we kind of tend to have a strong bond. For example, like I kind of go to Indonesian churches there. And my friend also go to the same church as me. So, from that we can like make connection. For example, I'm Christian, but also there's like lots of Indonesian Catholics in [university]. But, because my roommate is Indonesian Catholic, that goes to the Catholic Church, I make connection through my friends to the Indonesian Catholics in [university].

Linda highlights the strong bond between Indonesians, despite smaller numbers in Vancouver than other minority groups, and shares about her connection to others in the community through church attendance. The role of churches in both social inclusion and language learning has been studied in the Canadian context by Han (2011, 2018). In Han (2011), the researcher specifically contrasts differences in linguistic policies and perspectives between educational institutions and churches, noting that "educational institutions in western democracies generally tend to see immigrants and their children as deficient in the dominant language rather than being multilingual, and see their multilingualism as a liability" (p. 383). This extends to the practice of codeswitching, which is often discouraged in educational contexts, but which the author found to be an unproblematic and unmarked event within the Mandarin Chinese church in the study. Among the participants in this study, Linda was one of the more forthright in acknowledging hybridity in her language use – noting at another point in the interview that "it's kind of like a mix of Indonesian and English together when I speak to my friends." It is clear from Linda's comments that connections made through church played a strong role in opening the possibilities for this hybridity in both daily and student life. Zohreh and Linda's experiences demonstrate an important aspect of transnationalism and transnational identity, which is that transnationals "often develop meaningful ties to more than one home country, blurring the congruence of social space and geographic space" (Li & Zhu, 2013, p. 517). For these two participants, this blurring of spaces also impacted language use and the opportunity for hybridity in their language practice.

The sections above have introduced the participants' use of language in daily life and the ways in which they conceptualize their practice, at times both in alignment and at odds with a plurilingual understanding of language. Participants with a long history of plurilingual interactions, such as Rita and Asha, seemed to be better able to discuss practices in a way that reflected the complexity of such interactions. For some other participants, the tendency to frame language use in more simplified and compartmentalized manners may also reflect engagement with dominant discourses in

society around language use that have not caught up to more recent understandings of bi/multi/plurilingualism. In the following section (5.2), I will present instances where engagements with such discourses were more directly evident in the experiences and beliefs that participants shared.

5.2. Engagement with Societal Discourses & Consideration (and Performance) of Identity

Discourses around language use in society can be both powerful and prevalent and may shape the beliefs and practices of individuals (Bourdieu, 1990, 1992). These discourses include delineation of legitimate use of language (and who is entitled to speak), a theme that several participants raised in interviews. Discourses may also relate to views on the very nature of language (separate or hybrid competences) – a topic which was raised in the section above, but also discussed more directly by some participants. As discussed in the review of literature (Chapter 3), such discourses are crucial to consider when examining how participants use language, as language practices are discursively constructed. Alongside this discussion of discourses around language use, this section will also highlight participants' consideration and/or performance of identity, specifically as it relates to the way they draw on their languages. In contrast with questions around language use, which were a large portion of the semi-structured approach to the interviews, there were no questions directly tied to the concept of identity. However, several participants did broach this subject in our discussion. Through excerpts from conversations with Leila, Keisuke, Simu, Yen, Thao, Linda, and Leila, I will examine some of the ways that participants engage with discourses around language and navigate identity in light of their experiences and development of linguistic competencies.

5.2.1. Leila – Speaking English & Farsi "Fully" & Being "Shaped" by Danish Culture

At points in interviews, there was evidence of participants embracing the idea of semilingualism or a traditional view of bilingualism which requires perfect competence in each language (García, 2009). Below, I will use my discussions with Leila and Keisuke to illustrate these perspectives. I will begin with Leila, who openly discussed her evaluation of her own language skills, as well as thoughts on how others perceive her as

a plurilingual student (discussed in the following chapter on language use in learning). I asked Leila about how she perceived the connection between her languages. From this prompt, Leila chose to discuss how, for a long period of time, she had a habit of translating in her head from Farsi to English:

> Leila: I think this might be like very interesting…until I would say like two months ago…so, this is super early, I would still like think Farsi and then in my head translate it and then like type or talk English. Like I'm always constantly thinking Farsi and translating that into English, especially when I'm writing. I see that a lot, that my thought process is like always Farsi and just trying to translate it to English, which is really hard because some words are…you cannot find a real translation for them. And then that really affect the way that you want to talk. Because it doesn't kind of translate what you were thinking.

To understand further about how Leila processes and uses languages, I asked about the reverse scenario – translating from English to Farsi. In her response, Leila discussed the occasional frustration of being a plurilingual individual who regularly needs to call on multiple languages, as well as revealing something of how she perceives her language competences:

> Leila: There's, absolutely, like two words that I would always struggle translating from English to Farsi, and that is "already" and "yet." It's like I'm always talking to my mom, and I wanna say like "already" or "yet"…I just can't find the word. And I feel like it's killing me inside because I'm like "Oh my God, like *I can't speak Farsi fully. I can't speak English fully. This is just a disaster*" [emphasis added by researcher]…I feel like that's the worst part…I feel like this was like a meme or something…when you know both languages…*You don't know any of them fully* [emphasis added by researcher].

In her evaluation of her competences, Leila reveals an orientation (or expectation of her own competences) toward a norm in which complete competency is required or should be the goal of language learning. García (2009) discusses how many authorities on bi/multi/plurilingualism no longer expect a complete (or "balanced") bilingualism. Views of bilingualism that require this completeness – and the related concept of semilingualism – have been criticized for viewing bilingualism through a monolingual lens, whereas more recent understandings acknowledge that "a bilingual is a person that "languages" differently" (García, 2009, pp. 44-45) and should not be directly compared to a monolingual in terms of language use. Scholars of plurilingualism similarly emphasize that there should be no expectation of completeness when it comes to language

competence (Council of Europe, 2001; Marshall & Moore, 2018; Piccardo, 2013). Despite this change in understanding among scholars, García (2009) does also note that in society, a view of bilingualism requiring full fluency in both languages does still widely persist. In focusing on her languages competences as not "fully" developed, Leila seems to embrace this societal discourse around bilingualism.

Leila continues on to discuss examples of interactions with each of her parents in which she feels frustration with not having "fully" developed competencies in either Faris or English:

> Leila: And sometimes I really have a hard time like speaking to my mom in Farsi and…I would literally be so overwhelmed like "Oh my God, mom." Like I wish she knew English…And even typing…I was typing this thing to my dad because I have to like type Farsi, even though he can speak and read English. But he kind of prefers Farsi. So, I was typing it out and I think it was like a grammar issue or a spelling issue. And then he started laughing. And immediately he was like, "Oh my God, you can't be like wrong about this." So, it's definitely that one is also not perfect I would say.

Interestingly, the examples that Leila gives to highlight situations where she is frustrated by the development of her plurilingual competences simultaneously demonstrate the limitations of viewing such competences through a monolingual lens. In her interactions with her mother, a Farsi speaker who is learning English, and her father, who she describes as having strong competence in English, communication is readily achieved through the use of their two languages despite any incompleteness or imbalance. When through a plurilingual lens, with a focus not on completeness and balance but on successful communication, this issue of "full competence" diminishes in importance. In this way, plurilingualism departs from the native speaker target model of language learning and instead embraces an understanding of communication in which partial competences can play an important role (Council of Europe, 2001).

Leila also shared about how her experiences in a variety of cultures impacted her identity. As I ended the interview with an open-ended opportunity to share anything else about her experiences that she thought was relevant, Leila had this to say:

> Leila: I think we already like talked about my whole journey and everything, but I think something that maybe we did not talk about was the culture in Denmark and how it kind of shaped me…I moved when I was like really young 15, 14, and I think

at that point...I was not exposed to Persian culture much and not like English as well. So, when I moved to Denmark, I think that like it shaped me in a way that...I felt more towards like a Danish culture than like Farsi culture… Danish culture affected me so much..like way more than Farsi culture, I would say.

In the excerpt above, Leila reflects on how her journey from Iran to Denmark (and, later, Canada) has shaped her - reflecting on her development of a transnational identity (Duff, 2015; Li & Zhu, 2013). She continues on to say that the impacts can be seen in "how I would like dress, how I would talk, how I would engage in conversation and everything." When I asked Leila if she sees this impact to her identity and behavior in her present life in Canada, she replied:

Leila: I found that a lot in the way that I would like dress and kind of my outfits. It's like more inspired by like Danish culture I would say. So yeah, I see that a lot and I'm like happy about that, because I think here not many people have like their own like tastes and style. And there's mostly like everyone like looking the same. So, I'm like, "OK that's really good that that aspect is like a little bit different at least."

While Leila chose to focus on fashion in expanding on the impacts of her transnational journey, she also identifies how this journey has affected the way she talks and engages in conversation. The connection between transnational movement and identity and language practices has been established by researchers (see Li and Zhu, 2013; Duff, 2015). Moreover, Leila's comments about fashion may also not be as disconnected from language – and, therefore, not necessarily inconsequential to the focus of this thesis – as they might seem on first consideration. In introducing research on the connection between salsa dance and language, Schneider (2014) acknowledges that focusing on salsa dancing communities "is slightly unusual in a linguistic study and requires explanation" (p. 5). However, the author continues on to highlight the many ways that salsa and the Spanish language are inseparable – even for those who have no ethnic heritage connecting them to salsa dance. The connection that Leila feels between her experiences in Denmark and how they have shaped her fashion and conversational practices may be less direct. However, to Leila, there does seem to be salience in the intersection of these ideas and how they allow her to differentiate herself in a way that affirms her identity ("that's really good that that aspect is like a little bit different").

5.2.2. Keisuke – Being "Purely" Bilingual, Mixing Up Languages, & Transnational Identity

Keisuke was another participant who discussed his competences in terms of an understanding of bilingualism that many scholars now consider outdated. Keisuke's experiences with language and culture differed from many who grow up in Japan, as he attended a K-12 English-medium international school. As we discussed how this impacted his various competences, Keisuke highlighted one aspect of his Japanese competence that he considers weaker than his other skills:

> Keisuke: I didn't take, in Japan, Japanese class since grade five. I just basically learned my writing skills through...reading books, and like watching televisions, like the subtitles of TV, and like with my parents and stuff. So, I still have to really work on my Japanese writing. But, yeah, I learned the most of it on my own…The kanji characters, I'm struggling a lot. I'm really doing mostly everything; like I'm restudying it right now just so that I could write better in both languages and *purely be bilingual* [emphasis added by researcher].

Among all participants, Keisuke's appraisal of his own language skills was perhaps the most direct expression of a complete/balanced bilingualism perspective, standing in strong contrast with more modern perspectives on bilingualism (García, 2009) and the plurilingual perspective in which partial and uneven competences are considered natural (Council of Europe, 2001). While he frames his competences from a deficit perspective, a plurilingual lens would consider his unequal development of skills to be normal. The Council of Europe (2001) gives an example of this expectation around unequal competences that is quite relevant to Keisuke's experiences: "the profile of competences in one language is different from that in others (for example, excellent speaking competence in two languages, but good writing competence in only one of them)" (p. 133). The passage continues on to argue that "depending on the career path, family history, travel experience, reading and hobbies of the individual in question, significant changes take place in his/her linguistic and cultural biography, altering the forms of imbalance in his/her plurilingualism" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 133). It is not difficult to see how Keisuke's unique linguistic biography shaped the imbalances in his writing competences, as the learning of 1,026 foundational *kanji* (Chinese characters used in the Japanese writing system) is tightly prescribed by the Japanese Ministry of Education and occurs from first through sixth grade in the traditional Japanese school system

(Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, n.d.). Keisuke, however, attended an English-medium international school with its own curriculum. As a result, the development of his knowledge of the Japanese writing system would naturally occur on a different timetable.

Keisuke also tied his language competencies to considerations around his identity, a topic he raised at multiple points in the interview. As acknowledged at several previous points in this thesis, I did not directly ask about identity in interviews. However, most interviews were concluded with an open-ended question – an opportunity for participants to share any final thoughts or to raise a topic that I may not have thought to ask about. Keisuke took this opportunity to share thoughts on his identity:

> Keisuke: Yeah. Um, so, sometimes I feel like…regretful that I did not study Japanese when I was younger. But then, I don't know, I feel like right now I would try to use this…as a unique identity where I am a Japanese person, but my English is slightly stronger than Japanese. I can use that as an asset...even in Japan, as well. Like I could be like one of the guys that, you know, does transactions with foreign companies…I used to put like my, you know, weak Japanese skills as a negative. But then, I'm trying to be positive about it…I'm still studying a little, bit by bit. Depends on how busy I am with school here, but I just want…Hopefully, in the future I could be able to use English as my strong asset of the skill sets I have.

Norton (2013) discusses identity as a site of struggle and emphasizes the on-going process of how a "person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 4). In Keisuke's thoughts on identity, there is clear evidence of this struggle, as he discusses both past regret and current effort toward reframing of his experiences. His effort to understand how his varied competences allow (or restrict) how he fits into each of the societies that play a major role in his life can also be seen. Furthermore, as he thinks about life after university, the consideration of those future possibilities is clear in his discussion of work. In all of these thoughts that he shares in this excerpt, Keisuke's struggle relates to his languages and how they interplay with his identity. A few minutes later, as we wrapped up this line of conversation, Keisuke again reflected on his identity while concluding his thoughts:

> Keisuke: I think my identity's mixed up with both, both cultures, and like I feel like...my personality is probably unique, in terms

of like culture and how I do things, because I mix up Japanese and Western cultures a lot.

In this final sentiment, Keisuke reflects on feeling caught between two cultures. He is in a liminal, transnational space (Darvin & Norton, 2014; Li & Zhu, 2013; Marshall, 2010). And he seems to be deciding how he wishes to position himself going forward, again reflecting on the uniqueness of his experiences.

Over the course of the interview, Keisuke demonstrated an interest in alternative ways to think about his language skills. As we concluded, I offered to send a reading on the topic of bilingualism should he wish to further explore the topic (Grosjean, 2008). Keisuke was enthusiastic about this and, several weeks later, sent a follow-up communication discussing his thoughts on the article and how it changed his perspective. The first sentiment he shared was a reflection on how he had been previously thinking of the idea of bilingualism:

> Keisuke: While reading, I was trying to reflect on my own experiences. I think I have told you during the interview, but my definition of bilingualism was the monolingual view.

Keisuke also shared how our discussion of plurilingualism (and related modern ideas on bilingualism) had changed his perspective on his language skills:

> Keisuke: I realized that I do indeed use different languages for different purposes in different locations. Recently, especially since I have been in Canada, English is my most dominant language…but that doesn't mean I have lost my Japanese. And in terms of just living life and hanging out with people, I can perfectly use Japanese. Only on those formal occasions (both by writing and speaking), does Japanese become harder for me…Since I didn't go through the Japanese school system, I have not learned/developed these characteristics in a school environment. Therefore, I have learned formal Japanese when needed such as during job interviews, talking with older people, etc., and am still learning to this day…Through this article, I can prove the fact that even though I'm not perfect in both languages, I can still call myself bilingual!

Keisuke's experiences demonstrate how pervasive the deficit or monolingual perspective on language skills can be. However, they also reveal the potential that re-framing, such as through a plurilingual lens, has for offering a new perspective on an individual's linguistic repertoire that may be healthier than an internalization of deficit discourses. In the final excerpt (above), Keisuke was able to make the connection between his unique

linguistic biography and his competences, in alignment with a plurilingual view of language (Council of Europe, 2001).

5.2.3. Simu: Mixing Languages as Leisure & Training; Transnational Identity

In the first half of this data analysis chapter (specifically, 5.1.1), I shared Simu's thoughts – in a follow-up communication after having time to reflect on our interview – on his family's interesting practices of combining their collective languages and dialects:

> Simu Ever since the interview, I occasionally paid attention to language usage…interesting to find that my family has seven spoken languages (2 languages and 5 dialects). One of our leisure activities is to mix them together in one sentence/conversation to create kind of a trolling effect. Though such conversations sound funny, we get quite used to extract meanings without translating any language from another. This has also trained me to adapt and switch languages more smoothly.

While the previous discussion of this excerpt was focused on the hybrid practices themselves, I revisit the topic here to discuss identity. The creative and comical use of linguistic resources described by Simu is reminiscent of those described by Li and Zhu (2013) in their work on translanguaging and transnational identity. Li and Zhu (2013) argue that such mixing of languages and dialects is "not simply the mixing of linguistic forms from diverse language sources. It also involves a variety of identity articulations and negotiations within newly created social spaces" (p. 532). As Simu and his family draw on various aspects of their linguistic repertoires, those aspects of their linguistic skills may correlate with aspects of their identities. And, even if this is done primarily in jest, Simu's recognition of this practice as training is astute. In his Canadian life, Simu regularly interacts with peers whose linguistic repertoires and identities may overlap (or not) with his own in varying ways. This includes peers with ties to China; Li and Zhu (2013) recognize "the superdiversity amongst Chinese people" (p. 527). Or, as one of their participants puts it, "if you are Chinese, you could be from anywhere" (Li & Zhu, 2013, p. 527). Simu identifies as a speaker of Mandarin, Shanghainese, Cantonese (including some dialects within) and English. As he navigates the culturally and linguistically diverse context of his university, he may draw on all of these languages and the connections each have to aspects of his transnational identity. And, as Simu

identified, he can leverage the adaptability he has developed through creative and comical use of his linguistic repertoire with his family.

5.2.4. Yen: Societal Discourses Around Language Hybridity and Purity

Several participants reported that as their development of English skills led to hybrid practices, these practices were not always received favorably. The participant for whom this topic was most salient was Yen. Her experiences and perspectives with this issue will be shared below, alongside shorter excerpts from Thao and Keisuke. At points in our interview, Yen seemed to be caught between an instinct that the mixing of languages was natural and a feeling that it should be avoided - at least, in learning (discussed further in Chapter 6). I asked Yen to help me understand this seeming contradiction, which led into an important discussion of societal discourses around language use and language purity. This was her response when I asked about when and why she mixes languages:

> Yen: I actually have no idea. I feel like they're just coming out like that. I have no explanation for that actually, but yeah. I feel like that is the problem most of the children, I guess, who learned English from a really, really young age, got. So, they would still have like two different languages in their head, and sometimes they think in two different ways, with two different languages, of course. But then when they speak out loud, it's still a mix of the two together. And it's just like that because they were raising to that kind of person.

Yen’s comments here acknowledge that it is normal for people who are plurilingual to engage in hybrid language practices, though at other points she seems more conflicted. When I affirm that is indeed natural to mix language, Yen replies “Yeah! I hope so.”

As we continue to discuss the topic of mixing/hybridity, Yen reveals something about her experience with discourses around language that offers explanatory power for her conflicted feelings on the topic:

> Yen: Yeah, uhm, I don't know about here in Canada when people mix two or more than two languages together, but in Vietnam people are really against that...International student like us, just want to tell people that we don't mean that. It just happened naturally. We cannot control that. And because the

environment we're living in, sometimes, we just forget the word and we have to use the other language.

Interviewer: So..what do you mean by that, "In Vietnam, people are really against that?"…Can you explain that a little bit?

Yen: Ah, so it's something like if I'm walking around with my friends and I'm just, you know, like throwing the phrases like "what the heck" and then continuing Vietnamese. People will be like "oh, you are so pretentious. You do that to let people know that you know more than one language." Yeah and...people will call me as pretentious if I do that like publicly in Vietnam…This is actually a problem recently in Vietnam. So, a lot of celebrities or international students like me who come back to Vietnam, they can't help themselves to make the language together. And when they post their videos or, you know, like their talk show onto the Internet, people will just straight ahead go to the comments section and criticize them about how they mix the languages together, and they will be made fun of for the rest of their life. That's actually the thing going on now.

This tendency toward language purity at the societal level had not come up in interviews with other Vietnamese participants (Thao and Lan). However, in a follow-up communication, I had the opportunity to ask Thao if she had had similar experiences in Vietnam. Confirming what was shared by Yen, Thao said, "I do see a lot of backlash if someone uses codeswitch on their social medias and real life…In my country, it is often viewed as a whitewash." Scholars on the Vietnamese context have also confirmed the prevalence of linguistic purism discourses that are relevant to these participants' experiences. Vu (2017), writing about the codeswitching practices of pre-service English-language teachers, had this to say about the younger generations' challenges in navigating hybridity and discourses around language purity:

> The young preservice English-language teachers in Vietnam…are subject to the discourse of nationalism and likely to take on the "moral guide" role constructed for all Vietnamese teachers by the society to voice against these language practices, while, on the other hand, as members of the younger generation with certain proficiency in English, they could develop an inclination for, and an approval of, code-switching (p. 285).

In Vu's (2017) article, the pre-service teachers struggle with issues around discursively constructed practices (and identities), which Yen also seems to be negotiating. Beyond the Vietnamese context, Sayer (2014) reported a similar phenomenon in Oaxaca, Mexico around the idea of *pocho*, a Spanish slang term which refers to Mexican emigrants – especially those who may, for example, have a strong affiliation with English

and American culture and be perceived as lacking knowledge of Spanish and Mexican culture. In Sayer's (2014) study, a participant named Carlos, who was a teacher of English, recounted an instance at a soccer game "where another Oaxacan, who had apparently been a migrant to the United States, had started speaking English to Carlos' friends as a way of showing them up" (p. 194). Carlos was upset by this, referring to the behavior as *pocho*. In this latter example from Mexico, the use of English is presented as intentionally provocative – at least, this is the perspective of the participant who shares the anecdote. However, it similarly illustrates that a speaker who adds English to their repertoire may experience judgement for them using the language in the context of their home country.

As we continued our discussion, Yen touched on this idea of how her generation in Vietnam has developed English skills through an emphasis on this in the school curriculum, opening the door to hybridity.

> Yen: I remember, uhm, not my close relatives, when I actually went back from Canada last year, they were calling me as pretentious for knowing English. And I was like "we all learned it in school. It's not like a very big deal to know another language. It's that just you don't really focus on your English class. You cannot call me pretentious for that."

As I asked how encountering these discourses has impacted her practices, Yen expressed frustration with being criticized for using her English as part of her communicative repertoire and with the double-standards that exist around language use in Vietnam. However, Yen also discussed how she sometimes chooses to resist these discourses.

> Yen: Uhm, I don't really care about how people talk about me, honestly. But sometimes I'm just straight forward in English...So, the thing about Vietnam is that if you are a foreigner and you do 100% English, people will actually show respect toward you, like they will praise you in a way. So, sometimes if I feel like people are looking at me, people are judging me, I was just straightforward use 100% English to let them know...to pretend that I'm a foreigner. And people will actually be nicer to me than just Vietnamese or mix both languages…I have seen like native English speaker who speak a little bit of Vietnamese…the other Vietnamese will be really proud them for knowing just a little bit of Vietnamese. But for us who try to learn a new language besides from Vietnamese, we will be called as pretentious.

Yen raises an important issue related to language use, which is the issue of privilege. Not all development of additional language skills is seen equally; plurilingual speakers with a native language with less power and privilege ascribed to it may feel pressure to conform in English-dominant contexts or, as shared by Yen, may find their hybrid practices less praised, even in their own countries (Kubota, 2016; Lorente & Tupas, 2013). Yen and I discussed this issue of privilege through the contrast of our respective experiences – a discussion which was an important reminder of my need to be reflexive about my privilege and the areas where my lived experiences depart from those of my participants. I shared with Yen that, while in Japan, I experienced exactly what she described regarding a native English speaker being praised for their development of other language skills. My Japanese was frequently praised, even in the early months when my ability to communicate was quite limited. At home, friends and family are often similarly impressed with my Japanese skill. In contrast, Yen is likely to be subject to deficit discourses while studying in Canada and has faced criticism for her use of English in her home country.

Beyond this important discussion of privilege and double-standards, Yen's discussion of societal expectations around language use in Vietnam also reveals her "feel for the game" (Bourdieu, 1990), and her response, in its own way, represents a resistance to the expectations of that game and to the discourses of linguistic purity that she encounters. In switching fully to English in interactions in Vietnam where her hybrid practices are questioned (or she feels they may potentially be questioned), Yen asserts her ownership over, and right to use, the language. Vu (2017) argues that young Vietnamese increasingly face this type of dilemma, as the rise of English has been swift in Vietnam, yet the Vietnamese language is still held in a position of nationalistic pride. As such, individuals such as Yen must sometimes choose between communicating with their full linguistic repertoire in a manner that is natural given their experiences and linguistic biographies or suppressing the use of English in a show of solidarity.

Yen was also not the only participant who recalled family members giving their opinion on hybrid language practices. Keisuke shared how his parents responded to the way that he mixed English and Japanese growing up:

Keisuke: Back when I was in international school mixing languages was really common, not just me but everyone else as well. Like we would just like mix sentences in *nihongo* [Japanese], like

> even mixing was such a habit for me…my parents was like "don't do it, don't do it." But it just comes out because it's like when you're talking, and then you're stuck, you then change your language to whatever. So, if I speak in English and I don't find…can't think of an English word, I just switch right into Japanese and just continue on with my conversation.

In our follow-up conversation, Keisuke expanded on his parents' view, saying that "my parents told me to stop because they thought that in order to be fully bilingual, I needed to have perfect English/Japanese." Whether there is some level of malice, as seemed to be in the case of Yen being labeled pretentious by strangers and relatives, or the intentions are more noble, as in the case of Keisuke's parents trying to promote his learning of English, this monolingual perspective on bi/multi/plurilingualism is not uncommon within society. Contrastingly, plurilingualism promotes a move away from the native speaker target in language learning and towards a model that is more inclusive of imbalance and hybridity (Council of Europe, 2001; Coste et al., 2009).

5.2.5. Linda: We Indonesians Don't Really Use Bahasa Properly

Though it did not always become a core topic of conversation, participants other than Yen raised themes around linguistic purity. Linda was another participant who broached this topic, when describing her linguistic competences, though her explanation of societal perspectives towards language hybridity revealed a different climate towards the issue in Indonesia. As she was in Indonesia at the time of the original interview (we also had a follow-up discussion, at which point she had returned to Canada), we discussed experiences in that context:

> Linda: In my everyday life, because right now I'm in Asia, I speak Bahasa like every time. It's not like a trend, but it's like *we Indonesians don't really use Bahasa properly* [emphasis added by researcher]. It's kind of like, uh, we always use slang words in Bahasa, so there's also like lots of English words that we put in the Bahasa language. So, it's kind of like the mix of Indonesian and English together when like I speak to my friends. But to my mum or like to my parents, it's gonna be Bahasa. And also, probably like to like older people, it's like full Bahasa.

Linda introduces the issue of "proper" use of language, which she reiterated briefly in other points in the interview. Spracklin's (2018) study similarly had participants who used the phrasing "proper" to discuss their language use, which the author linked to

Bourdieu's (1977b) idea of legitimate speech. Spracklin's participants described parts of their linguistic repertoire as not proper because they felt that their competences were not developed enough to be considered proper. In contrast, Linda seemed to be discussing language use as improper at the societal level, as opposed to limiting the discussion to her own competences. In the initial interview, Linda and I moved on to discuss her language use in learning. However, in reviewing the interviews, it felt there was a need for further exploration of the nature of the mixing she was discussing, the theme of what constitutes "proper" language use, and her perceptions of the climate of Indonesian society towards such mixing. I reached out for clarification over email, and Linda not only readily agreed, but suggested a follow-up interview instead, so that she could give more context. She shared this about what "proper" language use means to her and the mixing that occurs in the Indonesian context:

> Linda: It's not proper because in our language, we also have like the set of grammars that we supposed to follow. But then whenever people use that grammar, it becomes too formal to the point that when you listen to it, you will feel like it's weird. For example, when we listen to a foreigner that just start to like speaking Bahasa. We will say, oh, it's too formal…Even in like corporate setting, when I did my internship in one of Indonesian company, I feel like even when they talk to clients, they don't really use a proper Bahasa, as in like the proper grammar. They will mix English words…and they also don't really use like a like a very formal set of words. So yeah, it's kind of like a mix of slang and also like of English words.

I followed up by asking if she was discussing English loanwords in Bahasa or a more widespread mixing of English and Bahasa. Linda confirmed that she was referring to a widespread mixing of the two languages – sharing the example that it can be seen even in formal situations like the news. And she further explained by contrasting the use of Dutch and English in Indonesia. She noted that there are Dutch loanwords in the Bahasa language as the result of colonization; however, Dutch is not as commonly studied in today's Indonesia as English, which is a core part of the school curriculum. The implication is that while Indonesians may use Dutch loanwords as part of their speech in Bahasa, the mixing of English and Bahasa is a result of these two competences being well developed and being used in a hybrid manner.

In starting to broach the conversation of societal attitudes about language mixing, I first asked Linda about her comment in the first interview that she uses "full Bahasa"

when speaking to an older generation. My instinct was that Linda may have been indicating that the older generation may harbor attitudes of linguistic purity or otherwise disapprove of the mixing. However, rather than being a result of disapproval, Linda attributed this to older generations being more likely to have Chinese, rather than English, in their linguistic repertoire. I then asked more directly about societal attitudes towards mixing, and whether there was prestige or disapproval attached to the practice. Linda replied:

> Linda: I think, well, there's no certain discussion about it. But I feel like it's gonna be the first one when people say it's cooler because…my perception is that usually the one who speak English or like mixing the Bahasa and English came from like a well-off family. Because they went to international school or…they have like a good education. So, that's why *they can speak English properly* [emphasis added by researcher]. Sometimes, they even speak English better than when they speak Bahasa. So, I think that's why people are trying to like know how to speak English and like mix the English and Bahasa. Because probably it makes them feel cooler or like smarter.

Linda, in contrast with Yen and Thao's description of the societal views on language in Vietnam, describes an Indonesian society that would seem to be largely approving of language hybridity. This is confirmed by Zein (2020), who writes of the Indonesian context as "superdiverse," noting that "given the diversity of languages and the intense contact between language speakers in Indonesia's superdiversity, plurilingualism is the norm" (p. 18). Despite the acceptance of language mixing, Linda's response still reveals important dynamics of power and privilege, in terms of who has access to the *linguistic capital* (Bourdieu, 1992) that English can confer. Moreover, in contrast to the way she discusses Bahasa, Linda frames the English skills developed by well-educated Indonesians as proper ("they can speak English properly"). This too suggests different linguistic capital associated with each language. And while it is, perhaps, less of a question of whose hybridity is valued (Kubota, 2016; Lorente & Tupas, 2013) than the examples shared by Yen (in 5.2.2), it does raise the question of what aspects of hybridity are praised and what aspects are problematic. In this case, for Linda, mixing of English with Bahasa signals someone is a "proper" English speaker; however, at the societal level it means that Indonesians don't use their native Bahasa "properly." While Linda reports that there is "no certain discussion about" societal views of mixing, sharing her "feel" (Bourdieu, 1990) for societal attitudes nevertheless provides a window into the prevalent discourses in Indonesian society.

5.2.6. Concluding Thoughts Regarding Societal Discourses

In the sections above, I have discussed how participants have engaged with discourses in society around language, including regarding what it means to be bilingual and how societies may view what constitutes correct ways of speaking. In certain interviews, participants' perspectives suggest internalization of discourses of semilingualism or "balanced bilingualism" (García, 2009). Likewise, there is evidence of participants internalization of the "social etiquette" (Gumperz, 1964) around language use, or what Bourdieu (1992) calls "legitimate practice." Importantly, the discussions with Yen and Keisuke also demonstrate the value of a plurilingual lens for analyzing and, potentially, intervening in the internalization of harmful discourses. Yen's apparent resisting of dominant discourses around "legitimate" language use is an example of how a plurilingual lens can assist with exploration of "individuals making choices and interacting in specific contexts and situations, including those where their agency is constrained" (Marshall & Moore, 2018, p. 5). Furthermore, Keisuke's openness to revisiting beliefs around the nature of language and to learning about modern perspectives on bi/multi/plurilingualism seem to have offered him a more positive view of his competences, even when partial or incomplete.

5.3. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored participants' language use in daily life, both in Canada and their countries of origin. I have presented participants' descriptions and conceptualizations of their language use in daily life. At times, these conceptions have been at odds with a plurilingual perspective on language, even while their described (or implied) practices are in line with plurilingual hybridity. In this conflict, there may be evidence of engagement with dominant societal discourses around the nature of language. Participants have shared about the impact of transnational movement and diaspora on the development of linguistic communities in Canada and how this impacts their use of language in daily life.

I have also presented participants' more direct description of engagement with discourses around language use, such as embracing complete bilingualism or semilingualism and discourses around language purity. Participants' navigation of identity through transnational movement and their developing plurilingual and plurilingual

competences has also been considered. The experiences and thoughts shared by participants demonstrate both how they use their various languages in dynamic and flexible manners, but also how societal discourses and considerations around identity can be powerful forces which sometimes constrain their language practices.

By exploring salient themes around language from the breadth of participants experiences – both in Canada and abroad – this chapter contributes to the understanding of how societal discourses impact students' perspectives on language and language use. This chapter has demonstrated how harmful discourses may be both internalized or resisted, as well as how discussions about language may offer opportunities for reframing perspective and revisiting beliefs about language. Building on these understandings, the following chapter will explore similar themes around perspectives on language and engagement with discourses, while focusing specifically on the intersection of language and learning – and with special attention paid to the learning that takes place in an English-dominant university.

Chapter 6.

Data Analysis (Part 2)

In this second and final data analysis chapter, I will address themes related to the second research question:

> **RQ2:** What roles do languages other than English play in participants' learning in an English dominant academic context? How do their practices in learning align with or differ from their language use in daily life?

I will again consider the sub-question of how participants' language use – and conceptualization of language use – relate to theories of bi-/multi-/plurilingualism. I will also consider the role of discourse and the performance and perceptions of identity, with a focus on educational settings. The chapter will be divided into two main sections, beginning with a discussion of themes related to discourse and identity (6.1), then culminating in the discussion of participants' plurilingual practices in learning (6.2). In keeping with the framework introduced in the literature review (3.5), this ordering seeks to highlight the discursive construction of participants' practices in learning, in which discourses – in society and the academy – and participants' consideration and performance of identity both shape and constrain how they use their languages. The data presented in this chapter comes primarily from participant interviews, but also includes copies of texts collected from participants, reflections on classroom occurrences and BIZ 200 self-introduction essays, and follow-up discussions (either over email or as a shorter, supplemental interview). I will continue to prioritize the sharing of participants' own words and explanations of their experiences, practices, and beliefs.

6.1. Discourse and Identity

As with the previous chapter, this data analysis section is concerned with how participants' practices are shaped and constrained by the discourses they encounter. The focus of this section will be on discourses that students encounter in educational settings, or which pertain specifically to learning, including from past educational settings in their countries of origin, study abroad experiences, and Canadian institutions. In the subsections below, themes such as English-only and deficit discourses will be presented. In addition – while again noting that there were no lines of inquiry directly

related to identity in the semi-structured interviews, several themes related to identity will be discussed, such as the ideas of feeling positioned into a “remedial ESL” identity and the performance of international student identity.

6.1.1. Yen, Miho, Asha, & Omar: English-Only Discourses Across Learning Contexts

Several participants reported experiencing explicit discouragement from using languages other than English in their studies. Importantly, these experiences covered the gamut of contexts from country of origin to short-term study abroad and classrooms in the Canadian context. These experiences were shared most directly by Yen, Miho, Asha and Omar; however, other participants also brought up these experiences or showed evidence of having internalized English-only discourses to some extent. I will begin with Yen, who shared an experience with an English-only policy from her English classes in Vietnam. Our discussion of the topic also demonstrated an internalization of the policy as being positive:

> Yen: In Vietnam…when we were in our English classes, most of our teachers forced us to use English. Even though sometimes we don't really understand what is going on, we still have to use English in class. Uhm, but I guess it's for…a good outcome, I think…So, we just listened to them when they asked us to speak English only in class.
>
> Interviewer: Did they ever tell you why they were saying that? Did they give you a reason?
>
> Yen: Some of them told us that, um, so that they can understand what we're talking about…but some of them say it just better to understand the material in English. Because if you understand it in Vietnamese, then you will again have to translate it back to English. And it will be like twice longer than just understand it straight from English.

This idea that introducing the L1 (in this case, Vietnamese) into the study of English will mean a lesser outcome is a reflection of “the deep-rootedness of monolingual immersion approaches” (Lin, 2015a, p. 75). Lin (2015a) notes a number of reasons for the persistence of these views, including past research (from a monolingual viewpoint) that suggested benefits to this separation, as well as “the one-sided application of the ‘maximum input hypothesis’ (p.75). Yen’s comment that she had to use English “even though sometimes we don’t really understand what is going” is, in itself, a fairly strong

refutation of the latter justification regarding input. As Lin (2015a) argues “the input that is made maximum is useful only when that input is also made comprehensible” (p. 78). Furthermore, the idea that arduous translating is needed if the L1 is introduced into learning reflects a perspective on languages in which they are viewed as quite separated, rather than the plurilingual perspective of interconnectedness (Council of Europe, 2001). Similar themes were explored by Marshall (2020b) in research on the perspectives of instructors at a Canadian university. The author found that “instructors tended to frame their understandings around binaries: process versus product, L1 versus L2, and in class versus out of class. Perhaps the most salient of these binaries is that of a plurilingual process and a monolingual product” (p. 153). In fact, several instructors expressed similar concerns about the potential burden of translating, similarly reflecting a perspective on language which is focused on separation.

In the previous chapter (5), Yen’s experience with a perceived aversion to the mixing of languages in general Vietnamese society was also discussed. Yen’s perspectives revealed awareness of those societal discourses and some willingness to push back by asserting her right to use English (alongside Vietnamese). She asserted there was “no separation” between her languages and reported frequent codeswitching/translanguaging practices. However, she also at times contradicted this position and discussed separate trains of thought for her languages. As I asked whether she thought her teachers’ idea of needing to study only in English and avoid translation was correct, a contradiction between beliefs and practices again emerged.

> Interviewer: Do you think that’s true or...?
>
> Yen: Yeah, definitely. Yeah. I am really against...I’m the type person, if someone is learning English and they are learning new words, I say I would encourage them to remember the definition in English instead of translating the word into Vietnamese. Or I would just stop them from, you know, thinking or translating the phrase into Vietnamese first and then translating back into English. Uhm, it’s just like it just flow better.

Learning definitions of words through the language of study is certainly a valid strategy. However, Yen’s avoidance of Vietnamese is in tension with large parts of our discussion, in which Yen shared many ways in which Vietnamese plays a valuable role in her study in Canada, including in meaning-making (to be discussed later in this chapter). It is likely a testament to the power of English-only discourses in the academy

that a student is willing to minimize (or refrain from) use of learning strategies that incorporate L1 – to the point of also discouraging others from the practice – despite acknowledging the benefit to their learning. In the aforementioned study by Marshall (2020b), the author writes of the tendency of instructors in the Canadian university context to reproduce dominant discourses around language in the classroom, rather than challenge them – even while some instructors in the study also acknowledged the benefit of strategies such as mediation in languages other than English. Coghlan and Brydon-Miller (2014) argue that it is "often through infiltrating dominant values culturally through institutions like school" (p. 213) that hegemony is empowered. When implementing a plurilingual-inspired pedagogy, there is space for instructors to reflect on language dynamics in the classroom and challenge ingrained discourses – offering an opportunity for students such as Yen to also challenge beliefs that have resulted from harmful dominant discourses.

Miho was another student who reported explicitly being told to avoid use of her L1 (Japanese). Her experiences illustrate an additional context in which students may be exposed to English-only discourses: a short-term study abroad program, which she undertook during high school.

> Miho: When I was in the United States, the organization who I was involved in exchange student at, they taught me that I shouldn't really speak Japanese or shouldn't read Japanese, in order to switch your brain to be fully English focused…I think I still have that belief…Because when I speak too much Japanese, I read too much Japanese…I can't really speak English fluently after having too much Japanese.
>
> Interviewer: Do you believe that? Do you think that that's true that you really should...?
>
> Miho: I think that is true. I do believe that. And I think that's one of the reasons why…one year in the United States really improve my English…because I didn't speak Japanese at all, and I didn't read or I didn't even speak with my family because they didn't want me to speak Japanese.

Miho suggests that the full commitment to English required by the study abroad program led to her quick improvement; however, she also later acknowledged that at the time she was "at the bottom" in terms of her English competence, so there was also significant room for growth. Similar to Yen, Miho held on to this belief while also acknowledging some areas or instances when Japanese could play a positive role in her life and study.

When participants, such as Yen and Miho, shared their avoidance of their L1, it brought to mind my own experiences in Japan. To improve my Japanese skills, I also made effort to minimize the use of my L1 in the early months following my move – something I discussed directly with Yen in the interview. However, as I endeavored to be reflexive, I found the need to avoid a false equivalency in these moments. The privilege that I carry in many overseas contexts as a White male native-speaker of English often means that I have the luxury of using (or abstaining from using) my L1 with few consequences to that choice. And, as discussed in the previous chapter (5.2.3), my partial competences may be praised while abroad. In contrast, the participants of this research are navigating an English dominant-context in Western Canada where they do not have the same luxury to use their L1 and coursework in which standard academic English is strictly expected.

To conclude this part of the discussion with Miho, I asked if she could imagine herself using Japanese further to scaffold her learning if it was encouraged by an instructor: While she said she hadn't had such an experience, she thought that "if the materials itself is very difficult to understand in the first place, I would probably want people who speak Japanese because they can teach me better." Miho then continued on to recall a past instance in a finance course where mediating with a Japanese friend was quite useful, saying "speaking in Japanese, that helped me a lot." The experiences of Yen and Miho demonstrate both how English-only discourses can be internalized by plurilingual students and how tensions may still remain between these beliefs and the individuals' actual practices. Marshall et al. (2019) wrote of a similar phenomenon among plurilingual students in Canadian universities and noted that the requirement to ultimately submit work in English results in a "tension between plurilingual process and monolingual product (assessed in academic English)" and a potential "sense of ambivalence about plurilingualism" (p. 5). The participants' experiences also highlight the importance of the instructor's role in facilitating L1 use. While instructors may be well-intentioned in enforcing an English-only policy, doing so blindly limits the resources on which a plurilingual student may draw and may be based on understandings of language and language instruction that are now considered outdated (Lin, 2015a).

The experiences of Asha and Omar illustrate a third context in which students, such as the participants of this research, may encounter English-only discourses and policies. Asha described an experience after relocating to Canada to pursue a bachelor's

degree. She shared about a course at an international college that acts as a pipeline school for her current four-year university:

> Asha: There was one course...in that, our professor told me that the main reason we try to make groups of not people from same culture is we wanna try to encourage everyone to speak English. Because I know everybody is from different cultures here, and [it] is an international college, but we are trying to make you learn English or be fluent, as much as you can while you actually get transferred to [four-year university].

Omar also attended this same international college and encountered a similar instance of an instructor asking him to use English, rather than his native Bengali (note: Omar uses the terms Bengali and its endonym, Bangla, interchangeably in his interview):

> Omar: It's me, my friend whom I know from earlier, and my new friend whom I made is also from Bangladesh…we are actually talking in Bangla. And that's when one of the teachers…I won't take his name. So, he came up and…"you know at [international college]," I think he said, "there's like so many international students. You guys should talk in English, so the neighbor will understand. If you go home, you can talk in your own language."

The instructor's comment in Omar's example that "if you go home, you can talk in your own language" has potentially problematic implications for the ownership of language – depending on the intent and exact wording of this reported speech. Putting this aside, the overall concerns expressed by the two instructors may be well-intentioned and are likely pervasive among instructors in such contexts, where English-only policies have a long history (Galante et al., 2020; García, 2009; Lin, 2015a).

In the instructors' reported speech, two important concerns can be seen. First, Asha and Omar both report that the instructors explicitly drew attention to the multicultural and multilingual nature of the context as part of their justification for advising the students not to use languages other than English. The implication here is one of etiquette – that the common language of English should be used for the sake of inclusivity. Inclusivity is a laudable goal; however, it may not need to come at the expense of full prohibition on other languages, thereby limiting the linguistic resources on which students may draw in their learning. Galante et al. (2020) addressed a similar concern expressed by instructors while reporting on a study involving the incorporation of plurilingual instruction into an EAP program in Canada. The instructors who

participated in that research also initially expressed concerns about how opening a space for languages other than English may impact the inclusivity of their classrooms. However, Galante et al. (2020) reported that:

> Despite this concern, the teachers also acknowledged that some students showed awareness of their language use depending on the interlocutor and situation, and they made decisions to be inclusive rather than isolate others from conversations…This flexible use of language allowed students to freely manipulate their own linguistic repertoire and exercise linguistic agency, challenging teachers' perspectives that an English-only policy was necessary for inclusiveness. (p. 1000)

While certainly an adjustment for instructors with a history of teaching in contexts where an English-only approach was favored, Galante et al.'s (2020) study indicates the potential for overcoming the issue of inclusiveness through empowering students to flexibly use their linguistic competences, in line with a plurilingual view of language. Empowering students to make these decisions on their own may also be more effective, in some instances. In the case of Omar and his friends, they did switch to English after the instructor's comment, but Omar reported that "after like 5 minutes we are back to where we again started talking in Bangla. I don't know how it happens. It just happens." In a plurilingual view of language, a speaker "builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and…can call flexibly upon different parts of this competence to achieve effective communication with a particular interlocutor" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 4). With this understanding, it is natural for Omar to speak Bengali – alone or in combination with English – with friends who share these languages. By extension, and as argued by Galante et al. (2020), this also means that speakers can flexibly navigate interactions in a multilingual classroom without needing an English-only policy – especially when explicitly empowered to do so through a plurilingual-inspired pedagogy.

A secondary concern was expressed by Asha's instructor: the need to provide extensive exposure to English and "make you learn English or be fluent, as much as you can" in preparation for transferring to university. As with the above discussion of inclusion, the instructor's concern is understandable; however, the issue of maintaining sufficient focus on the target language skills need not disqualify a plurilingual approach. Galante et al. (2020) highlight that all the instructors in their study "agreed that English

needed to be prioritized given that this was the target language of the EAP program" (p. 1001). However, they also report on several instructors' early discomfort with the plurilingual instruction, and how this discomfort dissipated as they gained a deeper understanding of how the plurilingual tasks aligned with the pedagogical goals of the course. When leveraged towards learning, such as helping ensure that the extensive exposure to English is maximally comprehensible and meaningful (Lin, 2015a), students' L1 can actually assist in preparing them for success in an English-dominant university setting – which we can understand to be the shared goal of both teachers and students at Asha and Omar's international college. Beyond the instructional and learning implications, a critical perspective would also examine the history and motivations of English-only movements (García, 2009), and issues of hegemony and decolonization of education (Coughlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014; Pennycook, 2021).

6.1.2. Ping & Cynthia: An Instructor's Avoidance of Mandarin & Strict Looks

A number of participants had difficulty recalling with certainty whether they had experienced English-only discourses directly but seemed to have engaged with these discourses in more subtle ways. Ping and Cynthia presented the two most salient examples of this. Ping had taken BIZ 200 during the early part of the COVID-19 Pandemic, when it was conducted via remote learning and many international students were in their home countries. To facilitate the final group writing assignment, students were grouped by time zone, resulting in Ping being part of an all-Chinese group. Parts of the final few lecture periods were also allotted to allow students to conduct planning, with work taking place in breakout rooms of the remote learning session. In visiting Ping's group's breakout room to answer a question, I observed the members of Ping's group talking in Chinese. When Ping later became a participant in this research, the interview offered an opportunity to follow up on this instance of L1 use in learning. However, Ping's response quickly led into a discussion of English-only policies:

> Interviewer: I think all your group members were in China, is that right? And did they all speak Mandarin? Or were there some Cantonese speakers?

> Ping: To be honest, they always speaked the Mandarin, but I don't like this because I think the English class, we should speak English. After class, we can speak the Mandarin. And it is in the

> class, so *we should follow the rules* [emphasis added by researcher].

In the response above, Ping alludes to English-only rules in the classroom, though my intention as instructor was the opposite: to empower students to draw on any resources that assisted their success. Marshall and Moore (2018) share a similar example of a student "making choices about what she can and cannot do…whether or not she should use her plurilingual repertoire in a task" (p. 12). In that example, the student does draw on her plurilingual repertoire after encouragement from classmates. In Ping's case, she reluctantly went along with her group members' decision to use Mandarin. I followed up on Ping's comment about rules by pointing out that while course assignments did need to be submitted in English in BIZ 200, there was no rule against using other languages in collaboration on group projects. I asked Ping to clarify what she meant in her discussion of rules:

> Ping: Yeah, because I think the rule is not the school's rule, it's my rule. I think in the class I should…speak English. Like in [international college], the econ professor is Chinese. But I still speak the English to him. Although some people speak Mandarin to him, he still answered with the English. So, I think the speak English is better in school.

Interestingly, while describing her preference to only use English in class as her own rules, Ping cites the example of an instructor's impact in how she arrived at this practice. When I asked whether she had ever been explicitly told not to use languages other than English, she replied, "I'm not sure about this question. But I think maybe someone required use English, but I'm not sure in which course." This blurring of lines between school/course policy and personal practice (self-regulation) demonstrates the power of discourses in the construction of practices (Bourdieu, 1990, 1992).

Another participant, Cynthia, similarly had only vague memories of being directly told to use English only in the classroom. However, she also shared an example of how even implied disapproval from an instructor may be impactful:

> Cynthia: If I say Chinese, and he or she like looks at me like strictly, I think I will not use Chinese further in the class.

The responses of Cynthia and Ping demonstrate how students may be sensitive to discourses around language use, even those that may be encountered in less direct manners: a stern look from an instructor or noticing a professor's intentional avoidance

of Mandarin. In fact, Bourdieu (1992) notes specifically the power of a disapproving glance in shaping habitus, arguing “the factors which are most influential in the formation of the habitus are transmitted without passing through language and consciousness, but through suggestions inscribed in the most apparently insignificant aspects of the things, situations and practices of everyday life” (p. 51). Even without explicit verbal discouragement from using languages other than English, such experiences may impact the beliefs and language practices of students.

In contrast to this, I asked Cynthia how her learning experience might be impacted by an instructor who explicitly encouraged the use of linguistic resources beyond English. She initially responded by saying:

> Cynthia: I think this professor is very kind. And, uh, it can motivate me to learn more and concentrate on this course somehow. Like is more about the emotional like support.”

Emotional support is an important outcome in itself, especially for a plurilingual student who may be more accustomed to being positioned by deficit-oriented discourses. And it is worth noting that modern university policies frequently include wording on expectations for a respectful and positive learning environment, and instructors are commonly assessed on their ability to facilitate such an environment (e.g. in student course evaluations). However, when asked if it would only be an emotional support and not likely to change her practices, Cynthia responded:

> Cynthia: I think it can change because…you can like talk more, like even Professor is talking, you can like talk quietly to still communicate with each other. Like to help you get that point quickly, *instead of like waiting till the class finish…to solve this problem* [emphasis added by researcher].

In this second excerpt, Cynthia also notes the potential positive impact on her learning if she was able to use Chinese freely in the classroom without concern for the instructors’ opinion (or having their encouragement). As she notes, mediation with a Chinese speaking classmate might offer an immediate solution that helps her follow the lecture without interruption – a utilization of her full linguistic repertoire in line with a plurilingual understanding of language (Council of Europe, 2001).

Hassan was a third participant who demonstrated a disposition towards treating the university as an English space. When I asked Hassan if he had encountered

English-only policies, he chose instead to focus on his own approach in his response, saying “Well, to be honest, I always had this idea that since [university] is an English language institute, I have to respect that.” Comments, such as the above from Ping, Cynthia, and Hassan, demonstrate how students need to navigate a “discursive ambivalence,” wherein they need to:

> Employ complex strategies about how, when, and where to use languages other than English according to their established relationships with other speakers as well as their understandings of institutional discourses (often characterized by ambivalence) about what is normal and acceptable in different locations (Marshall et al., 2019, p.3).

Institutions, such as West Coast Canadian University, walk a fine line in simultaneously strongly emphasizing and promoting multiculturalism (and multilingualism), while also requiring work to be submitted in standard academic English. Given this reality, it is easy to see how a student might move from viewing an institution as English-medium (or English-dominant) to “English-only.” Moreover, as this thesis has demonstrated by inquiring about participants’ learning across previous contexts, the totality of discourses they encounter along their academic careers likely play a role in this blurred distinction. This is an important issue given the strategic importance and prevalence of internationalization efforts in universities. However, Guo & Chase (2011) note that “despite the claim that internationalisation is now an integral part of institutional strategies at Canadian universities, there has been a gap between the rhetoric and the reality” (p. 316), especially with regard to support for international students. As I foregrounded in the introduction to this thesis, it seems logical that if students are paying additional money to learn in an environment, and language, that pose additional challenges, then this should be met with the provision of additional support. An inclusive pedagogy, such as one inspired by plurilingualism, can be an important part of this support.

6.1.3. Simu’s Agency in Learning

My conversation with Simu about learning experiences shared many similarities with those above from Ping, Cynthia, and Hassan. He similarly expressed a tendency to default to English in the university, saying that “we all like voluntarily try not to speak different language as like..as a respectful manner to both instructor and other students.” And he also shared a vague memory of being advised not to use Chinese when

learning, in order to strengthen his English skills. However, the most noteworthy aspect of our interaction on this topic was how he, contrastingly, asserted his agency to study in whatever way he saw most beneficial to his learning:

> Interviewer: OK. So, from my understanding, you know, your motivation for using English is efficiency, and being respectful. Is there anything else? Any other reasons? You know, I mentioned the idea of feeling guilty about using Mandarin, maybe?
>
> Simu: Oh, I never feel guilty about that. I only do something that was helpful. Like, as you said, like the success in studying or understanding. It have to be helpful to do something; otherwise, it lost the meaning to do so.
>
> Interviewer: And did you ever receive advice, either in China when you were learning English or here? Anybody ever give you advice and say it's best to only use English?
>
> Simu: Maybe like a one or two such advice like saying English is the only language that you should be using. But because I don't agree with that, I don't remember whoever said that before.
>
> Interviewer: OK, so it didn't really make a big impact on you or?
>
> Simu: Uh, no. If someone just come to my face and say like "you should be using English," then I'll say "I'll use by my own choice now. I'll do my decision."

For Simu, any self-restriction on the use of languages other than English in his learning has more to do with being respectful and communicating in a language familiar to those around him and less to do with submitting to English-only discourses. Though the English-dominant context of the university may constrain the use of Mandarin – most notably in submitting work for assessment - or result in a feeling of "ambivalence" towards plurilingual strategies (Marshall et al., 2019), Simu strongly asserts his agency to make his own decisions about how he will use his linguistic repertoire in his learning. Marshall and Moore (2018) discuss the idea of agency through a plurilingual lens – including pushing back against criticisms that it takes an over-agentive perspective on practices. The authors assert that the plurilingual view of agency is "about individuals making choices and interacting in specific contexts and situations, including those where their agency is constrained" (Marshall & Moore, 2018, p. 5). In Simu's acknowledgement of the necessity of English for most classroom interactions, but also his use of

plurilingual strategies and assertion of ownership of his learning process, this intersection of agency and constraint can be seen.

6.1.4. Leila: Deficit Discourses and "Remedial ESL" Identity

When discussing discourses that international and/or plurilingual students may encounter in an English-dominant learning context, deficit discourses are one crucial example. Leila, who had previously discussed the frustration she feels when she can't find a word she is looking for (as discussed in Chapter 5), most directly raised the issue of deficit discourses. Continuing with her self-assessment of her linguistic repertoire, she said:

> Leila: I have so much more to learn. And my English level in my head is like five out of ten…maybe it's even better, I'm not sure. This is just how I see myself, and sometimes I feel like when I'm like working in like a group…of course, all the members are like respectful and everything. But like sometimes, I feel like I'm looking for words to say, and I just can't like find those on top of my head. *And that kind of affected the way that people like think of you. Like they...don't take you seriously, or...I don't know this is like a really weird feeling, but I felt that like a lot of times when you're like not that strong in English, people might not take you that serious* [emphasis added by researcher]. So, that's what I really want to like work on and just learn more to like, be taken seriously, I think.

The experiences and feelings shared by Leila demonstrate how pervasive and impactful deficit perspectives can be. Marshall (2009) writes of how "despite bringing a diverse range of languages and identities to the university, nontraditional multilingual students…are regularly confronted with a 'remedial ESL' identity (p. 42). In this case, Marshall is specifically sharing about how students, having gained admission to an English-dominant university, may feel they have left their ESL days behind. However, challenging courses or experiences after admission may lead to a feeling of "re-becoming" ESL (Marshall, 2009). Whether it accurately represents the perspectives of her peers and instructors or not, Leila's words highlight her concerns about being positioned into such a remedial ESL identity. Simu was another participant who expressed similar thoughts. As he explained why he dislikes translating course content from English to Mandarin, he noted two reasons: inefficiency and shame. On the latter, he said:

Simu: It makes myself look very stupid…if you live here for like 6 or 8 years, you work so hard here, you try to be a part of the society, and then you cannot even use their language to process your daily life. And it's just…kind of it will shame me.

Shame can be a very personal feeling, involving a combination of one's own expectations of oneself, as well as how one is perceived (or assumptions about how one is perceived). As such, it is difficult to assign definitive meaning to what Simu shares. However, Simu's concern about looking stupid may be related to a fear of being positioned into a remedial ESL identity (Marshall, 2009).

Leila shared a specific example of the accomplishments and experiences that she brought to the Canadian context that she felt were not acknowledged in a way that matched their importance to her identity: completing an IB diploma while living in Denmark.

Leila: Unfortunately, I don't think that's very interesting to like classmates and the professor, especially. I just feel like they wouldn't ever care. And this is really funny, but I feel like the IB diploma that I have is like a…huge achievement for me and accomplishment. So, I want to always like talk about it. And I feel like people might not look at it that way. So, I don't bring it up.

I asked what gave her the impression that this important experience was not valued by others. In response, Leila gave the example of having shared about her IB diploma with peers in Canada, only to find that they would forget what it was or not understand how impactful it was to her:

Leila: So, it happened with my couple of classmates…especially really close friends, that I would just like say I have IB diploma. And let's say like two months later they would be like "yeah, what is that ? Oh yeah, you studied that before." Like they wouldn't care much about it.

The two experiences Leila shares, feeling people don't "take her seriously" when she struggles to find the words and a lack of appreciation for her accomplishments in other contexts, illustrate how Leila may feel positioned into a "remedial identity' (Marshall, 2009), despite all that she is bringing into the context. The deficit discourses experienced by students such as Leila are a compelling argument in favor of a plurilingual pedagogy, which may play an important role in overcoming prevalent harmful

discourses and offer opportunity for explicitly valuing experiences and skills gained in other contexts.

6.1.5. Hassan: There's No Point in Complaining

In the interviews, I asked participants some version of a question about whether they felt their learning environments in Canada were accepting of diversity and an equitable place to learn. In broaching this topic with Hassan, his response revealed some of his perspective on the nature of the international student experience:

> Hassan: Maybe I'm not the best person to ask this question, because I'm kind of a guy in my professional life whom I like…always say to people suck it up and do it…Many people come to me and say, "hey, isn't it unfair that international students have to pay 6 times more than a domestic student or five times more than a domestic student?" Or like "we are going through this a lot. We are going through the different language, different culture, different foods." And like I say, "you want it, you have to try for it." If you actually think it worth it, you have to suck it down and do it. Like there's no point in it that start complaining, nagging in front of me and say, "OK if you're uncomfortable, go back to your home country and stay there. Why you are here?" So that's my perspective.

Hassan continued on to somewhat soften this position by acknowledging that it would be good if more people were understanding of the difficulties international students experience, as well as to express gratitude for the faculty members who are empathetic to these struggles. However, he ended the response by reiterating "go back to your own country if you don't want the challenge. If you don't want to get to the being uncomfortable, that's my point."

Vandrick's (2015) article on the "invisible privileges" that EAL and/or international students may lack covers many of the ways that students such as Hassan are likely to face additional challenges in the English-dominant university context, noting that they:

> encounter not only the usual challenges that all college students face, but also an added set of issues and problems, large and small, that can profoundly affect their educational experiences. These issues and problems arise not only out of their imperfect control of the English language but also from the way they are often positioned, even if often nonintentionally, as outsiders, as Other. (p. 58)

In the book *Identity and Language Learning*, Norton (2013) shares the experiences of Martina, an English language learner and immigrant to Canada who was originally from Czechoslovakia. The author shares how Martina, in the face of marginalization, “set up a counter-discourse in her workplace by resisting the subject position of immigrant woman in favour of the subject position mother” (Norton, 2013, p. 164). Perhaps, for Hassan, framing challenges and struggles as a choice and an expectation – something taken on willingly as part of being an international student – may be a way of countering the narratives of deficit (Marshall, 2009) into which he might otherwise be positioned.

6.1.6. Summary & Reflexive Observations

In the sections above, I have introduced evidence of participants’ navigation of discourses around language in contexts ranging from their home countries to short-term study abroad and immigration to Canada. In the course of these discussions, I led participants in an interrogation of their practices and beliefs, such as around the idea of avoidance of L1 in learning. For some participants who internalized the need to avoid their L1, or even advocated this practice to others, there were occasions of apparent tension between these beliefs and their actual practices in which they had found value in the use of their L1 in learning. In applying a reflexive lens to the interviews and my own experiences, there must be an appreciation for the high stakes attached to participants’ navigation of agency and constraint in their use of language – which contrasts with my own experiences. Plurilingual students, such as these participants, may find validation and relief from deficit discourses in plurilingual ideas – the potential for which was evidenced in my discussions with Keisuke (5.2.2). However, it is much easier to embrace ideas such as the value of partial and unbalanced competences when those competencies are routinely praised, and you have the privilege to fall back on your L1 in most situations. The participants of this research may often lack that privilege. In closing this section, I acknowledge that from my privileged position, it may be simple to identify the internalization of harmful discourses and ask participants to interrogate their beliefs around language. It is a less simple matter for participants to quickly overcome harmful discourses while facing challenging, inflexible academic standards and deficit positioning - despite their highly developed plurilingual and pluricultural competences.

6.2. Participants' Plurilingual Practices

In the previous chapter, I sought to illuminate participants' perspectives on language, including how they view the nature of language, the interplay between their linguistic competencies, and how they report using language in both hybrid and discrete manners. I have also explored how societal discourses may either constrain or enable creative and flexible use of language and how participants may be navigating identity and positioning in relation to their language competencies. In the section above, I have extended this discussion of discourses and identity with a specific focus on the academy. The remainder of this final data analysis chapter will now focus on how participants' cumulative experiences of navigating discourses around language and identity informs their plurilingual practices in learning.

In the subsections below, I will introduce a variety of ways that participants found a meaningful role in their learning processes for their linguistic competences beyond English – despite studying in an English-dominant university. Many of the plurilingual learning strategies discussed below were selected for their value in shedding light on practices that can often be invisible to the educator, who sees and hears only what occurs in the classroom and work that is submitted as a finalized product in the medium of instruction. Each of the subsections will be oriented around learning strategies in which participants found a meaningful place for languages beyond English, such as notetaking, mediation, vocabulary memorization, and drafting of assignments. Many of these learning strategies were shared by multiple participants, and strategies beyond those listed were also used. In the sections below, I will prioritize sharing those excerpts in which participants were best able to articulate not only a description of their practices, but also how their use of other languages in learning benefits them in a meaningful way. The data from interviews will be supplemented by texts shared by participants and, in some cases, reflections on classroom occurrences or references to self-introduction essays submitted as part of the BIZ 200 curriculum.

6.2.1. Notetaking & Translation

Of the 17 participants, 14 discussed using their L1 in notetaking (the three exceptions will be discussed at the end of this subsection). For many of the participants, the use of L1 was presented as minimal and supplementing their use of English –

providing a quick translation or explanation of a new or difficult concept. This is illustrated in Ping's description of practices:

> Ping: Taking notes, I usually use English more than Chinese. Uh, only some words I couldn't, uh, remind it, I will use Chinese. But for the professional words, I always use English because sometimes if the English words translated the Chinese directly, it's hard to understand…I think I write…English more quickly. But sometimes, I couldn't mention the words, so I use the Mandarin and the English combined in the one sentence.

For others, it was represented as a practice that is decreasing as their comfort with English notetaking increases, as illustrated in the response by Lan:

> Lan: When I first came, I wasn't really used to writing in English, so I…wouldn't like really know how to like rephrase something when the teacher says something…Like I get the idea and all that, but I need to write that idea down right then…So, I would write it down in Vietnamese since it would be easy for me to capture the idea and put it down really fast. But now…I'm able to do it in English.

Another participant, Miho, reported a similar lessening of the use of her L1 in notetaking over time, however, with a more intentional avoidance:

> Miho: I like writing notes…and that really helped me when…the words that I don't know, because I'll put like explanation right on top of that words in Japanese sometimes.
>
> Interviewer: So, sometimes there is Japanese involved in notetaking?
>
> Miho: Yes, yeah. I try not to.

As discussed previously (6.1.1), Miho acknowledged internalizing the discourses she encountered around the avoidance of her L1 in learning while studying abroad in high school. In fact, it was this discussion of notetaking – and my follow-up question about why she avoids Japanese if it assists her learning – in which Miho first introduced the impact of the advice she received to completely avoid Japanese. In this excerpt, the tension between that internalized advice and the benefit of her L1 in learning is evident. This raises the possibility of a continued impact of the discourses she encountered during her high school study abroad in the construction of her current practices (Bourdieu, 1990, 1992).

In contrast with the perspective shared about, some participants did indicate that their L1 played an important role in supplementing their notetaking in English. For some, this was framed functionally - something that enhanced the efficiency of notetaking. Omar was one such participant; he explained his use of Bangla (Bengali) in notetaking and the functional benefits it has:

> Omar: I do it in English most of the time. But sometimes, let's say there's like deadline…Then, I use like Bengali bold words like "I have to do this" or "this is the deadline." I don't know, for some reason…when I turn my page, and I see that "OK, this is in Bangla, so this is something serious that I have to remember," so it catches my eye like right away.
>
> Interviewer: OK, it's almost like highlighting? It's like a highlighter function…like metatalk. It's not the content of what you're learning itself, but instructions to yourself or something like that.
>
> Omar: Yes, yeah, something like that. Yeah, instruction to myself.

Omar describes using Bengali for emphasis, working in tandem with the typographic use of bolding for emphasis. In Omar's use of Bengali for emphasis, there may be some overlap with several of the functions of codeswitching laid out by Gumperz (1982). One of these is to serve as an interjection – with interjections often having the function of marking emphasis. Omar's creative use of different scripts, with Bengali used for emphasis, is reminiscent of some uses of the Japanese phonetic syllabary *katakana*. Katakana is primarily used for representing foreign borrowed words in Japanese but is also frequently used in advertising or signage to mark emphasis and draw attention (Igarashi, 2007), much as italics are used in English. Another function of codeswitching introduced by Gumperz (1982) that may be relevant to Omar's practices is that of addressee specification, "to direct the message to one of possible addressees" (p.77). In an interesting way, Omar's use of Bengali accomplishes something similar, signaling a departure from notes on the course content to a direct address to himself as a reminder of an important deadline or responsibility. Certainly, Omar's practices are in line with an important idea within plurilingualism that language use can be flexible and creative (Piccardo, 2017).

Asha was another participant who talked about the functional benefits of implementing various aspects of her linguistic repertoire in the notetaking process. Leading into our discussion of notetaking, Asha and I were discussing the impact of the

recent pandemic on students' learning practices, especially how education had moved even further toward digital resources. Thinking of how online classes are often recorded for re-viewing and students may not have as easy access to university computer labs to print readings, I pondered whether fewer students were taking notes while learning and attending lectures virtually from home. Perhaps due to this framing of my question, Asha chose to discuss how she takes notes on her computer and digital resources:

> Asha: For the eBooks, I will just highlight them, and I do make notes, but in my own language. Like it's Hindi, but I write it in English. Like, you know, the text messages, how you do it? I don't know if I'm able to explain.
>
> Interviewer: So, like using English characters, but writing out the sound of the Hindi word?
>
> Asha: Exactly, yeah. I try to make notes that way…I would write it in my own language with using English alphabets. That's how I take notes. Yeah, because it's easy for me to look at. And, you know, just have a quick glance at it while I'm working on my assignments or learning something.
>
> Interviewer: Interesting. So, you're saying that writing it using English characters makes it easier to look at or…?
>
> Asha: Yeah, it's just like. Uhm, OK. So, if I'm trying to write it in English, I will have to make full sentences for me to further refer to it in future. But if I'm writing it in my own language but using English characters, it's just easy for my eye to look at quickly. Because that's how we normally text in India, like we would use English alphabets…but it would sound Hindi, or it would sound Punjabi. But we would use English characters.

Asha later sent several images of her notetaking and highlighting of ebooks. When sending the images, Asha wrote that they show "how I take notes in my national language using the English alphabet" (there is a continued theme of Asha's wordings expressing ownership of Indian languages but not English, as discussed in 5.1.5). The practice of using Romanized Hindi in notetaking was also raised by another participant from India, Rita. Beyond the functional value (quick notetaking) that the participants reported, the images sent by Asha also reveal hybrid practices. In contrast to her description of notes as Hindi written in the English alphabet, the images reveal that there are also English terms fluidly woven among Hindi throughout the excerpt. There is a wide body of literature confirming the phenomena of both the romanization of Hindi and the mixing of Hindi and English. On the former, Singh et al. (2022) studied the impact of

Hindi romanization on word recognition. On the latter, the mixing of Hindi and English has been studied with regard to social media (Agarwal et al., 2017; Rudra et al., 2019) and Bollywood (Si, 2011). Furthermore, Dey & Fung (2014) examined motivation for Hindi-English mixing (Dey & Fung, 2014). In the example of Asha's practices, which can be seen in the figure below (Figure 6.1), she intersperses key English terminology from the eBook passage with Hindi terms, leveraging multiple aspects of her linguistic repertoire to maximize her learning and meaning making.

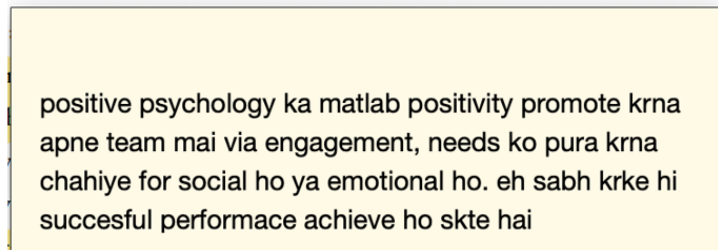

Figure 6.1. Asha's Digital Notes on an Ebook
Note: Asha intersperses English terms into notes written in majority in Romanized Hindi. (Translation: "Positive psychology means promoting positivity in your team through engagement, needs should be fulfilled be it social or emotional. By doing this we can achieve successful performance.")

While Asha's notes revealed plurilingual practices to aide in meaning-making, despite her description which framed them only as Romanized Hindi, some participants more explicitly highlighted the importance of plurilingual notetaking in meaning-making. Yen was one such participant. I made certain to ask Yen directly about her notetaking, as the topic had come up while making small talk during a break in one of our BIZ 200 class sessions. Yen had said that it would be difficult for anyone other than herself to read her course notes due to how heavily she mixes Vietnamese and English. As we discussed this in the interview, Yen explained that her use of Vietnamese was a crucial part of meaning making and memorization when encountering new terminologies:

Yen: For the courses that I have to remember things, for example, last semester I took [course number] which is about law. There are so many things to remember. And what I did is that I write the word in English, but then I try to explain the word in Vietnamese. And I feel like I can only understand the term, or the phrase, or the word when I am successfully explaining the word in Vietnamese.

Interviewer: I think there can be different reasons for doing that…are you having to look up the definition in Vietnamese to help your understanding of it? Or is it more about remembering?

Yen: No, usually it's more about remembering. Usually…when I look up for the definition, I will look up the word in English. So, look up the definition in English and then try to explain it in Vietnamese. So, it's not about like searching for the word, it’s about remembering the word.

Yen shared several examples of her notetaking, one of which can be seen in the image below (Figure 6.2). The example suggests a thoughtful and organized approach to notetaking, and multiple uses of Vietnamese can be seen.

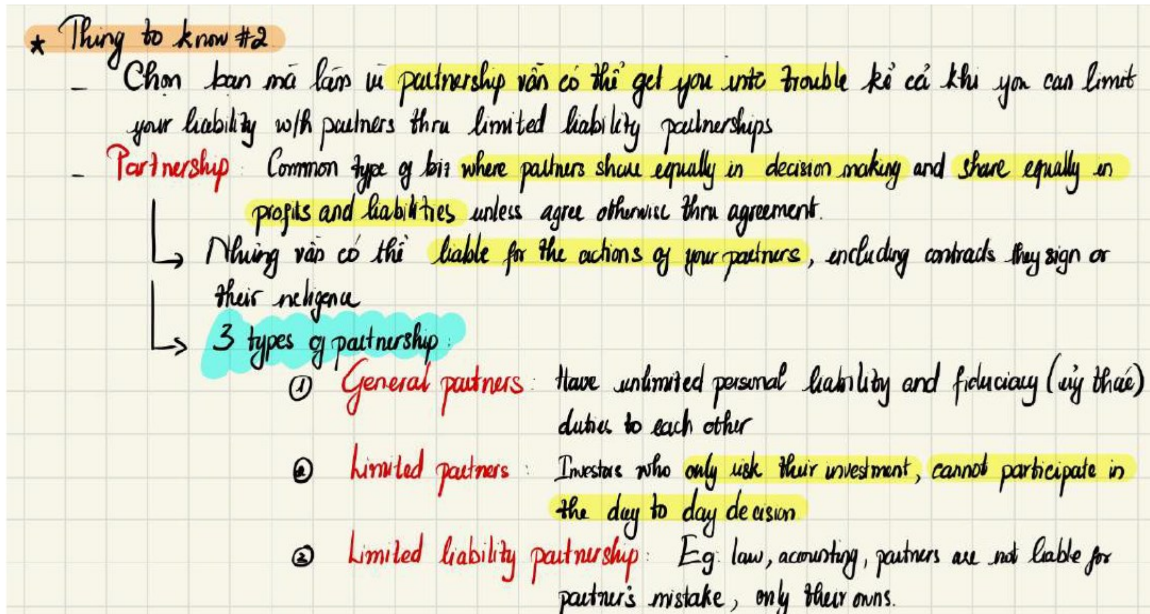

Figure 6.2. Yen’s Implementation of Vietnamese in Notetaking
Note: The image above demonstrates how Yen flexibly draws on the languages in her linguistic repertoire in notetaking. Lines 2-6 demonstrate hybrid use of English and Vietnamese. While line 9 has an instance of clarification of meaning in Vietnamese (in parenthesis).

Yen’s notes demonstrate a fluid interspersion of English and Vietnamese and, in at least one case, a clarification of meaning where the term “fiduciary duties” is defined in Vietnamese in parentheses. Yen’s explanation of why she seeks out an understanding of concepts in both English and Vietnamese demonstrates a conscious awareness of her ability to leverage her linguistic resources most effectively for learning, specifically memorization and meaning making. This emphasis on meaning and memorization was shared by several other students. Omar said that he often translates important reading passages into Bengali (usually in his head, but sometimes as notes), saying that this practice made the content “more meaningful to me, and I feel like when it means more to me then it helps me to better memorize.” Omar shared that one benefit of this practice is that when he takes an exam, often “the Bengali summary comes in my head.” Similarly,

Zohreh said of supplementing her English notes with Farsi that "I just write a translation underneath the word, because that helps me remember what it actually means." Van Viegen and Zappa-Hollman (2020), also writing of the Canadian post-secondary context, discussed how "students reported languaging their thoughts, ideas and note-taking in more than one language, selecting from among their linguistic resources the most effective means to facilitate and represent their meaning-making (p. 179). This strategy of plurilanguaging can be seen in the notetaking practices described above and in the participants' descriptions of how this strategy assists in meaning making and memorization.

A final theme related to notetaking was the continuation of a broader theme in this thesis - that participants seemed to be developing greater awareness of, and analyzing, some of their plurilingual practices for the first time. This could be seen in my interview and follow-up communication with Yuri. When I initially discussed notetaking with Yuri, she acknowledged using Japanese, but didn't have much to say about her practices. However, she agreed to send some pictures of her notes; when she did so in a follow-up email, she reported discovering something about her own practices:

> Yuri: I'd like to add something I noticed by reflecting on my note…I think I tend to use Japanese when I encounter a new English word that I don't even know in Japanese, because I found it difficult to explain the word in English if I don't even know what the word means in Japanese. For example…the word of "Atherosclerosis" is something that I've never heard even in Japanese, so I used a dictionary and wrote down the meaning in Japanese.

Yuri contrasted this with her notetaking on the concept of "myocardial infarction." Since she already understood this concept in Japanese, she quickly wrote only the Japanese translation of the term, as opposed to a full definition. Yuri's discovery regarding her own practices also serves to highlight the important role her L1 and plurilanguaging play in meaning making.

Among the participants who did not acknowledge the use of L1 in notetaking, Keisuke was the most noteworthy example. He explained that he prefers to handwrite notes and "can't write Japanese quickly, so I end up writing in English." While the Japanese writing system is certainly complex, this may also reflect Keisuke's own "linguistic biography" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 133). As noted in the previous

chapter, Keisuke attended an English-medium international school in Japan; therefore, he missed the rigorous memorization of *kanji* (Chinese characters incorporated into the Japanese writing system) that is part of mainstream Japanese education. Describing his self-study of kanji, Keisuke said "I'm struggling a lot." Plurilingualism acknowledges the unbalanced nature of competencies, "for example, excellent speaking competence in two languages, but good writing competence in only one of them" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 133). Keisuke's reflection on his competences reveals just such an imbalance, with more developed competency in written English than written Japanese; in turn, this offers some explanatory power regarding his notetaking practices. The only other participants who did not discuss using their L1 in notetaking were Leila and Hassan. With Leila, notetaking was not discussed in the interview due to a focus on other topics, and Hassan explained that he is "not really a note-taker person," preferring to focus on listening attentively. Overall, notetaking played an important role in learning for most participants, with the clear majority incorporating at least some use of their L1 in their notes.

6.2.2. Mediation with Peers

While notetaking can also be an example of self-mediation of content, much of the focus on mediation in plurilingualism and in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001, 2018) is focused on meaning-making in a social context, between interlocutors. The Council of Europe (2018) offers the following explanation of what constitutes mediation:

> In mediation, the user/learner acts as a social agent who creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning, sometimes within the same language, sometimes from one language to another…The focus is on the role of language in processes like creating the space and conditions for communicating and/or learning, collaborating to construct new meaning, encouraging others to construct or understand new meaning, and passing on new information in an appropriate form. (p. 103)

In this section, I will introduce participants' experiences with drawing on their plurilingual (and pluricultural) competences in both assisting with and benefiting from mediation with peers, in line with the themes described in the excerpt above.

A majority of participants did report the importance of mediating course concepts with peers who share their languages. Below is a selection of participants' perspectives on this issue:

Zohreh: When we studied together, we spoke Farsi. So, we just like read whatever we had to read, and then we would kind of like communicate in Farsi with each other.

~

Cynthia: I always take course with my Chinese friends, and we like definitely will use our home language like to communicate…even for the course concepts.

~

Yuri: We help each other in the class and like studying together…Like I was not good at economics and my friend…helped me out, yeah, by teaching economics in Japanese.

~

Linda: If I'm studying with my Indonesian friends, I'm gonna use like 100% Bahasa. Sometimes they asked me to explain things, and I will explain them in 100% Bahasa.

~

Hassan: My best friend right now, she grew up here, but she actually can speak Farsi…We are working on courses right now and we are doing some math-based courses, some programming-based courses. And we are talking Farsi all the time… When it comes to some technical stuff, I rather…walk her through in Farsi instead of just going through English…I need to be precise…So, I rather to keep it in Farsi.

In these examples, participants relay the important role their L1 plays in mediating course content. Their described practices cover several of the Council of Europe's (2018) descriptors for mediation activities, including mediating texts and concepts (p. 106). Participants' examples demonstrate benefiting from mediation, mediating for the benefit of others, and "collaborating to construct meaning" (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 106).

Several participants also reported the use of their broader linguistic repertoire, beyond their L1, in facilitating learning through interactions with peers. Rita was one such participant. As discussed in the previous chapter, Rita had expressed that she felt her first language was changing from Punjabi to Hindi, due to extensive interactions with

Indian peers in Hindi. Though Hindi and English are the common languages of education in India, Rita discussed also finding a role for Punjabi when studying with friends:

> Rita: I have another friend, he speaks Punjabi…with that person I used to speak Hindi. But eventually, he was like we should never forget our roots because he was also like a Punjabi person. And then he give me the habit to, you know, speak with him in this language only…whenever I'm helping him with anything.

Rita continued on to discuss her general excitement about helping her peers learn, and how she employs her full linguistic repertoire in doing so:

> Rita: Because my friends, I have always loved to help them in their studies. I always translate whatever I know in English in the language that they prefer. Like, for example, my friend from Iran. I have to explain what this assignment means, what this regression line is; I'll tell her in English. But when my friend who's from India, she's asking something, I'll explain her in Hindi. So, basically, it's all going in a mixed language scenario thing. Whatever I tell to each person depends upon from where that person comes and like what language he or she speaks with me. So, that definitely plays a role, their backgrounds and their cultures.

Omar was another student who reported drawing on aspects of his linguistic repertoire beyond English and his L1 (Bengali). In his self-introduction essay for BIZ 200, Omar wrote that he could also "speak a little Hindi but not as proficient as Bangla and English." However, through our discussion in the interview, it came to light that Omar was actually strongly proficient in Hindi. After Omar discussed his use of Bengali to mediate mathematical concepts for a friend – including in ways that align with the Council of Europe's (2018) descriptor of "explaining data" (p. 109) – I asked if he also engaged in this kind of mediation with Hindi speaking peers. Omar shared about sometimes being in project groups that were majority Indian students. In one instance, Omar described a group slowly becoming aware that he was able to follow their side discussions in Hindi and then eventually deciding "OK, let's do this like whole conversation in Hindi and even when, you know, studying."

North and Piccardo (2016) describe "the flexible use of different languages, for example in multilingual classrooms" (p. 9) that plurilingual individuals may engage in. Rita's description of her efforts to mediate course content for peers using a variety of languages and Omar's example of engaging aspects of his linguistic repertoire that he

considers less developed demonstrate such flexible use of language. North and Piccardo also note that mediation can include intralinguistic practices, as exemplified by when Rita uses English to explain English content to her Iranian friend. Moreover, Rita's understanding that the specific background and culture of her friends are important in informing how she assists them matches the Council of Europe's (2018) idea that "particularly with regard to cross-linguistic mediation…this inevitably also involves social and cultural competence" (p. 106).

6.2.3. Connecting and Extending Learning Across Contexts through Mediation with Parents and Past Teachers

Beyond mediation with classmates and peers, some participants also reported that past-teachers or parents were influential in helping them negotiate meaning in their current learning in Canada. In some instances, these practices also overlapped with the idea of "linking to previous knowledge" as discussed as a mediation strategy by the Council of Europe (2018, p. 126, 128). Rita was one participant that shared her thoughts on this topic. After mentioning that she would often translate concepts in her head, I tried to tease out more ways that her learning in Canada involved languages other than English and plurilingual strategies. Rita brought up using her former teachers in India as a resource in mediating concepts:

> Rita: If I'm not translating, like the only thing that I do is I'll go to my old teachers, like I talked to them on the phone…basically we have a conversation, and they try to explain me in words like what I want to understand. I have teachers back in India who used to teach me in like 11th and 12th grade. So, whenever I have problems, I just call them, and I ask them for help and, basically, it's like a one to one conversation and we don't need any translation over there.

Rita went on to share that she had previously studied business concepts in India in high school, so she had former teachers and tutors with whom to discuss the more difficult concepts that she was currently learning as an undergraduate business student in Canada. I asked if she noticed herself being able to make connections between her learning in India and her current courses, to which Rita replied, "Yeah, definitely."

Another group that emerged as a resource for negotiating meaning and connecting to concepts from other contexts was parents. This topic first emerged in my

discussion with Zohreh. I asked most participants about their use of resources, such as bilingual dictionaries. In her response, Zohreh identified her parents as another important resource:

> Zohreh: I actually use two sources for the English to Farsi translation. One of them is Google Translate and the other one is called parents. So, I just ask my parents.
>
> Interviewer: OK, interesting. So, your parents are a good resource in terms of those translations?
>
> Zohreh: Yeah, because my dad used to go to like different countries when we were in Iran for like different missions and everything…And also my mom used to be like English to Farsi translator for a while, so they know a lot of vocabulary. So, if I have any questions like that, I think 90% of the time they know what it means.

In the interview excerpt above, Zohreh shares one way in which her parents help enhance her learning. Though she frames this as simple assistance with translating concepts, there may also be important negotiation of meaning happening in similar exchanges.

Another participant, Miho, shares in more depth her meaningful conversations about learning with her parents. In Miho's case these conversations went further than assisting with vocabulary to include negotiation of meaning and practical application of concepts. I asked most participants if they had learned business concepts before coming to Canada and are able to make connections to this learning in their home country (or other contexts). Miho said she hadn't but credited her parents' involvement in business, especially her father's role as a manager, for her interest in the field. As we discussed her parents' influence, Miho revealed the meaningful role her father plays in her learning in Canada:

> Interviewer: Do you ever find overlap with that, and what you studied in [university], where you're like "oh, my dad told me about that, or something like that?"
>
> Miho: Yeah, I do that and then also, like the opposite things. Like if I study or learn something in business, and I told my dad about it. And then we have like really good conversations after. Like, for example, I learned something theoretical about business like HR or marketing, and then I talked to him about it. And then he gives me a new insights and how that actually works in a business.

Miho described these conversations with her dad as very meaningful. And she felt that the challenge of translating and explaining what she learned in Canada for her father was impactful for her learning.

> Miho: I feel like explaining things in Japanese that I've been taught in English, it's very helpful to really learn on things. Because I feel like in English, you know, you can say anything that you just heard to somebody, even though you don't understand. But you have to understand to speak in different language to tell others what's going on…So, it's definitely something that I, yeah, thought that was very helpful to learn things by telling others in different language.

Fielding (2016) discusses the important role that family members can play in co-construction of meaning. In one example, the author shares about a grandmother who helps her primary-school aged Australian granddaughter with schoolwork. As the grandmother – a speaker of primarily Italian – did not speak much English, this put the onus on the student to navigate her knowledge of both English and Italian to make meaning of the assistance that she was given. Fielding (2016) notes that students in her research "may not have had the metalanguage to label these strategies" (p. 368), but nonetheless were able to identify them as important to learning. In a similar way, participants in this research such as Zohreh and Miho did not always have the metalanguage to describe their plurilingual practices but nonetheless identified the strategies, such as co-construction of meaning with parents, as important to their learning.

6.2.4. Drafts and Assignments

As acknowledged in the Methodology section, the original plan for this research included a larger component of in-class observation of student practices. These observations may have offered the possibility to learn about students' drafting processes during in-class work. Ultimately, my agreement with the faculty to not collect data from current students, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic and move to remote learning, disrupted these plans. When asking participants if they had any texts to share which demonstrated plurilingual practices, I did specifically mention drafts of essays or papers. Unfortunately, the need to submit work fully in English often meant that any record of the use of other languages in drafts was erased as assignments were finalized. Asha, for example, responded to my question about using Hindi or Punjabi in drafts by saying "I

did that, but I don't think I would have that" - meaning she had not maintained any copy of her drafts. However, some participants did still share about their use of languages beyond English in drafting assignments and, in one case, the final product.

In most participant interviews, we discussed the drafting of essays through our shared context of BIZ 200. In this course, assignments included business communications such as emails and memos, as well as a report-style assignment which more closely resembled an academic research paper. Mirroring the discussion of notetaking (6.2.1), a number of participants described their use of languages other than English in their drafting process as a practice that was declining, to varying extents, as their comfort with English improved. Lan was on the far end of this spectrum; she reflected on feeling that she no longer knew how to write as effectively in Vietnamese after being far removed from Vietnamese-medium schooling:

> Lan: Uhm, like when I first came, I would…write my essays in Vietnamese…Uh, but now I even like find it hard to really write an essay in Vietnamese. I guess since I'm like used to writing in English, so it would take a while to go back to writing in Vietnamese. I think when I came back home for the pandemic, I think I had to write an email in Vietnamese and that was pretty hard…I didn't know how to start…I was like "I don't know how to write an email anymore."

Other participants expressed frustration with the process of translating drafts and gratefulness to no longer need to rely on this strategy. Simu shared that he felt translating was inefficient and really exhausting, while Cynthia discussed how using Mandarin in drafts could be useful, but she doesn't do it often because it wastes time. These comments mirror those shared by participants earlier in the chapter (6.1.1) and the discussion of English-only perspectives. Rather than being viewed as skill to be developed for future benefit, the translation of ideas between languages is discussed by some participants rather as a chore or an annoyance.

Leila was also among the participants who shared this perspective, when I asked about her use of Farsi in drafts. However, as she concluded her thoughts, she also acknowledged that translation of ideas from Farsi to English was still an important part of her writing process, it had just become a process that was more internal:

> Leila: I'm really like thankful and I appreciate that because that was how I used to do in like high school in 11th grade. I remember

> those like English essay, I would always like write the full essay in Farsi and then go back to translate it. And I'm really thankful that I'm not doing that anymore, so I just basically start like from English. But it's just, yeah, that translation is still happening, but I'm not putting it out on paper or like Word document.

A similar perspective was also shared by Omar:

> Omar: So, when I do my draft, I do it in English. But my thought process is completely in Bangla…I don't feel like I'm able to, you know, express what I'm gonna say very well. And then I'm good at, you know, translating what I'm thinking right now and then "OK, I'm gonna write these things and this this and this."

While some of the interview excerpts above featured participants sharing their diminishing need to translate between their languages as evidence of their developing English skills, Leila and Omar's comments highlight an important tenet of plurilingualism. Though modern scholars on language learning are pushing back against this perspective, language learning has often been viewed through a monolingual lens. One result of this has been a commonly stated goal of native-level proficiency in the target language. However, through a plurilingual lens, one can embrace the connections between languages and partial competences and reject native speakerism as the goal (Council of Europe, 2001). In Omar and Leila's comments, the participants' evolving writing processes demonstrate not that they have mastered writing in English in isolation but that they have developed greater fluidity in moving between the languages in their linguistic repertoires.

Omar was also the lone participant who was able to readily share an example of when languages beyond English were used in a final assignment. When I asked him if there was ever space for incorporating Bangla more visibly in work, despite the requirements of the university to submit work in English, this was his reply:

> Omar: Uhm, I don't know if this would be a perfect example, but in one of my presentations for [course number], I did present a startup company that was completely based in Bangladesh. So, I had to use a lot of Bengali words and then I had to write the translation in English.

Omar continued on to describe that the startup company he was presenting about was a similar concept to LinkedIn for the Bangladesh market. Because not everyone in

Bangladesh can speak English, the app he was presenting about would need to be in Bengali:

> Omar: Bangladesh is very highly like densely populated, right? And that particular community, like a huge majority, does not know how to speak in English…So, the company that I presented, and its mobile application, and all the instruction was in Bengali. Let's say "log into your profile." That was written in Bengali 'cause they don't understand this right? So, in the class I have to explain this…And I'm sure the class…wouldn't know "log into your profile" if I write this in Bangla, and I don't have the translation. No one will know, right? So, I have to write this in English translation as well.

As a result, Omar's presentation took on a plurilingual nature. While he translated much of the Bengali to English for the benefit of his classmates and instructor, he also provided some key words in Bengali (alongside their English equivalents), so that the audience would be able to navigate the app if they chose to do so. An example of his plurilingual slides can been seen in Figure 6.3 (below).

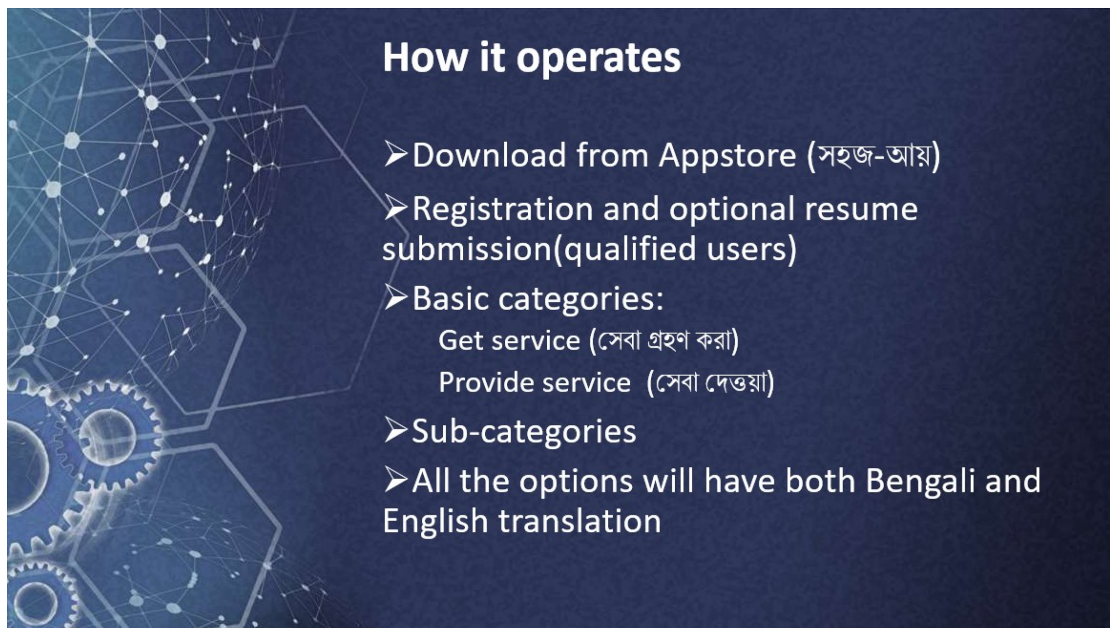

Figure 6.3. Omar's Use of Bengali in Presentation Slides
Note: Omar translated information about an app from the Bangladeshi context into English for his classmates and instructor, but also provided key terms in Bengali to assist them in navigating the app.

While participants may not commonly find opportunities for their use of languages other than English in the final drafts of assignments, the examples above demonstrate that the composition of assignments is often a plurilingual process. This

process may be less apparent as a student's practices evolve from strict translation from L1 to target language to a more flexible movement between languages (perhaps, internally). However, this does not diminish the importance of the connections between the languages in the students' linguistic repertoire.

6.2.5. Video Tutorials

Omar shared one other instance of a plurilingual learning strategy that affirms that languages beyond the medium of instruction can play an instrumental role in learning – even when that language is viewed as a partial competency by the student. Omar was among a number of participants who shared an instance of turning to YouTube to find additional guidance. As I asked about his process of seeking out video resources, he recalled one instance in which he was searching for some supplemental guidance for an accounting course. After searching through videos in multiple languages, he eventually settled on one in Hindi, ostensibly the least developed of the languages in his repertoire:

> Omar: I did find in Bangla, but I found that whoever was explaining in Hindi was easier for me to understand than in Bangla. 'Cause I'm not very familiar with those words in accounting…for example, "depreciation." I don't know how to say it in Bangla, right? But when that guy in Hindi was explaining depreciation…this is much easier for me to understand.

In previous sections (above), I highlighted some participants' dismissals of their less developed competences. In stark contrast, Omar, who first introduced his skills in Hindi by saying he speaks "a little," was able to draw on this language to find assistance with his accounting studies, when he could not find an equally helpful video in either English or Bengali. While Omar may have understated his Hindi competency – he later clarified that "I do not know how to read and write Hindi, but if you talk to me in Hindi, I can like fluently speak in Hindi" – there is no doubt that it is a less developed competence than that of his English and Bengali. Even so, it is a resource that has been useful in his learning in an English-dominant context on multiple occasions, in line with the value attributed to partial and unbalanced competences in plurilingualism (Council of Europe, 2001; Marshall & Moore, 2018; Galante, 2020b).

6.3. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the discourses around language and identity that participants of this study reported engaging with in academic settings, including those before arriving at their current university in Canada. I have also described a selection of plurilingual strategies employed by participants, alongside their perspectives on the value of these strategies to their learning. However, these represent only a small portion of the practices that students reported. Participants shared a number of other avenues for learning that involved their L1 (or other languages), such as strategies involving dictionaries (both English-English and dictionaries with definitions in their other languages), flash cards, and vocabulary games, among other topics. Importantly, each participant of the study shared meaningful ways that languages beyond English have played a role in their learning - including participants such as Miho and Hassan, whose navigation of discourses around language and identity at times seemed to lead to an admitted self-regulation of plurilingual strategies.

In discussing these themes, this thesis has contributed to a deeper understanding of students' plurilingual practices while learning in English-dominant contexts, as well has how they navigated agency and constraints placed on them by dominant discourses in the academy. In the following chapter, I will conclude this research by reviewing the findings related to each research questions, synthesizing themes, considering the implications for pedagogy, and recommending avenues for further research on the themes presented here.

Chapter 7.

Conclusion and Implications

This thesis explored participants' perspectives on topics related to the nature of language and on language use in daily life and learning. I have taken a qualitative approach, with primary data generation in semi-structured interviews and supplementation from collection of documents which demonstrate plurilingual practices. Interviews and document collection revealed that participants were often able to draw on their full plurilingual repertoire to maximize their learning and successfully complete coursework in an English-dominant university. However, they also revealed that participants engaged with, and sometimes internalized, harmful discourses around language, including linguistic purity, deficit perspectives, and in what domains various languages should be used (e.g., English-only discourses). In the sections below, I will revisit the research questions and summarize the findings related to each. I will also reflect on the constraints and limitations of the research presented in this thesis. Finally, I will offer thoughts on both implications for pedagogy and potential future directions for research in a similar vein, before offering concluding thoughts.

7.1. Research Questions and Findings

To better understand the participants' experiences and perspectives on language and learning, the following research questions (and sub-questions) were established:

> **RQ1**: How and why do participants use languages in their daily lives (in non-academic contexts)?
>
> **RQ2**: What roles do languages other than English play in participants' learning in an English dominant academic context? How do their practices in learning align with or differ from their language use in daily life?

Within each of these research questions, I also considered the sub-question of how participants' language use and conceptualization of language use relate to theories of bi-/multi-/plurilingualism, as well as the role of discourses and the formation of identity in constructing their practices. In this section, I will summarize the findings related to each of these primary research questions, as well as the sub-questions.

7.1.1. Research Question 1

Participants shared the use of multiple languages (and dialects) in various arenas of their daily lives. Languages other than English were used to communicate with family members both in Canada – for those whose families have immigrated – or in their home countries. Many participants also used their L1 or other languages and dialects from their home country when communicating with friends who share those languages. Some participants, such as Zohreh, discussed using their L1 at work or when frequenting local business in communities in the Vancouver area with a strong population from their home countries, such as those formed through diaspora or other transnational movement. The continuing use and importance of an L1 while in a new country and language environment is not a surprise, and likely well-understood even by the lay person. García (2009) notes that research shows that, even in the face of pressure to assimilate, "the process of *language shift* among immigrant populations tends to take place over three generations in countries such as the United States of Australia" (p. 80) – which can likely also be extrapolated to the Canadian context. So, it is natural for these participants to have maintained use of their L1 while in Canada. However, in discussing language use with participants, a number of interesting themes did arise.

In contrast, one interesting outcome of lines of inquiry around language use in daily life came in discussions of hybridity. As I asked participants to describe the situations and people with whom they typically used their various languages, many participants initially presented their practices in the form of clean separation of languages, in contrast with how a plurilingual lens views languages (Council of Europe, 2001). This was most clearly demonstrated by Simu who first stated that his language use was divided into zones for use of Chinese and English, respectively, that were clear and distinct. However, for Simu and other participants, this division frequently began to dissipate under further analysis of practices as the interviews proceeded. As an example of this, in a follow-up through email, Simu recalled how his family speaks two languages and five dialects and enjoys mixing them together for comedic effect. A number of other participants similarly shared hybrid practices, with some commenting that they had not really realized how much they mixed languages until they were asked to think more deeply about it – highlighting both the prevalence and naturality of such practices. In contrast, a few participants were quite aware of their mixing of languages. Yen was one

participant who typified this group. When I asked her, in one of the first questions of the interview, whether her languages were separated into different domains of use, she finished her response by saying “we kind of mix them together, and there's no separation between two languages for me.” Other participants, such as Rita and Asha, who grew up in families where different members had different preferred languages – resulting in long history of plurilingual interactions and mediation – also seemed quite comfortable describing their hybrid practices. This may suggest that individuals with such linguistic biographies are better able to conceptualize language in a manner consistent with ideas in the field of plurilingualism.

Another interesting aspect of participants’ perspectives and experiences around hybridity was whether they found these practices to be encouraged and supported in various arenas. Yen, for example, discussed experiencing criticism and direct discouragement from both family members and strangers when she mixed English and Vietnamese. She said that in Vietnam some saw this as pretentious behavior – an attitude confirmed by another participant from Vietnam, Lan. While Yen described sometimes actively resisting these discourses around language use, she also presented evidence of internal struggle by embracing (and promoting to peers) and L1 approach in some aspects of learning (to be discussed further in the summary of RQ2). This demonstrates the power of deeply ingrained societal discourses to cause conflict within an individual, even when they have identified and, at times, resisted the discourses. In contrast, Linda talked about how prevalent the mixing of languages is in Indonesian society. She stated that “we Indonesians don’t use Bahasa properly” because the prevalent mixing with English that has become commonplace as English education has become heavily adopted in Indonesia. For her, hybridity is not a marked choice but a natural state of affairs in Indonesia.

In another important finding, interviews revealed that many participants also seemed to internalize a native-speaker oriented goal around language learning. While a plurilingual perspective embraces the value of even partial competences and sees imbalance amongst the various components of an individual’s plurilingual competence as normal, most participants seemed to struggle with this idea. Internalized deficit perspectives were evident in participants such as Leila who lamented having two languages (Farsi and English) but not feeling “fully” competent in either. In a similar vein, Keisuke – who went to English-medium schools in his native Japan – talked about the

areas in which he viewed his Japanese competency to be incomplete and how he desired to improve this in order to be “purely bilingual.” However, while this research was not necessarily designed to take on an intervention-oriented approach, some participants explicitly expressed interest in perspectives such as plurilingualism and demonstrated openness to revisiting and changing the beliefs and perspectives around language that they held which may involve viewing their competencies in a less positive light.

In exploring research question one and discussing themes around language use in daily life with participants, their perspectives and descriptions of practices revealed a complex navigation of agency and constraint. Moreover, the results demonstrated that many participants have internalized discourses in society around language use, even when they may contradict their own experiences and instincts about language. However, some participants also demonstrated openness to modern perspectives on language, and many responded to the line of inquiry by indicating they had not previously deeply interrogated their internalized beliefs about language. This suggests potential for avenues of intervention to overcome the harmful aspects of beliefs, such as could be accomplished through a plurilingual pedagogy.

7.1.2. Research Question 2

In the previous section, I noted that it is widely understood that immigrants (and those on shorter sojourns in a new country) will still maintain regular use of their L1 in their daily lives. In contrast, when it comes to learning, the role of L1 is less widely accepted, even within language education circles (Lin, 2013; May, 2014). The participants of this research confirmed that their L1s – and other languages beyond English – do play an important role in their learning, despite course deliverables ultimately needing to be in academic English. Participants were able to share numerous learning strategies that confirmed this role for other languages. These strategies included plurilingual notetaking, mediation, and the use of supplemental materials in a variety of languages.

Beyond sharing how and when they use languages other than English, some participants also demonstrated awareness of, and were able to clearly articulate, the positive impact on learning that these plurilingual strategies have. Among the ways that

participants indicated that their L1 was important was the idea of meaning making, such as when encountering new vocabulary in English. Several participants described actively seeking out an understanding of new terms in both English and their L1 and reported that this strategy improves meaning making and helps them recall information more easily when it is needed (such as in an exam). Other participants commented on how plurilingual mediation with peers can improve their understanding of lecture concepts, especially if they are able to do so quietly during the lecture. One participant expressed that this would assist with better following lectures, in contrast with waiting for the end of the class or instructor office hours, when they may have already gotten behind. However, this practice of in-class mediation may depend on the comfort of the instructor, as the participant identified disapproving glances as something that may discourage them for doing so. Moreover, at least one participant reported an instance when a lesser developed competency played a key role in learning. This participant, Omar, found that their learning of course content was enhanced by seeking out supplemental instruction (such as online tutorial videos) produced in his other languages. And he recounted an instance when, after searching for a video on accounting in English and his native Bengali, he eventually settled on one produced in Hindi, ostensibly the least developed of his linguistic competences. This instance confirms the advocacy for the importance of even partial competences that can be found in plurilingualism (Council of Europe, 2001).

Despite these positive experiences with plurilingual strategies in learning, many participants were still conflicted about the use of L1 in learning. This was best demonstrated by the perspectives shared by Yen who went as far as to say that she would try to stop others form using Vietnamese when learning in English, despite also sharing meaningful ways that Vietnamese played a role in her learning in Canada. Others reported that they felt the classroom should be an English environment, referencing reasons such as respectfulness to others, instructor policies, and intuition based on more subtly communicated messages from interactions with instructors. Ping recalled being unhappy with classmates using Mandarin in the BIZ 200 classroom we shared (with me in the role of instructor). She initially said she felt this was against the class rules. Upon further investigation and a reminder that I did not enforce such rules, she revised her response to say it was her rule – though, in doing so, she referenced a past instructor in Canada who spoke Mandarin but would always reply in English to Chinese students who asked questions in Mandarin.

The conflict that students such as Yen, Ping, and others may feel about using languages other than English in their learning in Canada can best be explained by their engagement with societal discourses. In academic contexts, discourses around deficit and English-only requirements are still prevalent (Galante, 2020a; García, 2009; Lau, 2020; Lau & Van Viegen, 2020; Marshall, 2010; Marshall & Moore, 2018). And this reality was confirmed by the experiences and perspectives that participants of this research shared. Participants reported engaging with discourses around language, including on the topics of linguistic purity and avoidance of mixing languages, of needing to avoid use of their L1 when learning in English, and of deficit. These discourses were experienced across multiple contexts, including their home countries, while receiving advice about how to maximize a short-term study abroad experience, in an international college serving as a pipeline school, and at West Coast Canadian University.

The findings related to research question 2 demonstrate that much like in their daily lives, students find it both natural and useful to draw on their greater plurilingual resources while studying in an English-dominant context. Despite this, students may internalize harmful discourses, viewing their own competences from a deficit perspective or self-regulating their use of other languages even in learning while simultaneously acknowledging the benefit of those practices. A plurilingual perspective offers a more positive lens through which plurilingual students can view their competences, even if partial or unbalanced. And the interconnected nature of languages which is emphasized in plurilingualism can reaffirm the value of all competences to learning, even in the face of an English-dominant environment. As such, a plurilingual pedagogy is well-positioned to address the harmful discourses encountered by students and be useful in replacing them with more positive and affirming perspectives.

7.1.3. Summary of Findings

This thesis research found that plurilingual students maintained use of their L1s – and other languages beyond English – in both their daily lives and learning in Canada. However, the experiences and perspectives shared by participants suggested a long history of engaging with societal discourses around language. Many of these discourses would seek to limit how and when they draw on various aspects of their linguistic competences, which demonstrates that plurilingual students such as the participants of this research need to navigate a complicated intersection of agency and constraint. For

some participants, there was clear evidence of conflict and strife, especially in the domain of learning. Some of the discourses that participants encountered in the academy were likely well-intentioned, seeking to maximize students' English input and output and/or facilitate a respectful multilingual environment by enforcing use of a common language. Nonetheless, these policies are based on understandings of language that are now considered outdated by many, including advocates of plurilingualism.

The data shared here represents a contribution towards a deeper understanding of how plurilingual students may draw on not only their L1 but their full linguistic repertoire while studying in an English-dominant context. Moreover, important themes have been introduced regarding how both discourses encountered throughout their lives and academic careers and identity may play a role in the construction of these practices, as they navigate constraints and employ their agency in learning. The results of this research suggest that there could be great potential benefit to a broader implementation of plurilingual-inspired pedagogy in multilingual contexts such as the site of this research. The feasibility of such pedagogical improvements is already being explored by researchers of plurilingualism, translanguaging, and related fields in a variety of contexts (see, among others, Galante, 2020a, 2020b; He at al., 2021; Lau & Van Viegen, 2020; Lin, 2013; Piccardo, 2013; Ponzio et al., 2023). However, the experiences of the participants of this thesis demonstrate that harmful discourses, such as around deficit and English-only policies, remain prevalent and can negatively impact how students view the usefulness and importance of their broader linguistic repertoires.

For faculty, learning to implement plurilingual-inspired pedagogy would be an important opportunity to update their understanding of language and to better support plurilingual students. For plurilingual students, a plurilingual-inspired pedagogy can offer opportunities to challenge previously encountered discourses around language that might cause them to limit their use of other languages which can enrich their learning experience. For the broader classroom, pedagogy that assists in the creation of a more equitable and inclusive learning environment benefits everyone, as other students can benefit from the experiences and knowledge that plurilingual students bring to the classroom. For example, in faculties of business, such as the context for this research, plurilingual students may also have experiences with workplaces in their countries of origin or other cultural and linguistic knowledge which can provide insight into

international business contexts and practices. Finally, a plurilingual-inspired pedagogy would be in line with current university policies on diversity and inclusion – assisting universities in striving towards these goals.

7.2. Constraints and Limitations

Any research design will come with advantages and disadvantages. In choosing interviewing as my primary form of data generation, the advantages included the ability to explore salient themes across the greater timeline of participants' developing plurilingual competences, to not only ask how participants use language but also to inquire about why participants' use their languages in the way they do, and to understand how participants engage with discourses around language. However, there are also limitations to interviews. These include the need to rely on participants' recollections of certain past events and the reality of the subjective nature of the co-construction of data that occurs in the interview (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015). On the latter note, such subjectivity need not be a disadvantage or limitation – and this research was designed with an embrace of the idea that subjective perspectives can still contribute valuable information to the greater body of knowledge. Even where a participant's a description of an event or experience may have inaccuracies or what they share may be different than what they would have shared on another day, past or future, it is a valuable insight into their perspective and beliefs on the day of the interview. Nonetheless, the intention of this study was to supplement the interview with other forms of data collection, such as the collection of documents (course notes, assignment drafts, etc.) and observations. The former was largely successful, with the main limitation being that some reported plurilingual practices in the drafting of assignments were not preserved for viewing. On the latter strategy, observations, there were several important constraints that should be repeated here.

I had originally envisioned a research project in which classroom observations in the sections of BIZ 200 that I was involved with would play a larger role – both to illuminate classroom dynamics and student practices around language use, as well as to inform lines of questioning in the interviews. This plan needed to be altered due to two specific constraints. The first constraint came in the form of my agreement with the faculty in which the participants were studying. In gaining approval for the study, I was asked to refrain from recruiting participants who were currently students in my classes.

Understanding the desire of the key decision makers to limit any disruption to learning in a highly competitive faculty which also emphasized consistency across sections of a given course, I readily (and gratefully) agreed to this condition. While this meant recruiting participants from other classes, or those who had already completed my courses, it would still allow for my own reflections on classroom occurrences and student practices to inform my interview questions and the themes I chose to explore. And, as a result, this constraint resulted in only a minor change to the research design. Though this did alter my original plans, it also prompted me to examine participants' experiences more broadly, beyond only the BIZ 200 classroom. And this led to valuable insights into the discourses around language that participants have encountered in the stages of learning leading up to their move to Canada.

The second, and larger, constraint on research design came as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Just as the pandemic impacted the delivery and experience of formal education, the design of this study was also altered by those unprecedented circumstances, as the move to remote learning that was necessitated by the pandemic meant far fewer opportunities to directly reflect on classroom dynamics and student practices during the course of preparing for and completing this thesis. While observation had already been removed from research design as a form of data generation, reflection on my experiences in the classroom did contribute to lines of inquiry for interviews. The pandemic meant fewer opportunities to generate such ideas. An additional impact was a slower process of participant recruitment, as my intended method of recruiting participants had originally been visiting relevant classrooms in the faculty to announce the project. Remote classroom visits felt a more challenging environment in which to build some level of rapport with potential participants. A result of this was that a larger than expected proportion of participants were my past students, with whom I had already built rapport. Nevertheless, while the recruitment process was slower, I did meet my goal of recruiting at least 15 participants.

Finally, there is a need to once more acknowledge that a researcher brings with them an inherent subjectivity in the themes that they identify and choose to focus on. Moreover, there is a need to again consider my own positionality. My interest in exploring phenomena through a plurilingual lens arose partly from its explanatory power when applied to my own experiences, some of which have significant overlap with the experiences of the participants of this study; however, that overlap is certainly not

exhaustive – as discussed in the introduction and methodology chapters. My own experiences diverge from the participants in meaningful ways, not least of which in terms of the privilege that I have carried with me in various domains of language use due to my positionality as White American English-speaker (among other important aspects of my identity). While I sought, through reflexivity, to acknowledge these important differences, to avoid leading questions in interviews, to diligently clarify participants' intended meanings through member checking when necessary, and to ground my interpretations in relevant theoretical literature, the reality of the subjective nature of any researcher, and their positionality, cannot be dismissed.

7.3. Implications for Pedagogy

The implications of this thesis apply to at least three different groups of stakeholders in the university context: students, faculty, and the institutions themselves. Regarding the first category, students, this thesis described how participants frequently engaged with and internalized discourses that may be harmful (e.g., deficit discourse) and/or that discouraged use of their full linguistic repertoire in life and learning (e.g., English-only, linguistic purity). However, this thesis also demonstrated that some participants were open other perspectives on their competences and language practices. This was most notably exemplified by my interview and follow-up discussions with Keisuke (see 5.2.2), whose perspective on his own competences was defined by deficit and who initially characterized his experience with his languages as a struggle to "purely be bilingual." Through engaging with recent perspectives on language during a one-hour interview and a single recommended reading, Keisuke seemed to arrive at a more positive perspective: "even though I'm not perfect in both languages, I can still call myself bilingual!" This suggests a possibility for a plurilingual pedagogy – in which an instructor could engage with students on similar themes over the course of a semester – could have a similar or greater impact.

Furthermore, a plurilingual-inspired pedagogy may better empower students to use all the linguistic resources available to them in their learning. While some participants in this study described resisting the English-only and linguistic purity-oriented discourses that they encountered, others acknowledged internalizing them and limiting their use of their L1 – even while acknowledging plurilingual strategies had often benefitted their learning. Yen, for example, strongly asserted her agency and right to use

both English and Vietnamese in her daily life (5.2.4); however, she also asserted that she was "against" using her L1 when learning in English and discouraged others from doing the same (6.1.1). While Yen hesitated when asked to explain how she arrived at this disparity between her language practices in daily life and learning, other students were clearer about the origin of their avoidance of their L1 in learning. Miho (6.1.1) was told by the organization facilitating a study abroad experience to avoid Japanese while in the US. Cynthia (6.1.2) noted the power of a teacher's strict looks, which would stop her from using Mandarin in class. And Ping (6.1.2) explained how a Mandarin-speaking instructor's avoidance of that language when answering student questions had a role in the construction of her own rule for herself to always use English in class. A plurilingual pedagogy could offer students another perspective on the role of L1 in learning while in an English-dominant context. Some students may still find a benefit in performing monolingually (Lee & Marshall, 2012) to maximize their input in and use of English; however, others may find that "the input that is made maximum is useful only when that input is also made comprehensible" (Lin, 2015a). A plurilingual pedagogy can open space and remove constraints so that a student's L1 can be leveraged towards learning – should they choose to do so.

A second group for whom the findings of this thesis have implications is faculty. As discussed in the opening chapters, classrooms in many contexts – including the Canadian higher educational context – are becoming more linguistically and culturally diverse. With this diversity comes the reality that not all students arrive in the classroom with the same privilege. And an educator has a responsibility to create an equitable learning environment to the best of their ability. The findings of this thesis suggest that one opportunity to create more equity is to be reflexive about the impact of their words and actions, which may be reproducing dominant discourses around language in the academy (even if unintentionally). In turn, this reproduction might have unintended effects on students such as those discussed by Cynthia and Ping (revisited in the paragraph above) Moreover, educators have an opportunity to engage with students on critical issues that are relevant to the context and students' lives. Pennycook (2021), discussing critical pedagogy in applied linguistics, outlines two perspectives on critical literacy pedagogy: those more focused on facilitating access to forms of language that carry social and economic power (Delpit, 1988, 1995) and those more focused on raising consciousness of structural inequalities and elevating marginalized voices (Freire, 1970).

Pennycook (2021) argues that neither of these approaches is sufficient in itself, and educators “need to provide access while challenging forms of power” (p. 124). And educators in a variety of contexts may find opportunities to do so, with the impact being the possibility for improved equity in learning, or even a transformational impact (see Lin, 1999).

Applying a critical lens to the classrooms of BIZ 200 can serve as another useful example. Pennycook, Delpit, and Freire may be discussing individuals at more severe disadvantages than the typical student in the classrooms of BIZ 200 who, by having gained admittance to WCCU and the classrooms of BIZ 200, are already well advanced on their journey of access to language and its correlated social and economic power. However, BIZ 200 is very much focused on *honing* two powerful forms of language: academic English and English for business communication. Though rigorous marking expectations and the need for uniformity across course sections certainly create constraints on instructors in BIZ 200 (as discussed in 2.1 and 3.3.2), there are areas where a thoughtful (and critical) implementation of plurilingual-inspired pedagogy may make an impact. Explicitly opening a space for students’ L1s in the classroom and students’ practices, for example in mediation with classmates, may help create a more equitable learning environment. In turn, this may help to ensure that any gap in access to powerful forms of language not only does not grow over the course of the semester, but rather moves towards closing. Placing explicit value on the experiences and competences of students of all backgrounds may also help to elevate more voices and combat deficit discourses. For example, an instructor can introduce a question about connections between course content and students’ prior employment or business communication experiences with an explicit statement that experiences outside Canada and communications scenarios that took place in languages other than English were equally valid to the conversation – and revisit such explicit reminders throughout the semester. These may be small steps, but they are critical pragmatic actions (Benesch, 2001; Marshall & Moore, 2018) that are available to educators, which can make an impact on the student experience and trajectory.

Finally, the findings of this thesis have implications for educational institutions. As discussed in the introduction, international students have become a major source of revenue for many universities in Canada (and numerous other locations). However, the much higher rates of tuition that most of these students pay is rarely used to provide the

additional resources that they would benefit from as they adjust to what is often a different culture of education and different language of instruction. These struggles with language and educational culture may also apply to domestic students whose families have recently immigrated to Canada or who grew up with a home language other than that of the academy. In my view, the reality of today's incredibly diverse university classrooms should come with a responsibility for institutions to commit to research-backed support initiatives for international (and domestic plurilingual) students which aim to create an equitable environment. Ethical implementation of internationalization is still lacking in many institutions (De Wit & Altbach, 2021); however, there are steps that can be taken in this direction. For example, committing to enhanced support for international students as a right afforded to them based on the higher rates of international tuition would be a step in the right direction. If codified into university policy as a right, institutions may find the necessary motivation to commit to (and provide necessary funding to) promising initiatives. This may allow for initiatives to gain traction, grow, develop, and make tangible impacts – rather than being cut when they become inconvenient for university budgeting.

De Wit and Altbach (2021) also note that the current implementation of international programs is often revenue focused. If not solely for ethical reasons, institutions should also consider that this revenue strategy may not be sustainable. In the United States, for example, recent years have seen the decline of intensive English language programs (Fischer, 2020; ICEF Monitor, 2022; Quinn, 2023) – another formerly revenue generating department in many institutions and one that ensured a steady pipeline of international students into degree programs. While the COVID-19 pandemic certainly exacerbated declining enrollments, arguments have been made that this decline is also representative of students choosing to develop their English skills in their home countries. What happens if prospective international students decide they can similarly develop the skills they would learn in an undergraduate program without leaving their country – saving significant amounts in tuition and fees? If the tolerance for astronomic fees and lack of support for international students wears this, universities in countries such as Canada and the US could be left with only the prestige attached to their degrees as a selling point. Selling expensive degrees based on prestige may put universities in an ethically troublesome position given implications with regard to the issue of hegemony. In contrast, an ethically implemented internationalization, with

reasonable tuitions rates and any additional costs clearly translating into support – rather than feeling exploitative – may sustain the interest in such institutions from abroad.

Beyond the implementation of student support and an ethical implementation of internationalization strategy, institutions can also take further steps to facilitate pedagogical training opportunities for faculty. This could take a number of forms, with one possibility being facilitating collaborations between content area faculty and language-specialist faculty. Notably, a study of perspectives of EAP professionals by Corcoran et al. (2022) found that this kind of collaboration was lacking, but desired:

> they are dissatisfied with the lack of institutional collaboration and respect…with many noting frustrations at relations with non-EAP units at their institutions: "It is unfortunate that there is limited appreciation for the [EAP] expertise…colleges find themselves struggling to provide academic support for international students…providing this support is something EAP programs and instructors do every day!" (p. 68)

Whatever form it takes, the increasingly international reality of post-secondary contexts makes pedagogy for the multilingual classroom an important area of professional development for faculty, and institutions can play a crucial role in encouraging and facilitating this.

7.3.1. Directions for Future Research

On the topic of future research, the results of this research demonstrated that plurilingual students frequently engage with harmful discourses around language; however, it also demonstrated that students are open to revisiting their internalized beliefs about language. This research utilized a semi-structured approach to interviewing. While this often meant exploring similar themes across participants, each interview was nonetheless distinct. The semi-structured approach and co-construction allowed for the exploration of themes that were most meaningful to each participant, or on which they had most to share. One interesting result of this approach was that some participants were interested in hearing more about plurilingualism and other current perspectives on languages – and the discussions moved in that direction. In a few instances, it seemed that participants were re-visiting their experiences and perspectives through the lenses of these current theories of language. Most notable was how my interview with Keisuke concluded with my sharing of an article on bilingualism by

François Grosjean, and his reaction to that article which seemed to help him acknowledge and (at least, partially) overcome some of the deficit perspectives from which he viewed his own language skills. Similarly, other participants expressed, in follow-up conversations, that they had continued thinking about some of the ideas they were exposed to in the interview. Building on these outcomes, a potential avenue for future research might be a longitudinal study on a plurilingual pedagogy with an intentionally intervention-oriented approach – exposing participants to new lenses (such as a plurilingual lens) through which they can reflect on their own experiences and linguistic competencies. A longitudinal approach could facilitate following up in more comprehensive manner than the more limited procedures employed in this thesis, in order to understand how this might impact their self-perceptions and language practices going forward. Such a study could be in a similar vein to Galante and Dela Cruz's (2024) study of teacher candidates' beliefs before and after a practicum in which they learned about, and implemented, plurilingual pedagogies.

7.4. Concluding Remarks

In this study, I have explored the perspectives and experiences of plurilingual university students in Canada – specifically as relating to their language practices and beliefs about language. The results revealed that participants maintain active use of their wider linguistic repertoires in both life and learning, despite the English-dominant nature of the Vancouver, Canada context. The study has also revealed the need to better combat harmful discourses through avenues such as plurilingual-inspired pedagogy. It is my hope that there will be greater consideration of employing such pedagogy as part of authentic efforts at student support and living up to institutions' stated goals of diversity, inclusion, and equitable learning environments. Moreover, it has been my hope and intention that the focused placed on the perspectives of participants and the analysis shared here in this thesis will contribute toward calls for greater equity in diverse contexts such as the Canadian university. Finally, I will close by expressing that this thesis has been an important opportunity for my development as both a researcher and educator, and I am extremely grateful for both this experience and all the guidance that I have received while undertaking this research endeavor.

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Appendix.

Sample Interview Questions

Examples of questions used in semi-structured interviews:

- What languages do you use in your daily life?
- What role do these different language play?
- Do languages other than English play a role in your learning process, or have they in the past?
- Have you ever been asked to use English-only and, if so, what were your thoughts on that approach to learning?
- Do you sometimes find opportunities to connect your learning in Canada with learning from past contexts?
- Have you found the institutions you have studied at in Canada to be environments that are accepting of diversity (including linguistic diversity)?
- What role do you hope your languages will play in your future (including in employment)?

Final open-ended question:

- To close the interview, I want to open up space for any final thoughts about your experiences with language and culture that you think are interesting to share. There may be things that I did not think to ask about. Is there anything else related to the themes that we have discussed that you would like to share?