

**Multilingual Learners:  
Student Experiences in a First-Year Academic  
Literacy Class**

by

**Connie Lam James**

B.Ed., The University of British Columbia, 2010

B.A., The University of British Columbia, 2009

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

in the

Teaching English as an Additional Language Program  
Faculty of Education

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**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**

**Summer 2016**

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# Approval

**Name:** Connie Lam James  
**Degree:** Master of Arts  
**Title:** *Multilingual Learners: Student Experiences in a First-Year Academic Literacy Class*  
**Examining Committee:** **Chair:** Roumiana Ilieva  
Associate Professor

**Steve Marshall**  
Senior Supervisor  
Associate Professor

---

**Ena Lee**  
Supervisor  
Senior Lecturer

---

**Danièle Moore**  
Internal/External Examiner  
Professor

---

**Date Defended/Approved:** July 20, 2016

## Ethics Statement



The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores how multilingual students might negotiate their multilingual identities while navigating a first-year academic literacy class (ALC). Through an ethnographic approach, with qualitative data including interviews and samples of students' writing (both formal and informal), I analyze how multilingual students in the ALC might conceptualize their multilingualism and as tied to this, how they then might integrate multilingual practices into their learning and writing processes. While students' conceptualizations and presentations of their multilingual identities varied, the multilingual students of this study demonstrated how their linguistic perceptions and practices were reflective of and sometimes constrained by dominant linguistic discourses about English and multilingualism.

**Keywords:** multilingualism; academic literacy; multilingual resources; identity; dominant discourse; language ideologies

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to begin by thanking my thesis committee. Thank you to my senior supervisor, Dr. Steve Marshall, who went above and beyond a supervisor's role, helping me to navigate the isms and guiding me through my graduate student journey as a whole. Thank you to my committee member, Dr. Ena Lee – my first instructor in the TEAL program – for her advice, conversation, for being a mentor from the very beginning, and for her answers to my frantic emails, even in the middle of the night. Thank you to Dr. Kelleen Toohey, who was my Pro Tem and supported me throughout my switch to a thesis-based program. Thank you to my examiner, Dr. Danièle Moore, for providing such valuable feedback and suggestions during my defense. Thank you to the students of my study, who shared their narratives with me and by doing so, have taught me so much.

I wish to thank friends and peers from the TEAL Program and all my graduate studies classes. A special thanks to the EDUC 714 group for the adventures and for being my moral support.

Thanks to all my friends for being there, even going as far as keeping company with me and my coffee on those late nights. A special thanks to my partner, Ken, for his encouragement, his consideration and his patience (but especially his patience).

To my family, The Lams, for their strong and unconditional love. To my dad, Randy. To my mom, Nicole, whose belief in education and love for me led me in pursuing all my studies.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

I am a little past the midway point of the fall term in my observations of the Academic Literacy Course (ALC)<sup>1</sup> at Pacific Coast University (PCU), a university located in Metro Vancouver. The ALC is a course which aims at strengthening students' academic literacy skills at a university level. I am observing two classes taught by the same instructor<sup>2</sup> and in both classes, students are beginning their term research papers. In preparation for these term papers, they are working on writing exercises that break down the different parts of a research paper. One of the exercises uses bilingualism as a writing topic.

In the first class, the instructor defines “bilingualism” and states that someone who is bilingual is able to speak two languages. He then asks who in the classroom is bilingual. One student raises the question of what counts as a language. Would Cantonese count as a language or is it a dialect? The instructor replies that the definitions of the terms “language” and “dialect” can vary, and that Cantonese can be seen as a language or a dialect depending on the contexts. However, in this specific classroom context, it could be seen as a language. The instructor therefore then asks who in the classroom could speak Cantonese.

Hearing a student pose a question regarding Cantonese has peaked my curiosity. Not once have I heard Cantonese during my time in their classroom. Meanwhile, I have heard plenty of Mandarin and had just assumed that not many students could speak Cantonese. I am surprised when I see quite a number of hands raised.

1 The institution and any courses mentioned have all been given pseudonyms.

2 The instructor was both the instructor of the ALC course that I observed as well as the instructor of a methodology course that I took. He was therefore aware of and played a role in the co-construction of my research goals.

The same definition of bilingualism is given to the second class and the same question is posed of who is a bilingual. When the instructor asks who can speak Cantonese, I am surprised to see that yet again, quite a few students can speak Cantonese.

During one of the classes, the instructor also poses the question of whether or not anyone is trilingual. Nobody raises their hands. The instructor reiterates that different “dialects” of Chinese could be seen as languages. Isaac<sup>3</sup> – a student who has just stated that he spoke both Cantonese and Mandarin – then laughingly jokes, “But I can’t speak English!” to explain why he could not be categorized as trilingual. It was meant as a joke and everyone laughs. However, I find it both sad and fascinating.

Later, I learned from the instructor of the demographics of the two classrooms. Several of the students are from Southern China, where Cantonese is spoken. I wonder why they do not use Cantonese in the classroom and instead choose to speak Mandarin. I wonder about the Canadian-born students who are offspring of Hong Kong immigrants and why they did not use Cantonese in the classroom. I wonder about Isaac’s comment: what can be defined, then, as being able to speak English? And why did English leap to his mind when discussing language capabilities? These are questions that relate closely to issues I will address in more depth in my data analysis

With my background in both secondary education and adult TESOL education, and with my work and teaching experiences as mostly concerning development of writing and language skills for secondary and college students for university entrance, I have always been especially interested in that transitional space in-between secondary and higher education for multilingual students. This is a space in which students are negotiating changes – including cultural and institutional changes, as well as changes from adolescence into adulthood. It is a space where previous high school experiences might impact transitions into post secondary education. Thus, an academic literacy course, with its students of mixed language backgrounds and with students in that transitional phase between secondary school and post secondary education, was a prime site of research

<sup>3</sup> Student have all been given pseudonyms.

interest for me. As such, much of my work during my graduate program involved exploring research on the ALC at PCU, and I chose to therefore research the same site.

Casanave (2002), in discussing students from different countries and cultures transitioning into academic writing at different levels of education, states that “transitions and identity intertwine so thoroughly that they cannot be separated” (p. 9). Interestingly, identity was not a concept that I had considered before starting my graduate studies. It was while journeying through my master’s program that I became increasingly aware of the important role identity plays in teaching English as an additional language (and the field of education as a whole). Theories regarding identity would become pivotal to my inquiries into learning and student experiences.

In her early work on language learning, Norton Peirce (1995) draws ties between identity and learning, arguing that identity is constantly changing as learners not only invest in the target language but invest in a desired social identity. Additionally, I find very helpful Ivanič’s (1998) use of the terms “identity” and “identification” in order to indicate “processes whereby individuals align themselves with groups, communities, and/or sets of interests, values, beliefs and practices” (p. 11). In my teaching experiences, I have seen how students attempt to negotiate their identities while simultaneously being constrained by discourse and “socially determined restrictions” (p. 11). How they navigate being multilingual can fall under similar constraints.

The multilingual students with whom I work and have worked have shown me how their languages can be drawn upon as linguistic resources (Duff, 2007). Correspondingly, being raised in a multicultural Vancouver, I have seen similar examples of language use all throughout my own education. These linguistic resources – or what I will call “multilingual resources” for the purpose of this thesis – include switching in-between different languages in speech and while writing (especially during online social media literacy practices), and translation (especially in the case of translating on behalf of parents and family members who do not speak English).

When I chose the ALC as my research site, I wanted to learn more about student identity, multilingualism and dominant language ideologies. These were more like ruminations – not yet fully articulated – but the ethnographic encounters from that day of

observations in the ALC (as described earlier) deeply resonated with me. Thus, these defining instances from further reflection upon my field notes provided a thread for my evolving thesis project and later, my research questions.

## **Research Questions and Purpose of Study**

Through an ethnographic approach, with qualitative data including interviews and samples of students' writing (both formal and informal), I analyze how multilingual students in the ALC negotiate their multilingual identities. Tied to this larger framework, my research questions are as follows:

- 1) How do students conceptualize their multilingualism?
- 2) How and why do they make use of their multilingual resources in and around their learning<sup>4</sup>?
- 3) To what extent are students' linguistic perception and practices reflections of social and linguistic discourses about multilingualism?

By examining the above research questions, I aim to add to an ongoing dialogue that highlights dynamics between institutional and social discourses and multilingual students in higher education; through this exploration, I hope to contribute to a discourse that empowers multilingual students and lends to student agency. I will further address these notions of discourse and multilingualism in the literature review and data analysis chapters.

## **An Introduction to the ALC at PCU**

This section will provide a brief overview of the ALC at Pacific Coast University, the site of my research. PCU is a multicultural institution, with its slogan reinforcing this global perspective as seen on its webpage through the promotion of worldwide community

<sup>4</sup> Question 2 comes from Marshall and Moore's (2013) study of multilingual students in Vancouver.

partnerships<sup>5</sup>. As part of its global aspect, PCU welcomes students and scholars from across the globe.

I conducted my research throughout the Fall 2014 term at PCU. Its report on international students for that Fall 2014 term when I conducted my observations states that a total of 4,257 students were registered as international students, 16.9% of the total undergraduate population. Furthermore, the same report goes on to state that 19% of undergraduate students graduated from a foreign high school.

At this point, however, it is important to highlight that these statistics only serve to document the international student population – as well as their countries of origin – or students who arrived for post secondary education after their high school education. It does not address domestic students who might be of different cultural and multilingual backgrounds. I draw attention to these aspects because failure to acknowledge the different demographics at PCU could essentialize varied and diverse groups of students. Being multilingual does not solely apply to an international student population.

Additionally, in terms of multilingualism, these numbers do not give insight into the languages spoken by the PCU undergraduate student population<sup>6</sup>. In order to highlight the different languages that could possibly be spoken at PCU, I will refer to the many languages spoken in Vancouver as a whole. A 2011 Welcome BC report indicates that 41.4% of the Vancouver population identified “an immigrant language as a primary mother tongue” (“Languages in B.C.,” 2011, p. 3). Statistics Canada reports that Punjabi, Chinese (n.o.s., or “not otherwise specified”), Cantonese and Mandarin were the top immigrant languages spoken at home in 2011 (“Linguistic Characteristics of Canadians,” 2012, p. 7).

As well, regarding culture and multiculturalism, it is important to note the complexities surrounding culture and the nationalities and ethnicities with which students might identify. Although the countries of origin of the international students are listed, in our globalized world, this is not telling of more complex movement and subsequent

<sup>5</sup> Due to anonymity, I have not included cited references regarding information on Pacific Coast University.

<sup>6</sup> PCU does not gather data and statistics regarding student language demographics.

complex cultural identifications. Kiang, Perreira and Fuligni's (2011) study of "ethnic label use" (p. 720) in different locations (urban and rural) in the United States analyzes these complex cultural identifications. The authors discuss how there are varying factors that might influence how youth might identify themselves; these include factors such as geographic location, how the community in question receives immigrant populations, the cultural diversity of a given community, as well as family and personal history. Subsequently, it can be argued that languages spoken and how they are used might be equally complex. For instance, Marshall (2010) accentuates the intricacies surrounding first, second or even third languages. In his study, students of the same ALC course that I have researched for this thesis relay the difficulties in compartmentalizing these categories, especially when trying to prioritize chronology, competence and degree of competence (in reading, writing or speaking) of the languages they know. Furthermore, although my study focuses specifically on multilingual students and the resources these multilingual backgrounds can provide, the ALC and its student enrollment is diversified; not all multilingual students are international students and not all ALC students would identify as being multilingual. It is important to note that students of varying cultural and language backgrounds take the ALC.

According to university requirements, students are required to have scored a grade of 75% or higher in their high school English 12 or Literature 12 courses to enroll directly in a writing in the disciplines course. For international students, it is required that an overall band score of 7.0 is obtained on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Students who do not make either the English 12 or Literature 12 requirements or do not score the prescribed scores for the IELTS, must enroll in the ALC. The ALC begins with a writing topic with which students are knowledgeable: their life experience. Students then journey throughout the course acquiring skills such as active and critical reading and they study a range of skills required to compose an academic research essay. Opportunities for revision are provided throughout course work as students work in groups for peer editing and continuous feedback is given from the instructors as well. The ALC at PCU was created in order to assist students of all subject areas in developing the necessary skills needed for university-level writing. The overall aim of the course is to increase the confidence of students in order for them to move on and continue with their studies, and to succeed in writing in the disciplines courses.

## **Organization of Thesis**

In Chapter 2, I will review and detail relevant literature that I used to frame my study and research. In Chapter 3, I will detail the research site and participants as well as the methodology that I employed throughout my study. In Chapter 4, I will examine the findings from my research questions in relation to the previously discussed theoretical body of knowledge. Finally, I will discuss the potential pedagogical implications for the field of academic literacy, the study's limitations and suggestions for future research.

## Chapter 2. Literature Review

This chapter will summarize pertinent literature that I used to frame my study. I will examine the power and “socioeconomic importance” (Lin, 1999, p. 393) of English, highlighting the resulting dominant discourses and ideologies surrounding English. I will then explore theories regarding student identity as well as how multilingual students are positioned institutionally at the university level. This will lead to a discussion of literature which presents a more positive positioning of multilingual students and their multilingual capabilities.

### A Note on Terminology

Before delving directly into the literature review, I will begin by addressing the terminology used throughout my thesis. While contemplating which terms to use during the writing process, I realized that the terminology in itself was referencing both my research questions and my position regarding multilingualism and multilingual students. Thus, this note on terminology foregrounds my discussion of the literature and my study as a whole.

For this thesis project, I generally used the term “EAL” (English as an Additional Language) when referring to the field of teaching that has traditionally been called English as a Second Language and with reference to students for whom English is an Additional Language. While this terminology corresponds to my program name “TEAL” (Teaching English as an Additional Language), I also use the term in acknowledgment of how names can be politically-charged. For instance, Lin, Wang, Akamatsu and Riazi (2002) address how discourse and terminology can be intertwined. “TESOL” (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and the word “other” can emphasize “dichotic *Self-Other* subject positions” (p. 311), with the learner positioned as an illegitimate other. The term “ESL” can assume that English is a student’s “second” language, ignoring the student’s potentially complex language background. To me, the word “additional” does not convey the same assumptions as it acknowledges that English might be an addition to a student’s language repertoire.

When referencing pertinent and relevant literature, I also use terminology as chosen by the author of the specific article or work I am referencing. As well, while referencing certain aspects or specific fields in EAL teaching and learning, I use whichever terminology is most well-known in that specific field. For example, if the author uses the term “TESOL,” I then also use the term “TESOL” when I discuss their work.

## **Multilingualism**

There is a wide range of terminology used in order to address the use of different languages and those of diverse linguistic backgrounds. While I have chosen to use the term “multilingualism,” I will also refer to the term “plurilingualism,” depending upon the research to which I am referring, as plurilingual concepts are inextricably linked to the theoretical concepts that shape my study. I would like to point out that the two terms can have their own definitions in relevant literature. Canagarajah (2009) explains how traditionally, multilingualism can connote “separate, whole, and advanced competence in the different languages one speaks” (p. 7). Meanwhile, plurilingualism can be seen as “allow[ing] for the interaction and multiple influence of the languages in a more dynamic way” (p. 7).

In their discussion of plurilingualism, Marshall and Moore (2013) accentuate a departure from more traditional views regarding bilingualism and multilingualism. Lee and Marshall (2012) also deconstruct these traditional definitions, which stress the importance of discrete, “divided repertoires” (p. 67) with bilingualism equating a native-like command of each of the two languages spoken (Romaine, 1989, as cited in Lee & Marshall, 2012). Marshall, Moore and Spracklin (2016) specify that traditional definitions of multilingualism, which dictate that individuals should have “high degrees of competence in separate languages” lend to institutional discourses which negatively promote deficit or remedial views of multilingual students. (Notions of deficit and remedial will be discussed in a later section). With regard to plurilingual students taking a first-year academic literacy course in Vancouver, Canada, Marshall and Moore (2013) highlight that plurilingual speakers are social actors who utilize different languages in a variety of ways that include “different forms of knowledge” (Moore & Gajo, 2009, as cited in Marshall & Moore, 2013, p. 474) and that the concept of plurilingualism is tied to factors such as investment, individual

agency and engagement. In their analysis, however, instead of emphasizing the difference between the two terms, the authors emphasize a “continuum” (p. 474); they use both terms, with “plurilingualism” referencing a focus on the individual’s language repertoire and agency, and “multilingualism” referencing “broader social language context/contact(s) and the coexistence of several languages in a particular situation” (Moore & Gajo, 2009, as cited in Marshall & Moore, 2013, p. 474). As well, they acknowledge that the term “multilingualism” is more commonly used and understood, and therefore use the term in interviewing their study participants.

For similar reasons – with “multilingualism” being a more common term that seems to reference a broader social dialogue on language – and for the sake of uniformity while addressing such a wide range of work in which I have encountered many terms in reference to my topic, I have adhered to the term “multilingualism” and refer to the student participants as “multilingual” students. To me, the term “multilingual” is tied to my observations and reflections<sup>7</sup> while working with multilingual students and as a student myself growing up in multicultural Vancouver. It connotes the diverse language backgrounds of the students with whom I work as well as the meshing of languages I have heard all throughout my own education. Martin-Jones and Jones (2001) discuss how the term “multilingual” provides focus on “the multiple ways in which people draw on and combine codes in their communicative repertoire when they speak and write” (p. 7). Thus, the term encompasses the “multilingual resources” I refer to in my introductory chapter such as the mixing of and switching in between different languages through speech and writing. Furthermore, Martin-Jones and Jones also emphasize a form of continuum by accentuating that the term “multilingual” and literacy practices should not be viewed through a “deterministic light” (p. 8), but rather as “always undergoing a process of reaffirmation and redefinition” (p. 8). This assertion thus encompasses expanding and changing definitions of what it means to be “multilingual.” I therefore use the term “multilingual” as part of an effort to understand how students “negotiate the multi in multilingualism” through “population movements and changing relations in time and space” (Marshall, Hayashi & Yeung, 2012, p. 31). With this note on terminology, I will continue with a summary of relevant literature.

<sup>7</sup> Refer to introductory chapter.

## The Power of English

In order to analyze multilingual students' identities and their language negotiation processes, I will first examine relevant history and the legitimization of English over time. This involves looking at the discourse of English and English language learning on a global scale. I therefore begin with Martin-Jones and Heller (1996) and their emphasis on taking into consideration historical processes in order to understand the spread of dominant languages. They argue that our contemporary societies have been shaped by colonialism. Pennycook (1998) explains further, stating that "English has been a major language in which colonialism has been written" (p. 9), pointing not only to texts written in English that legitimize the European occupation of other countries, but to how English was forced onto these countries, leaving a "cultural foot print" (p. 16) that arguably lasts to this day. Consequently, colonialism paved the way for the spread of English on a global scale and has created this image of "English as a global language" (p. 19).

Utilizing Bourdieu's (1991) work, Lin (1996) examines how English has become a "dominant symbolic resource in the linguistic market" (p. 53). With Hong Kong as an example, she highlights that though English is a minority language – with English Native speakers making up only 2% of the entire Hong Kong population – English has become a language of advancement. Lin (1999) highlights the "socioeconomic importance" (p. 393) of English as well as how English has become a commodity that is "increasingly demanded by the world" (p. 393).

Bringing the discussion into the realm of educational institutions specifically, Martin-Jones and Heller (1996) argue that certain groups hold power over certain symbolic resources and materials, assigning values to specific cultural and linguistic capital in their own interests; this in turn shapes institutions and how educational institutions, in particular, operate. For instance, Auerbach (1993) describes how monolingual or English-only approaches in the educational system of the United States stem from a post World War I, anti-foreign sentiment and a nationalistic political movement for Americanization. She argues that monolingual approaches are taken as "pedagogically grounded [but] have antecedents in overtly ideological tendencies" (p. 13). Motha (2006) addresses the issue in her study of "language minority students" (p. 76) in schools in the United States. In her

study, she points out how discursive practices have led to the reification of English and standardization of a “‘mainstream’ American accent” (Reagan 2002, as cited in Motha 2006, p. 76). Motha emphasizes the need to connect such beliefs and practices to “broader social, institutional, and political contexts in order to understand how discursive practices can make certain ideologies seem natural” (p. 76). As these researchers have pointed out, historical and political factors have contributed to the power of English, laying out a set of ideologies that promote the legitimization of English. These factors are important to consider as they can consequently affect multilingual students and how they might conceptualize English and being multilingual. Thus, I will extend this discussion by highlighting the significance of language ideologies and the discourse surrounding English.

King (2000) defines language ideologies as a “set of beliefs concerning a particular language, or possibly language in general” (p. 168) and asserts that attitudes and behaviours toward languages can best be understood through analysis of language ideologies. As discussed above, multilingual students’ attitudes and behaviours towards languages, and English in particular, can be influenced by these dominant ideologies. This is tied to Pennycook (1994) stating that using a language should not merely be considered through linguistic terms but be seen as participation in social practice “situated within some discourse” (p. 32). Thus, Pennycook highlights how a central discourse suggests that the spread of English is “natural, neutral and beneficial” (p. 11) and that this is problematic on many levels, not taking into consideration history and issues of power and inequality. However, as practices are constructed and discursive, he alludes to the possibility for researchers and educators to aid students to positively “negotiate voices in English” (p. 320). Pennycook’s commentary thus takes us into a discussion of student identity and negotiations of identity.

## **Identity and Negotiating Identity**

Central to this study are notions regarding constructions of identity and how positioning and negotiating identities and language identities can play a prominent role in multilingual students’ experiences as they navigate academic literacy. Before beginning such a discussion, it is important to explain what is meant by “constructions of identity.”

Block (2013) recognizes identity as a “social process, as opposed to a determined and fixed product” (p. 129) in that identity is fluid as individuals are self-positioning and being positioned in different ways dependent upon the social context. Hall (1996) elaborates on the idea of identity as part of a process, situating it in discursive practice, as individuals construct themselves based upon identification “with another person or group, or with an ideal” (p. 2). Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) add that constructions of identity, while situated in discursive practices, are also subject to power relations and their “location within particular discourses and ideologies” (p. 14). Thus – as discussed in the introductory chapter and in acknowledgment of the above paradigms – a learner’s identity is not fixed or static, but instead can be seen as a “site of struggle” (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 15) and constantly changing.

In regards to constructions of, and changing identity, language itself is especially salient as it is a “primary tool people use in constituting themselves and others” (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1995, p. 470, as cited in Shao-Kobayashi, 2014, p. 89). Language is therefore important in processes of identity negotiation and the positioning of others. Fuller (2007) expands upon the notion of identity by explaining that individuals might take on many different positions depending on the context and specific interaction. She stresses the importance of language choice especially and how it is “often a key aspect in such identity construction” (p. 106) and a key aspect through which individuals perform their identities. These constructions of identity as pertaining to language are important to consider as multilingual students are self-positioning and being positioned in an academic literacy course at an English-medium university.

Looking specifically at literacy, Street (1995) identifies literacy practices (including traditional notions of literacy such as reading and writing) as social practices. In regards to the process of learning literacy, Street states that “the student is learning cultural models of identity and personhood, not just how to decode script or to write a particular hand” (p. 140). In the case of the participants of my study, these cultural models involved adapting to a different education system in a different country, and/or adapting to university life. Similarly, Ivanič (1998) looks at the relationship between writing and identity. In her analysis of adults returning to post-secondary education, Ivanič discusses choice and selections students make in their writing, drawing ties between the act of writing and

learners aligning themselves with certain identities and positionalities. However, she accentuates that these choices can be “constrained by social factors and highly influenced... by socio-historically situated conventions” (p. 54). She argues that choices in writing and therefore “people’s possibilities for self-hood” (p. 32) sometimes arise from and are constrained by powerful discourses. In the case of first-year academic literacy, challenging constraints can include hegemonic rules of academic English, institutional rules in order to gain full access to university courses, as well as discourse of deficit and remediation surrounding the academic literacy course.

In order to inform her collection of case studies regarding students of different cultures and academic literacy, Casanave (2002) addresses the issue of identity construction through the works of Lave (1996) and Wenger (1998). She explains that student identity is tied to learning how to become members of communities of practice. Through this framework, identities are “being reconstructed and negotiated through different practices and modes of belonging” (p. 22). Casanave furthers this framework with the metaphor of a game. In becoming members of the academic community, students need to adopt “game-playing strategies” (p. 263). Learning academic writing and becoming a part of this academic community therefore encompass a series of “rule- and strategy-based practices, done in interaction with others... and... learned through repeated practice” (p. 3). However, this process of becoming a part of “academic subcommunities” (p. 23), can be a process of “tension, conflict, and abuses of power” (Wenger 1998, as cited in Casanave, 2002, p. 23). The next section will examine these conflicts, how multilingual students are positioned in the academic community, and how these dynamics can impact students’ identity negotiations and their negotiations into communities of practice.

## **EAL Student Identities in Higher Education**

In examining academic writing practices in higher education, Lillis (2001) poses the question of, “what kinds of identities are privileged through existing practices?” (p. 169). While my study places an emphasis on negotiation processes as students navigate their way into academic literacy, it is important to note once again that students are

simultaneously navigating their way through institutional settings set with dominant language ideologies and discourses. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) state that:

...identity options are most often contested and resisted by the most marginalized and discriminated against segments of the population... How much room for resistance to particular positioning individuals and groups may have will depend on each particular situation, the social and linguistic resources available to participants, and the balance of power relations which sets out the boundaries for particular identity options. (p. 25)

It is therefore important to examine the dialogue at the university level surrounding multilingual students that might constrain their multilingual identities.

Harklau and Siegal (2009) provide a useful introduction to multilingual learners in higher education. They start with a discussion of a “postindustrial age” (p. 25) in which high school completion is no longer sufficient in order to obtain professional employment, arguing that “postsecondary education is vital for the individual well-being of youth” (Education Trust 2003; Leonhardt 2005, as cited in Harklau and Siegal 2009, p. 25). Thus, with the growing number of students who are immigrants (or are the children of immigrants) coupled with these global trends regarding the need for professionals in the workforce, the authors stress the need to retain language minority students in post secondary education.

Spack (2004), moreover, pinpoints how multilingual students are often judged through a framework that favours a monolingual culture and a “simple stage model of development” (p. 37). Sieber (2004) addresses this with his analysis of ESOL students and their integration over the years into his cultural anthropology class and the institution in which he teaches. Through his analysis, he references dominant discourses regarding multilingualism and multilingual students in higher education. He specifies how the academic culture attempts to preserve a more traditional model, which encompasses “a strongly monocultural and monolingual” (p. 131) stance toward education.

Roberge (2009) addresses this traditional monocultural and monolingual stance through earlier views of language acquisition. In this breakdown, he discusses how historically, multilingualism was seen as an impediment to second language acquisition. Students were often encouraged to use only English and parents were advised to use only

English with their children even if they did not have a high level of proficiency in the English language. In an EAL context specifically, Auerbach (1993) adds to Roberge's breakdown with an analysis of how the "English-only movement" (p. 10) has come to be accepted widely by educators over time. The accepted pedagogical rationale of an English-only approach is rooted in the idea that high levels of exposure to English will aid in overall English acquisition as the language is automatically internalized over time. However, Auerbach argues, not only are these notions politically-motivated, but that an English-only classroom is not necessarily "pedagogically sound" (p. 15) as there is much evidence to support the use of L1 in the classroom. For example, Lee (2012), in his research on Korean English language learners, questions a monolingual method, arguing how research suggests English-only classrooms are ineffective and not necessarily superior to methods that might integrate L1. Meanwhile, the favouring of a monocultural stance and English-only or monolingual approaches arguably constrains and delegitimizes multilingual identities, students' diverse backgrounds, as well as other ways of learning. Such practices highlight Lillis' (2001) questioning of which identities are being privileged.

Spack (2004) argues that the linguistic contexts of many second language students are more complex and cannot fit simply into a monolingual model. She explains that multilingual students have varying backgrounds and educational experiences and through these experiences, might not communicate in "recognizable conventions" (p. 37). Roberge (2009) adds to this with his discussion of new immigrants and their settling in enclave communities in the United States. In these communities, there are varying levels of home language and English proficiency and language use (Valdes, 2000 as cited in Roberge, 2009 p. 15). Those living in these communities then adapt and adopt "localized language practices of the community" (Roberge, 2009 p. 15); these language practices include modification of English and complex code-switching.

Similarly, with a focus on Canadian higher education, Marshall, Hayashi and Yeung (2012) argue that with globalization and population movement, many students have complex and layered language backgrounds. Through this, they adapt, negotiate and perform complex and layered modes of communication. Yet, in classrooms, they are held in reference to Western frames of logic where "the target learner is still an idealised native speaker" (Leung, Rampton & Harris, 1997, as cited in Marshall, 2010, p. 42) and

multilingual students are seen as though they are in need of remediation, with their multilingual backgrounds seen as “obstacle[s] to their progress in higher education,” as stated by Preece (2009, p. 11) in her study of multilingual undergraduate working class students in the United Kingdom.

Lee’s and Marshall’s (2012) look at the ALC course with its multilingual students is an example of students demonstrating their complex and layered language backgrounds. In their study, students are shown as not only engaging in different forms of code-switching and code-mixing with peers and family members, but also engaging in the mixing of languages through various forms of writing and literacy. In response to an accentuation on monolingualism in the education system, Lee and Marshall instead focus on the “flexibility and fluidity of... multilingual and multimodal repertoires” (p. 73). It can be argued that students in the study therefore demonstrate a complex command of language systems. However, the authors are quick to point out that this ability to move in and around languages is still constrained by social discourses. Lee and Marshall stress that in formal academic settings, it is necessary for these students to “perform certain language practices and identities to pass” (p. 73). In these confines, students discussed the difficulties in trying to regulate these languages and their different cultural identities. Most importantly, multilingual students are made to perform “as a monolingual, English-only speaker” (p. 75).

Marshall (2010) examines a process he labels “re-becoming ESL” (p. 41). In his study of the ALC, Marshall describes students as in the process of negotiating the transition in identity of “having been ESL” in their secondary schools (p. 45) to becoming “a legitimate university student” (p. 45); having to take the ALC repositions them as ESL. Marshall asserts that this ESL identity can carry a negative stigma (p. 45), at both societal and institutional levels. Instead of universities embracing students’ rich diversity in culture and languages, Marshall argues that multilingual students “are regularly confronted with a remedial ESL identity” (p. 42) and are being positioned in educational institutions as “problems to be fixed” (p. 42).

In this section, I have indicated how, in disregarding students’ multilingual language resources, universities are functioning as though still in a “monolingual

environment” (Heller, 1995, as cited in Preece, 2010, p. 18). This goes against the view that multilingual students bring an array of “strengths and cultural capital” (Murie and Fitzpatrick, 2009, p. 155) to institutions. As well, scholarly research shows that multilingualism can actually promote cognitive development (Roberge, 2009). In the next section, I will outline literature that calls for recognition of “the diversity of students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds” (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993, p. 63).

## **Multilingualism as a Resource**

In an age of globalization such as our contemporary world where many people are in transition, students’ diverse multilingual backgrounds should be seen as a resource, something to be drawn upon (Duff, 2007). Zamel and Spack (2004), in their work on ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) in the college classroom, stress the importance for academic institutions to understand and accommodate multilingual learners. Zamel (2004) calls for the reconceptualization of teaching to include all learners of diverse backgrounds, arguing that viewing ESOL students as “deficient” (p. 13) – or mistaking student diversity as lack of literacy or intelligence – does not promote positive learning environments. She warns that “deficit thinking blinds us to the logic, intelligence, and richness of students’ processes and knowledge” (p. 13).

In regards to an inclusive model that harnesses students’ languages and diversity, a look at recent research and calls for changes in TESOL methodologies is helpful. Lin (2013) calls for the recognition of bilingual or plurilingual pedagogies and drawing upon diverse language backgrounds as a learning resource. Lin specifies that this recognition includes code-switching and code-mixing but would also venture to include notions of “*metrolingualism, flexible bilingualism, translanguaging, and hybrid language practice*” (p. 522).

Cummins (2007) asserts that there is not much empirical evidence in applied linguistics for the dominant monolingual approach and pushes instead for bilingual instructional strategies. For instance, in regards to the barring of translating in the classroom, Cummins pinpoints research that has proven how translation can improve English acquisition; through translation, students are made to “produce comprehensible

output in English” (p. 228). He also advocates for the activating of students’ prior knowledge, which includes their linguistic repertoires and the use of L1, and using this as a basis upon which to further build. It can be argued that the need for inclusive pedagogies can be applied to a diverse population of multilingual students in an academic literacy class. Such dialogue can serve to further student agency and promote more positive discourses regarding multilingualism and multilingual students.

This chapter started with a brief introduction and history of the legitimization and power of English. I then summarized the theories regarding identity and the processes of negotiation and positioning that students might encounter. As well, in addressing the dominant discourses surrounding English (as influenced by its legitimization over the years) and multilingual students in higher education, I provided a basis for my data analysis chapter, in which I intend to explore how students might navigate these same discourses as they simultaneously navigate being multilingual in the ALC.

In chapter 3, I will introduce the student research participants of my study. As well, I will describe how I conducted my study, including my chosen research methodology, the data collection process and how I analyzed my data.

## Chapter 3. Methodology

### Methodological Approach

#### A Qualitative Study

In my thesis project, I aimed to examine how multilingual students in the ALC negotiate their multilingual identities and have employed an ethnographic approach in order to carry out this research. In their exploration of what constitutes an ethnographic study Marshall, Clemente and Higgins (2014) state:

... “ethnography’ is not synonymous with ‘qualitative research’: some qualitative research lacks some of the essential ingredients of ethnography, while ethnography *can* include quantitative data and analysis, even if this is less common or less emphasized in ethnographic accounts. (p. 6)

In discussing why researchers might choose a qualitative method, Creswell (2013) highlights the need to explore a problem or issue in depth in order to examine social phenomena that cannot otherwise be easily measured. He states that we conduct qualitative research when a detailed understanding of a problem is necessary and obtaining that detail requires, “talking directly with people, going to their homes or places of work, and allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature” (p. 48). Similarly, students’ perceptions, their concerns and reflections, and the details surrounding their journey through their educational experiences required this same consideration. In choosing a qualitative methodology, I was choosing to understand multilingual students as follows: through conversations (the interview process) in which they shared their personal stories, through my being in their classroom space, and through my exploration of their writing – which demonstrated their multilingual learning processes, as well as narratives of their lives.

Qualitative research, though it can arguably “empower individuals to share their stories” (p. 48), does not disqualify the need to consider power relationships and the potentiality of researcher’s “saviour complex” (Lopez-Gopar, Javier Reyes & Lambert Gomez, 2014, p. 219). These power relations are especially important to contemplate as

we consider the topic of multilingualism as well as dominant language ideologies and the legitimization of English, as earlier discussed in the analysis of relevant literature. Thus, in their examination of more critical approaches to research, Lopez-Gopar et al. discuss the need for “openness towards students’ views and realities in order to listen and understand their realities and not to simply impose our ideologies” (p. 220). In an effort to practice such consideration of power relations, I emphasized to the students my own multilingual background while introducing myself and my research, and again during the interviewing process.

However, regarding qualitative research, Ilieva (2014) cautions researchers to be aware of “the limitations of producing knowledge by employing a neatly packaged method” (p. 59); she especially problematizes researchers simply assuming certain positionalities. Thus, even with my considerations, I understand that these processes of power negotiations and identification are complex and multifaceted as I am working with people whose negotiations of identity and power might be equally complex and multifaceted. This especially resonates with my study as, even though I am positioning myself as a multilingual student, I must understand that I am additionally a graduate student researcher, whose reality and perceptions of being a multilingual student might be different from the students of my study. As Guba states, “there are as many realities as persons” (p. 77). Nevertheless, even as I am writing this, I realize how qualitative research is allowing me a more “flexible style” (Creswell, 2013, p. 48) through which I can practice reflexivity in order to address some of my “epistemological assumptions” (Ruby, 1980, as cited in Guba, 1981, p. 87). With these thoughts on qualitative research, I will now discuss my thesis project as an ethnographic study.

## **Ethnography**

Originally, this project was born of an assignment from a methodology class I took as part of my graduate program, in which we were required to conduct observations of our chosen site, take traditional field notes and then write up these field notes in a more cohesive essay assignment. As stated in my introduction chapter, because the site resonated with me, I chose to expand my class project into a thesis project.

My understanding and employment of ethnography much coincide with Walford (2008) in his deliberations on “how to do educational ethnography.” Walford highlights how education and ethnography complement one another. He draws attention to the fact that ethnography encompasses the study of a group of people by means of their “cultural contexts” (p. 7). He argues that educational institutions have within themselves their own micro-cultures as well and thus examining these micro-cultures through means of ethnographic research can allow the researcher to understand students’ processes in an educational institution better than any other research method. In addition, Walford identifies ways in which a child learns, in that a child utilizes every sense and tool available completely. Admittedly, the participants in my study are not children; however, Walford’s focus resonates with my study. No one tool can be enough in learning or teaching and similarly, in the contexts of ethnographic research, no one method of data collection can be entirely sufficient on its own. Walford specifies then that while teaching and learning require the application of various tools and various forms of input, so too does an ethnographic study require various research tools and informants. These can manifest in ethnography through interviews, recorded discussions and field notes, just to name a few. These are but two aspects Walford highlights in his article that pinpoint ethnography as an ideal methodology with which to examine and do research in educational contexts. I too highlight these aspects in particular as leading toward my selection of ethnography as a means to conduct research in educational contexts, which is in this case, the ALC classroom.

While choosing ethnography as my methodological approach of choice, I am aware of the criticisms of ethnography as a method of research. Hammersley (1992), for instance, highlights disputes regarding whether or not claims made through ethnographic studies can be argued as legitimate and representative of social realities. He discusses how ethnographic research can be construed as constructions of reality, rather than being representative of reality. Creswell (2013) adds to this discussion by identifying that ethnographic approaches (with often narrative-like renderings) can be limiting in regards to audience as readers might be inclined toward more traditional or scientific approaches. In addition, Shao-Kobayashi (2014) in her ethnographic study on the negotiation of language and identity, alludes to the potentiality of slipping out of a critically reflexive awareness. With a methodology such as ethnography, I am employing participants’

personal backgrounds and self-proclaimed lived experiences as research data, and need to be on my guard against what is “authentic” in terms of how people identify themselves and others as authenticity is “continuously imagined” (p. 90). Regarding the credibility of a study, it is easy to become entrapped in constructions that both participants and researchers project upon one another that are “homogenous, essential, and singular” (p. 90).

Regarding credibility, however, and participants’ views and constructions, Walford (2008) extends the discussion to the topic of credibility as a whole in postmodern approaches to ethnographic studies. As stated above, study participants in an ethnographic study might take on or believe in any number of stereotypes as based on “essentialist assumptions in their minds” (Shao-Kobayashi 2014, p. 90). These beliefs might manifest in statements made during observations or even in interviews. Again, it is important to remain critical and critically reflexive (Shao Kobayashi, 2014) of such assumptions or of taking on such assumptions.

Similarly, Hammersley (1992) argues that an important part of ethnography is trying to understand different experiences and perspectives as opposed to merely trying to judge them as “true or false” (p. 43). Taking into consideration Walford (2008), we might also argue that the knowledge and experiences that participants might reveal in a study – imagined or not – can be deemed as real. In other words, these experiences are real because it is the “reality of their world” (p. 11). Walford thus advocates for the bestowing of “high status to participants’ own accounts” as “data collected are grounded in informants’ actual experiences” (p. 12). What is observed as well as participants’ accounts can both be seen as forms of “evidence for the validity of an account” (Hammersley, 1992, p. 53). Therefore, in my own study of the ALC, should students’ statements or behaviour fall under essentialist assumptions (Shao-Kobayashi, 2014), everything observed or heard is still credible as it is a reality in the context of these students’ lives. While LeCompte and Goetz (1982) especially highlight issues of credibility in their analysis of ethnography as a research method, they acknowledge how participant experiences and ethnographic studies can “provide a depth of understanding lacking in other approaches” (p. 32).

Furthermore, there is the question and debate of what an “ethnographic study” is. While my research was much shaped by ethnography, I would define my thesis project as “partially ethnographic” (Marshall, 2014). In questioning whether or not it is possible for a study to be wholly ethnographic, Marshall (2014) examines the American Anthropological Association (2004) definition of ethnography, highlighting especially the “defining features of ethnographic enquiry” (p. 14). These include the inductive nature of ethnography and the traditional requirement for ethnographers to live with or be fully immersed in a community. Marshall then proceeds to challenge these purist aspects of ethnography, questioning whether or not research can be truly ethnographic and purely inductive.

Taking into consideration Walford’s (2008) accentuation on being culturally open-minded and being open to continuously “challenging [my] own theories and understanding, constantly testing them” (p. 11), I attempted to enter the ALC classroom as open-mindedly as possible. For example, I had a different set of research questions before beginning my observations of the ALC classroom. These questions were still in line with student identity and multilingualism; however, additionally, I wanted to examine how students’ personal stories and narratives could positively affect student identity as well as how educators could potentially empower students’ multilingual identities yet still aid students towards becoming writers at an academic level.

As my time in the classroom with the students progressed, I realized that my research interests as per my original research questions might not have been directly observable and furthermore, could not fit into the confines of this one thesis project. These realizations manifested from being in the ALC classroom. Subsequently, I then reshaped my research questions. That being said, while many aspects did change as I progressed with my observations and I did have to redirect my research questions, I nevertheless still began my thesis project with research questions. Thus I cannot label my research as being purely inductive and being in sync with the purist notions of ethnography; my thesis project was fueled by personal interests in multilingualism and multilingual practices and was guided by personal experiences and related readings and theories arising from my graduate studies.

As well, in keeping with my thesis project timeline and in complying with the technicalities regarding accommodating student schedules, I was restricted to observing the students in just their classroom environment. I did not observe students in their other classes where arguably, students would be negotiating their multilingual identities differently. (I will address this further in my study limitations.) I therefore cannot say that there was full immersion into the ALC community and I was not privy to “the ongoing everyday activities of the designated community” (American Anthropology Association, 2014, as cited in Marshall, 2014, p. 140). Marshall argues that “wholly inductive ethnographic research may be an idealization” (p. 148) and instead uses the term “partially ethnographic” to describe adapting the principles of ethnography to suit the specific contexts of a study. Thus, I use the term “partially ethnographic” to describe my thesis project.

In addition to ethnographic observations, I conducted follow-up interviews and collected formal academic writing samples and informal writing samples from students’ social media posts as well as email interactions. It is through “partial ethnography” (Marshall 2014) and these above listed forms of data collection that I hoped to “gain a multi-dimensional appreciation of the setting” (Walford, 2008, p. 8).

## **Study Participants**

The study participants of my thesis project were the students of the two ALC classes I observed during the fall term. Students taking the course are usually in their first year of university, unless they are transfer students or international exchange students. As stated earlier, students had to take the ALC due to not achieving at least 75% in their overall grade twelve English classes or not acquiring the necessary LPI or IELTS scores.

I recruited the students with the aid of the classroom instructor, who introduced me to each of the two classes and allowed me to introduce my study to the students. In my introduction, I specifically highlighted my own language history and background in an effort to foreground my research interests. I described my Chinese background and how my family had immigrated from Vietnam. I discussed how I spoke Vietnamese and some Cantonese and Teochow. The study details were then given orally in this same

introduction. These were passed around the classroom and students were given the option of whether or not they wished to participate in the study. Specifically, they were given four options<sup>8</sup>:

1) Students could allow me to merely observe their classroom interactions and be written into my field notes.

2) As the original observations were intended for my methodology course observation assignment, students were asked if they would allow me to use the data in any future studies. For this particular point, I stressed that I would be using the same study toward my thesis project.

3) Students were asked if they would allow me to contact them for follow-up interviews.

4) Finally, they were told that they could abstain from the study altogether; in that case, I would not refer to these students specifically in any of my field notes.

Eight students chose the first option, 12 students chose the second option, and 16 students chose the third. None of the students chose to abstain from the study altogether.

The students of both classes ranged in age and background. Most were in their late teens to early twenties. The students were of different ethnic backgrounds, with some students being international students and others Canadian-born or having immigrated to Canada at different stages in their lives. I can only elaborate upon the backgrounds of the students who were interviewed.

Five of the 16 students who originally allowed me to contact them for further follow-up interviews replied upon being contacted. We arranged appropriate times and places to meet through email. The following table is a summary of the students I interviewed:

<sup>8</sup> See appendices for Study Details and Consent forms.

**Table 1. Summary of Students Interviewed**

Name	Sex	ALC Class	Languages Spoken:	Migration History:
Blake	M	Classroom B	Korean, English	Born in Korea and immigrated to Canada in the sixth grade
Dustin	M	Classroom B	Portuguese, French, English	Born in Canada
Jonathan	M	Classroom B	Cantonese, Mandarin, two other Chinese languages (but student did not elaborate on these languages), English	Born in China and came to Canada to study in the tenth grade
Reggie	M	Classroom A	Mandarin, English	Born in Taiwan and immigrated to Canada when he was "a few months old"
Sarah	F	Classroom B	Cantonese, Mandarin, English	Born in Canada, moved to Hong Kong at a year old and returned to Canada in the ninth grade

## **Classroom Observations**

I observed two different classes of the ALC (hence the labeling of Classroom A and Classroom B in the above table) taught by the same instructor. I began my study a few weeks into the course and observed the remainder of the Fall 2014 term as well as the final exam. Thus, I observed the ALC for approximately ten weeks with the observation of each class lasting 110 minutes as I would stay the duration of the entire class. My observations took place twice a week (as the classes were scheduled twice a week) and the two different classes of the same course were back-to-back. This particular feature of my study allowed me to compare participant's reactions to similar class activities and prompts from the same instructor.

Regarding observation methods, Creswell (2013) describes a "good qualitative observer" (p. 167) as an observer who might change roles while conducting observations. During my time with the ALC classes, I was both a participant and non-participant observer. The beginning of the classes often started with an introduction regarding which writing, research, or sentence structure topics the students would be working on throughout the remainder of the class. During this portion, I would often sit near the front

of the class. This was mostly due to space restrictions in the classroom; my location provided easy access to my viewing of both the students and the screen upon which class notes were displayed. In addition, I acknowledged that students were accustomed to their table groups and fellow students with whom they usually sat and I did not wish to disrupt their usual seating arrangements.

There were times when students were given a demonstration and then given a moment to discuss or practice as a class introduction. During these times, I would sometimes walk around the class. If the instructor would begin speaking to the class again while I was in the middle of my rounds, I would sit at the closest seat, which provided me different views and perspectives of the classroom. While my observations did not allow me to fully note “a phenomenon in the field setting through the five senses of the observer” (Creswell, 2013, p. 166), I did gain an in-depth knowledge of the course and the students. I was able to observe student interactions and follow student discussions. This in turn allowed me to take note of different multilingual interactions – in the context of the larger classroom, with the instructor, in table groups, with classmates and with friends.

During some classes, students worked in groups and I would participate in some of the activities and discussions. Participant observation allowed me to experience the ALC activities and course work for myself. During class and discussions with students, I was able to ask the students questions in order to confirm anything I had previously observed.

Throughout my time observing the ALC classroom, I was very particular about taking clear field notes. I felt as though they were a very important part of the ethnographic process, especially as I have always tended to write notes for remembering as well as for processing information. For the duration of my observations of the ALC, taking field notes was my main form of data collection. Some of the students of the ALC had given permission for me to observe their class and take notes on them but not for me to use the data for any future research projects. Thus, I did not record any audio or take any video footage and only took field notes to ensure that any students who had not given consent to be in any future research would not be included in my thesis project.

Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2008) discuss field notes in some depth. They debate the usefulness and importance of writing constant, detailed notes against the potential disruption of writing constant, detailed notes. In regards to disruption, Emerson et al. discuss how the act of writing notes can “ruin the moment” (p. 357) and could potentially make participants feel as though their experiences are reduced to merely subjects for study. While I acknowledged that at times, it was very difficult to take notes while being constantly mentally present in the classroom and be discrete, in the end, I chose to “preserve the immediacy of the moment” (p. 357) and take as many detailed notes when possible.

Beyond jogging my memory of observations I might have otherwise forgotten, I used my field notes as a way to reflect. Emerson et al. highlight that descriptive accounts such as field notes are not just merely a recording of facts. To demonstrate, after each class, I would type up my written field notes, further reflecting upon my observations. However, with even the taking of field notes during observations, “active processes of interpretation and sense-making” (p. 353) are already taking place. Thus the taking of field notes was a particularly important part of my data collection, especially with meaning-making in progress. It can be argued that while taking the notes and reflecting upon the notes, I was conducting a form of preliminary coding of this data.

## **Interviews**

I sent out my first request for interviews during January of 2015. To reiterate, I interviewed five students in total. I conducted the interviews after completing all the classroom observations since I had to obtain further ethics approval to extend my initial course work research, which was only observation-based, to include interviews and analysis of writing samples. In addition, I felt that the students had to know me before consenting to being interviewed.

Interviews took place at PCU as this was the location that all the students preferred, all of the students citing that they would prefer to be interviewed around their class schedules. I accommodated their schedules and conducted the interviews in areas on campus that had as much privacy as possible. These areas were still open spaces

with other students interacting in the background but my conversations with the students interviewed were out of earshot.

Creswell (2013) advises researchers to compose interview questions that focus upon the central research questions of the study. While I did draw from my research questions in preparing interview questions<sup>9</sup>, my senior supervisor had suggestions and I was guided by interview questions from similar studies of other academic literacy courses. When I progressed with the interviews themselves, however, the interview questions became more of a guide and the interviews were casual. Although we adhered to the same themes and all the questions were answered, the students oftentimes led the conversation on different paths dependent upon how they constructed the question.

In these interviews, students' English proficiency and abilities ranged. I encouraged students to use phrases in their language of choice, if need be, to explain anything in particular that was specific to their language or culture. This would include if they needed to say a phrase or a word that they felt did not or could not translate well into English. I specified that I could work to have these parts translated at a later time if I did not understand<sup>10</sup>. I was able to understand the few words that were spoken in Chinese without need for outside translation and for the most part, other than those very few words, students spoke in English.

Along with in-class observations of their ALC classes and collection of writing samples. I conducted follow-up interviews with five students: Reggie, Sarah, Jonathan, Blake and Dustin. I asked them questions regarding what languages they are able to speak, how they might use these languages at the university and in the ALC, and their experiences as first-year students at PCU.

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix C for Interview Questions.

<sup>10</sup> I am able to understand some Cantonese.

## **Collecting Students' Writing Drafts**

Prior to each interview, in our email interactions, I asked students for examples of their writing, particularly drafts. Thus, in each interview, students gave me samples of their writing from the ALC class. Each of these writing sample packages had several drafts with both their rough notes as well as the instructor's comments written on them. Their instructor had given them a chance to improve their marks based on his comments before handing in final drafts. My intent for collecting these drafts was in order to examine how the use of different languages during the writing process might aid students in becoming better academic writers.

In addition to these drafts, I asked for students to submit samples of informal writing in the forms of text messages or postings and discussions on social media sites and applications. I wanted to compare students' use of languages in informal writing with how they might use languages while producing monolingual texts in English for the ALC.

## **Ethics**

Defining whether or not my thesis project was ethically-sound was a surprisingly difficult feat in certain regards. At first glance, and especially in comparison with more positivist studies that might require testing on research participants, my study did not appear to be cause for much ethical concern. That is not to say that I was not at all concerned about ethics; it was more a question of my concerns being more technical in nature. During my observations, as I was becoming accustomed to taking field notes on ALC research participants, I took careful consideration over which students had signed which forms, thus allowing me to write field notes based on their interactions, or contact them or not. As this thesis project was originally a class project for my methodology class, we often presented findings in class as part of the course assignment. Therefore, I was particularly careful about blurring out names in charts I had drawn in my field notes that I added to my presentation for visual effect.

For the initial graduate course project, our course instructor had submitted all of the forms for ethics approval. However, in extending my research from that project into a

full thesis project, I was required to also extend my ethics approval with necessary additions. With this extension and in applying for ethics approval on my own, the process included rating levels of potential harms of the study on a scale. At this point, I had to take into consideration Murphy and Dingwall (2007) as they state that “in ethnography...harm is more likely to be direct than indirect, and open to interpretation” (p. 340). In this statement, they are addressing how ethnographers are researching participants’ personal and sometimes very individual experiences, and thus cannot anticipate all potential risks that can cause emotional harm. I extend this argument through Marshall’s (2010) exploration on “remedial ESL identity” (p. 42) and how students projected feelings of deficit. In his study, students taking the ALC acknowledged “embarrassment, deficit, and a sense of being inadequate as compared to peers” (p. 53). I had to therefore carefully consider whether or not I was inflicting harm on the research participants, especially since I could not know for sure their feelings or perceptions of being in that class.

I can argue and have argued that the results of my study might benefit future students, especially those of multilingual backgrounds who still view themselves as inferior or who take on deficit identities. However, as Murphy and Dingwall (2007) state, “harms or benefits derive from the participants’ unpredictable response to the interactions rather than from the researcher’s intentions” (p. 340). These authors highlight how in certain circumstances, positive or negative reactions or feelings regarding a study might reverse themselves much later. They especially highlight that the greatest risk in inflicting harm arises at the time of publication of the study. I cannot be sure of students’ perception of being in the ALC, and thus cannot fully judge the level of potential harm I could inflict with my study.

In addition, what I might view as helpful to the students or beneficial to future students is in line with my own personal perceptions and biased assumptions. Thus, what I might deem as beneficial to students might not be in line with others’ “ideological position[ings]” (Murphy & Dingwall, 2007, p. 340), and could even raise issues of power struggles, or perhaps even inadvertently touch upon “suspicion of expertise” (p. 340). With these points in mind, I took careful consideration in making students aware of my intentions should they wish to participate in my study, as well as concealing any personal information that might identify participants. Through Murphy’s and Dingwall’s cautioning,

I understand that although there might be no direct physical harm or public shaming or humiliation, there is always a potential for shame in a smaller community or even the internalizing of a personal shame. As such, with my methodology course in ethnography and careful deliberation during my application for ethical approval, I can say that I have at least an awareness of the potential ethical issues – including “claims to ‘know’” (Brettell, 1993, as cited in Murphy & Dingwall, 2007, p. 343) – and have taken as much careful consideration as possible during my research and data collection.

## **Transcription and Coding of Data**

As discussed in earlier sections of this chapter, emergent themes – along with subsequent shapings and reshapings – were key throughout my entire study. Being present in the ALC classroom with an awareness of the students and what language phenomena might actually be observable caused much re-shifting in my study and I even had to refocus my study questions.

Walford (2008) addresses this idea of how an ethnographic study is a process. He discusses how ethnography and its processes are an “emergent design” (p. 13) as new data might emerge to better previous ideas. I found this to be true in my study, as I reshaped my focus as my research questions and emerging themes took shape. Creswell (2013) adds to this emergent design process in stating that all phases of the research should not be “tightly prescribed” (p. 47) but rather continuously shifting. Thus my coding process was in line with this emergent design as I coded based on emerging themes.

Transcripts were originally transcribed into individual documents for each research participant. I began coding by organizing and sorting through each of these individual interview transcripts. I created new documents in which I arranged student responses by the interview questions that were asked and then created documents in which I arranged student responses into categories formed by my originally proposed research questions. I then analyzed the data by looking for common themes that appeared from these organized documents. Once certain concepts began to emerge, I continued to follow these established threads by coding them by colour. In a separate document, I created a legend in order to keep track of which colour pertained to which theme. This coded data

was then further analyzed in order to form the findings that will be presented in the next chapter for my data analysis.

## **Chapter 4. Data Analysis**

Through the process of coding and analysing the data I had collected, certain themes arose. The data analysis in this chapter is organized around the following themes<sup>11</sup>: students' descriptions of their learning processes (and the dominant social discourses that arose from these descriptions), students' perceptions of their multilingual identities, and students' negotiation of their multilingual identities in the ALC. These themes helped me to analyze my research questions:

- 1) How do students conceptualize their multilingualism?
- 2) How and why do they make use of their multilingual resources in and around their learning?
- 3) To what extent are students' linguistic perception and practices reflections of social and linguistic discourses about multilingualism?

Throughout the data analysis, I will be analyzing the emergent themes by linking findings of participants to each other in order to illustrate complexities and the multifaceted nature of students' academic lives while incorporating theory from my literature review into the discussion. I will revisit my research questions in relation to my data at the end of the data analysis chapter.

### **English and Multilingualism Contextualized**

Often, during interviews, students digressed from the set questions and re-engaged in more general conversations in which they discussed their future plans, what languages they spoke at home, and how their family history and migration might have impacted the languages they are able to speak. The stories they shared with me helped

<sup>11</sup> These themes are further organized into categories and subcategories throughout the data analysis.

me to understand how they might identify with their languages and cultures, and served as linguistic contextualization for my study.

## **Pushing English and a Western Education**

The following field note excerpt was written while observing an exchange during group work:

As I move away from the table, I hear Jonathan say a phrase in Mandarin while looking across the table at another student. The student does not notice because he is busy writing. Blake half-kiddingly says, "In English!" dragging out the last syllable. Jonathan apologizes but laughs saying that he only said it in Chinese because he doesn't know the phrase in English. He is also gesturing to his phone at this point. (Is he using a dictionary to translate?)

Field note 1, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014

At a glance, I found the "in English" comment understandable as not all the students at the table spoke Mandarin. Retrospectively, after having ruminated on classroom dynamics and students' discussions about multilingualism, I thought about the above exchange. Was there an underlying discourse regarding English or learning English? What other factors were at play?

A look at students' prior education reveals the emphasis and importance placed on English. Motha (2006) highlights how "discursive practice can make certain ideologies seem natural" (p. 76). Thus, participants who seemed to embrace their multilingual identities embraced English as a part of these identities and as a "vehicle for mobility and economic achievement" (de Costa, 2010, p. 228).

In her interview<sup>12</sup>, Sarah elaborated upon the English-medium elementary school she had attended in Hong Kong:

<sup>12</sup> Transcribed interviews follow these conventions:

..represents a pause or sudden stop in speech.

...represents a deletion because a part of the excerpt was not relevant.

- represents the speaker stopping in the middle of a word or stuttering before beginning again.

Sarah: Yeah. During class, it's mostly English and teachers they..they speak English but after class, like.. I usually talk in..we usually talk in Cantonese.

CLJ<sup>13</sup>: Ok.

Sarah: So.. It's like..only class..it's in English. Other than that, it's Cantonese.

Sarah had previously reported that her family was originally from Hong Kong. She was, however, born in Vancouver. After living in Hong Kong for some years, where Sarah attended elementary school, she and her family returned to Canada when she was in the ninth grade. Sarah's parents had moved the family to Hong Kong for unknown reasons and while it seemed they stayed for a lengthy time (until Sarah was in the ninth grade), it was still important that Sarah receive her education in English. As seen in the interview excerpt above, Cantonese – and not English – was the language that was otherwise part of her everyday life. My assumption is that English was seen by her parents as a vehicle for future success (de Costa, 2010).

In the interview, Sarah seemed to very much identify with her Hong Kong background. She discussed how Cantonese was the language she predominantly used in Hong Kong. At her elementary school, Cantonese was the chosen language students spoke outside of the classroom; Cantonese is what she also speaks at home with her family. During our conversations, Sarah initially identified with being from Hong Kong. It was upon further discussion that Sarah then revealed how she was actually born in Vancouver and had moved to Hong Kong. In expanding upon the languages she used in different contexts, Sarah shared how she has one friend at PCU with whom she speaks Cantonese, highlighting that, “she's from Hong Kong too” as opposed to all her other friends who are “native” to Canada. With this statement in which she describes her friend's background in reference to her own, it can be argued that Sarah identifies more as being from Hong Kong. Yet, English was the chosen medium for her formal education,

\_\_\_\_(?) shows that a word or phrase was inaudible to me and I could not decipher what was said.

<sup>13</sup> The initials “CLJ” (Connie Lam James) represent me as the interviewer.

exemplifying how even practices and choices within a family can be impacted by dominant language ideologies and discourses that reflect the dominance of English (Pennycook, 1994). As well, during my time in the ALC, I observed Sarah speaking only English in the classroom, despite her sitting near Chinese-speakers (some who were able to speak Cantonese). It was not until later when the class was asked who was bilingual that I discovered she could speak Cantonese and later still, during our interview outside of the ALC classroom, that she discussed her Chinese background. I will discuss Sarah's language choices in the ALC further in a later section.

Similarly, the importance of a western education was prominent in my conversations with Jonathan. Jonathan moved to Vancouver after having finished the tenth grade in his home town in the southern province of Guangdong in China, and had little to no formal English schooling. Jonathan seemed to strongly identify with his Chinese background and discussed how he would not stay in Canada upon graduation; however, he uprooted his life in order to obtain a degree at an English-medium university. Jonathan discussed his Chinese background while elaborating on the four Chinese languages he is able to speak. He accentuated the fact that he was the most comfortable speaking Chinese, highlighting that he was speaking entirely in Chinese for the first fifteen years of his life. Even with people he felt were more fluent in English than in Chinese, Jonathan still chose to speak in Chinese, partly because he felt he was not able to express himself as articulately in English and partly because he felt so much more comfortable speaking in Chinese.

During the interview, Jonathan mentioned a particular moment in the ALC class that occurred at the very beginning of the semester that refers to his Chinese identity. The instructor had asked the students to walk around, introducing themselves to one another. Jonathan had started to introduce himself in English. However, upon finding fellow Chinese-speakers, he chose to use Chinese in continuing the introductions and starting further conversations. Later, while reflecting on this in the interview, he explained his switch from English to Chinese, "why we.. why are we Chinese – why we speak English?" This moment particularly reveals the strong ties with his Chinese identity. As well, Jonathan specified several times that he does not have the intention of remaining in Canada. He hopes that upon graduation, he will be able to return to China to work. In

discussing settling in Canada, Jonathan revealed why he left China for his post-secondary education:

Jonathan: Mmm.. My family..they want.. In.. Mmm.. Maybe I can say in the.. the old people.. They like outside of the country.. They study.. Maybe good thing in China.. And they want to say.. I-When I graduate, I have one more way to work.

Jonathan does not intend to stay in Canada to begin his career but he acknowledges the importance of this “outside” education. Jonathan sees Chinese as personally more “useful” to him. However, in being able to obtain a job in China, a foreign degree (in this case, at an English-medium university) is seen as necessary and/or desirable. He emphasized that it does not matter from which faculty or subject area this degree is obtained:

Jonathan: Because.. (Chuckle). Because.. Many people like me.. They.. We just want to be graduate.

CLJ: Oh.

Jonathan: Only want to graduate. And the econ easier to get in..PCU.

Jonathan uses “they” to reference others who have the same goal of just completing a degree in any faculty, therefore alluding to a common trend that he is a part of and the importance of an education abroad. Thus, it was very important for Jonathan to obtain his post secondary education in English. Lin (1999) describes this as a “want-hate relationship with English” (p. 394).

Lin’s take on the work of Bourdieu (1984) and his theories of misrecognition in reference to Hong Kong can be very helpful in analyzing this. Accordingly, certain “representations of the world and social meanings” (Lin, 1999, p. 395) are imposed upon individuals and through this process, thus becoming legitimized. Many Hong Kong parents therefore insist on English-Medium schools because they buy-into the discourse of English as a language with strong social, cultural, and economic capital; this is the case even when students’ everyday lives do not involve or will not involve the use of English outside of school. This buy-in corresponds to Sarah’s placement in an English-medium school throughout her family’s stay in Hong Kong as well as Jonathan choosing an

English-medium post secondary education. In later sections, I will detail how this symbolic representation of English can affect how students chose to make use of their multilingual resources in and around their learning.

## **English-Only, Please**

In an academic literacy course such as the ALC, in which there are many multilingual students, I found that the “symbolic domination of English” (p. 395) manifested itself in different ways. Throughout the interviews and through discussions with students during my observations, students revealed different ways their social and academic lives revolve around English, regardless of their intentions upon finishing university and what their career goals were. As students navigated language ideologies, especially the discourses surrounding English, they seemed to correspondingly at times “buy into and perform discourses of monolingualism” (Lee & Marshall, 2012, p. 67). Through these dynamics, students’ direct reporting of how they used languages was inconsistent with the role languages seem to actually play in their lives.

For example, both Blake and Reggie claimed English as the language with which they felt most comfortable and their language of choice to use in educational contexts. Blake and Reggie moved to Canada at a young age to attend school. Although neither student divulged specifically that they immigrated for an English education, “the centrality of English” (p. 77) can still be seen in their narratives. I will discuss Reggie’s migration and educational trajectory in a later section.

Neither Blake nor his family intended for him to live and study in Canada. It was when Blake and his mother decided to visit his brother in Vancouver, and compared Canada’s education system with Korea’s, that the family decided it might be best if Blake also stayed to study. Blake had a traditional stance regarding second language acquisition (Roberge, 2009), adhering to a belief in learning English through English.

During his interview, Blake highlighted his preference for using English in learning English. However, he revealed through reflection upon the experience of his arrival in Canada, that his teacher paired him with another Korean-speaking student and they were

allowed to speak Korean to one another. This came about while he explained how his elementary school teacher helped him in navigating a new school in a new language:

Blake: ...So, after I got into his class, he noticed I was speaking Korean more than English so he asked me why. I told him that I'm not..I don't understand English very well. So he helped me..he put with another student..who was Korean and speaks fluent English, tried to get me used to the class environment and..I got home..then..

CLJ: So you're allowed to talk to each other in Korean then?

Blake: Not always but I..if I don't understand.

While Blake follows the notion that it is better to use English in order to learn English, in circumstances such as the one above and because he “didn't understand anything” when he first arrived, Blake acknowledged that being able to use some Korean was helpful, thus supporting Lee's (2012) research that calls for exploration of other methods and a “policy shift over the English-only approach” (p. 10). Blake's teacher paired him with another Korean student in order to ease communication. The following is an excerpt from one of the first drafts of Blake's narrative piece detailing the major events in his life. It is a draft in its original form with no editing or corrections made:

At the time, it was not my decision to move from Korea to Canada. It was involuntary action, which turned out to be my best and biggest change of my life. When I was in Korea I was not an 'ideal' student. The cultural life of study, study, study was not suited for me despite my best efforts. When the came to move to Canada, I was too happy, excited and distracted at the fact of going to another country, when I should have been concerned about what is going to happen when I land at Canada. When I arrived at the airport, I knew that I was going to meet a challenge, a challenge of speaking another language. When I was attending XXXXXXXX elementary school, I met one of the best teacher that I have ever had so far. Mr. XXXXXXXX, is his name. He helped me get suited for Canadian style of studying and allowed me to adapt to new environment quickly. I still visit him once in a while, when I have time to do so.

Through this excerpt, we can see how this teacher seemed to make a positive impact on Blake as he mentioned how they still keep in touch. Blake refers to him as “one of the best teacher that I have ever had so far” and that it was through this teacher's considerations that he was able to become “suited for Canadian style of studying.” Despite

acknowledging that it was through this experience and his teacher's methods that he became more accustomed to his new "class environment," if discussing explicitly the use of Korean in classrooms, Blake still adhered to a self-imposed English-only rule.

Blake explained that because he has been in Canada since the sixth grade, his brain "just completely use[s] all English" and that this is "involuntary." Later, in an email exchange with me in which we were discussing informal texts and mixing languages, Blake revealed how he reserves the use of Korean for speaking with elders, stating that it is a better way to formally greet elders. In our exchange and in order to elaborate, Blake included a text message to his old martial arts instructor, in which he is asking the instructor to be his referee for his application to the Canadian Armed Forces. The message is in both English and Korean (with full English translations in italics by Blake below the original text):

XXXXXXXX, 제가 군대 paperwork를 하고있어요. 그런데 제가 information 조금더 필요해요. company/institution, title/position, relationship to applicant, 그리고 references email address... 감사해요

*XXXXXXXX, I am working on Canadian Forces paperwork right now. But I require more information, if you don't mind. Company/Institution, Title/Position, Relationship to applicant, and references email address...Thank you sir.*

Despite his claim that he thinks in and uses English "95% of the time," Blake acknowledged that his Korean just "switch[es] on right away." Through the above excerpt as well as Blake's acknowledgement of the ability to switch in and out of Korean, it seems as though his self-imposed English-only rule is part of a larger discourse and performance of a monolingual identity (Lee & Marshall, 2012) in English within learning contexts.

Blake often discussed how he loved learning and exploring different languages. During the time of the interview, he mentioned trying to learn German, Chinese and French. Blake did tell me that he was able to learn much better when he spoke in the language that he was attempting to learn. For example, in learning French, he would try to speak only French as much as possible. However, this does not wholly explain how the imposition of English expanded into social settings. For instance, Blake discussed running into a fellow classmate on the bus from another class. Upon hearing the

classmate use Korean, Blake had approached him in order to specifically address the fact that Blake was Korean too. Instead of speaking to him in Korean, however, Blake spoke to him in English. In discussing other less formal academic settings, Blake broached the subject of other languages at PCU:

Blake: ...I use a little bit of Korean 'cause I have some Korean friends that I.. Well, my brother friends. So I use a little bit of Korean. But I should be..still try to speak English. 'Cause..why not? Why speak Korean when you can speak English and still learn?

The legitimization of English can be seen in the encounter with his classmates as well as his above thoughts on the use of Korean for social purposes. Blake's beliefs and performance of identity demonstrate the reproduction of "powerful social, cultural and linguistic discourses" (Lee & Marshall, 2012, p. 68).

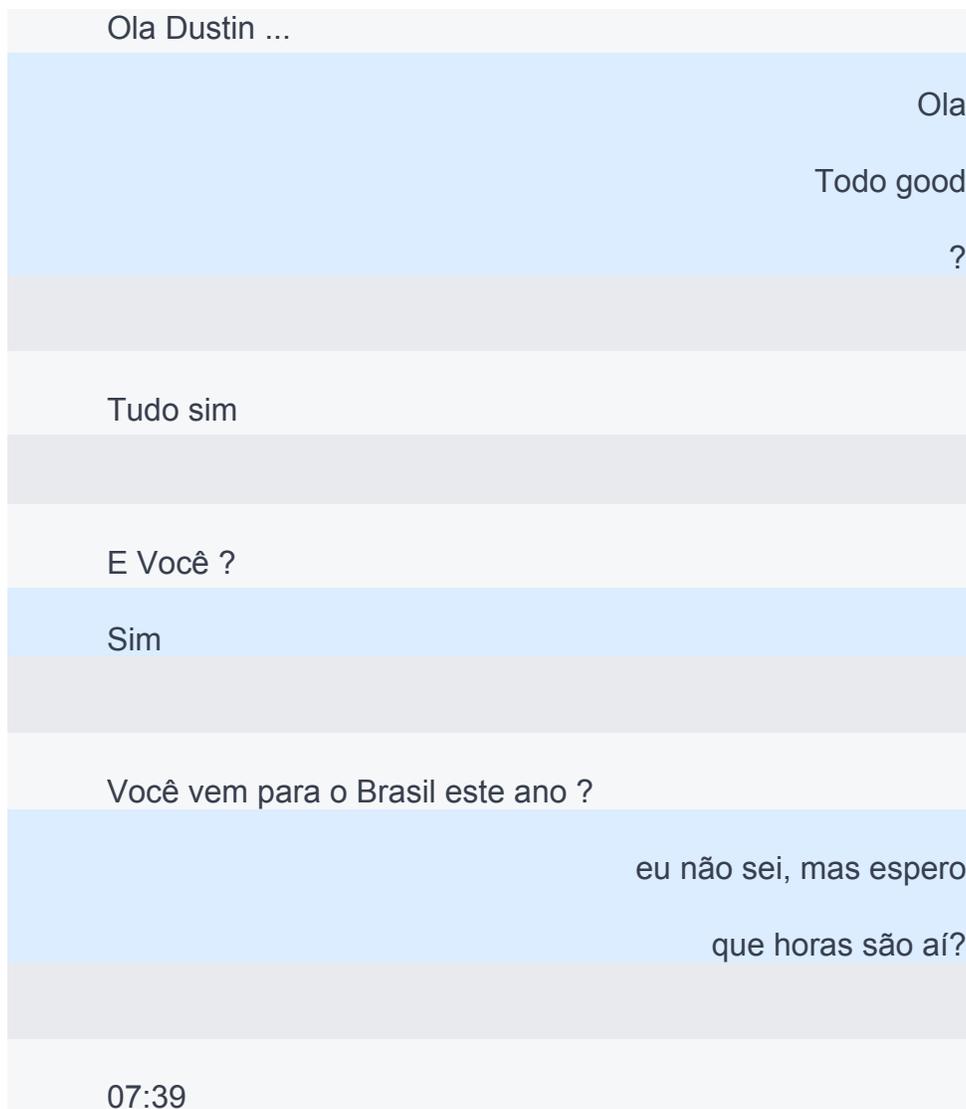
### **Being Selectively Multilingual: Embracing a Non-Remedial Identity**

Students' relationships with their languages seemed to be quite complex. Students showed awareness of the importance of English, with both Sarah and Jonathan recognizing its position as a language for academic success, despite demonstrating strong identification with Chinese. Blake seemed to distance himself from his first language – Korean. Another student with a complex relationship between English and his other languages was Dustin.

Although Dustin was born and raised in Canada, he identifies as Brazilian as Brazil is where his parents were born. During his interview, he specifically stated, "I'm Brazilian" before expanding on his parents' history and how he was born in Canada. Moving from Brazil to Switzerland and then from Switzerland to Canada, Dustin's parents first lived in Montreal and then moved to the Vancouver area, where Dustin was born. Early on in his interview, Dustin acknowledged that he could speak three different languages: English, French and Portuguese. Dustin was enrolled in an elementary school that offered Francophone Education, a program for students whose first language is French ("French Programs," N.D.). He referenced his French-speaking abilities several times, citing how much he enjoyed his French-medium elementary school and how French aided him throughout his education. Taking French helped to boost his overall grades during high

school and Dustin spoke of the possibility of taking French at PCU for the credits he could obtain toward his arts degree.

Dustin travels to Brazil every few years in order to visit his extended family. He informed me that most of his extended family still resides in Brazil. While he originally told me that he could not read or write in Portuguese, he later added that he would try to keep in contact with his cousins through social media websites. In doing so, he would use translating programs to help him. The following is an example of how he tries to keep in contact with his cousin; it is a conversation that occurred on social media:



aqui é 01:40

nossa

por que você está acordado tão cedo haha

Nós todos aki de casa estamos acordados

Estamos indo para Praia

legal

tem que ir dormir agora

oi para todos

feliz ano novo

Pra Você também, manda bjo de todos pra.sua mãe !!

*Translated:*

Hi Dustin ...

Hi

Is everything good

?

Yes, everything

And you ?

Yes

Are you coming to Brazil this year?

I don't know, but I hope

What time is it there?

07:39

here it's 01:40

Wow

why are you up so early haha

We are all here at home awake

We're going to the beach

cool

I have to go to sleep now

say hi to everyone

happy new year

You too, send kisses from all of us to your mom !!

Dustin sent this example through an emailed exchange with me. Dustin added in this email that there might be some slang that he was not sure how to directly translate into English. Thus, even though he felt that he was not literate in Portuguese, while communicating with his cousins, he feels comfortable enough to try out his Portuguese in online communication with his relatives in Brazil. These chats seem to represent a creative and multilingual practice (Marshall et al., 2012).

Altogether, Dustin was quite proud of his Brazilian background and identity and even shared how he wanted to get more involved with this community on campus:

Dustin: ...there's all these clubs. And then there-uh-there's a Latino Club here. And then, uh, I don't know, my friends told me like, "yo, you should-you should check it out because you're Latino." (Chuckle.)

CLJ: Oh. (Chuckle.)

Dustin: They have like, a big, like Brazil flag and then..

CLJ: Oh, really?

Dustin: So uh, yeah, then I met-I met the guy who like, he's like the.. the guy in charge of the club and he's-he's from Brazil and-and the same city my family's from..

CLJ: Which is?

Dustin: Sao Paulo.

CLJ: Ok.

Dustin: It's..a big city there.

CLJ: Yeah.

Dustin: And uh..and I-I spoke with him in Portuguese.

CLJ: Oh, alright.

Dustin: I haven't gone to the meetings, the events, or the club um..

CLJ: You haven't gone or you haven't received notice?

Dustin: No, I..I received notice but I haven't-I haven't gone to anything.

CLJ: Do you plan to go?

Dustin: Yeah.

CLJ: Yeah?

Dustin: I'd like to.

The above excerpt illustrates the complex relationship that Dustin has with his languages and identities. Dustin uses some Portuguese in family communications and shows affiliation to a Latino club at the university. In this sense, Dustin's affiliation is linked to what he sees as prestigious Latino culture. Nonetheless, he also seems ill at ease with the cultural and linguistic diversity of the ALC class as the following excerpt illustrates:

Dustin: (Chuckles.) I don't know. I-it kinda like..(chuckle).. I kinda felt like I was like-like too smart for the class 'cause they [referring to his ALC classmates] couldn't, like you know, like couldn't.. They um, what was it, they couldn't really speak English.

Dustin might embrace being in a diverse and global university atmosphere; however, it seems that in the contexts of the formal classroom, a more powerful discourse emerges as students are not identified as multilingual but rather as lacking English. This is reminiscent of what Zamel (2004) termed "deficient thinking" toward ESOL students (p. 13). While earlier, Dustin seemed to identify more as Brazilian and identified as being quite multilingual himself, he later distanced himself from these other multilingual students by referencing them as "they" when discussing classroom dynamics and whether or not he perceived being multilingual as being advantageous in the ALC classroom. The more dominant discourses surrounding English seemed to be competing against the discourse in which he embraces a multilingual identity. In the specific context of PCU and the ALC,

Dustin recognizes the value of English versus other languages. In this sense, he positions himself as a multilingual English user as opposed to a multilingual student lacking English. With the internalizing or positioning – upon self and others – of a “remedial ESL identity” (Marshall, 2010) for multilingual students in academic literacy courses, self-awareness and identities can be negatively affected.

Distancing from multilingual practices and identities in learning contexts was similarly demonstrated through the earlier example of Blake and his strong adherence to English and directly reporting that he only used English in the classroom and larger school contexts. Despite stating the contrary, Korean seemed to have had a strong presence, not just in his personal life but also throughout his education. In the next section, I will discuss how students’ attitudes toward being multilingual as influenced by dominant language ideologies therefore influenced the use of their multilingual resources at PCU and the ALC.

## **Multilingualism as a Resource at PCU and in the ALC**

An informal writing excerpt that Jonathan sent to me through email exemplifies how multilingual students of the ALC can “represent and enact their plurilingual competence... along a fluid continuum of overlapping contexts and use of languages” (Marshall & Moore, 2013, p. 476). This excerpt from a webchat conversation with a friend demonstrates multilingual practice with Jonathan’s use of loan words in English interspersed between Chinese characters while helping a friend plan for classes and university entrance. As Jonathan wanted to translate his own webchat, the translations (in italics underneath each text message) are in his own words and unedited:

Friend: 毕业了多好 我还有最后几个月

*If I graduate it will be good. I still have a couple months*

Jonathan: 进了大学估计你就不会这么想了

*You might not think this when you get in university*

Jonathan: 话说你还没收到offer?

*By the way, you still have not get your offer yet?*

Friend: 没有啊 还没selfreport呢

*No, have not write the selfreport yet*

Jonathan: 呢...

*A modal particle word, sound is like er, can mean for do not know what I can say*

Jonathan: 记得看due date啊

*Remember look at the due date*

Friend: 不记得啥时候了哈哈

*Already forgot the date haha*

In the above exchange, Jonathan and his friend integrate key English words into their Chinese text when necessary as Jonathan helps his friend navigate university entrance. Additionally, I often heard codeswitching as a form of multilingual practice in the ALC. The following is an excerpt from my field notes early on during my in-class observations, which describes a multilingual exchange that involves codeswitching and again, exemplifies the strong multilingual presence in the ALC:

I hear codeswitching between Jake and his partner. They are saying the terms from the textbook that they are supposed to be integrating into their presentations in English (ex., "counter argument") and the rest in Mandarin. They switch completely to English when they are dictating to one another what to write onto the overhead transparencies.

Field note 2, October 2nd, 2014

In this instance, the students were asked to practice critical thinking by writing a paragraph that argues a particular point. They were then to write these paragraphs onto transparencies in order to present to the rest of the class. The two students in the above field note excerpt employed codeswitching and communicated with one another in both Mandarin and English during the process of creating the paragraph.

During my time with the ALC students, I was introduced to various ways (such as the above example) that students could incorporate and have incorporated their multilingual repertoires while navigating their education, especially during their learning processes. Sometimes, I discovered students' learning processes serendipitously, through discussion of other topics. Instances such as these revealed interesting ways in which students engaged with their multilingual backgrounds while learning, both inside and outside of the ALC context. For example, a topic Reggie talked about the most when I interviewed him was how he learned to adapt to university life. Through conversation, he revealed that much of his success in being able to navigate through university life was due to preparation with a tutor he had throughout his high school years. Reggie regarded this tutor as a good friend and held his advice in high esteem, stating that his tutor has, "seen it all." Reggie was referring to how his tutor knew what it took to succeed in the transition between high school and post secondary because his tutor had worked with many students over the years and had become enlightened from hearing about his students' experiences. Reggie described how his tutor expected that his advice on university work ethic and how to succeed in post secondary would be enough to help Reggie throughout university and that his tutor would not provide any more help upon Reggie's entrance into PCU:

CLJ:           So he kinda waved goodbye to you at the end of grade twelve?

Reggie:       Yeah.. (Both laughing.) H-he-he was basically like, "Yeah, good luck. It's your own show now." Basically. That's what he literally said in Mandarin. He's like, "Yeah, it's your own show now. Yea-uh, dependent-like, let's see how you perform on stage."

It was through this incidental exchange that I discovered that Reggie and his tutor conducted most of their tutoring sessions in Mandarin. I will elaborate on the significance of this exchange after providing a brief biography on Reggie. Reggie is from Taiwan but came to Canada when he was only a few months old. While discussing his language background, Reggie had explained that he did not feel as though his Mandarin is particularly good. He first explained that he could be considered fluent at a very basic level but later, he emphasized his rudimentary Mandarin, referring to it as "barely elementary level." He described his parents' English as not very fluent and because of

this, it is necessary for him to speak Mandarin at home in order to communicate with them. He highlighted that his Mandarin needs to be interspersed with bits of English in order to fill the gaps in his vocabulary.

While Reggie's tutor could understand a little English, Reggie informed me that, "Mandarin is his most proficient way of communicating." Reggie explained that the textbooks used were all in English but the instructions given by his tutor were all in Mandarin. Since Reggie did feel that he was proficient in Mandarin, in reference to how he could then discuss complex science and mathematical theories and concepts, he explained:

Reggie: But I can kind of like.. like, if there's any-a confusing part, I would just, ask him it. But other than that, I can pretty much figure out what he's talking about.

...

CLJ: But those terms, though, like uh.. For example, talking in physics, or speaking uh-speaking about physics, or.. chemistry and things like that.. You have to know.. uh-uh, very high-tech terms, re-regarding the subject in Mandarin, then, to be able to go back and forth and..

Reggie: Actually, his instructions are in Mandarin.. But then the terms he uses are English. (Chuckle.)

CLJ: Oh! Ok.

Reggie: Like, you know, gravity, force, impulse, oh, he says those things in English.

Thus, even if Reggie could not understand bits and pieces of his tutor's explanations, as a whole, he was still able to grasp the main concepts. Their tutoring sessions demonstrate how multilingual practices can be potentially resourceful (Lin, 2013), albeit with the use of English for technical and key words.

What I took from this excerpt is that while I read a lot of significance into Reggie's multilingual practices, Reggie in contrast, gave them little importance. While I see a key role of Mandarin in his learning process, he did not see it. Reggie emphasized his

adherence to English, stating that “any communication that’s serious” had to be in English. This was despite the presence of Mandarin in his life, including his home life and arguably as part of his learning strategies. Just as Marshall and Moore’s (2013) study challenges the belief that “English, or academic English, is necessarily the sole conduit to success for participants” (p. 480), Reggie’s practices demonstrate how his successes were also based upon the use of Mandarin “in and around [his] studies” (p. 480). Thus, like Blake, Reggie’s direct reporting of how he used languages was inconsistent with the key role that Mandarin seemed to play in his learning.

The regulation of “an individual’s multiliterate and multilingual self” (Lee & Marshall, 2012, p. 75) was echoed in other interviews and arguably is a thread throughout my thesis project. With the dominant discourses surrounding English, I found complex interrelationships between different types of multilingual identities. Of interest was how students were buying into different aspects of the dominant discourse surrounding English and how this buy-in then affected their views on multilingualism and their multilingual practices in the ALC classroom. The extent to which students recognized their multilingual resources as “strengths and culture capital” (Murie & Fitzpatrick, 2009, p. 155) will be studied in this section.

When I asked about what languages they spoke and how they used languages in the ALC, the students responded directly with various reasons for their language practices. The reasons varied but many of them were technical in nature. For instance, the students referred to others whom they sat with and the issue of politeness (and not speaking certain languages when their surrounding peers could not participate) as reasons for the languages spoken in class. The classroom was made up of round tables and three to four students sat at each table in small groups. Although there was group work in which the instructor asked the class to move around the room in order to work with other students, students mostly interacted directly with and did group work within their table groups. Both classes I observed took place in the same classroom space.

Another participant whose interview responses are of interest in terms of using languages as resources in the learning process is Sarah. Sarah is able to speak English, Cantonese and Mandarin. While discussing language choices, Sarah revealed that she

had learned Mandarin with a tutor while living in Hong Kong but rarely uses it as her father could not speak it. Furthermore, she felt her Mandarin was different, categorizing it as “Hong Kong Mandarin” in comparison to other Mandarin “accents” that sounded “blurry” to her. Regarding language choices in the ALC, Sarah explained her reasons for choosing English instead of utilizing her different languages:

CLJ: Ok. Any reasons why just English..or?

Sarah: ‘Cause, for Jessica, I..she’s Korean. So I talk to her in English. And the others.. I don’t think they know I speak Mandarin. So.. I..

CLJ: Yeah..

Sarah: I just talk to them with..like, in English.

There are a few factors seemingly at play, influencing Sarah’s language usage in the ALC. She points toward those around her and their language capabilities, as well as her perception of how others might perceive her language capabilities. She chose to speak English because it is the common language between her and Jessica, referring to a student who sat in the same group and with whom she often partnered. Even though Sarah is able to speak Mandarin, she chose not to since she felt as though the others at the same table did not think she could speak it.

The above is an example of how students responded when they were asked about their language usage in interviews. However, student responses can also be analyzed in the contexts of the ALC classroom dynamics that I observed during my time spent with the students in the classroom. As I observed seating arrangements and both large classroom and smaller group dynamics, I observed students making, what I felt, were interesting and potentially informative language choices. For instance, I observed one student who seemed to be very comfortable conversing with a group of students sitting near her in Mandarin. However, I observed her choosing to work on ALC tasks and writing exercises with a different group of students who would work and discuss in English. During the class in which the topic of bilingualism was discussed, I discovered that she could speak Cantonese and while a few nearby students revealed that they were able to speak Cantonese as well, I only heard Mandarin being spoken amongst their groups.

Throughout the Fall 2014 term, I often observed such classroom dynamics. Through their language practices, and as they contemplated the differences between a language and a dialect (as discussed in the excerpt of my reflective field notes in the introductory chapter), I became more conscious of students' awareness of language politics and the legitimization of certain languages over others. As I considered the languages students might be choosing to speak or not speak, I considered how students might be positioning themselves, perhaps even selecting or pushing away certain language identities. I wondered at the choices students made in the ALC and what might be influencing these choices. Were students choosing specific languages to use in certain contexts in the ALC as if choosing and navigating toward certain language identities and which identities seemed advantageous or beneficial?

Kroskrity (2000) highlights the importance of language, stating that it "often provide[s] important and sometimes crucial criteria by which members both define their group and are defined by others" (p. 111). While language choice was a complex phenomenon in the ALC classroom with students perhaps choosing to use or not use certain languages (and therefore choosing to make use of or not make use of their multilingual resources) for various and sometime unknown reasons, it was arguably also a means of negotiating identity (Fuller, 2007).

Fuller's study of a fourth-grade, Spanish-English bilingual classroom discusses how students' language choices and how their function in everyday interactions are important as they are "linked to their positioning of themselves as social beings" (p. 126). She addresses how language choice can be connected to "displays of solidarity" (p. 125). Again, I see links between K-12 research findings and my search for meanings in the contexts of ALC students, notably an explanation of how students seemed to gravitate toward Mandarin. As discussed in my introduction, I was very surprised to learn how many students were able to speak Cantonese since I never heard it spoken in the ALC classroom. As Mandarin seemed to be the dominant language amongst many students in the ALC, it can be argued that students were attempting to show a form of solidarity with their same peers by using their "common language" (Nero, 2005). Their interactions accentuate the importance of social ties in regards to developing identity (Fleck, 2004, as cited in Fuller, 2007).

However, Fuller emphasizes that “constructing identity is not a simple formula... [and] each code has multiple meanings which may vary according to the speaker and social context” (p. 125). In regards to this and “common language”, Nero (2005) provides a useful framework, stating that:

...although individual socialisation to particular groups can be largely defined by a common language, the motivation to maintain affiliation with our ascribed language group(s) is contingent upon the benefits derived therefrom, both internally and externally. (p. 195)

Mandarin seemed to be a “common language” shared by many students in both the ALC classes that I observed. It was the only Chinese language I heard spoken in class despite students acknowledging that they were able to speak others. Nevertheless, the desire to remain with this language group was arguably determined by how students might benefit in the ALC classroom. This can be seen in my observation of the ALC student conversing in Mandarin but then working on ALC tasks with English speakers.

Fuller (2007) explains further with her explanation of how English can be seen as the “prestige code” (p. 125). In her study, she presented one of the student participants and his strong identification with Spanish and his Mexican background. However, this student prioritized “academic achievement” (p. 122) which was associated with seeing English as “the prestige code.” Therefore, he used Spanish with his peers and English during school-work specific interactions. Fuller interpreted this as the student translating “his concern with academic achievement into adherence to instructional language norms” (p. 122).

Nero (2005) adds the work of Peirce (1995) to her framework regarding language and identity in that student investment in language learning is very much tied to their constantly changing social identities. Thus, while students might converse in the “common language” with peers while socializing, they also seemed to be choosing to work and invest in the prestige code of English in order to be “viable candidate[s] for academic advancement” (Fuller, 2007, p. 125). As language choice in the classroom was complex, so too were choices surrounding how students would employ multilingual practices in the ALC classroom. Students discussed how they used certain languages for technical reasons but they also demonstrated exercising language choice according to their “desire

to form identity” (Nero 2005, p. 195). While Reggie, Blake, Sarah, Dustin and Jonathan all revealed how different languages have influenced various parts of their lives (with Jonathan very closely identifying with his Chinese background), they simultaneously wanted to either distance themselves from their multilingual identities by investing in the prestige code and the associated more desirable identities, or conform to rules as dictated by “commonly held notions about standard English ideology” (Cook, 1999; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996, as cited in Johnson, 2006, p. 429). As Lee and Marshall (2012) note, students might perform a “different monolingual identity” (p. 74) in academic settings where stakes are high.

### **“Whatever works”**

An instance in the classroom helped me to understand many of the students’ language practices, multilingual exchanges, and how they might position themselves in the ALC and at PCU. This happened when students were asked to produce examples of logical fallacies and the instructor and I circulated the classroom to see if students had any questions. The writing exercise could be written as informal texts such as text messages or hand-written notes. Students were therefore able to use informal writing conventions such as slang and abbreviations. For example, several groups employed hand-drawn emoticons to demonstrate that their writing sample was a mobile text message. I stopped at one table to see if any students needed help. After having observed several other groups using hand-drawn emoticons in their writing samples, I asked this group whether or not they would use emoticons in theirs. One student answered on behalf of her peers with, “whatever works,” referring to how her group would do “whatever works” in order to accomplish the assigned task.

This answer of “whatever works” particularly stood out to me because it seems to correspond to many of the multilingual exchanges and practices observed in the classroom and revealed through interviews with the students. “Whatever works” seemed to be occurring in two ways. Students were doing “whatever works” in correspondence to what could help them accomplish classroom writing tasks, succeed in the ALC and reach their intended end goals. As tied to this, students were doing “whatever works” by

performing certain acts, making certain language choices, and adopting whatever positionalities or identities that might help them reach these same endeavours.

Casanave's (2002) analysis of academic writing explains student strategies and positioning. Participants in my study can be seen as participating in these "game-playing strategies" (p. 264) as they were negotiating their way into the community of practice that was both the ALC but also the "broader academic enterprise" (p. 23) that is PCU. In this sense, students doing "whatever works" to complete the task is not random. Instead it can be seen as strategies in what Casanave calls "the writing game." On a larger scale, these strategies relate to academic achievement at PCU and to whether or not students will be able to obtain employment in this "postindustrial age" (Harklau and Siegal, 2009, p. 25) and succeed in their endeavours, post-graduation. Students' language choices and positioning can be seen as how students are "entangled in games" (Casanave, 2002, p. 263) as they reconstruct their identities and transition into the academic community. In the case of the ALC, if English was perceived as the prestige code, students invested in this dominant language and participated in this game-playing strategy in order to succeed in the ALC and perhaps also the university as a whole.

An example of several game-playing strategies can be seen through a peer-review activity I observed during one class. Students were asked to work in groups to review each other's writing assignments. The review itself consisted of having the students write comments onto a separate worksheet. I often found Dustin being positioned as a legitimate English-speaker through several classroom interactions. One student in Dustin's group politely requested for Dustin to write comments directly into her essay instead of on the separate sheet and asked him to even correct her grammar. She carefully questioned him regarding each of his comments, asking him to elaborate on his markings on her grammar. This student did not ask the same from her other groupmates and it can be argued that she was making an effort to work with Dustin as a strategy to better her English (the prestige-code) and better her chances at succeeding at her writing assignment. At the end of the activity, even though the instructor reminded the class that they had the option of giving a letter grade to their group members (based on interpreting the assignment criteria on a rubric sheet), Dustin had not. He merely said that he did not know he was supposed to. I inferred that he had done this on purpose as the instructor

had repeated the instructions several times and in exchanging papers throughout the group, it was easy to see that his peers had given him letter grades. In a face-saving act, Dustin might have intentionally misheard the instructions so he would not have to give his peers – who he might position as weaker students – what might be low grades. These above acts – students’ positioning of self and others, how they then chose to act within these positionings, their acknowledgement of the prestige code, as well as Dustin’s choice to save face for everyone in his group – could be seen as student strategies to navigate the ALC community.

In regards to how students then might make use of their multilingual resources through game-playing strategies, students seemed to employ multilingual practices based on “whatever works” for them according to their specific needs, the specific context of their tasks, or according to their intended end goals. These practices might not follow “recognizable conventions” (Spack 2004, p. 37) if examined through the “stance of a more monolingual culture” (p.37) but students were citing them indirectly as the tools or resources that connected them with others (including family and peers), helped them overcome obstacles, and led them to some important academic achievements.

Reggie’s learning technique with his tutor in Mandarin – interspersed with content-specific terms in English – helped him to achieve university entrance and a successful first year as a university student. Blake’s elementary school teacher helped him to become acquainted with a new school and classroom in a new country by pairing him with a Korean-speaking student, with whom Blake was allowed to converse in Korean when he was having trouble understanding. As well, Dustin used Portuguese with the help of translating websites in order to keep in touch with his family in Brazil and discussed wanting to join clubs at PCU where he could connect with other Portuguese-speakers. In this sense, there was evidence of students employing their linguistic resources (Duff, 2007) in the university, in past educational-related experiences and in their everyday lives. However, doing “whatever works” through positioning and participating in game-playing strategies involved complex interrelationships between participants’ different multilingual competences, as has been described above, the key competency therein being academic English.

## Discussion: Languages, Identities and Student Writing

If the discourse surrounding English impacted how students positioned themselves and how they presented their classroom and learning practices, it correspondingly impacted their writing processes while creating monolingual texts. Writing drafts was an important part of the ALC since students were given comments and then a chance to improve in order to raise the mark on their final drafts. As stated in my methodology chapter, I originally asked for samples of students' drafts in order to look for examples of multilingual practices in students' writing. However, the students presented me with monolingual texts in English. The first draft and all subsequent drafts, including the final drafts, were all written in English. This was despite some students revealing that they did employ multilingual practices, especially translation methods, in the process of creating monolingual texts.

Sarah was one of the students who claimed to only speak English in the ALC. As discussed earlier, this was for various reasons. In the interview, she commented on the fact that because the ALC was an English-based class, "the best way" to learn would be then to use English both in the classroom and for ALC class assignments. For the same reasons, she chose not to translate from Chinese to English in her writing for the ALC.

While Sarah explained her different learning methods, we progressed to discussing how she organized her writing. As she intends to major in Biomedical Physiology and Kinesiology (BPK), her timetable consisted of courses such as chemistry, physics and calculus. With courses where not much writing is concerned, Sarah found it best to draw visual representations of concepts in order to help her understand. Sarah shared how, much like her science and math-based courses, she prefers using visuals in order to write the ALC essays. This included making a web during brain-storming and charting each part of her essay in a "mind map" where she could later insert each of her body paragraphs. As she continued and we began to discuss more specific details of her writing practices, Sarah used an example that, in fact, did involve some translating practices during her writing process:

Sarah: Like. So. OK. So. I will find like. I was trying to find a vocabulary which is strong. Stronger than like, what I thought.. 'Cause I always think in like simple words. So I

think in Chinese, like, I think of a word and I Google it and try to translate back to English and use that word.

Sarah, like Blake and Reggie, proved to be somewhat inconsistent when discussing English-only processes. When asked, Sarah stated that she did not use multilingual practices in her writing process. However, further discussion revealed the interesting practice of directly translating Chinese words in order to discover stronger synonyms in English to use in her essays. In a similar way, Reggie described learning through English-only, before later explaining the important position of Mandarin in his learning process.

When I described the students earlier, I discussed Jonathan's close ties to his Chinese identity. Jonathan had elaborated on how he felt as though his life revolved around communication in Chinese, emphasizing, "English not my mother language." During the interviews, Jonathan revealed how he sometimes wrote his essays entirely in Chinese because he was "still in Chinese mind" and then later translated them into English. He further revealed how he has tried to start "thinking in English way" while writing but that his thinking and writing sometimes return to "Chinese way." However, this did not appear in the drafts that Jonathan showed me. The drafts Jonathan chose to present to me were all in English with no examples of the translation that he discussed in his interview, further exemplifying the power in "hegemonic discourses" (Lee & Marshall, 2012, p. 77). It can be argued that there is pressure to perform as a monolingual English-speaker, even with students like Jonathan who seems to otherwise embrace his multilingual identity.

Ivanič (1998) discusses how students sometimes even go through an identity crisis, specifically because they feel "that they have to become a different sort of person in order to participate in... academic institutions" (p. 345). Although Ivanič's research is of adults returning to higher education, she specifies that her findings can apply to "all types of writing, literacy and of discourse in general" (p. 332). In writing, she specifies that students tend to adopt certain discourses. Specifically, with more powerful discourses, students are "under pressure to participate in them" (p. 32). This is in line with Sarah stating in her interview that using English to write is "the best way," despite her translation of Chinese words into English during writing. This is in line with Jonathan's performance

of a monolingual identity and presentation of monolingual drafts in English despite his strong ties to his Chinese identity and using translation methods while writing. As a whole, multilingualism seemed to be a big part of students' lives. Students employed interesting multilingual practices in and out of the ALC classroom. However, students were constrained by the dominant discourse of the academic literacy class also being an English language class for many. Subsequently, students' multilingual practices and how they viewed their multilingual practices were also constrained.

Canagarajah (2004) looks specifically at how identities can be shaped by language and discourse in the classroom. He pinpoints how students are under pressure to "conform to the dominant discourses and identities preferred in the classroom" (p. 120). Through his studies, he discovered students taking on the identities that are necessary for academic success and for later socioeconomic advancement. Furthermore, schools can be places of linguistic regimentation (Lee & Marshall, 2012; Heller, 2006) where students themselves take place in the "production and reproduction of linguistic norms" (Lee & Marshall, 2012, p. 75). Sarah had certain conceptualizations of her Mandarin sounding like "Hong Kong Mandarin" and Reggie thought his Mandarin was "barely elementary level" despite being able to carry on full conversations in Mandarin with his tutor. As can be seen from how Isaac from my introductory chapter jokingly stated, "I don't speak English" (stated in English while in an English-medium classroom in an English-medium university), students regulate what forms of language they perceive are legitimate and illegitimate. Thus, when marks are at stake and in doing what is necessary in order to succeed, students might conform to the "ideological and social reproduction" (Canagarajah, 2004, p. 120) that can perhaps contribute to "social inequalities" (Lin, 1999, p. 393).

## **Chapter 5. Conclusion**

In this research project, I have looked into different ways students might make use of their multilingual resources in and around their learning. Tied to this, I sought to examine students' conceptualization of being multilingual and how these perceptions and their multilingual practices might be influenced by larger social discourse. My formal research questions were:

- 1) How do students conceptualize their multilingualism?
- 2) How and why do they make use of their multilingual resources in and around their learning?
- 3) To what extent are students' linguistic perception and practices reflections of social and linguistic discourses about multilingualism?

This chapter will readdress these research questions in correspondence to relevant literature that examines pedagogical implications and the possibility for change. With the synthesizing of my questions and the literature, I aim to see how the research questions are linked and intertwined with one another. Equally, I look at how important social discourses are when considering students' perceptions of their multilingual identity and thus how they choose to present and exercise their multilingual resources.

### **Answers, Implications and Change**

To address Question 1, students' conceptualizations of their multilingualism ranged. For example, Sarah and Jonathan seemed to embrace their multilingual identities, both citing their close ties to their Chinese backgrounds. Dustin, however, seemed to embrace his multilingual identity in the wider context of being a student in a cosmopolitan, multicultural and multilingual university, but recognizes the added value of being an English-user in the context of PCU and in the ALC. Thus, it can be argued that while conceptualizations of multilingualism ranged, they were synchronized in that students were influenced by the legitimization of English and associated language ideologies, albeit from different perspectives. In some instances, students' reporting of their language practices and usage did not coincide with how their other languages

seemed to play key roles in their lives – as they instead reproduced dominant discourses such as English-only. Reggie and Blake were examples of this inconsistency. Meanwhile, even students like Sarah and Jonathan who otherwise very much identified with their multilingual identities had to regulate their languages and multilingual selves. Sarah and Jonathan (or arguably their families) saw the value in seeking English-medium educations and they performed monolingual identities through their discussions and presentation of their writing methods.

In regards to Question 2 and the use of multilingual resources – to answer succinctly – students demonstrated how they make use of and have made use of their multilingual resources in different ways throughout their education; however, similar to how students conceptualized their multilingualism, their multilingual practices were seemingly constrained. As discussed in the data analysis, students were doing “whatever works” in order to succeed in the university setting. For instance, Sarah used translation methods in order to create monolingual English texts for the ALC. Students described multilingual learning processes influencing much of their educational trajectories. Reggie discussed using multilingual practices with his tutor and how sessions with his tutor helped him to be a successful first-year university student. Blake discussed how being able to use a little Korean in his elementary school classroom when he first came to Canada helped him to become acquainted with a new school culture. Dustin, on the other hand, limited his multilingual practices to outside of the ALC classroom, and mainly to social and family communications.

This leads to Question 3: how students’ conceptualizations of being multilingual and their multilingual practices as well as the way they viewed these practices may have been constrained by social and linguistic discourses about multilingualism. The ways in which students integrated multilingual practices into their learning processes and how they chose to present their multilingual identities while referencing formal academic contexts helped me to see the extent to which their perceptions were shaped by dominant discourses regarding English and multilingualism. Through the course of my thesis project, I found that students, despite their diverse language backgrounds, would often in some way shape or form “default to English” (Lee & Marshall, 2012, p. 77). This can be seen as perpetuation of the “symbolic power and domination of English” (p. 77). In this

sense, students' multilingual practices, regardless of whether or they viewed them as resources, were self- and other-regulated and institutionally/discursively determined and constrained. However, where there is constraint, there may also be the potential for agency and transformation. The potential of students and their potential for transformation (Marshall, 2010; Lin, 1999) can come in the form of "creative discursive agency" (Collins, 1993, as cited in Lin, 1999), in which students can be seen as engaging in the "creative, emergent practices of social actors" (p. 395).

While the discourse surrounding English and multilingual students can be problematic with students reproducing their own inequalities, there is more positive discourse where student identities can be negotiated. Bourdieu's theories, while aiding in the understanding of "the social turn in language acquisition studies and literacy instruction" (Canagarajah, 2004, p. 117), do not make adequate room for students' agency and potential for transformation (Marshall, 2010; Lin, 1999). Lin (1999) highlights the prospect of "creative discursive agency" (Collins 1993, as cited in Lin 1999), in which students can be seen as "creative, emergent practices of social actors" (p. 395).

Marshall (2010) adds to this structure versus agency debate by citing Giddens' (1984) work on recursivity. Through this framework, individual's agencies are not only understood as being constrained by structures; the focus on recursivity suggests that in some cases, students can also engender change within structures. As well, Marshall (2010) highlights the "transitional nature" (p. 44) of students' agencies. While first-year academic literacy students are going through several different transitions through new structures, they can concurrently be seen as social actors who bring with them their epistemologies. Marshall (2014) explains in reference to his study of migrants to Catalonia that this includes "personal experience and individual sociolinguistic histories" (p. 143). These epistemologies therefore begin to intertwine within new structures. Several examples of participants bringing epistemologies that are rooted in past learning experience with them to their first year of university, and seeking meaning from them as they try to make sense of their new environment, can be mentioned.

Students like Reggie and Sarah employed multilingual practices in their learning. However, these multilingual practices were not often identified by the students as

resourceful practices that helped with their learning. Reggie often highlighted his “elementary” level Mandarin throughout the interview and the fact that Mandarin did not play a major role in his life (other than through interactions with his parents). This can be seen as “default[ing] to English.” It can be argued that Reggie’s belief is aligned with the idea that it is best to use English. He specifically stated that “any form of communication that’s serious” would be conducted in English. This “serious” communication meant that he would only use English in learning contexts. However, his experiences with his tutor, in which all his lessons were conducted in Mandarin with only key words in English, presents a different practice or “different epistemology” (Marshall, 2010, p. 44) that he brought with him to PCU. It did not register with Reggie that this was a multilingual practice; instead, it was just a part of his everyday practice with his tutor. Again, it is important to note that Reggie attributed most of his success as a first-year university student to the advice of his tutor. Reggie can be seen as negotiating between the “symbolic power” of English and his multilingual background. As argued in a previous section, in doing “whatever works” students were positioning and participating in a form of game-playing that was reflective of dominant language ideologies, leading them to then disregard their multilingual competences and the multilingual practices that sometimes arguably fueled their successes. However, as Casanave (2002) would argue, students are “entangled in games” (p. 263) but they are “not defined exclusively by them” (p. 263).

In doing “whatever works” and applying different multilingual practices in their learning processes, students have taken from their prior experiences and their “old” ways of knowing and applied it to the university setting, or “the new structure” (Marshall, 2010, p. 44); this process can be regarded as students exercising their agency by utilizing their multilingual resources to their advantage. It includes the use of the English translation of “strong” words from other languages in order to then make monolingual English essays stronger (like Sarah). It can include codeswitching or utilizing different languages when necessary in the ALC or other learning contexts (like Reggie and Blake). As Marshall (2010) questions how educators can seek to better understand these kinds of “new agencies” (p. 44), he also emphasizes that positive change can be engendered within the university structure. Marshall also provides examples of how this can be done:

...courses such as the ALC can be set up in response to the needs of the changing student body; instructors can adapt their classroom practices to make room for

greater numbers of nontraditional learners; and university students themselves can change as a result of the changing sociolinguistic makeup of the university and interaction with multilingual peers. (p. 44)

A dominant discourse throughout my research was this deficient or “deficit ESL identity” (Marshall, 2010) that students seemed to project upon one another and themselves as they distance themselves from their multilingual identities and disregarded their multilingual resources. Meanwhile, the students that I observed and interviewed had very complex language backgrounds and demonstrated resourceful multilingual practices. Ivanič (1998) questions how students with such diverse backgrounds could be met with so little response by institutions of higher education. In a similar vein, Benesch (2001) argues that instead of turning students into “well-behaved students happily fulfilling demands” (p. 53), the goal should instead be to “view them as members of a community who are aware of various possibilities and who decide which ones to carry out” (p. 53).

As students revealed their language histories and practices and subsequently, their learning preferences and trajectories from over the years, I wondered how students could negotiate their “multiplicity” (Marshall, 2010, p. 51) while also being restricted to perform as an English monolingual speaker (Lee & Marshall, 2012) through dominant discourses, as emerged in two previous ALC studies. In a list that addresses proposed challenges to more traditional policies and ways of teaching, Roberge (2009) points to drawing upon “multilingual/multicultural students’ funds of knowledge” (p. 7). Lin (2013) adds to this with her call for bilingual and plurilingual pedagogies. She seeks recognition and acknowledgment of “communicative repertoires of both learners and teachers in multilingual settings... as a potential resource... to language and content learning” (Lin, 2013, p. 522). Cummins (2007) specifies as well that recognition and implementation of L1 can, not only support learning in the classroom, but also “promote identities of competence...thereby enabling [students] to engage more confidently with literacy” (p. 238). As can be seen throughout this study, multilingual students have a wealth of experiences and resources to draw upon.

With my thesis project, I aimed to add to an ongoing dialogue that examines dynamics of institutional and social discourses and the potential influences on multilingual students in higher education. Through this exploration, I have become more aware that

these inclusive dialogues should be considered in a broader way across the university. Dialogue and change can start with micro-steps and the acknowledgement of non-traditional learners with instructors adapting their classroom practices (Marshall, 2010). While the discourse surrounding English can be powerful and thus challenging, Ivanič (1998) encourages student exploration and discussion of institutional discourses. The fact that there are the beginnings of a dialogue is promising. Thus, while I cannot say that the path towards change and student agency will not be problematic, I believe that – with a chance for both students and other members of the university alike to reflect and consider other backgrounds and other ways of learning – that there is always a possibility for change. Just as student identity is constantly being re-imagined and reconstructed (Casanave, 2002, p. 264), so too are “discourse types not fixed, but are in a constant state of flux and struggle” (Ivanič, 1998, p. 340).

## **Limitations of Study**

My time with the ALC students was limited to the few months that I spent observing them during the Fall 2014 term. As stated in my Methodology Chapter, due to technical aspects and scheduling, I did not observe students interacting in any other setting except the ALC classroom. This was one of the limitations of my study. During the interviews, students discussed various aspects of their lives that involved their language backgrounds. This involved the wider university context and prior learning experiences that became the basis for my understanding of the students and how being multilingual fit into their lives. Thus, being able to observe the ALC students in other settings or their interactions in broader university contexts would have provided me with a more in-depth understanding of their lives as multilingual students at PCU.

I had observed the ACL during the Fall 2014 term and conducted interviews with students during the Winter 2015 term. In our conversations, students had shared with me their personal narratives but also their dreams, life goals and even fears for the future. When I began writing up my data, I began to wonder how the students I interviewed were doing and whether or not they had achieved some of their goals or were headed toward their intended paths. I especially wondered how their experiences in the ALC had translated to their other courses and their university experience as a whole. For some

students who have had to retake ALC, I am unsure of whether or not they have since passed the course. Thus another limitation of my study is that I was unable to conduct further follow-up with the students.

## **Future Study**

During interviews, students extended the discussion to include their personal narratives, prior learning experiences and their struggles and experiences with other coursework at PCU. These were anecdotal and incidental while discussing other interview questions. However, when students revealed these factors, I was able to better understand them as students and how their language practices came to be. I was also able to understand how they had to negotiate and navigate academic literacy throughout the university, in their other courses. For example, it was incidental how I discovered that Reggie communicated with his tutor in Mandarin; through further discussion, I discovered how much Reggie valued his tutor's lessons and advice and how much this impacted his first year at university. As stated in the previous section on limitations, it would have been helpful to see how students' experiences in the ALC could translate to other courses and their university experience as a whole. However, within the scope of this research project, I was unable to pursue this further. Thus further research could involve more exploration of students' histories as well as students' experiences in their other courses. As stated in the limitations, it would be helpful to contact the students for follow-up regarding how their perceptions of the ALC or being multilingual have changed or stayed the same and how their experiences in the ALC have extended into other parts of their university lives since the course ended.

## **Conclusion**

When I first embarked on this study, I was especially drawn to literature on academic literacy courses and the experiences of multilingual students as this seemed to address many of my research interests. Thus, I chose the ALC as a site for my research.

I have taught students in larger classroom settings and smaller groups. As well, I have tutored students one-on-one. Still, it is not often that I am given the opportunity to interview students and place such focus on their individual stories. Through my research on the ALC, I gained insight into my research questions. Through researching the ALC and multilingual students I also gained insight into my own teaching practice as a whole. For example, I was not only able to see and hear the ramifications of dominant language ideologies, but how they can affect students' identities and practices in different ways. Being a guest in the ALC classroom, observing multilingual students and their multilingual practices, and hearing their personal narratives were great privileges. It was especially a privilege to conduct this study as I explored the challenges that multilingual students might face but also explored student agency and possibilities for change.

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# Appendix A.

## Consent Form

M.A. Thesis – Multilingualism and Student Experiences in a First Year Academic Literacy Course

### STUDY TEAM

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Connie Lam James

SENIOR SUPERVISOR: Steve Marshall, Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University

### INVITATION AND STUDY PURPOSE

You are invited to take part in research by the principal investigator who is in the M.A. Teaching English as an Additional Language (TEAL) Program. The program focuses on theoretical research and practical issues within teaching and education (“TEAL Overview,” n.d.). The principal investigator is required to complete a thesis project. This particular thesis project involves investigating multilingualism, how students might bring multiple languages into a university setting and student experiences within a First Year Academic Literacy course. Having already observed the Academic Literacy Class (ALC), the principal investigator is now seeking to conduct follow-up interviews to obtain further data for thesis research.

### VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to participate, you may still choose to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences to the education, employment, or other services to which you are entitled or are otherwise receiving.

### STUDY PROCEDURES

What happens in the study?

The principal investigator will add to existing data collected by interviewing you. This will involve questions regarding your experiences as a first-year student, the languages you speak and how you might use these languages in a formal university classroom. The interview will be audio-recorded, the principal investigator will take notes and will ask you for samples of your written class work.

### POTENTIAL RISKS OF THE STUDY

Is there any way being in the study could be bad for you?

There are no foreseeable risks to you in participating in this study.

### POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

How might you benefit by taking part in the study?

There may not be any immediate benefits for you; however, we hope that others may benefit in the future from what is learned.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

How will your identity be protected?

Your confidentiality will be guaranteed. Any information that identifies you will not be released without your consent unless required by law. All personal identifying information will be changed and your name will be replaced with a pseudonym. The principal investigator is required to store notes and audio-recordings in a password-protected file on their computer, stored in a locked cabinet to which only they have access. Any data submitted to the senior supervisor by email will be in a password-protected document. Only the principal investigator and senior supervisor will have access to this data. After the thesis examination, the principal investigator will transfer notes and collected data to a password-protected memory key, stored in the same cabinet. Data, including audio-recordings, will be retained for three years after the final observation, and stored in a password-protected memory key in a locked cabinet that only the principal investigator has access to. After three years, all data will be discarded.

## **WITHDRAWAL**

What if I wish to withdraw my participation and consent?

You are free to withdraw at any time without giving any reasons. Should you decide to withdraw, your data will be destroyed.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL PERMISSION**

Permission to conduct this research has been obtained from Simon Fraser University.

## **STUDY RESULTS**

The results of this study will be discussed with the senior supervisor as well as presented during the thesis defense. It is also possible that the principal investigator will report the findings in other graduate work, a conference presentation, and/or a published academic article subject to your giving consent on this form. You will be able to contact the principal investigator after the program is finished, if you wish to learn about the results. The principal investigator can also make available the assessed thesis project. This would also be an opportunity for you to share ideas and analysis with the principal investigator should you wish.

## **FUTURE USE OF PARTICIPANT DATA**

The data collected in this research may be used as described in the Study Results section above. It is also possible that the data will be used for educational purposes, for example, in presentations and workshops for educators, as well as in the development of teaching materials. You will be asked below to give consent for this future use – with no obligation.

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT AND SIGNATURE PAGE**

Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without any negative impact on your employment, access to services, educational opportunities and standing.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

1. Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

(Participant signature or  
parent or guardian signature)

Date (yyyy/mm/dd)

2. Please sign below if you consent to the principal investigator using data collected in this study for future use (for example, a graduate thesis, conference presentation, a published academic article, for educational workshops and materials). You may withdraw this consent for future use at any time without giving a reason.

---

(Participant signature or  
parent or guardian signature)

Date (yyyy/mm/dd)

3. Please sign below if you consent to being contacted in the future for additional research related to this study.

---

(Participant signature or  
parent or guardian signature)

Date (yyyy/mm/dd)

## **Appendix B.**

### **Study Details**

**TITLE:** M.A. Thesis – Multilingualism and Student Experiences in a First Year Academic Literacy Course

#### **COLLABORATORS**

**SENIOR SUPERVISOR:** Steve Marshall, Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University  
**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Connie Lam James

#### **BACKGROUND**

The principal investigator is in the M.A. Teaching English as an Additional Language (TEAL) Program. The program focuses on theoretical research and practical issues within teaching and education (“TEAL Overview,” n.d.). As part of the M.A. program, each student is required to complete a thesis research project. Thesis research is “designed to generate and/or examine critically new knowledge in the theory and/or practice of education” (“TEAL Program Curriculum,” n.d.). This particular thesis project involves investigating multilingualism, how students might bring multiple languages into a university setting and student experiences within a First Year Academic Literacy course. The principal investigator has previously observed the Academic Literacy Class (ALC) for an EDUC 714 Ethnographic Research Methods class project. This project involved observation of language use and multilingualism within the class, taking notes and writing up the notes in an assessed assignment. As this project is related to the principal investigator’s thesis project, the principal investigator would now like to use the data collected for on-going thesis research. As well, the principal investigator is contacting ALC students, who were previously observed and gave consent to be contacted, in order to conduct follow-up interviews and obtain further data for thesis research.

#### **STUDY PURPOSE**

The purpose of this study is to first analyze collected data from previous ALC observations and then conduct follow-up interviews for comparison. As well, the principal investigator is looking for samples of written work, which might exemplify multilingualism, for further analysis and comparison.

#### **LOCATION WHERE THE RESEARCH WILL BE CONDUCTED**

The research will be conducted at one or more sites, depending on the availability and schedule of the participant(s). This may include a participant’s place of study or work, their home, or a social setting to be determined. The principal investigator will have studied, and will follow, the ethical standards guidelines and policies of Simon Fraser University’s Research Ethics Board (this Board aims to protect the rights of human research participants) during a class on research ethics during the EDUC 714 Ethnographic Research Methods course.

#### **PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT INFORMATION**

The principal investigator will select participant(s) who have participated in the previous ALC classroom observations project. These participants will be students who have

already given consent for their collected data to be used in future research and have also given consent regarding being contacted for additional research related to this study.

#### **DETAILED RESEARCH PROCEDURES**

Study participants will be contacted for interviews by email. If the individual(s) give their informed consent to participate, the principal investigator will arrange a meeting place that is convenient for the participant. Upon meeting, the principal investigator will orally review the purposes of the study as well as present a summary of the current and on-going study as stated in this document. The interview will revolve around first-year student experiences and language used in class and within writing practices. The interview will be audio-recorded. The principal investigator will also ask for samples of written work, which will be analyzed in relation to the research themes.

#### **POTENTIAL BENEFITS**

There may not be any immediate benefits for participants; however, it is hoped that others may benefit in the future from what is learned.

#### **POTENTIAL RISKS OF THE STUDY**

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study. Only research defined as minimal risk will be conducted.

#### **MAINTENANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidentiality will be guaranteed. Any information that identifies a participant will not be released without consent unless required by law. All identifying information will be changed; and the names of people will be replaced with pseudonyms.

The principal investigator will be required to store their notes and audio-recordings in a password-protected file on their computer. When the principal investigator submits any data from this study to the senior supervisor, this will be in a password-protected document. Computer equipment containing password-protected data will be stored in a locked cabinet, which only the principal investigator/senior-supervisor has access to. After the course, the principal investigator/senior supervisor will transfer data/reports/audio-recordings to a password-protected memory key, to be stored in the same locked cabinet. There will be no paper copies of the data kept by the principal investigator or the senior supervisor. Only the principal investigator and the senior-supervisor will have access to the data/reports/audio-recordings.

#### **DESIGNATION OF THE STUDY AS MINIMAL OR NON-MINIMAL RISK**

Due to the low level of potential harm, the study is designated as minimal risk.

#### **RETENTION AND DESTRUCTION OF DATA**

Data, including audio-recordings, will be retained for three years after the final observation, and stored in a password-protected memory key in a locked cabinet that only the principal investigator has access to. After three years, all data will be discarded.

#### **FUTURE USE OF DATA**

It is possible that the principal investigator will use data collected for any of the following purposes in the future: a graduate thesis or course presentation, a conference presentation, an academic publication. Participants will be asked to give their consent for such future uses in the consent form.

**DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS**

The dissemination of results will take place during the thesis defense. It is also possible that the principal investigator will report the findings in other graduate work, a conference presentation, and/or a published academic article subject to consent being given in the initial consent form.

Participants will be able to contact the principal investigator who observed their practices after the research project has finished to learn about the results. The principal investigator can also make available the assessed thesis project. This would also be an opportunity for participants to share ideas and analysis with the principal investigator should they wish.

## **Appendix C.**

### **Interview Questions**

Multilingualism and Student Experiences in a First Year Academic Literacy Course

#### Participant Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me about the languages you speak?
2. Can you tell me about how you use languages at PCU?
3. Can you tell me about how you used languages in the ALC?
4. How did using different languages help you in the ALC?
5. I am also interested in how students use different languages while writing essays in English. Do you use different languages when writing drafts or taking notes for your classes? How do you use different languages during writing?
6. Can you tell me about your experiences in your first year at PCU?
7. Can you tell me about your transition into PCU?