

**The politics of oral participation:
The experiences of Chinese multilingual
speakers in Canadian university classrooms**

by

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Abstract

Taking into account the increasingly diverse student body in increasingly interactive classrooms, it is crucial to enhance our understanding of the dynamics of mixed multicultural groups, and in this particular case, the oral participation and group experiences of Chinese multilingual speakers. Following scholarship from critical pedagogy, intersectionality, and language as symbolic capital, this thesis research project examines the beliefs, interactions and struggles of eight Chinese multilingual speakers in their group discussions in lower-division and upper-division courses in a middle-size Canadian university.

Using ethnographic methods, participant observation and interviewing in particular, the researcher followed and observed how eight Chinese multilingual speakers, with various English proficiency levels and diverse learning cultures, participated and performed in their group discussions. Video-recordings, audio-recordings, course syllabus, lecture slides, marking rubrics, students' writing samples and peer review forms were the main sources of data.

The investigation and comparison of participants' group experiences show that institutional structures, such as ideologies, stereotypical biases, curriculum and grading policies, could significantly affect participants' oral participation and positionalities in their groups. Informed by scholarship in critical pedagogy and Bourdieu's language as symbolic capital, the researcher argued that some discursive structures in educational settings could largely disadvantage multilingual speakers especially those who newly arrived in North America, and cause challenges for them to participate effectively in their group projects. It is, thus, important for university educators to be aware of the power imbalances as well as the power struggles between different social groups in doing group projects. At the end of the thesis, the researcher provides some practical suggestions for more inclusive practices for instructors.

Keywords: Oral participation; negotiation of positionalities; critical pedagogy; intersectionality; symbolic capital; group dynamics

*To my beloved family,
Zhonghua, Beiyan, Feng, Michelle and Jefferson*

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Chapter 1.

Introduction

In the past few decades, research interest in group activities has increased greatly among educators and scholars in higher education (see examples in Millis, 2010; Slavin, 1983, 1995; Sharan, 1990, 1992). Group activity is founded on the view that individuals actively construct their versions of knowledge through their experiences and interactions with the world and their peers. This “constructivist” view was promoted by American philosopher John Dewey and cognitive psychologist Jean Piaget (Sharan & Sharan, 1992). Various approaches to group activities for learning have been proposed and studied across many disciplines and Millis (2010) claimed that small group discussion is one of the most common learning activities in North American classrooms.

Increased use of small group activities and new perspectives on knowledge have helped researchers find numerous academic, cognitive and social benefits in small group interaction. Scholars argue that the use of group work can promote deep learning, critical thinking and greater academic achievement; it also helps to build social skills such as intercultural understanding, supportive attitudes and better persistence (for a detailed review, see Johnson & Johnson, 2009 and Slavin, 1995; as well as Adams & Hamm, 1990; Laal & Ghodsi, 2012; Nuhfer, 2010; Shadle, 2010; Springer, Stanne & Donovan, 1999). In addition, proponents claim group work stimulates learner interests and confidence by allowing them to have some autonomy in influencing and directing their own studies (Sharan, 1992). And for language learners particularly, group work can increase the amount of language production from students and a variety of language functions, but more importantly, it can provide learning opportunities in which students can utilize resources such as their own and each other’s background knowledge through the mediation of the target language (Davis, 1997; McCafferty, Jacobs & DaSilva Iddings, 2006; Pica & Doughty, 1986).

Scholars and educators have long suggested that how learners interact in class situations can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of learning (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003; Hadfield, 1992; Swain, Brooks and Tocalli-Beller, 2002). Almost 40 years ago, Stevick (1980) noted, “success (in a language course) depends less on materials, techniques and linguistic analyses, and more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom” (p. 4). Hadfield (1992) emphasized the importance of interactions among learners by stating, “group dynamics is a vital element in the teaching/learning process” (p.10). In other words, advocates claimed that experiences in group work and intergroup relationships could significantly affect learners’ learning process, their motivation and ultimately, their learning outcomes.

As the student body in North American universities becomes more and more diverse in this globalized era, many researchers have pointed out that the diversity and heterogeneity of multicultural groups may adversely affect group cohesion and interpersonal relationships, leading to less team satisfaction and more conflicts (Glazer, 1997; Levi, 2007; Staples & Zhao, 2006; van Knippenberg, Haslam & Platow, 2007; Williams & O’Reilly, 1998). Some have noted the unequal power issues between students who are native English speakers and students who are non-native English speakers (Ellwood & Nakane, 2009; Fiechtner & Davis, 1984; Leki, 2001). Previous studies reported that some university instructors and native English speakers find Asian learners’, in particular, oral participation in groups problematic and even considered their reticence as signs of incompetence and passive learning styles (Chan, 1999; Ha & Li, 2014; Jones, 1999; Wang, 2012). One could argue that this negative view is likely to affect Asian and Chinese learners’ learning processes, motivation and eventually their educational outcomes.

Taking into account the growing diversity in students in increasingly interactive classrooms, it is crucial to enhance our understanding of the dynamics of mixed multicultural groups, and in the case to be examined here, the participation of Asian speakers. This thesis research project investigates from a sociocultural perspective the experiences, expectations and struggles of adult multilingual speakers, in particular Chinese multilingual speakers, in academic group discussions in mainstream undergraduate courses. This project aims to contribute to better understandings of and discovering more inclusive and pedagogically sound practices for a diverse and

globalized student body. In particular, the study focuses on Chinese multilingual speakers in that China is the top source country of international students with a percentage of 33% of the whole international student body across all levels in Canada in 2014 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2014).

1.1. The motivation of this study

My research interest in Chinese learners' oral participation in multicultural academic groups stems from my own experiences as an international student and university faculty member. Stories I heard from my colleagues and students including incidents that I experienced myself all seemed to suggest that participation in groups was beyond simple personal, linguistic and cultural adaptation. The same student may have groups that foster support and respect, while experiencing others that causing resentment or even violent fights between members. Furthermore, oral participation in small groups is an integral part of the curriculum in North American educational systems but often a challenging struggle for not only international, non-native English speakers, but also domestic students. People are constantly being graded, evaluated and judged on the basis of their oral participation behaviours in classes and out of classes. Yet, there are rarely any explicit instructions or support given to these students on proper voluntary oral participation in academic settings. Thus, I have found it an interesting and critical issue to investigate the oral participation of Chinese students in Canadian university classrooms.

I was deeply perplexed by the following questions. What kind of difficulties and struggles do international Chinese students encounter in their academic groups? Do Chinese-speaking students with various English proficiency levels and cultural backgrounds have similar or different challenges? What factors contribute to their challenges? What do they do about it? These questions began my inquiry on Chinese students' experiences in their academic groups.

1.2. Research questions and clarification of terms

At the very beginning stage of this study, I had only a few primary questions. I wanted to learn more about the group experiences of Chinese-speaking students in Canadian university classrooms—their success and frustrations, challenges and strategies, and factors that contributed to their experiences. The theme was so general that it involved multiple factors and elements from several disciplines such as sociology, psychology, linguistic and language education. It took a lot painful self-questioning and reflection through course work, extensive reading and writing, and field work for me to realize that it is the historical, social and cultural layer of oral participation, the discursive construction of one's identity, as well as the power dynamics in a particular group setting, that are of particular interest to me. For a more detailed discussion on the socially co-constructed nature of oral participation, please refer to Section 1.4 Literature review in this chapter and Chapter 2, Theoretical framework.

The thesis examines the oral participation of Chinese multilingual learners, including international, immigrant and Canadian-born Chinese-speaking students in academic group discussions. In particular, I wanted to investigate what factors affect their oral participation in group discussions, and how they interpret, construct and negotiate their positionalities to overcome difficulties to participate in their group discussions. The specific research questions to be answered in this study are:

- 1) What beliefs and expectations do Chinese multilingual learners have about group work and participation?
- 2) How do they participate in the small group discussions?
- 3) What kind of challenges and difficulties do Chinese multilingual speakers face in small group discussions?
- 4) How do they respond to and act upon those challenges and difficulties?

Before providing more detail about my study, I would like to clarify some important and frequently used terms in this thesis. First, I find it very problematic to label and categorize Chinese students in today's highly globalized and diasporic world, as it may oversimplify the diversity within them. Therefore, I decide to use the more inclusive term, "Chinese multilingual speakers" in this thesis to describe my participants—Chinese-speaking students with various English levels and cultural backgrounds, including English language learners and bilingual English-Chinese speakers who were

born and grew up in Canada. From time to time, I still use terms such as “non native English speakers (NNES)”, “English as a second language (ESL)” or “English as an additional language (EAL)” when quoting and discussing their original sources in literature. In particular, the term “Chinese learners” is kept during the literature review, referring to Chinese students whose first language and primary culture is Chinese. Second, throughout the literature review and in some discussion parts, I use the term “west” when discussing cross-cultural differences in learners’ learning styles. The term “west” specifically refers to the geographic areas including North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. Last, the term, “positionality” is often used when discussing participants’ identity, power and status within their working groups. I follow Alcoff (1988)’s concept of “positionality”, which emphasizing the impact of external context on one’s identity, to indicate participants’ relational in-group positions that are marked by one’s race, class, gender and other aspects of identity.

1.3. Background and purpose

The current student body at Canadian universities has become increasingly ethnically and linguistically diverse. It is reported that international student enrollment grew 94% in the past decade from 134,000 in 2001 to over 265, 000 in 2012 (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2014). Meanwhile, the number of visible minority students in Canadian universities has risen sharply in recent years, approaching or even exceeding 50 per cent of the total student body in several institutions, including the University of Toronto, York University and the University of British Columbia (Kobayashi, 2009). The increasing diversity of the student body brings new challenges and expectations to the teaching beliefs and practices of university instructors. Ellwood and Nakane (2009), Ferris (1998) and Fushino (2010) found that ESL learners had significantly different beliefs and views from their university instructors about academic culture, academic discourses and skills. Such differences contribute to the wide concerns among university instructors as how to best serve a mixed student body especially with a large number of multilingual speakers in class. As well, teaching practices at the university level have become more interactive in the past two decades, which has placed new expectations on students’ oral communication skills (Duff, 2010; Ferris & Tagg, 1996; Machemer & Crawford, 2007).

Many researchers have become interested in group dynamics in heterogeneous multicultural groups as the student body becomes more diverse (for a collection of studies, see Phillips, 2008). Though some research claimed multiple benefits of increased group diversity on creativity, production and decision making (Cox, 1993; Page, 2007; Phillips & Loyd, 2006), many researchers have pointed out that the diversity of groups tends to have negative effects on individual and group cohesion, and they noted less team satisfaction, more anxieties and conflicts in such groups (Glazer, 1997; Levi, 2007; Staples & Zhao, 2006; van Knippenberg, Haslam & Platow, 2007; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Some researchers have investigated interactions and relationships between EAL speakers and their native English-speaking peers and instructors (Ellwood & Nakane, 2009; Fiechtner & Davis, 1992; Fushino, 2006, 2008, 2010; Leki, 2001). These studies in general show that, rather than linguistic or cognitive competence, social contextual factors play a critical role in affecting EAL speakers' participation and interaction with their peers in academic group discussions. These social factors include cultural-specific practices and beliefs, personal relationships, positionality and power inequalities. The findings of this study on Chinese learners' oral participation can add to our understanding in the following ways: 1) to better understand the beliefs, behaviours and desires of Chinese multilingual speakers regarding academic group work; 2) to deepen our understanding of group dynamics in heterogeneous multicultural groups, so as to develop group cohesion and raise productivity; and 3) to encourage more inclusive practice in university classrooms to provide support and guidance for multilingual speakers in their oral participation. The next section details some major findings on Chinese learners' oral participation in western English-speaking university classrooms from previous scholars and educators.

1.4. Review of the literature

The oral participation of Chinese learners (ESL students) is often portrayed as problematic in educational literature. Educators and scholars have often described Chinese learners as markedly silent in western English-speaking classrooms (Chan, 1999; Ha & Li, 2014; Jones, 1999). Their reticence has often been regarded by their western peers and instructors as signs of being passive, rote and/or superficial learners (Biggs, 1996; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Pratt & Wong, 1999; Speece, 2002). The extensive literature on "the Chinese learner" and their oral participation has three major

orientations: a cultural view, a constructivist view and a critical view. These orientations overlap, of course, and I do not intend to dichotomize this work into discrete separated areas, but I do so for the purpose of clear organization of my review. More often than not, the discussions, findings and implications are interrelated and reciprocal.

1.4.1. A cultural view of participation

A cultural view of participation addresses the issue from the perspective of intercultural differences in learning behaviours. This view hypothesizes that the home culture has a predominant influence on Chinese students' learning styles and that cross-cultural differences in learning have caused barriers and misunderstandings for Chinese students to participate effectively in student-centered interactive classrooms. Scholars aligning with this orientation believe that Chinese students from a Confucian, collectivist culture background tend to favour teacher-centered learning methods which are fundamentally different from western educational norms which encourage students' autonomy and critique of other people's opinions (Chan, 1999; Durkin, 2008; Speece, 2002; Tweed & Lehman, 2002).

From a culture insider's view, Chan (1999) challenged the myth about Chinese learners as passive and superficial learners by providing a historical, social, economic description of the Chinese education system. She shed light on ways the Confucian culture, traditional Chinese values and beliefs, as well as the current political context have shaped certain learning styles that Chinese learners are most familiar with, such as teacher-centered teaching and learning methods with clear structures and detailed instructions.

Some educators from their personal experiences with Chinese learners identified fundamental differences between traditional Chinese culture and western culture as well as between their social structures, which, it is believed, all contribute to differences in learning styles and preferences (Chan, 1999; Speece, 2002; Tweed & Lehman, 2002, Durkin, 2008). Tweed and Lehman (2002) applied a Confucian-Socratic framework to juxtapose and analyze the substantial differences between the culturally Chinese and the culturally western learning styles in Canadian tertiary institutions. Their findings show that the Confucian culture, which produces huge impacts in a variety of contexts such as China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam and more, emphasizes thoughtful acquisition and

appreciative thinking. They felt that it is fundamentally different from the traditional western inquiry-based (Socratic) teaching norms that encourage students' autonomy, critique and challenge of other people's opinions. They proposed that a flexible teaching approach incorporating merits from both learning styles would be most suitable for Chinese learners. De Vita (2000) and Speece (2002) provided insights from their personal firsthand experiences of teaching international Chinese students in UK and in Singapore. Speece made a connection between the reticence of his Chinese speaking students with their Confucian, collectivist and high power distance social structures. De Vita (2000) identified some common barriers in multicultural classrooms and highlighted the importance of cultural knowledge in developing effective intercultural communication and inclusive instruction.

Other than scholarly discussions, empirical studies have also been conducted to reveal substantial cross-cultural differences between the two learning systems in a number of areas including learning outcomes (Clark, Baker & Li, 2007), roles of teachers (Chan, 1999; Zhou & Todman, 2008), assessment (Li & Campbell, 2008; Nield, 2004), just to name a few. Surveying and interviewing staff, lecturers and Chinese students in three New Zealand tertiary institutions, Clark, Baker and Li (2007) discovered a big cultural gap in the conceptualization of group projects between the novice Chinese learners and their New Zealand lecturers. Whereas Chinese learners valued lecturers' content delivery to gain high marks, their English-speaking teachers actually intended that group work would develop their students' interpersonal team skills.

A number of scholars have pointed out that the particular learning preferences of Chinese students are likely to make group work and class discussions particularly challenging (Chan, 1999; De Vita, 2000; Speece, 2002; Tweed & Lehman, 2002; Foster & Stapleton, 2012). The Confucian cultural values as well as the high power distance societal structure (Speece, 2002) cultivate Chinese learners to respect authority, avoid uncertainty, and especially be careful "to preserve harmony, to conform, to avoid loss of face and shame (for self and others)" (Chan, 1999, p. 298). On the other hand, group work and open discussions in western classrooms "encourage brainstorming of ideas with a readiness to reject any that do not stand up to rigorous critical analysis (Durkin, 2008, p. 17). Such differences in beliefs and values can make Chinese students feel uncomfortable with student centered, participatory teaching approaches, to make group

projects particularly demanding for them (Chan, 1999; Tweed & Lehman, 2002; Foster & Stapleton, 2012). Some researchers, thus, caution university instructors to be aware of the home culture influence on Chinese students and the cultural appropriateness of these “western constructed” pedagogies on students from essentially different cultural contexts (Nguyen, Terlouw & Pilot, 2006; Foster & Stapleton, 2012).

In general, scholarship in the cultural orientation provides helpful insights in understanding how the home cultural roots may cause difficulties for Chinese learners’ to participate effectively in western classrooms. However, a cultural view alone oversimplifies the issue to a dualism, which essentializes the Chinese learner group and the western learner group as homogeneous, fixed and unchangeable social categories. It overlooks Chinese learners’ individuality—the different background, experiences, personality, motivation and agency they bring to learning. Furthermore, such a static view of culture obscures the dynamic, fluid nature of culture itself and undermines the impact of sociocultural context and learning context on the learner and learning process. Next, I present the insights from the constructivist view on Chinese learners’ participation in western classrooms.

1.4.2. A constructivist view of participation

Scholars from a constructivist view of participation have seen learner agency and the learning context as more important in determining participation than the conditioning of learners’ home cultures. From this perspective, regarding Chinese learners as always rote and passive learners is seen as a stereotypical misperception because empirical evidence has shown that Chinese learners’ beliefs do shift over time under the influence of new political, economical and social changes (Ha & Li, 2014); they learn and behave differently under different circumstances (Gao, 2006; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006); Chinese learners are actually capable, active learners who appreciate the benefits of group work, but who also may seek meaning and understanding through memorization (Kember, 1996; Marton, Dall’Alba & Kun, 1996; Nield, 2004; Wang, 2012); and they adapt to a certain extent to the western learning culture according to individualised needs, motivations, agency and goals (Durkin, 2008; Gao, 2006; Gieve & Clark, 2005).

The current social, economic, and political contexts under globalization and internationalization of education have an evident impact on Chinese learners’ beliefs and

values as well as teaching practice in China. Ha and Li (2014) interviewed four Chinese international graduate students in Australia (the so-called “Me Generation” who were born post-1980) on their experiences in class discussions. They found that these students constantly experienced value clashes along with educational paradoxes and developed their own educational values and beliefs, which largely challenged their traditional Confucian values. Such transformation, in Ha and Li’s opinion, was a result of the influence of an influx of western pedagogies, the Open Door policy, globalization and internationalization of education. Therefore, they questioned whether “traditional Confucian values and beliefs still have currency in contemporary China given China’s internationalisation of education policies and its increasing contacts with Western cultures” (Ha & Li, 2014, p. 236).

Gu and Schweisforth’s studies (2006) provided evidence for diversity and heterogeneity within a Chinese Confucian-influenced cultural group. Interviewing and surveying undergraduate and postgraduate Chinese students in 13 English universities in United Kingdom on their changes in learning perspectives, they found that Chinese learners learned and behaved differently in different situations, according to their goals, personal needs, determination, and situational demands. These qualities and factors, they noted, “are individualised and vary greatly even within a monocultural group” (Gu, Schwisforth, 2006, p. 78).

Some researchers have examined the complex interplay between social agents and the learning context. Gieve and Clark (2005) described the transformative potential of a learning context, which has the power to promote attitudes and behaviours of autonomous learning among learners. They problematized the label of *the Chinese learner* so as to promote a contingent notion of culture within particular social contexts. Durkin (2008) looked into the adaptation process of Chinese learners. She interviewed 59 Chinese master students in Britain and found they were gradually going through a five-stage transformation process from their own culture to the new learning environment. She argued that such adaptation “is not a single process with ‘a shared end-point’—complete acculturation—but rather a hybridization and creation of a ‘third space’ where ‘the new approaches to learning are inevitably compared and blended with their existing practices’ (Burnapp, 2006, p. 90-91)” (Durkin, 2008, p. 24). Her findings showed that Chinese learners often adapted to a certain extent to western-style learning,

by a “middle way”, based on many personal and sociocultural factors such as the level of their English competence, their reflexivity, their experience and support from their teachers and peers, and their future plans after graduation.

According to constructivist scholars, Chinese learners have the capability, motivation, agency and opportunities to adapt to an active learning culture. However, I would like to argue that the current literature from culturalist and constructivist orientations inadequately addresses why Chinese learners in reality still largely remain reticent in oral activities in western classrooms. Insights from critical theorists disclose that the oral participation of multilingual students in western university classrooms is never a simple, neutral linguistic or cultural phenomenon, but a dynamic, situated sociocultural process, which inevitably involves negotiations of identity as well as positionalities, and power play (Casanave, 1995; Leki, 2001; Morita, 2004, 2009). I explain this orientation in more detail below.

1.4.3. The critical sociocultural orientation

A limited number of studies on the oral participation of Chinese and other Asian learners in western classrooms have taken a critical lens to investigate the complex interplay between Chinese learners and their sociocultural context (for example, Leki, 2001; Remedios, Clarke & Hawthorne, 2008). A few studies in this critical orientation focus on the academic discourse socialization (ADS) process of international students. ADS is a line of enquiry which investigates the enculturation process of novice students learning to become competent members in an established academic culture (Duff, 2010, p. 171). ADS scholars often focus on academic writing, and more scholars have recently started to pay attention to the various challenges and struggles that novice learners face in socialization into academic oral discourses (for a review, see Duff, 2008, 2010; Duff & Anderson, 2015; Morita, 2004). Researchers in ADS use primarily qualitative research methods to situate the participants in their social contexts, and have demonstrated that ADS is not a simple linguistic or cognitive process of the novice learners acquiring a set of academic skills. Instead, ADS often involves multidirectional, complex negotiations between the experienced members and the novice learners concerning identities, ideologies or power relations (Casanave, 1995; Leki, 2001, 2007; Morita, 2000, 2004, 2009; Prior, 1998; Starfield, 2002). As Duff (2010) explained, “affecting students’

experiences of socialization is the way newcomers and their histories and aspirations are viewed and by how they are positioned—by themselves, by others, and by their institutions—as capable (or incapable), as worthy (or not), as insiders (or outsiders), and so on” (p. 176).

Below I present the findings of empirical works in the critical sociocultural orientation. Due to the limited number of studies on Chinese learners, I include here a selection of Asian learners’ (Japanese and Korean ESL students) oral participation in western universities. These studies show that Chinese, Japanese and Korean students constantly need to negotiate with their peers of their¹ competences and positionalities in order to obtain legitimate memberships in their groups (Ellwood & Nakane, 2009; Leki, 2001; Morita, 2004, 2009; Remedios, Clarke & Hawthorne, 2008). Often, the dominant western educational discourses and power differentials among students may have undermined bilingual learners’ agency, efforts and opportunity to actively participate in group discussions and to make meaningful contributions (Leki, 2001; Remedios, Clarke & Hawthorne, 2008).

In a longitudinal ethnographic study, Ilona Leki (2001) collected data through weekly or biweekly interviews, class observations, collection of course materials and so on, over the course of five years, of six bilingual, non-native English speakers’ various experiences of group work in their university courses. Leki’s participants in general reported negative experiences in group work in that they were more often than not positioned as having marginal, inferior status by their domestic peers. She described in details two of her Chinese participants’ experiences. In both cases, the Chinese learners were given minute, mechanical jobs to do as they were assumed incompetent, “constructed as something of a burden or a problem to be fixed” (Leki, 2001, p. 55) by their domestic group members. The unequal power relations in the classroom, reinforced by Chinese speakers’ insufficient linguistic competence in English, prevented the bilingual learners from making potential contributions to their groups and from gaining advantages through the collaboration with their group members. Leki highlighted the power issues in the group work, saying,

¹ The six participants were from China, Finland, Poland and Japan.

Certainly group work evokes issues of power—the power to define others and to force them to behave in ways consonant with that construction. The voices of the least powerful, the NNES students, tended to be muted or ignored in the unsatisfactory group work experiences. Their own presumption of equality with the domestic students collided with the domestic students' construction of the NNES students as variously handicapped. (p. 61)

Pointing out that careful planning and student friendships do not necessarily grant cohesive group dynamics, Leki (2001) emphasized the importance for instructors to realize the power struggles of the bilingual students and to intervene to legitimize the full participation of all speakers in their groups. Leki's study (2001) illustrated academic discussions as a discursive site in which bilingual students, in particular the Chinese learners, struggled to hold their positions as legitimate players in the group but eventually were silenced and denied opportunities to actively participate in the group work even they were motivated to do so.

Other than learners' English language proficiency, Morita (2009) argued that gender can be a factor impacting students' oral participation in the academic community. She examined the class participation and the small group interactions of a male Japanese international student at a Canadian university. The male participant, Kota, felt significant tensions, isolation and challenges when interacting with his peers and instructors. Morita observed that Kota's interaction with his professor evoked certain gendered expectations—he contributed the difference between his research approach and his female professor's as a gender difference. On the other side, the female professor felt that the male international students did not respect the teaching/learning situation and her as a female instructor. Morita's in-depth and longitudinal analysis showed that Kota's differences in language, academic culture and gender stereotypes all played a crucial role in his academic interaction. Morita further suggested that the institutions should provide means and resources for instructors to exert their influence and status as the experts in "assisting international students to gain legitimacy and ensuring their active and meaningful participation in their courses and other academic activities" (Morita, 2009, p.457).

Another recurring theme in the findings of Asian learners' oral participation is the value of speech and silence. Many critical scholars point out a hidden curriculum in western educational institutions which privileges speech, disparages silence and serves to "other" the Asian students and reinforce the negative image of "the quiet Eastern

learner” (Duff, 2002; Ellwood & Nakane, 2009; Pon, Goldstein & Schechter, 2003; Ha & Li, 2014; Remedios, Clarke & Hawthorne, 2008). Remedios, Clarke and Hawthorne (2008) challenged the dominant educational discourse of privileging speech in Australian university classrooms, which equates verbal participation to active learning. Their case studies illustrated that silence is not only limited to Asian students but is also characteristic of some local Australian students as well. The four participants all had very limited oral participation in class and chose to be silent for different sociocultural reasons including learning preferences, motivation, lack of preparation, cultural literacy, language skill, face, etc. The study demonstrated that motivated and knowledgeable bilingual students could be discouraged from oral participation in that they may come to feel isolated and inferior as a result of the reactions of their peers in group discussions. One Korean participant consciously decided not to participate in the oral activities turning “from a comparatively high level of verbal participation (mini-monologues) to that of silent participation” in the course even though he had more knowledge to offer during discussions (p. 206). Remedios et al. thus problematized the dominant discourse of negatively interpreting the silence of bilingual speakers as incompetence or lack of learning, and argued it is a conscious behavioural choice or even a form of resistance by bilingual learners.

Ellwood and Nakane (2009) also problematized the dominant discourse of negatively interpreting silence. They observed and interviewed a total of 35 non-native English speakers who were mostly Japanese and their English-speaking lecturers in an English class and a mainstream class in an Australian university. Using a combination of discourse analysis, conversation analysis and microethnography, they confirmed that a discourse of privileging speech was evident in both classrooms. The silence of the Japanese participants was often interpreted as the sign of lack of confidence, or incompetence or unwillingness to participate. Ellwood and Nakane (2009) pointed out that “classroom discursive practices, both in their home country and in Australian classrooms, sometimes work to discourage them from speaking, despite their desires to transform themselves into articulate, expressive, and international personalities” (p. 225). Urging university instructors recognize the power imbalance and the co-construction process of talk, silence and identity (Kramsch, 2002; Zhou et al., 2005), Ellwood and Nakane suggested a reconsideration of the hidden curriculum of speech

and silence in English-speaking classrooms, which have served to keep bilingual learners at margin.

Also looking at the role of silence, Ha and Li (2014) demonstrated that their participants may use silence as a means of resistance. They interviewed four international students, “Me generation” Chinese learners in an Australian university on their experiences and perceptions about silence in class discussions. Their findings showed that these students sometimes used silence as a choice to not express opinions (such as not to “badmouth” their home country), a strategy to be academically competitive, and a means to protest against teacher-imposed rules (Ha & Li, 2014, p.236). They argued that the silence of Chinese students in western classrooms is a legitimate form of “choice, right and resistance” which should not be viewed as problematic and not be judged according to western educational values which favour oral participation and link talk to active thinking and learning (Ha & Li, 2014, p. 244).

In this section, I have offered a review of current theoretical and empirical discussions on Chinese as well as Asian multilingual speakers’ oral participation in western university classrooms. The review shows that Chinese multilingual learners are often considered incompetent and passive learners by their English-speaking instructors and peers due to a lack of voluntary oral participation in western English-speaking classrooms. Studies in culturalist and constructivist orientation suggest that preferences and learning behaviours of Chinese multilingual learners originate in their Confucian roots and traditional cultural values, which are also constantly evolving and reconstructed through discourses over time under specific learning contexts. Scholarship in critical socioculturalism show academic group discussions as a discursive site full of power imbalances, and oral participation as a co-constructed process between the Chinese learners and their peers, instructors and learning context. The insights from this extensive review lead me to adopt a critical sociocultural lens in examining Chinese multilingual speakers’ group discussion experiences. It is the historical, social and cultural layer of oral participation, and the negotiation of power dynamics that I find most intriguing to examine. Having reviewed the previous studies, I identified three gaps in the existing literature of Chinese learners’ oral participation. First, the power imbalances among students that are not only subject to language, but also to race, gender, class, and other aspects of identity are under-researched. Second, the impact of institutional

structures such as social biases, ideologies and educational discourses on learners' positionalities and their oral participation has not been a central focus in previous studies. Last, it is important to take into account learners' agency in negotiating their positionalities in their group activities. Yet, learners' use of strategies in the process of negotiation of power and participation has not been reported before in the literature of Chinese multilingual speakers' oral participation. This thesis study intended to make some contributions in these three areas.

1.5. Structure of this thesis

In this Introduction, I have provided the broad context of my thesis project on Chinese learners' group work experience through a description of the background, purpose and my personal aspirations for pursuing this inquiry. This thesis topic is particularly pertinent, in my opinion, in a context of globalized, internationalized education and a rise of student-centered approaches in higher education in North America in the past few decades. In the second half of this chapter, I outlined the major findings of theoretical discussions and empirical studies of Chinese learners' participation in academic discussions.

In Chapter 2, I provide a more in depth discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of this study. Three strands of thoughts on educational practice and on identity have informed me and guided me enormously through the design, conduct, and analysis of the study of Chinese learners' oral participation in multicultural groups. I elaborate in the chapter how critical pedagogy theories and intersectionality help to reveal the power struggles that Chinese learners undertake in their academic discussions. Furthermore, Bourdieu's conception of cultural capital (1984, 1986) and language as symbolic power (1991) enables me to link Chinese learners' positionalities and potential marginalization with institutional structures. Lastly, I discuss in detail a discursive and constructive notion of identity as well as performativity, which provide means for me to interpret Chinese learners' behaviours as ways to reconstruct new identity positions and to negotiate their positionality in their local contexts.

Chapter 3 gives the rationale and an overall picture of the design of this thesis study. A qualitative design, ethnographic methods in particular, was the best fit for the

purpose of this study. I begin with an introduction of my methodological and epistemological considerations for the study design, followed by a description of the data collection and analysis process. I include a brief discussion on the pros and cons of using computer software Nvivo10 for coding and analysing data in this study. I then reflect my own biases and voice in this study as well as how my positionality may affect the data collection and the interpretation of the results. At the end of the chapter, I describe in detail the two phases of the fieldwork including the recruitment procedures, the participants, the setup of the group work and the contexts.

Chapter 4 and 5 illustrates in detail the major findings of this thesis project. Chapter 4 answers the first two research questions about participants' beliefs and behaviours in university group work. I describe eight Chinese multilingual speakers' views about group work and oral participation, which were related largely to their past experiences in North American post-secondary institutions. The second section of the chapter shows in detail the various ways of participating of each participant in their respective groups and courses. In addition, I include information on the courses, the setup of group work in both phases, as well as the interaction among students as well as happenings in the group discussion.

Chapter 5 focuses on the last two research questions, reporting the significant impact of participants' multiple social differences on their confidence and opportunities to participate in their groups. Using a great deal of participants' personal stories, accounts and reflections, I demonstrate how numerous social factors, such as race, gender, class, language, length of stay in Canada, work ethics, and physical appearance, in addition to classroom contextual factors, intersect and function in complex ways to position participants in groups. The second half of the chapter portrays participants' efforts in making more oral contributions and in negotiating better positionalities. Four main strategies are introduced with examples, including assuming a leader's role, code-switching, strategic use of reticence and volunteering.

In the last chapter, Chapter 6, I give a more in-depth discussion of three themes pertaining to the findings reported in previous chapters before making some recommendation for pedagogy and research. First, social differences functioned in intersecting, fluid and complex ways affecting participants' in-group positionalities. In addition, the boundaries of social characteristics in a diasporic era became increasingly

ambiguous and contingent. Second, institutional practices (i.e., classroom discourses) and ideologies in the larger society contributed to the construction of symbolic capital in the group space as well as the reproduction of stereotypical biases, both of which significantly affected participants' motivation, confidence and opportunities to participate orally. Last, Chinese multilingual speakers showed their agency in utilizing multilingual resources through strategies such as code-switching to reconstruct new identity positions so as to strive for a desired positionality. The success of their negotiation was still largely subject to the constraints of social structures and power dynamics in that particular context. Based on these themes, I made recommendations of four areas: the task design of group activity, course content and assessment, instruction, and general education on power dynamics in academic groups. I then conclude the chapter with a summary of the key ideas in the thesis as well as my own transformation over the process.

Chapter 2.

Theoretical Framework

After reviewing previous studies on Chinese learners' oral participation, it became clearer to me that a sociocultural lens fit best with my intent to investigate the historically, socially constructed nature of Chinese multilingual speakers' participation in academic groups. The sociocultural theories that specifically guided me through the study design are in three areas: 1) critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970,1993; Giroux, 1983; McLaren, 1989) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), 2) language as symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984, 1991), as well as 3) identity and performativity (Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte Jr., Cain, 1998; Norton, 1995, 2013; Pennycook, 2007). Scholarship in critical pedagogy and intersectionality provides me with means to question seemingly neutral but value-laden educational practices and to connect daily classroom behaviours with their larger hierarchical social contexts. This scholarship elucidates the multiple interlocking effects of social differences on teaching and learning. The second perspective that guided me was Bourdieu's theorization of cultural and symbolic capital, which gives language—one of the most salient social traits—prominence in constructing and negotiating learners' identity and positioning in academic discussions. Last but not least, a discursive notion of identity with the idea of performativity as an identity act, shed light on how students may take existing resources to produce favoured positions. I now provide a detailed discussion on these theoretical underpinnings of the study.

2.1. Critical pedagogy

2.1.1. Key ideas in critical pedagogy

Critical pedagogy builds on the premise that men and women live in societies that are full of contradictions and asymmetrical power relations (McLaren, 1989, 2014). Power imbalances at schools often marginalize and oppress certain vulnerable social

groups. Critical pedagogy, thus, “is fundamentally committed to the development and enactment of a culture of schooling that supports the empowerment of culturally marginalized and economically disenfranchised students” (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009, p. 9).

The design of my study is informed by three key notions in critical pedagogy. First, critical theories fundamentally challenge the notion of absolute objectivity, positivism and scientific rationality (Giroux, 1983). Many critical theorists believe that truth and knowledge are not absolute but relational, dependent upon history, cultural context and power structures in institutions (McLaren 1989, 2014; Giroux, 1983). Darder, Baltodano and Torres (2009) emphasized the historical dimension of knowledge, saying,

Critical pedagogy supports the notion that all knowledge is created within a historical context and it is this historical context which gives life and meaning to human experience...Along these lines, students and the knowledge they bring into the classroom must be understood as historical—that is, being constructed and produced within a particular historical moment and under particular historical conditions (p. 10).

McLaren (2014) asserted that “knowledge acquired in school—or anywhere, for that matter—is never neutral or objective but is ordered and structured in particular ways; its emphases and exclusions partake of a silent logic” (p. 196). Such “logic”, according to McLaren, is a consensus between certain individuals under “particular social relations (e.g., of class, race, and gender)” in particular historical times (p. 197). In other words, knowledge or truth is considered to be “socially constructed, culturally mediated and historically situated” (McLaren, 2014, p. 210).

Second, critical scholars view knowledge as deeply rooted in power relations between social groups with competing and conflicting interests (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009; Giroux, 1983; McLaren 1989, 2014). They feel it is important to examine the “social functions of knowledge”—ask how and why certain knowledge is constructed the way it is; why some forms of knowledge have more power and legitimacy than others (McLaren, 2014, p.198). Giroux (1983) pointed out that social groups in privileged positions get to determine what knowledge counts as true, important and legitimate via schooling, and thus protect their own interests and privileges. Through regulating the kind of “legitimate knowledge” in curriculum, schools have control over shaping students in particular ways and can reproduce existing dominant social orders in the larger

society (Giroux, 1983). Furthermore, schools and educators get to set specific norms, expectations, rules and common sense which socialize students' values and behaviours to support the interest of the groups in power (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009). Therefore, from a critical perspective, educational institutes often work against the interests of vulnerable social groups (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009; Foucault, 1980; Giroux, 1983; McLaren, 1989).

Thus, the third proposition of critical pedagogy that is of particular importance to this thesis is that educational institutions such as schools serve as a terrain of struggles for vulnerable social groups and simultaneously a means for empowering them for social justice (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983; McLaren, 1989). Paulo Freire, in his famous work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), argued that schools should abandon the banking style of education that regards students as empty depositories and should replace it with problem-posing education to encourage dialogue, reflection, creativity and social consciousness. It is in problem-posing education, Freire suggested (1970), human beings develop their power to see the world as a reality in process instead of a static entity, and to make social transformation (p. 58). Similarly, McLaren (1989) pointed out that critical pedagogy adopts a distinction on the forms of knowledge which was proposed by social theorist Habermas (1973). Habermas argued that knowledge can be of three types: technical knowledge that can be measured and quantified; practical knowledge which helps people to analyze social situations; and emancipatory knowledge which helps people to make social changes and empower themselves (which is of primary interest for critical educators).

2.1.2. Power issues and racialization in educational settings

Many educators who have examined the daily practice and structures in educational institutions have pointed out that schools and institutions are a contested site for politically and economically vulnerable social groups (Henry & Tator, 2009; Lankshear, 1997; Norton & Toohey, 2002; Omi & Winant, 1993; Weedon, 1999). Norton and Toohey (2002) noted that "the relationships and activities of classrooms contribute to patriarchal, hierarchical and dominating practices in wider societies" (p.1). Lankshear (1997) asserted that dominant groups use established resources like institutional structures, curriculum, standard exams, standard school language or literacy practice to

maintain their dominance, power and privilege in the current society whereas subordinate groups are placed at marginal and disadvantaged positions.

One of the ways that educational practices privilege some groups while marginalizing others is by making social differences salient (bell hooks, 1994; Cameron, 2000; Cassidy & Jackson, 2005; Dei, 2006; Heller, 2007; Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001; Singh & Dooley, 2001). Dei (2006) argued that *racialized* educational practices “have been able to call upon culture, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, ability, religion and, of course, race and skin colors as ways of distinguishing groups for differential and unequal treatment” (p. 27). Singh and Dooley (2001) reported the case of a female Aboriginal Masters student in an English literacy course in an Australian university. Her use of a native literacy practice (oral story telling) and content for a course presentation was rejected and mocked by the instructor and her peers because her practice was considered inferior and illegitimate from the standard, normative, western ideology and practice. Singh and Dooley argued that regulated everyday classroom practice contained racialized discourses, which constructed, expressed and justified unequal power relations between majority and minority groups. Next, I discuss some social characteristics and their impact in the teaching and learning processes.

2.1.3. Social categories in educational settings

Social categories inevitably play an important role in differentiating people and giving unequal treatment in educational settings. The multiple forms of discrimination that operates in the academy are a series of socially constructed factors such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, language, religion, sexual orientation, and different abilities (Collins, 1991, cited in Henry & Tator, 2009). Feminist scholar, bell hooks (1994) cautioned university instructors that “race, sex and class privilege empower some students more than others, granting ‘authority’ to some voices more than others” (p. 185). In this section, I delineate the meaning and significance of some common social categories applied in this study such as race, gender, class, language and nationality.

Race and Whiteness

In this thesis, race is understood as a socially constructed discursive category that “functions to define both Self and Other” (Darder & Torres, 2009, p. 152). According

to Darder and Torres, critical theorists view the concept of race as an ideology—a social reality rather than a biological, scientific fact. The ideology of race is often used in racialized discourses by the dominant groups for justifying existing social hierarchies based on phenotypes and for justifying dominant group’s superiority over other social groups (Darder & Torres, 2009; Kubota & Lin, 2009). Omi and Winant (1993) argued that “race is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies” (p. 55). Therefore, race in critical pedagogy is not viewed as a static, homogeneous, innate attribute but as a historical, social and cultural construction that is always in flux and situated in social and cultural processes (Solomos, 2003).

Racism, the social practice of excluding some groups as inferior and “Other”, while maintaining unequal social hierarchies based on perceived biological characteristics, is usually masked under seemingly scientific, neutral and objective dominant ideologies. Such dominant ideology views certain bodies and subjects in specific spaces as undeserving of full personhood (Razak, 2002). By designating those bodies and subjects as racial “Others”, discriminators can confirm their own identities “as white, as men entitled to the land and the full benefits of citizenship” (Razak, 2002, pp.126). *Orientalism* is an institutionalized form of racialized discourse. Said (1979) saw Orientalism as a discourse created in the West to disseminate the ideology that Orientals are biologically and intellectually inferior so as to justify colonization and domination over Orientals. Orientalism reveals white westerners’ sense of entitlement and legitimacy.

This sense of white superiority and legitimacy still exists in practices, curriculum and social relations in today’s educational settings. Weedon (1999) pointed out that in mainstream discourses, whiteness usually functions as a neutral category and is equivalent to a norm (p.154). Furthermore, the discourse of racism is usually beyond an individual level and often implied in institutionalized educational structures or epistemologies (Kubota & Lin, 2009, p. 6). Through these institutionalised structures, the white dominant group exercise their power to describe themselves as the norm while marginalizing, ruling and designating all things non-white, non-European as the “Other” (Dei, Karumanchery & Karumanchery-Luik, 2004). For example, Harper (2009) reviewed literature on black male undergraduate students in the USA and concluded that

dominant perceptions are full of racist stereotyping, which portray black male students as violent, troubled, disengaged, underperforming and intellectually inferior. As a result, instructors and peers usually have low expectations for them.

Gender

Mainstream discourses regard the human body as the fundamental sign of gender and attribute specific meaning and values to it. Weedon (1999) noted that this biologically- and physically-based notion of gender is used to support dominant formations of social order –male and white supremacy in society. Liberal feminist studies document sex-role stereotyping in curricular materials and school practices, and the roles of schooling in reinforcing capital and patriarchal relations (Weiler, 2009). In this regard, school texts, practices, social relations and public educational policies, which implicitly confirm women’s inferior positions to men and their unequally rewarded role in workforce, all enhance and reproduce gender division and oppression.

However, poststructuralists challenge a fixed notion of body and the essential linkage between body and gender difference, by proposing that their meanings are constructed discursively, culturally, plurally and always changing (Weedon, 1999, pp.102). Butler (1993, 1997) theorized gender identity as a form of performativity. She suggested that gendered positions are constructed through repeated social and cultural performances rather than predetermined. Viewing subjectivity as discursively and culturally produced, Butler’s conception of gender and performativity opens up possibilities for women to transform ideologies, practices and power relations around them.

Class

Class, according to McLaren (2014), refers to the economic, social and political relationships in a particular social order (p. 198). bell hooks, from her own university experience, noted that “[Class] shaped values, attitudes, social relations, and the biases that informed the way knowledge would be given and received” (bell hooks, 1994, p.178). In other words, class affects people’s world views, epistemological positions and their understanding of cultural norms. For some time, studies have identified evidence of a positive correlation between class origin and educational outcomes (Lawton, 1968;

Macaulay, 1977; Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009, pp.103; for a review, see also Stuber, 2011).

Critical pedagogy theorists believe that it is the white, middle class culture that has become hegemonic and prevailing in educational institutes (bell hooks, 1994; Henry & Tator, 2009; Stuber, 2011). bell hooks (1994) pointed out that students from unprivileged classes are forced to assimilate to the bourgeois values imbedded in everyday pedagogical practice through conforming their behaviour to the classroom order. If students do not accept those values without question, they “tend to be silenced or deemed troublemakers” (p. 179). She lamented that, “[I]t was the constant evocation of materially privileged class experience (usually that of the middle class) as a universal norm that not only set those of us from working-class backgrounds apart but effectively exclude those who were not privileged from discussions, from social activities” (p. 181). Here, class difference becomes a means to maintain dominant class hierarchy and to marginalize those from the poor or working class groups. Stuber’s (2011) study supported this argument by revealing how first-generation, working class students at college are underrepresented and deprived of the necessary social, cultural, financial capital to successfully integrate into a campus community.

Language

Sociocultural theorists view language in essentially social terms, seeing, as Heller (2007) put it, “language [a]s one form of social practice” (p. 2). For many sociocultural theorists, language is the primary mediation tool for human mental activities but also an important way in which knowledge and concepts are constructed and displayed (Lantolf, 1994; Vygotsky, 1987). Since knowledge and concepts are socially mediated and constructed, language, by its nature, is also socially constructed. According to Heller (2007), language is “a set of resources which circulate in unequal ways in social networks and discursive spaces, and whose meaning and value are socially constructed within the constraints of social organizational processes under specific historical conditions” (p. 2). Language, thus, is considered as a value-laden practice that is subject to and represents the norms imbedded in the social relations in the society.

Hence, different languages and language varieties represent different values and ideologies. Edwards (2010) pointed out that although all language varieties are fully developed and rule-governed linguistic systems, they hold different symbolic values. Some accents or varieties are viewed as more prestigious than others. Subsequently, linguistic difference in educational settings becomes a symbolic resource in power negotiations. I will discuss language and its power as symbolic capital in section 2.2 in more detail.

Nationalism

By designating nationalism as a social category, I intend to underline the complex power interplay among students with different statuses in Canada such as citizens, new immigrants and international students. Some scholars noted the institutional discrimination on non-citizens' credentials, skill and experiences. For example, it is reported both in Europe and North America that foreign educational or vocational qualifications as well as work experiences of immigrants from less developed countries are often not fully recognized in the job markets (see a brief review by Kogan, 2007, p. 12; Akbari, 2013, p. 51; Xue, 2011, p. 5). Darder and Torres (2009) pointed out that nationalism often works with the ideology of race for nation-state to "sanction exclusionary practices" such as denying rights of citizenship (p. 154) to some. Miller (2000) reported that Asian students who were born or arrived at a very young age in Brisbane represent themselves and are represented as "Aussie mates" by their peers in an Australian high school, while newly arrived Chinese immigrant students are seen or heard as "Other". Such ideology is also reflected in common employment practices which do not recognize or accept the credentials that immigrants bring from their home countries, or require these credentials to be validated through host country licensing bodies. This phenomenon reflects a hegemonic ideology, which depicts Western countries as inherently better or more advanced than Eastern countries, an ideology deeply rooted in colonial history (Beck, 2006, p. 90-91).

Immigrants and international students who possess different cultures and values are signified by these ideologies and discourses as inferior racialized "Others". The practice of demeaning people based on nationality has been extensively discussed. Lee and Lutz (2005) argued that the traditional discourse of national cultural identity views nation as the symbol of civilization, progressivism, ethnic superiority and personhood.

“Rightful citizens are called upon to defend this legacy by excluding those who are accused of not belonging to the nation” (Lee & Lutz, 2005, p. 16), such as immigrants and international students.

Above, I delineate several social categories that have been used to differentiate people from one another. From a critical view, social differences are often called upon and utilized in educational settings to differentiate people and keep certain social groups in subordinate positions so as to reproduce the unequal power hierarchy in the larger context. In practice, various forms of differentiation and subordination always interact and intersect with one another, and individual factors cannot be analyzed alone (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Cassidy & Jackson, 2005; Davis, 2008; Naples, 2009). This leads us to the scholarship of intersectionality, which illustrates the complex and interlocking ways that various forms of differentiation impact on human beings.

2.2. Intersectionality

An intersectional framework refers to both a theory and an analytic approach to understanding of various forms of differentiation, subordination, and discrimination that interact and intersect with one another (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Cassidy & Jackson, 2005; Davis, 2008; Naples, 2009; Stuber, 2011; Taylor, Hines & Casey, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Considered one of the most important contributions to feminist scholarship (McCall, 2005), intersectionality exerts influence over a wide range of disciplines including philosophy, education, humanities, political science, geography and law, to name only a few (Davis, 2008). Brah and Phoenix (2004) stated that intersectionality “[signifies] the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axes of differentiation -- economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential--intersect in historically specific contexts” (p. 76). In this section, I begin with a brief explanation of the concept followed by a summary of its key ideas as well as its common approaches. At the end, I highlight the strength and limitations of intersectionality.

2.2.1. Key ideas of intersectionality

The term Intersectionality was first coined in 1989 by Crenshaw, a black feminist in the USA. She (1989) argued that either feminist or anti-racist theories alone are not adequate to elucidate the complex subordination that women of colour experience, because racial and sexual discourses mutually reinforce one another. Thus, she proposed an integrated approach to analyze the multiple dimensions and layers of Black women's experiences and struggles. Long before the term was first created, efforts were made to show the various forms of subordination on women of colour in feminist scholarship (Davis, 2008; Phoenix, 2006). As early as a century ago in 1851, according to Brah and Phoenix (2004), an enslaved black woman named Sojourner Truth powerfully challenged the essentialist thinking of contemporary gender categorization through her speech at the Women's Rights Convention in Ohio, and "clearly demonstrate[d] that what we call 'identities' are not objects but processes constituted in and through power relations" (Brah & Phoenix, 2004, p. 77).

Since that speech, many feminists and educators have continued to emphasize the importance of examining multiple identities and sources of oppression. One example is the black feminist organization, Combahee River Collective, which argued in 1977 for an integrated analysis of and practice upon the interlocking systems of major oppressions including racism, sexism, heterosexism and classism (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Davis, 2008; Naples, 2009). Several years later, black critical theorist bell hooks echoed Sojourner Truth's allegation in her book *Ain't I a Woman*, claiming that the usual singular/unilateral analysis on oppression treated all women as white and all Blacks as men (bell hooks, 1981). During that period, educator Goli Rezai-Rashti in Canada also questioned the tendency to examine sources of social inequalities separately from one other (quoted in Cassidy & Jackson, 2005). Cassidy and Jackson (2005) extended Rezai-Rashti's argument and cautioned educators against an essentialist position in school practice, which would view children as from stable and homogenous groups and in doing so fail to capture the complexity and intersectionality of marginalization (p. 449).

Crenshaw's term, Intersectionality, was welcomed and used by many feminist scholars. Black feminist scholar Hill Collins extended the term from black women to all women (Mann & Huffman, 2005). Hill Collins (1998, 2000) proposed the construct, "matrix of domination" to indicate that forms of social phenomena not only mutually

construct one another, but also are influenced by and intersect with other systems of society, such as age, religion, social structures, patterns of interactions and other social practices (as cited in Ali, Mirza, Phoenix & Ringrose, 2010).

Feminist studies were significantly influenced by poststructuralist theories and perspectives (Brah & Phoenix, 2004). For example, poststructuralist analysis challenged the essentialist position towards bodies of individuals and viewed differences as “historically contingent relationships, contesting fields of discourses, and sites of multiple subject positions” (Brah & Phoenix, 2004, p. 82). The changes in theoretical grounding brought new trends in feminist as well as intersectional studies. As Kathy Davis (2008) observed, homogeneous categories such as “women” and “black” were in the process of being deconstructed throughout the 1980s.

In this section, I have outlined the development of the notion Intersectionality. Some researchers and theorists have made attempts to name and describe various approaches to intersectional analysis (McCall, 2005; Naples, 2009; Prins, 2006), which I turn to in the next section.

2.2.2. Approaches to intersectionality

Among the various attempts to identify different intersectional approaches, McCall’s work (2005) has received much attention among feminist theorists (Davis, 2008; Naples, 2009; Phoenix, 2006). McCall (2005) delineated the three most common approaches to distinguishing intersectional approaches by highlighting their characteristics, contributions, and challenges. The three approaches display diverse stances in regard to social categories: “anticategorical complexity”, “intercategorical complexity” and “intracategorical complexity”. The anticategorical approach adopts a methodology that deconstructs social categories, based on the understanding that social life is “irreducibly complex—overflowing with multiple and fluid determinations of both subjects and structures” which cannot be captured by fixed categories (McCall, 2005, p. 1773). The second approach, the intercategorical complexity, emphasizes the strategic and provisional use of existing analytical categories to document the relationships and the changes in configurations of inequality among different social groups to accommodate the multiple and conflicting dimensions of intersectionality. The intracategorical complexity is the approach which falls in the middle of the continuum

between the above two approaches—it acknowledges the “stable and even durable relationships that social categories represent” but meanwhile critically “interrogates the boundary-making and boundary-defining process itself” (McCall, 2005, p. 1773-1774). Researchers following the intracategorical approach tend to center their analysis on particular social groups and the complex lived experiences within such groups.

In a later publication, Prins (2006) from Netherlands pointed out significant differences among the intersectional approaches that are predominant on either side of the Atlantic Ocean, and divided them according to what she has called the systemic approach and constructivist approach to intersectionality. She suggested that, “The US approach foregrounds the impact of system or structure upon the formation of identities, whereas British scholars focus on the dynamic and relational aspects of social identity” (Prins, 2006, p. 279).

Many feminist scholars regarded intersectionality as a productive strategy to deconstruct binary oppositions as well as homogeneous categories (Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, 2008; Prins, 2006). Intersectionality takes into account intra-group differences in addition to differences among social groups, and thus it offers an effective way “of capturing the complexity of positionality and structural differences” (Naples, 2009, p. 568). Moreover, inspired by critical pedagogy and critical methodology, intersectionality effectively challenges static conceptualizations of identity. It provides a way for poststructural theorists to inflect Foucauldian perspectives on power into their studies by focusing on dynamic processes as well as dismantling essentialist positions (Davis, 2008). Davis (2008) noted that intersectionality, both as a framework and methodology, is appropriate for and has been applied to a broad range of areas including theorizing identities, identity and social structures and empowerment.

This thesis adopts an intercategorical approach (McCall 2005) to intersectionality that provides a potent tool to investigate the ways students navigate through the complex matrix of power relations in small multilingual group discussions in university settings. Through the lens of intersectionality, participants’ social characteristics are not fixed and homogenous categories, and the social oppression that they experience function in interlocking, dynamic and multiple ways. The flexibility and open-endedness of intersectionality also shows possibility to explore participants’ uses of strategies as

empowering means to negotiate their positions as well as their self-representation in small groups.

Now, I turn to the next theory that helps to illuminate the construction of the primary positioning that multilingual speakers often bear in their groups, and the means that learners can utilize through their negotiation and acts of identity positioning. This leads us to the discussion of Bourdieu's theorization of cultural capital and language as symbolic capital (1984, 1986).

2.3. Language as symbolic capital

The conception that language is symbolic capital, proposed by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984, 1986) can be interpreted to encompass two intertwined meanings: language is a resource, which gains certain status and power in a particular social space; and this power enables the speakers to exercise social control. In this section, I begin with an introduction to Bourdieu's concepts: capital, habitus and field, which is followed by a description of the key ideas of this theory.

2.3.1. Capital, Habitus and Field

The concept of cultural capital was first introduced in the early 1960s by French sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron in their empirical studies (1964) of the educational practices of children from different social classes (Robbins, 2005). In this work, Bourdieu and Passeron applied the Marxist term "capital" –the accumulation of economic profit—in their analysis on everyday cultural practice and power, and used it as a conceptual tool to account for the production and reproduction of social inequalities.

Bourdieu (1984 [1979]) furthered his theorization of capital with concepts—habitus and field—in his well-known work, *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. The term "habitus" refers to a system of internalized habits and dispositions, which constitutes a person's cognition, beliefs, perceptions, and actions. The habitus entails both "the capacity to produce classifiable practices and works" and "the capacity to differentiate and appreciate these practices and products (taste)" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170). Thus, habitus is both a "structuring structure", which conforms one's actions to and

generates class-specific social practices and perceptions, and a “structured structure” as a result of the internalization of social class divisions, which reflects the social conditions of the social agent.

A certain habitus gains power in a “field”, a structured social space, and thus forms a certain hierarchical position in that field. The habitus thus becomes a form of “capital”, a set of accumulated and usable resources and powers, which can, potentially, be converted into economic profits. Capital is also context-specific. In specific “fields”, a particular habitus may ‘count’ or ‘weigh’ more than others, and thus become cultural capital in that field. Bourdieu (1984) noted:

...the relative weight of the factors which constitute [capital] varies from one field to another..., because capital is a social relation, i.e., an energy which only exists and only produces its effects in the field in which it is produced and reproduced, each of the properties attached to class is given its value and efficacy by the specific law of each field. In practice, ...the specific logic of the field determines those which are valid in this market,...and which, in the relationship with this field, function as specific capital—and consequently, as a factor explaining practices (p. 113).

Bourdieu used these concepts to suggest that the judgment of taste, a person’s artistic preferences, is a marker and a product of one’s positions in social space, and these preferences or tastes are utilized by those in power to stratify (and justify that stratification) the social world in a way that favours their own positions (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 5-7). He has written, “... art and cultural consumption is predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 7). In particular, Bourdieu (1984) asserted that social subjects are assigned different ranks and power in a particular field based on the volume and structure of capital they possess, given that the distribution of capital is not equal. He commented that, “[a distribution of capital] expresses a state of the power relation between the classes or, more precisely, of the struggle for possession of rare goods and for the specifically political power over the distribution or redistribution of profit” (p. 245). Consequently, the structure of the distribution of capital represents the power structure of that social space, and the different types of capital as well as the distribution serve as the “weapons and prizes”, as Bourdieu put it, in the struggle between different social classes (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986).

In the article, *The Forms of Capital* (1986), Bourdieu provided detailed descriptions of various forms of capital including economic capital, social capital and cultural capital. Bourdieu (1986) suggested that the different types of capital could convert from one to another, i.e., educational qualifications can transform into decent paying jobs, but this convertibility is a strategy to ensure the reproduction of capital and social positions (p. 254). Of most relevance to our discussion here is the concept of symbolic capital, which is considered one form of cultural capital, such as honour, prestige or recognition. Bourdieu (1991) claimed, “a power or capital becomes symbolic, and exerts a specific effect of domination, which I call symbolic power or symbolic violence, when it is known and recognized” (p. 111). He further pointed out that symbolic capital is usually recognized as the authority exerting a power over other capitals, instead of being recognized as just one form of it (Bourdieu, 1986). Next, I elaborate on the key ideas of Bourdieu’s theorization of language as symbolic capital.

2.3.2. Key ideas of language as symbolic capital

Bourdieu’s theorization of language as symbolic capital implies that language is fundamentally a social phenomenon whose practice is socially and historically imbedded within the power structures of a society. Bourdieu established this social view of language through his critique of formal and structural linguistics. Bourdieu (1991) commented that both Saussurian and Chomskyan approaches focused on the internal characteristics of linguistic systems, assuming that language is an autonomous object, and overlooked the social, historical and political conditions in which the language is produced and received. Bourdieu (1991) pointed out that “linguists merely incorporate into their theory a pre-constructed object, ignoring *its social laws of construction* and masking its social genesis...” (p. 44).

Drawing on Austin’s theory of performative utterances, Bourdieu (1991) showed that speech-act linguists attended to the social conditions of communication but still failed to comprehend fully the primacy of its sociality in their purely linguistic analysis. According to Bourdieu (1991), language does not exist in an ideal community devoid of the economic and social conditions of its larger surroundings. Instead, language is inseparable and gains its very power from social institutions.

In Bourdieu's (1991) approach, language is a set of dispositions, a form of habitus, bearing the traces of the social conditions in which social subjects acquire these dispositions. Differences in accents, vocabulary and ways of speaking manifest to some degree the socially structured differences among various social groups. In Bourdieu's terms, language is a set of structuring and structured structures. In particular fields, linguistic habitus comprises a certain amount of value, and thus becomes a form of capital. By comparing linguistic varieties to goods in a market, Bourdieu (1991) illustrated that the "prices" of linguistic goods vary from one another according to their powers established among the speakers within the market whose "law of price formation" reflects the social hierarchy of the society (p. 67). For example, Bourdieu (1991) observed that people from the dominant group tend to gain more symbolic profits in formal situations than other social classes in that their linguistic form is perceived as linguistic capital, which is sanctioned by the law of the market (p. 70). Consequently, he argued that all relations of communication are power relations, which depend on the material or symbolic power accumulated by the agents involved (p. 167). He further asserted that people from the dominant class exercise power and authority to shape social structures in a way that favours their linguistic productions and maximizes their symbolic profits (p. 167). This is precisely the politics of official, or legitimate languages.

When a particular linguistic variety is defined and recognized as the official or legitimate language through institutionalized practices, it gains the symbolic power to exert influence over other language forms. In other words, it becomes the law regulating the linguistic market, which in turn reinforces the authority that renders its dominance in the first place (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 45). This normalization process is what Bourdieu calls symbolic domination or symbolic violence. The dominant language functions as linguistic capital, ensuring the unequal distribution of capital so that the dominant group is able to keep their advantage and ongoingly impose their cultural practices as the legitimate ones in the field. Under this symbolic domination process, one particular socially conditioned way of speaking is designated equivalent to people's capacity to speak. Bourdieu (1991) commented, "Speakers lacking the legitimate competence are *de facto* excluded from the social domains in which this competence is required, or are condemned to silence" (p. 55).

Therefore, language, a form of symbolic structure, can serve as an instrument of domination. It is a means of social control through which the dominant group regulates “the established order by establishing distinctions (hierarchies) and legitimating these distinctions” as well as by “forcing all other cultures to define themselves” as subordinate and unequal (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 167). The symbolic power that language holds, according to Bourdieu (1991), comes from censorship among the interlocutors—it “is a power that can be exercised only if it is recognized, that is misrecognized, as arbitrary” (p. 170). Hence, the power of the legitimate language and its speakers is acknowledged by everyone and secured by social institutions, but its true character as merely one form of capital is disguised under its seemingly neutral, objective and superior forms.

The symbolic power of language, in Bourdieu’s view, is also a constitutive power, which allows social subjects to achieve the equivalent to what is done through physical or economic force. He said, it is “a power of constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world and, thereby, action on the world and thus the world itself” (p. 170). In this regard, some scholars have connected language with agency and argue that multilingual social agents may use linguistic competencies as empowering means (Kramsch, 2009). Kramsch (2009) built on Butler’s (1990) and Pennycook’s (2007) idea that language provides a means for performing identity acts, believing that multilingual speakers “have greater semiotic resources to draw on to redress the balance of symbolic power” (p. 9). She said that language learners are not “helpless recipients or imitators” and they may “wield the power that comes from using a whole range of symbolic forms to be who they want to be” (Kramsch, 2009, p. 9). These scholarship shed lights on the possibility for Chinese multilingual speakers to use their linguistic resources to facilitate their negotiations of positions in academic group discussions. The third strand of the theoretical framework is concerned with whether and how multilingual speakers may utilize their linguistic resources, as well as other social differences, to mediate and construct favoured social positions and realities in their academic groups. Before giving a detailed deliberation on the last part of my theoretical framework, I discuss how Bourdieu’s language as symbolic capital in conjunction with intersectionality is connected to this thesis project on Chinese multilingual speakers’ oral participation.

2.3.3. **Social differences as symbolic capital in small group discussions**

Bourdieu's theory of language as symbolic capital in conjunction with intersectionality provides three important premises for me to approach the issue of Chinese multilingual speakers' oral participation. The first premise is that a university group is a structured social space, a "field" in Bourdieu's term, in which various social characteristics are assembled into "habitus" with different values and powers. Linguistic practices inscribed with values and ideologies that reflect the power hierarchies in the society. For example, being white and male might be more valued in the group work than being coloured and female. From the perspective of intersectionality, social subordinations always work in intersecting, interlocking ways. Thus, the positionality of a participant in a discussion group needs to take into account the overall "calculation" of an individual's various social characteristics in that "field" rather than of the linguistic practice alone.

The second premise of this study informed by both theories is that one particular social difference including one's linguistic practice may gain symbolic power over others. Bourdieu as well as many poststructuralist theorists recognized the symbolic power of an official, standard language form over other variations (Cameron, 1995; Edwards, 2010; Heller, 2007; Kramsch, 2009; Lippi-Green, 2012; Norton, 1997; Peirce, 1995; Pennycook, 2007). I conceptualize that this symbolic domination not only works through linguistic practices but also through other social differences. For example, if one particular form of receiving knowledge is considered the standard one, it may gain power over other forms of learning and became the superior, prestigious one. This standpoint argues that in academic group interactions, learners are constantly scrutinized, indexed and positioned with regard to their particular social differences by their peers and instructors. The socially and culturally specific ways of being and speaking that are more or less different from the dominant native ways, might be considered inferior or illegitimate, and thus receive less power or lower status..

Third, Bourdieu's language as symbolic capital also highlights the constitutive power of language. Such perspective, in a positive light, leaves doors open for multilingual speakers to utilize their multilingualism as a strategy to acquire a more desirable positionality. I would further argue that multilingual speakers might be able to

utilize their social differences to construct alternative identity positions so as to resist and shift hegemonic power relations in their groups. As Heller and Martin-Jones (2001) suggested, “Difference is, in some sense, a resource for constructing, leveling, contesting, and blurring boundaries in order to attempt to maintain, contest or modify relations of power” (p. 4).

Intersectionality helps to situate this study in a more comprehensive social context, while Bourdieu’s language as symbolic capital provides tools to associate social differences including linguistic practice with power hegemony as well as to conceive social characteristics as resources for negotiating positionalities. A discursive and constructive notion of identity with the conception of performativity shed light on ways through which multilingual speakers may act out certain aspects of their identity or construct new preferred identity positions. I shall now turn to the third part of my theoretical framework—identity and performativity.

2.4. Identity and performativity

Perspectives on identity are relevant to this thesis project in two ways. First, learners’ motivation or reticence in their group discussions is often imbedded in the social relations within the discussion group, more specifically their social positioning in their groups—who they think they are in relation to their peers and whom their peers think they are. As Norton (2013) noted in the second edition of *Identity and Language Learning*, “A fully developed theory of identity highlights the multiple positions from which language learners can speak, and how sometimes marginalized learners can appropriate more desirable identities with respect to the target language community” (p.2). In this regard, an examination of multilingual speakers’ positions in western university classrooms is indeed an investigation of their identity constructions in those particular contexts. Furthermore, the theory of identity, particularly a discursively constructed view of identity, opens up opportunities to discuss learner agency with respect to their positions in multicultural groups. It is this discursive view of identity that allows me to envision hope and potential for multilingual learners to constitute and hold desired identity positions that might not have been accessible to them originally.

2.4.1. A poststructuralist perspective of identity

The concept of identity is well-studied. It has been invented, reinvented, interpreted and reinterpreted across different paradigms and disciplines including philosophy, second language acquisition, education, sociology, and literary criticism (Canagarajah, 2004). The conception of identity in this thesis is informed by works from poststructuralist scholars such as Gee (1990), Holland, et al. (1998); Hall (1996), Weedon (1997); Norton (1995, 1997, 2013), Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), David (2006) and Edwards (2010). In particular, I am inspired by Norton's poststructuralist view of identity as "the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space and how the person understands possibilities for the future (p. 4)". In this thesis, I conceptualize the notion of identity encompassing three layers of meanings: First, identity is constantly evolving and reconstructing itself through language and daily practices; secondly, identity construction is a dialogic process among various discourses in society, in which individuals receive pressure from social institutional structures; and lastly, the construction process leaves doors for social agents to become who they want to be.

From a poststructural perspective, identity is not a fixed, unchangeable cultural understanding of the self but is constantly produced and reinvented through language and discourse (Discourse) in different social relations (Gee, 1990; Holland, et al., 1998; Norton, 1997, 2013; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Gee (1990) identified "Discourse" as a meaning make process which involves saying, doing, being, valuing and believing. In his words, Discourse is "ways of being" in the world. Through this Discourse, individuals are identified as members of social groups. And, through this Discourse, individual and group identities are constructed and produced (Gee, 1990). Holland et al. (1998) drew on the conceptual frameworks of Bakhtin's (1981) self authoring and Vygotsky's (1978) cultural historical theory, and proposed the theory of "identity in practice". In their view, identities—the objectification of self-understandings—are always being formed and improvised "in the flow of activity within specific social situations" from available cultural and symbolic resources (p. 4). Therefore, Holland and her colleagues suggested that "Identities are lived in and through activity and so must be conceptualized as they develop in social practice (p. 5)."

Holland et al. (1998) further pointed out that identity construction encompasses dialogic processes of fabricating multiple competing or even conflicting discourses around the self, and often it is under the constraints of structured sociocultural norms. They conceived identity as repeatedly moulded by the cultural forms of specific social groups, or to use their term, “figured worlds”; and it is always positioned in a particular set of hierarchies of social relations. From time to time, individuals are located in a matrix of tensions: contradictory social rules, culture norms, imposed identities or personal preferences. It requires continual negotiations of these different tensions, to “orchestrate” different discourses in the space of self-authoring (Bakhtin, 1984 as in Holland et al., 1998). Therefore, Holland et al. (1998) argued that identity was not a coherent, unified entity but full of contingencies and contradictions because its construction is always under some form of pressure and tension. In this regard, identity construction is a set of multiple constant negotiation processes in which a person’s cultural beliefs in various figured worlds, their relational positions in particular contexts, and their personal inclinations interplay.

The perspective of identity as multiple, diverse, dialogic, contradictory and under the scrutiny of social structures is shared by many poststructural scholars (Bakhtin, 1981; Norton, 1997; 2013; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston & Johnson, 2005). Hall (1996) emphasized the historicity of identity development and identity as always in process. He argued that identity formation is not a neutral practice. It is “produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies” (p. 4) and therefore, such processes are inscribed with particular value systems and power relations. According to Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), identity is constructed, validated and negotiated in diverse discourses. They believed that identity is always situated in particular discourses, practices, positions, and ideologies of language at a particular point in time and place. Taking insights from Weedon’s (1997) conception of subjectivity, Norton (1995, 2000, 2013) understood identity as socially and historically constructed through language. In her words, identities “are frequently socially constructed in inequitable relations of power, changing across time and space, and possibly coexisting in contradictory ways within a single individual” (p. 2).

Norton (1995), recognizing the impact of social structures on multilingual learner's social positioning, proposed the construct of "investment" to indicate learners' changing commitment to learning a language in particular social contexts. Drawing on Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital, Norton (1995) used the term investment to capture the historically socially imbedded relationships of the language learner to the target language and its community. Norton (2013) noted:

If learners 'invest' in the target language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic resources (language, education, friendship) and material resources (capital goods, real estate, money), which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital and social power (p.6).

Norton's notion of investment is particularly pertinent in this paper in that it shows the complex and changing nature of multilingual learners' desires in participating and learning across different academic discussion groups. As Norton pointed out, "A learner may be a highly motivated language learner but may nevertheless have little investment in the language practices of a given classroom or community, which may, for example, be racist, sexist, elitist or homophobic (p. 6)". The same argument is applicable for my study on multilingual learners' oral participation in groups. Multilingual learners could be highly motivated to participate but get discouraged and not want to invest in a given classroom if they feel classroom practices are keeping them on the margins. Such cases have been reported in Leki (2001), Morita (2004, 2009) and Remedios, Clarke and Hawthorne (2008), which I introduced in the literature review section of Chapter 1.

The dominating social structure is powerful and influential on identity construction. Nevertheless, many poststructural scholars argued that the construction process is not totally free of one's will (Beynon, Ilieva, Dichupa & Hirji, 2003; Hall, 1996; Holland et al., 1998; Norton, 1995, 2000, 2013). Individuals may exercise agency in their attempts to generate a preferable identity in the sense of "becoming". Hall (1996) centred his understanding of identity on the primacy of agency. For him, "identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from' so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how we might represent ourselves" (Hall, 1996, p. 4). It is this sense of "becoming", the identity to be, that opens up opportunities for multilingual speakers to use their imagination/agency to be who they want to be and to resist and transform unfavourable social realities. Norton (1995)

emphasized that human beings are both “subject of and subject to relations of power” because we have agency (p. 15). By highlighting identity as “a site of struggle”, she further explicated how a social agent exercises one’s agency. Norton (2013) noted:

Thus the subject positions that a person takes up within a particular discourse are open to contestation: While a person may be positioned in a particular way within a given discourse, the person might resist the subject position, or even set up a counter-discourse which positions the person in a powerful rather than marginalizd subject position (p. 164).

Varghese, Morgan, Johnston and Johnson (2005) corroborated this agentic view of identity in their study on teacher identity. They argued that teacher identities were in constant negotiation between assigned identities which were under social constraints, and claimed identities that were of one’s own interests.

Holland et al.’s (1998) theory of identity also acknowledged human agency by suggesting that individuals may utilize available resources and their imagination to produce and regulate their actions in a situation, such as creating preferable identities in a “counter world” which is opposite to the adverse social reality. They suggested that human identity consists of a variety of relationships, and thus human agency actually means the capacity to act upon these relationships. Creating a space of negotiation then requires human agents to attend to these social relationships and to “orchestrate” these relationships in the way they desire. In other words, the first step towards agency and the creation of a space of “authoring” is to direct individual’s attention to the relationships around them and to understand those relationships. By doing that, the person can establish and understand his or her own voice and position in relation to other voices in order to coordinate and take actions in social reality.

This thesis adopts the perspective that identities are discursively constructed, socially and historically negotiated, multiple, contradictory, and evolving—new identities are constructed with available resources. Of importance here, is the central role of language in identity construction. It is precisely in this theorization of identity that language is an essential and creative force in constituting identity. It not only reveals the interplay between ideology and power in identity construction, but also ties closely with agency for making social changes. Before I move onto the concept of performativity—

the performative power of language in constituting new identities, I include a brief outline of the connections between language and identity.

2.4.2. Language and identity

The above discussion shows the role language plays in the process of identity construction. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) summarized three connections between language and identity: (1) language can serve as a marker for national and ethnic identities (Bailey, 2000; Edwards, 2010; Marshall, 2009); (2) it may also be used as symbolic capital and bestow varying power and status to its speakers (Bourdieu, 1991; Heller, 2007; Norton, 1995; 1997); and (3) it is also an essential force in appropriating and constituting new identities (Cameron, 1995; Edwards, 2010; Lippi-Green, 1997; Norton, 1995, 2000, 2013). In the following, I discuss these links in detail with reference to empirical studies.

It might seem obvious to suggest that language is often used as a marker for national and ethnic identities. Sometimes, language can even precede phenotype in serving as the primary trigger for race and ethnic identity. Bailey (2000) reported from his study of a second generation Dominican American that Dominican Americans explicitly defined their race in terms of language, Spanish, rather than phenotype. For them, language is an important means to resist hegemonic social categorization and to transform and create new social positions. In the context of globalization, the connection between language and national identity becomes more and more complicated. Marshall's (2009) four-year ethnographic study of Latinos in Catalonia showed that the unified association between language and nationhood is contested at many levels in Catalonia from government policies to daily interactions. New forms of identity, such as hybrid identities and multiple identities are appropriated and constructed via the use and socialization of Catalan. Edwards (2010) examined the language use of multilingual speakers and found that different language were associated with different aspects of their identities. They may feel more strongly in one language about their ethnic identity than in another. Thus, Edwards argued that "language choice draws out, and draws upon, different personalities" (Edwards, 2010, p. 244). Early and Marshall's (2008) study corroborated such an argument. They reported a case study of a female Chinese

student who preferred speaking Chinese because she projected a more competent and intelligent identity in it than in English.

I don't feel stupid when I speak Mandarin. I don't get as frustrated and people take me more seriously when I speak Mandarin. In English, I just don't sound smart...so it is more easy for me be smart when I speak Mandarin. (Early & Marshall, 2008, p. 391)

Because of language's symbolic power and connection to identity, it acquires an indexical function in stratifying people—sorting people into different statuses. Bourdieu (1991) argued, which I have outlined in Section 2.3, that language acquires a certain cultural value and status in a given social space. More than often, it is the dominant language holding a form of symbolic power over other languages in that social context. Various languages bestow various powers and statuses to the identities they associate with. Since some varieties have a higher exchange value than others, the identities associating with those higher-status varieties are considered superior to other identity positions. Edwards (2010) pointed out that linguistic variations act as triggers for social stereotypes. Sometimes a language variety that has very low status may even be rejected by its own speakers. In addition to language varieties, linguistic competence also serves as an indicator of one's academic capacity. Heller (2007) pointed out that linguistic performance and interaction are often not only used as indices for linguistic competence, “but as indices of other kinds of competence (intelligence, work skills, personality, and so on)” (pp.14). It is the indexical power of language that makes it a symbolic means to privilege certain groups while marginalizing others.

Many studies show the constituting power of language for appropriated, new identities (Bailey, 2000; Cameron, 1995; Edwards, 2010; Lippi-Green, 1997; Marshall, 2009; Norton, 1995). According to Lippi-Green (1997), language is the most salient means people use of “establishing and advertising our social identities” (p. 5). Cameron (1995) developed Butler's ideas of “repeated stylizations of the body” and suggested that the lexical, grammatical and interactional choices that one makes contribute to the construction of a social and personal identity for the speaker. In other words, the language variety one uses and the way one uses it can create an impact on the speaker's social identity. It is worth noting here that this relationship between language and identity is a dialectical one because language not only constitutes social identities but is also constituted by language (Norton, 1995). Pennycook (2007) emphasized the

production of language by arguing that “Languages are no more pre-given entities that pre-exist our linguistic performances than are gendered or ethnic identities. Rather they are the sedimented products of repeated acts of identity” (p. 73). Next, I discuss ways language constitutes or performs new identity positions—performativity as an identity act, which I shall elaborate in the next section.

2.4.3. **Performativity as identity acts**

The theory of performativity is a poststructuralist approach to understanding identity. As I have depicted in Section 2.41, poststructuralist theorists view identity as located in multiple sites of struggle and as conflicting, negotiated, and constantly evolving. The theory of performativity in the poststructuralist approach suggests that identity is not a static, unitary or fixed trait. Instead, identity is viewed as a performance, which individuals “do” at particular times in particular contexts as their responses to particular social surroundings. Next, I discuss the ideas and development of performativity in detail.

The concept of “performative” was first raised by John Langshaw Austin, a British philosopher, to describe a type of speech that performs an act (Austin, 1965). In the book *How To Do Things With Words*, Austin (1965) pointed out that some utterances may look like statements according to their “grammatical make-up” but do not actually describe, or report or declare “true” or “false” of anything, which was “traditionally the characteristic mark of a statement” (p. 12). When one utters these words, one is not reporting something, but actually is “doing” something. Austin defined this type of speech as “performatives”. He used the term “performative” to “indicate[s] that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action—it is not normally thought of as just saying something”(Austin, 1965, pp. 6-7). Some examples of performative sentences could be: “I do” in the course of a marriage ceremony, or “I give and bequeath my watch to my brother” in a will.

The idea of performatives, and that language utterances can function as actions, has generated huge interest among theorists from a wide range of disciplines including Derrida, Bourdieu, Butler, Habermas and Laclau (in Pennycook, 2007, p. 63). Of particular relevance here is Bourdieu’s discussion of performatives on how words come to have power as actions. Bourdieu (1991) argued that “...authority comes to language

outside, ... Language at most represents this authority, manifests and symbolizes it" (p. 109). This authority of discourse, according to him, can only exercise its effect when the speech is recognized as legitimate -- the spokesperson is legitimately licensed to use legitimate forms of speech and in front of legitimate receivers. This legitimacy is rooted in a system of social rituals defined by dominant groups that hold more accumulated symbolic capital than others. In short, Bourdieu (1991) proposed that the performative power of words resides in social institutions, which govern the production and reception of these speech acts.

Bourdieu's view of performatives, according to Judith Butler (1997), assumes that effective performative speeches are only delivered by those who have the social power to do so. Butler disagreed with this claim and suggested that performatives could also be appropriated and spoken by those who are not socially entitled to do so. Butler (1997) critiqued Bourdieu's account of performatives for implying a static view of language and social institutions, a view which is too conservative to account for the possibility of agency and social transformation. Therefore, while Bourdieu regarded performative power as external to language and determined by preexisting social structures, Butler (1997), on the contrary, argued that language does not simply reflect the social world but can have performative power within itself to transform social realities.

Focusing primarily on gender, Butler (1990, 2009) challenged the traditional hegemonic view of gender as a fixed, binary and predetermined attribute by proposing that gender "is a certain kind of enactment" (Butler, 2009, p. i). She wrote that "gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing.... Identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler, 1990, p. 25). In other words, gender could be viewed as repetitive performances that people do through language and discourses, which are always in the process of forming and reforming. This performative view of gender opens up space for a range of fluid, variable and deviant gender positions, which, Butler argued, are not recognized in traditional heterosexual discourses.

Butler's interpretation of gender situates performativity and gender production within power relations and discourses. Butler suggested that "gender is prompted by obligatory norms to be one gender or the other, and the reproduction of gender is thus

always a negotiation with power” (Butler, 2009, p. i). Besides the strict regulation of gender construction under power, the subject, the social being, is produced through power and thus becomes an effect of power (Butler, 2009). Only through unexpected displacement during the discourses of production, Butler (1990) noted that, might there be a chance to undo or redo gender norms. Hence, Butler’s understanding of performativity implies that gender performances are not free or unconstrained, but are highly regulated.

In line with Butler, critical applied linguist Pennycook (2007) interpreted performativity as an expression of agency, which regards the social and cultural construction of subject positions as a form of resistance. He expanded the concept of performativity further to include the possibilities of “false acts—acting out what one is not” in identity performance (Pennycook, 2007, p. 75). He suggested that social agents may produce desired and provisional identity performances consciously and deliberately through language and discourses at a given moment and context for subversive purposes. Pennycook (2007) examined alternative linguistic forms that were produced through the performances of identity. He asserted, “Languages are no more pre-given entities that pre-exist our linguistic performances than are gendered or ethnic identities. Rather they are the sedimented products of repeated acts of identity” (p. 73). Hence, in his view, identity is produced through language and discourses, and meanwhile, language itself is also reproduced and sedimented through the very acts of identity construction. Building on Walcott’s (1997 as cited in Pennycook, 2007) ideas, Pennycook argued that performativity could be viewed as a form of rewriting in the service of altering the world. He wrote, “In the process of rewriting, reinventing and reclaiming, languages and identities are remade” (p. 76). He also suggested that the vernacular voice in Hip-Hop music is a clear example of inventive uses of language as well as performances of identity. For Pennycook, performativity provides ways of implementing imaginations in producing and performing new desired positions as well as linguistic forms in our social communities.

The notion of performativity as described in the previous section implies that self-representation and subject positions are not fixed, pre-established or static meanings, and that identity and positionality are produced in discourses, through ongoing, repeated speech or behavioural acts. Such a performative view of identity offers a way to interpret

and analyze the dynamics of interactions among students, including their language and actions, as forms of social and cultural performances of their subject positions within multilingual groups in academic settings.

2.5. Conclusion

My study of oral participation of multilingual speakers in Canadian university classrooms has been a multi-dimensional process and involves theoretical discussions in disciplines such as psychology, sociology, linguistics and cultural studies. Adopting a sociocultural lens, this project focuses on the historically, socially constructed aspect of learners' oral participation in group work. Theories in critical pedagogy, intersectionality, symbolic capital as well as identity and performativity, which I have discussed in this chapter, provide me with the means to establish relationships between classroom practices and learners' positioning in groups within the larger historically imbedded institutional structures. Moreover, this critical theoretical framework not only acknowledges the controlling pressure of social structures but also leaves possibilities for learner agency, counter discourses and positive social transformation.

The theory of critical pedagogy challenges the seemingly neutral and apolitical nature of knowledge and education. It argues that all knowledge is historically, culturally and socially constructed, and educational practices serve the interests of certain selected social groups. Curriculum materials and classroom activities such as small group discussions are often sites of struggles for students as they compete for fair opportunities to participate in their group work. Intersectionality, on the other hand, suggests that the imposed positioning on students in multicultural groups could be multiple, diverse and dynamic. By distinguishing them through their social differences such as race, language and nationalism, students from vulnerable social groups might be discouraged from participating if they are treated as illegitimate, peripheral players in their group activities. Nevertheless, intersectionality also accounts for the complexity and fluidity of social positioning—some might face subordination in one setting but be dominant in others.

The view that language is symbolic capital suggests that linguistic practices such as group discussions are sites of struggle for competing ideologies and power relations,

in which linguistic variations serve as symbolic tools for privileging or marginalizing particular social groups. Some students may be positioned in lower, inferior positions if their English competence—the dominant language in western university classrooms—is not “sufficient” or “native-like”. The perspective that language has the symbolic power to both reproduce but also construct social relations creates potential for Chinese multilingual speakers to “appropriate” their language resources, in this case Mandarin or Cantonese, as a symbolic means to negotiate their positions within small groups. Furthermore, socially and culturally constructed differences other than linguistic practices, including ethnicity, gender, age and education, may also serve as capital for Chinese multilingual speakers to employ so as to elevate their statuses in the discussion groups.

In this thesis, Chinese multilingual speakers’ identities are conceptualized as discursively constructed, historically and socially imbedded, multiple, contradictory and ever evolving. With its symbolic power, language can serve as a marker to index their national or ethnic identities, and it can also assist them in highlighting a particular aspect of identity or producing new identity positions in their group discussions. Integrating the theory of performativity which conceptualizes subjects as social beings with autonomous agency, I propose that in small multilingual group interactions, learners may under some circumstances reflexively examine their situations in the groups with knowledge of the power relations as well as of the social institutions which provide context for the given group interactions, and accordingly adjust their performances with available resources to stress, reproduce, negotiate, and construct certain subject positions. However, it is equally important to keep in mind that such performances are under the scrutiny of a complex matrix of social differences as well as the social structures in larger contexts.

In conclusion, the oral participation of Chinese multilingual speakers in their group discussions is not simple or fixed. Similar to their social positioning, their oral participation should be understood and examined as historically imbedded, socially and discursively constructed in multiple, diverse and ever changing ways. Chinese multilingual speakers may in some occasions accept imposed positioning and act accordingly in their group discussions, thereby reproducing the dominant ideology and social hierarchy. In other occasions, they may utilize their linguistic and other resources

to construct counter discourses in which they have a more powerful and stronger voice in their discussions.

Chapter 3.

Methodology

In Chapter 1, I have described the background and the purpose of my thesis, and have provided a review of relevant literature on Chinese multilingual speakers' oral participation in their group activities. Chapter 2, my theoretical framework, introduced scholarship in critical pedagogy, intersectionality, symbolic capital and performativity. These theories have informed my understanding on the relationships between learners' desires, inclination or willingness to participate in group activities and with the classroom practices, individual learners' social characteristics and their agencies. Those understandings depicted in the first two chapters have served as the theoretical underpinning for the methodological design of this thesis.

In Chapter 3, I offer a comprehensive account of the considerations, choices and challenges during the design, conduct and analysis of this thesis study. I first explain the rationale for a qualitative research design for this research topic, followed by a discussion of ethnographic methods with relevant literature so as to support my methodological choices. Second, I explicate the setting of the study, the methods of data collection, participant observation and interview in particular; and data analysis procedures. Next, I discuss the politics of this qualitative research, focusing on my positionality and how my theoretical lens has impacted the participants and the findings of the study. In the final section, I illustrate the specific contexts of this thesis study by delineating the classroom settings, the participants, the specific steps and methodological concerns in each of the two data collection phases.

3.1. A qualitative research design

Before describing my methods, it is essential to clarify their underlying philosophical principles—my research paradigm. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) pointed out

that any qualitative research designs and their researchers are bound within certain research paradigms—a set of beliefs about the world and knowledge (ontological, epistemological and methodological beliefs), which guide researchers' actions in a study. Though these beliefs sometimes might seem invisible or taken for granted, they largely impact researchers' choices of a study design and their interpretations of their data. Therefore, in this Section 3.1, I briefly explain my research paradigm, which has directed me through the process of connecting the theoretical framework to the real world; through searching for appropriate strategies; and through collecting and interpreting data. In addition, I describe the development and evolution of my research focus and research questions, followed by a discussion of my choice of a qualitative research design for the topic on Chinese multilingual speakers' oral participation.

This study has been built upon a critical constructivism paradigm and it consists of, in Lincoln and Guba's (2000) terms, a historical realism ontology, a transactional epistemology and a dialogic and dialectical methodology. By adopting this paradigm, this study is built on the convictions that knowledge is socially constructed, historically imbedded, and value-mediated, and that individual's standpoints, their positions in the society, affect their ways of knowing and being in the world (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). In this view, "realities" are multiple, in that different people experience and understand them differently (Grbich, 2007). And, these versions of realities are seen as related to an individual's various identities in terms of race, gender, class, and culture (Grbich, 2007). Therefore, this critical constructivist study is meant to capture the localized, contextual versions of Chinese multilingual speakers' understanding and experiences in their group work, and does not claim to be objective truth about multicultural academic interactions. I believe that in a qualitative study,

[T]here is no clear window into the inner life of an individual. Any gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity. There are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the worlds of--and between--the observer and the observed. Subjects, or individuals, are seldom able to give full explanations of their actions or intentions: all they can offer are accounts, or stories, about what they did and why (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 19).

Therefore, terms such as trustworthiness and authenticity have been proposed as alternative evaluation criteria for good constructionist research to replace the traditional positivist terms like internal and external validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2011; Cho &

Trent, 2014). Furthermore, these ontological and epistemological views require a dialogic and dialectical methodology for studies, authorizing participants to play active roles in the study process and to amplify their voices. It thus becomes crucial for researchers to include multiple voices in their writing, such as to include participants' voices in the study process, and to make transparent researchers' biases and the analytic process in their representation. This critical study aims to bring critique and recognition of power hegemony in classroom settings and to call for more inclusive practices in educational settings through presenting multiple voices from Chinese multilingual speakers.

A critical constructivism paradigm combines core elements from critical and constructionist perspectives. These perspectives share similar epistemologies and methods. Lincoln and Guba (2000) suggested that if perspectives share similar axiomatic elements, they could be commensurable with one another. They noted that, "So, for instance, positivism and postpositivism are clearly commensurable. In the same vein, elements of interpretivist/postmodern critical theory, constructivist and participative inquiry fit comfortably together" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 174). Such a combined paradigm gives me the flexibility to adopt a critical perspective on Chinese multilingual speakers' participation while acknowledging that the findings of this study are socially constructed and multiple voices/realities coexist in this process.

My research focus and questions have evolved throughout the research process as my understandings on the topic were shaped by reading scholarly literature in the area, data from the field, and conversations with my participants as well as by being an international student myself. I began with a general interest in better understanding the interaction and dynamics in multicultural groups in western universities. In one of my methodology courses, I had the opportunity to conduct a pilot study on how proximity and contact may have affected learners' oral participation in their academic group discussions. I realized during the data analysis that it was not my real passion to look into the physical or psychological factors of this issue. After more reading, writing and self-questioning, gaining insights from critical studies on the same topic such as Leki (2007), Duff (2002), Ellwood and Nakane (2009) and Morita (2004, 2009), it gradually became clearer to me that my fundamental intention was to understand the socially, historically constructed nature of participation in group work. How do Chinese

multilingual speakers participate in their group discussions? What kind of challenges and difficulties do they encounter and how they react to the difficulties? Do matters like race, class, gender, language or nationhood play a role in their ways of participating? Based on this general theme, I designed the first set of research questions and applied for ethical approval. However, it was not until I went into the field, talked to the instructors and the participants, heard their concerns and passions, and interacted with the data intensively, that I had the understanding and expertise to pose the final set of research questions.

This study intended to examine the relationship between Chinese multilingual speakers' participation and their historical, social contexts by understanding ways they interpret, construct and negotiate meanings of their experiences in academic small group discussions in western English-speaking university classrooms. From a sociocultural perspective, this thesis study is meant to answer the following specific research questions:

- 1) What beliefs and expectations do Chinese multilingual learners have about group work and participation?
- 2) How do they participate in the small group discussions?
- 3) What kind of challenges and difficulties do Chinese multilingual speakers face in small group discussions?
- 4) How do they respond to and act upon those challenges and difficulties?

This study adopts a qualitative research design due to its research paradigm and its sociocultural focus on learners' experiences, emotions, as well as their social contexts. The critical constructionist paradigm designates that a qualitative research approach fits my research focus best because it creates space for dialogue and participants' multiple voices. There are four reasons, in particular, for me to choose a qualitative study design. First, a qualitative research approach is particularly applicable for situating the researcher and the researched into the social contexts in a critical way. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) pointed out that,

Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning (p. 8).

Second, a qualitative research design allows in-depth understanding of multiple, diverse perspectives from different standpoints on one phenomenon. Richardson (2000) suggested that qualitative studies captured multiple, colourful versions of realities. She argued that the concept of triangulation should be replaced by crystallization, as “crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns and arrays, casting off in different directions “ (p. 934). In this study I have included participants’ diverse voices by inviting their perspectives on the same events, incidents and about each other. This was an attempt to gain different sides of one story so as to add to the robustness of my data. In addition, I also invited participants’ comments on my observation methods, used semi-structured open-ended interviews and sought their feedback on the research project. These attempts were designed to include participants’ voices in the research process and to gain a better understanding of the participants’ research experiences in order to add complexity and depth to this study.

Third, a qualitative research design can include various modes of data and thus provides possibilities for looking into complex layers of phenomenon including institutional structures, emotional or psychological aspects. The common data types include field notes, video recordings, interview transcripts and documentations. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) saw qualitative researchers metaphorically as bricoleurs who use different tools, methods and forms of representation to produce a collage to embody complex situations and in-depth understandings (p. 4). They saw the interpretative practices again metaphorically as montage, a method in editing cinematic images. Montage places several different images together and sometimes on top of one another to create a composite. Montage produces multiple effects such as creating a defined sense of complexity, inviting viewers to construct sequences and meanings, and highlighting emotions. Through using the metaphors like bricoleur and montage, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) showed how qualitative research creates spaces for different voices, different understandings, complex or conflicting emotional as well as psychological aspects and even moral meanings to an interpretative experience (p. 5).

Last but not least, a qualitative study design allows the researchers to show their biases, history, background, trajectory, investment and positioning in this process. In summary, I find a qualitative research approach fits best with my epistemological

position, my theoretical lens and research focus. In particular I have adopted ethnographic methods, participant observation and interviewing as my primary research methods.

3.2. Ethnographic methods

Ethnography has long been applied from its origins in anthropology into many disciplines like cultural studies, literary theory, women's studies, sociology, social psychology and even in some applied areas like education, criminology, management and law (Tedlock, 2000). Ethnography became prevalent as a research methodology across fields in social science due to its strength in providing better understandings and descriptive accounts of people's beliefs and daily practices through interacting with subjects (Hammersley, 1998). Ethnography is also a research strategy for analyzing concrete contexts and human development in a cultural surrounding by capturing aspects of space, time, rituals, symbols, rules, norms and so on (Flick, 2007, p. 82). In this thesis, ethnographic methods such as participant observation and interviewing helped me to gain firsthand information about the interaction between my participants and other group members, as well as the interplay between my participants' and the social, educational contexts.

Previous studies of Chinese and other Asian multilingual speakers' oral participation from a critical lens, which I have reviewed in Section 1.4.3, have often adopted ethnographic methods (Ellwood & Nakane, 2009; Leki, 2001, 2007; Morita, 2009; Remedios, et al., 2008). For example, Leki (2001) conducted a five-year longitudinal ethnographic study of six bilingual, non-native English speakers' group work in a large state university in the United States. Her ethnography consists of what she described as "a series of naturalistic case studies" (Leki, 2001, p. 43). Her data included transcriptions of in-depth weekly or biweekly interviews, field notes of observations of classes, transcriptions of interviews with their course instructors, documents such as course syllabuses and handouts, and their written work. In terms of data analysis, she generated basic categories through content analysis of the transcripts and field notes, and then looked for reoccurring and salient themes among them.

Ellwood and Nakane (2009) also conducted classroom ethnography. Their two separate studies (Phase 1 and Phase 2) focused on multilingual students' classroom identities and classroom communications in two Australian universities. In Phase 1 they conducted interviews and 40-hour classroom observations of 15 students and 4 Australian teachers over a 3-month semester. In Phase 2 they conducted interviews and 34-hour classroom observations of 3 Japanese students and 5 Australian teachers over a 3-month semester. These two studies cross-sectionally sampled different groups of multilingual speakers: students in Phase 1 were at an intermediate level of English speaking, whereas students in Phase 2 were advanced English speakers. The data analytic method for Phase 1 was not reported in their paper. In Phase 2, the transcripts of observations were analyzed with discourse analysis, drawing on conversation analysis and Erickson's (2004, quoted in Nakane, 2007) microethnography. Erickson's microethnography entails direct analysis of interaction in detail in order to gain the subtle, socially organized aspect of it (Nakane, 2007, pp. 101-102).

Remedios, Clarke and Hawthorne (2008) conducted a two-year ethnography at an Australian university. The study focused on how overseas-educated students responded and reacted to project-based learning. They collected 30-semi-structured interviews, 42 videotaped project interactions and 65 video-stimulated recall interviews with a total of 30 students. They used a constructivist Grounded Theory approach (Charmaz, 2003) to analyze interview data for emerging themes. They used findings from different sources of data for triangulation to support the trustworthiness of their analysis such as semi-structured interviews, video-stimulated recall interviews, video data and the participant observer journal (Remedios et al., 2008, pp. 204-205).

These examples of work on multilingual students' classroom interactions show the utilization of ethnographic methods, especially participant observation and interviews, and a variety of analytic approaches with respect to their different focuses. Ethnographic methods provide a number of benefits for these qualitative studies and for my thesis project. First, ethnographic methods can capture the naturally occurring human behaviours, such as how students interact in academic groups through first-hand contact. Second, they allow the researcher to provide rich descriptive accounts of students' interactions while taking into account the impact of wider contexts (Hammersley, 1998). As Wolcott (2010) pointed out, "The attention to context and to complex

interrelationships in human lives is what makes ethnographic accounts different from accounts written from the perspective of other social sciences (p. 106).” Furthermore, ethnographic accounts include subjects’ interpretations of their beliefs, desires and emotions, and offer in-depth cultural understandings of their actions. Last but not least, the research process of ethnography is usually an inductive one, which allows unanticipated outcomes to emerge and substantial changes to be made to the research design (Hammersley, 1998).

Contemporary ethnography has changed from its original form, and requires researchers to carefully consider methodological choices. Earlier ethnographical studies tried to achieve a balance between subjective immersion and scientific objectivity—objectively reporting the observed culture. However, Angrosino and Mays de Perez (2000) pointed out that postmodernists and poststructuralists have started to question whether it is desirable or feasible to seek observational objectivity as a goal of research. They noted that “ethnographic truth has come to be seen as a thing of many parts, and no one perspective can claim exclusive privilege in the representation thereof” (p. 675). This view echoes that of critical and constructivist scholars who believe that realities have multiple forms related to an individual researcher’s positioning, and that knowledge is historically, and socially constructed between the researcher and the researched. A critical constructivist paradigm accepts the impact of the researcher—their race, class, gender and life trajectory—on collecting, interpreting and writing up the data. Any findings and experiences presented in my thesis, therefore, should be viewed as interpretative accounts co-constructed by myself and the researched in a particular historical, and social context. A detailed discussion on my positionality and my impact on research is included in Section 3.6.

Health and Street (2008) highlighted the importance of keeping a multilingual perspective in ethnographic approaches for language and literacy studies, which is very pertinent for this study. They noted, “today’s scholars who do their research in nations with one dominant national language have to keep in mind not only multimodal literacies but also multiple languages...Multilingualism is likely to be a daily reality in the lives of students around the world...” (p. 5). In my study, multiliteracy became a daily encounter in data collection processes and a recurring theme in the data analysis stage. Multiliteracy is not only a common characteristic of many academic groups but also a

resource for multilingual learners to reinforce or contest particular discursive positions. I will illustrate this point with findings in Chapter 4 and 5. In the next section, I discuss my understanding and the application of two methods: participant observation and interviewing in this thesis.

3.2.1. Participant observation

Observation has long been considered as “the mainstay of the ethnographic enterprise” (Werner & Schoepfle, 1987). Cultural anthropologist Russell Bernard (2006) argued that “Participant observation involves immersing yourself in a culture and learning to remove yourself every day from that immersion so you can intellectualize what you've seen and heard, put it into perspective, and write about it convincingly (p. 344)”. Some sociologists have described participant-observation as a method and have suggested a continuum for the degrees of participation and observation (as cited in Wolcott, 2010). One extreme of the continuum is when a researcher serves as a total participant and the other end is when the researcher works as a lone observer, unseen and unknown. Wolcott (2010) pointed out that the research focus and research questions should determine which approach of participant observation to be adopted in the study. Wolcott (2010) cited Vidich (1960) saying “it is the kind of data to be gathered, rather than any standard field practice, which determines how ‘native’ the researcher should go” (p. 115).

In this thesis, my participants in both courses were aware of my presence in their lectures and knew that I would observe, take notes and video-record their interactions. Nevertheless, I did not intend to take part in their conversations nor to give any comments on their discussions. Therefore, in this study, I adopted the “participant as observer” approach in which the observer is known to all and functions as an observer but does not expect to (and is not expected to) perform as other participants do (Gold, 1958 as cited in Wolcott, 2010). Or in Bernard’s (2006) alternative term, I was a “participating observer” who was an outsider participating in some aspects of life around the participants and recorded what I could (p. 347). Adopting this “participant as observer” role, I had the privilege of being in the “present”—observing and experiencing closely the happenings in the class and during the group project, meanwhile keeping the possibility in recording, checking devices, and writing down field notes.

Participant observation can bring several benefits to qualitative study, according to Bernard (2006). First, it makes it possible to collect different kinds of data such as video and audio recordings, researchers' field notes, documents circulated to the participants and photos. Second, Bernard (2006) claimed that when the researcher spends enough time in the site, participants get used to his or her presence and come to overlook him or her and do what they normally would do. Though the impact of the researcher is unlikely to be totally ignored, this may help to keep their impact at a minimum. Third, the researcher is able to ask sensible "insider" questions as he or she has gained the local knowledge and been immersed in the daily actions of the participants. The researcher would also be able to give an intuitive understanding of happenings in a culture and confidence in making meaning of data (Bernard, 2006, p. 356).

3.2.2. Interviewing as co-constructing and negotiating

I used semi-structured individual interviews as one of the two main methods for collecting information on Chinese multilingual speakers' views on their oral participation in group discussions. Fontana and Frey (2000) pointed out that interviewing is one of the most common and powerful means for gaining information and understandings. Roulston (2010) categorized contemporary and traditional ways of interviewing in six major paradigms: Neo-positivist, romantic, constructionist², postmodern, transformative and decolonizing approach. A neo-positivist interview tries to minimize the researchers' influence or biases by using good questions to generate high quality, valid findings (p. 52). A romantic approach refers to the interviewer establishes rapport with the participants to generate "self-revelation or true confessions" so as to produce an in-depth interpretations of the participants' lives (p. 56). A postmodern approach, according to Roulston, treats participants' doings and sayings as "situated performance" for the researcher to deconstruct and transform into "performance texts in multiple genres, such as fiction, and poetry" (p. 64). A constructionist approach, which I adopt in this thesis, conceptualizes interviewing as a situational practice and that both interviewers and interviewees co-construct meanings together in unstructured or semi-structured interviews (Roulston, 2010, p. 60; Brinkmann, 2014, p. 282). Scholars in this line,

² Constructionist: this is the term that Roulston (2010) used, which I adopt in the rest of the chapter.

according to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), Fontana and Frey (2000), Talmy (2010), and Schwandt (2015), contest the idea that interviewing is an objective, neutral means to solicit people's viewpoints. The transformative view of interviewing refers to dialogic interview processes that involve creating new thinking and understanding of both the researcher and the participants for fostering social changes. Lastly, the decolonizing approach, according to Roulston (2010), shifts the power to the researched by designing and co-conducting research that will be beneficial for the researched community.

Many qualitative researchers share the view of the constructionist approach that interviewing is a socially constructed, context-specific practice (Brinkmann, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Fontana & Frey, 2000; Schwandt, 1997, 2015). Schwandt (2015) pointed out that in qualitative studies, interviewing may be regarded as "a particular kind of discursive, narrative, or linguistic event or practice unfolding in a specific sociopolitical context", in which the interviewer and the participants jointly construct "the content of the interview" (p. 191). Along a similar line, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) acknowledged the impact of interviewers on the interviewing process and argued that it is a dialogic process. They asserted:

The interview is a conversation, the art of asking questions and listening. It is not a neutral tool, for at least two people create the reality of the interview situation. In this situation answers are given. Thus the interview produces situated understandings grounded in specific interactional episodes. This method is influenced by the personal characteristics of the interviewer, including race, class, ethnicity, and gender (p. 633).

It is worth noting that in this dialogic, co-constructing conversation, the interviewees and the researcher are not at equal positions to generate understandings. Typically, the researcher and the participants are in hierarchical relationship in which the researcher possesses the power in designing questions, leading the conversation, making interpretations, and granting voices. Therefore, Smith (1999) urged researchers to reflect on their power and positionality, and exercise caution when reporting findings that may cause harm for the participants. To make my biases and power transparent, I discuss my life trajectory and positionality in Section 3.6.

Furthermore, Fontana and Frey (2000) argued that interpreting interview data involves unpacking how the social context contributes to meaning. Quoting Holstein and Gubrium (1997), Fontana and Frey (2000) proposed a reflexive approach of

interviewing, which not only looking at the “whats” of interviews but also the “hows” of them—their context, particular situations, nuances, manners, people around and so on. Fontana and Frey (2000) emphasized that interviews are negotiated text because

[R]esearchers are part of the interactions they seek to study and influence those interactions....Interviewers are increasingly seen as active participants in interactions with respondents, and interviews are seen as negotiated accomplishments of both interviewers and respondents that are shaped by the contexts and situations in which they take place (p. 663).

I designed the individual interviews for this study to be semi-structured. The semi-structured interview is one of the most widespread forms of interviews in the human and social sciences (Brinkmann, 2014). I regard the semi-structured interview as appropriate for a dialogic and dialectical methodology because it creates space for participants to play an active role in the research process by sharing their voices, interests and concerns. It allowed me to prepare a list of questions to provide some general directions and stimulus for my dialogues with the participants. At the same time, such a structure is flexible so as to let participants “raise questions and concerns in their own words and from their own perspectives” (Brinkmann, 2014, p. 285). In addition, semi-structured interviews show the role of the researcher/interviewer in the interviewing process. As Brinkmann (2014) explicated, semi-structured interviewing can

make better use of the knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues by allowing much more leeway for following up on whatever angles are deemed important by the interviewee; as well, the interviewer has a greater chance of becoming visible as a knowledge-producing participant in the process itself, rather than hiding behind a preset interview guide (Brinkmann, 2014, p. 286).

3.3. Setting

This study was undertaken in a middle-size comprehensive university in an urban area in the west coast of Canada. Canada is one of the most ethnically diverse nations in the world and it adopts multiculturalism as its official policy at both the constitutional and legislative level. The 2011 Canadian census reported that Canada has a total population of 33 million with 4.17% First Nations and 19.1% visible minority groups other than Aboriginal peoples (Chui & Statistics Canada, 2013). The self-reported ethnic

origins include Canadian, English, French, Scottish, Irish, German, Italian, Chinese, First Nations, Ukrainian, East Indian and more. There are two official languages—English and French—in the country, while a multitude of other languages are used such as Chinese, Punjabi, Spanish, German and Italian.

The university uses English as a medium of instruction except some courses are taught in French. In 2015-16 academic year, there were nearly 30, 000 undergraduate students enrolled into the university and 17.6% of its population are international students, according to 2016 Fall International Student Report by the university's research department. Sixty-six percent of the international students speak a Chinese language in 2012-2013 when this study was conducted. The student body is significantly ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse. The top source countries of students include Canada, China, Iran, United States, India, Korea (South and North), Indonesia, Malaysia, Brazil and others. In the following two sections, I describe the specific steps and issues in the research process of each data collecting phase such as recruitment, participants, course set up, observation and interview sessions.

3.4. Data collection and analysis

My project involved two data collection phases: Phase 1 in a linguistic undergraduate course and Phase 2 in a business undergraduate course in two semesters from September 2012 to April 2013. In each study, I had four focal participants. I observed and video-recorded each focal participant's in-class group discussions through the course of one semester (3 months). I also observed and took notes of their classroom behaviours in the courses. At the beginning and the end of the semester, each focal participant was interviewed individually on their feelings and experiences of their group interactions. When the term was over and grades were submitted, I interviewed their instructors on their impressions and views about participants' oral participation and their performance in their courses. I provide detailed specific information on the process and the focal participants of each study in Section 3.6 and 3.7.

The main data in this study include 17 video recordings of group interactions, 16 audio-recordings of individual student interviews and three individual instructor

interviews. Other than participant observation and interviewing, six other sources provided valuable information: 1) collecting class handouts and audio-recordings of the lectures if there were any; 2) collecting copies of instructions and requirements for group activities; 3) collecting grading rubrics; 4) collecting students' peer evaluations on group activities; 5) collecting the instructor's impressions and comments on the focal participants' oral participation and their academic performance; and 6) collecting students' works related to their group activities.

Data analysis in this study occurred in three cycles. Saldaña (2013) (cited in Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014) divided coding into two major stages: First Cycle coding in which codes are assigned to data chunks; and Second Cycle coding which deals with relationships and patterns within codes (pp. 73-74). In this study, I have used one more cycle at the beginning stage to help to generate codes that were appropriate for in-depth analysis in the second and third cycles. The initial preliminary cycle of analysis was undertaken when the data was first collected. I summarized emergent issues and questions that I felt were worthy of attention after each class observation and after each interview. Some of these topics were further explored with participants in follow up interviews. Based on these topics and questions, I carefully developed an open-ended coding scheme for the second cycle.

After all the data were collected, the second cycle included transcribing and coding the data using the open-ended coding scheme via computer software, NVivo10. I used two coding schemes for the video data and the interview data due to their different foci. The video recorded group interactions were directly coded using thematic analysis, and focused on speech acts such as the sequencing, turn-taking and other communicational devices used by participants in their discussions. I attempted to identify their speech acts, turn-taking, turn construction, openings and closings, code switching, pauses and other non-verbal cues such as eye contact and body language. These conversational details provided insights for me to see the strategies participants utilized for negotiating their oral participation in their group interactions. Selected segments of videos were later transcribed using Jefferson's (2004) transcription conventions (Appendix A).

Interview transcripts were coded mainly on the content with a particular focus on matters related to my theoretical framework informed by critical theories,

intersectionality, language as a symbolic capital and performativity. The topics that I focused on comprised of race, class, gender, language, ethnicity, nationhood, length of stay in Canada, stereotyping, marking, evaluation, and so on. I also kept the coding scheme open-ended so as to include any salient themes emerging from the data themselves. Other sources of data such as students' writing, course handouts and marking rubrics were also examined for any related themes or issues pertinent to the topic of this study.

The third step in data analysis is pattern coding (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014): to gather, display, compare and cross-analyze the coded data looking for salient themes, emergent patterns and relationships among the codes. During this process, I used Matrix Display (Miles et al., 2014) to map out the codes to see how the coding units interconnected. Matrix Display is a method to “chart or table the data—including codes—for analytic purposes. They organize the vast array of condensed material into an “at-a-glance” format for reflection, verification, conclusion drawing, and other analytic acts (Miles, 2014, p. 91).” Through Matrix Display, I compared and crosschecked results from the initial preliminary summary with the computer-coded findings, as well as across courses and participants. Recurring themes and patterns pertinent to the research questions were highlighted and explored by linking the findings to my theoretical framework, to relevant theories and literature. Detailed results and findings will be reported in Chapter 4. A sample of the data matrix and the coding schemes is included in Appendix B.

The use of computer software, NVivo10 in particular, in my second and third cycle coding was a practical choice. NVivo10 is a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). Using computer programs to assist in data collection, storage, management, analysis and reporting “has become a widely accepted strategy” across multiple academic disciplines (Silver & Lewins, 2014, p. 606). Many scholars pointed out that the use of CAQDAS does not replace the role of the researchers, but is mainly to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the analytic process, to improve researchers' immersed interpreting experience with a large range of data types, large data corpora, and to have new ways to investigate and visualize data (Bazeley, 2007; Kelle, 1995; Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014; Saldaña, 2014; Silver & Lewins, 2014). It was important for me to learn that Nvivo10 is compatible with my research paradigm

before adopting it. CAQDAS such as NVivo is “method free” as the software “does not prescribe a method, but rather it supports a wide range of methodological approaches” deployed by the researchers for their particular research questions and study designs (Bazeley, 2007, p. 3).

I used NVivo10 for storage, transcribing, data linking, coding, analytic memoing, data display, and drawing patterns (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). First, my data set included a variety of formats, such as texts, video recordings, audio recordings and photos. NVivo10 allowed me to store and organize these different types of data in one interface and it is very easy to switch between these different types of data. Second, Nvivo10 provided tools for transcribing audio and video recordings into written transcripts. And, the transcripts were codable and synchronized with their original recordings. Therefore, it was very convenient for me to check or edit the transcripts. Third, other than regular content coding, NVivo10 allowed me to conduct thematic analysis directly on video data. In this study, it was important for me to keep the non-verbal features of participants’ oral participation in the analysis. Such nonverbal features are usually challenging to keep intact and show their significance in written transcripts. Coding directly on the video clips meant I could actually specify, categorize and interconnect the non-verbal features of the interaction such as the pause, the eye contact or body languages with my codes. For example, I linked segments of video recordings directly to one or a few codes. When I clicked on the code, it showed me all the video segments that I linked with that code, and I could play them right away or check their respective transcripts. As Bazeley (2007) suggested, NVivo software allows the researchers to theorize their data “without losing access to the source data or contexts from which the data have come” (p. 2).

Fourth, the coding scheme—the nodes in Nvivo10 were easy to apply, expand, refine and visually illustrate relational patterns. Since I used an open-ended coding scheme, I created new codes, updated or revised existing codes, wrote analytic notes about codes, and applied revisions across the coded data in Nvivo10. I also connected codes to one another and visually illustrated the network of codes so as to seek potential relational patterns. Last but not least, Nvivo10 was helpful in the reporting stage as it could display all the coded data across different cases once a code was selected. I could

then select coded data across participants to determine which one to include in my writing.

The design of the data collection and analytic methods were influenced by this study's paradigm, its theoretical framework and research focus, which were all tied with my beliefs, views, life trajectory and preferences. With the understanding that all research is biased and all findings have political implications, I now discuss the biases and politics in this study.

3.5. Biases in this study

The ethnographer may need to realize that what he or she observes is conditioned by who he or she is, and that different ethnographers--equally well trained and well versed in theory and method but of different gender, race, or age might well stimulate a very different set of interactions, and hence a different set of observations leading to a different set of conclusions (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000, p. 689).

The choice of a research paradigm affects the roles played by the researcher and by the participants in that particular study (Grbich, 2007). In this critical constructionist study, I consider knowledge (truth) to be "socially constructed, culturally mediated and historically situated" (McLaren, 2009, p. 73). In the view of Foucault (as cited in McLaren, 2009), truth and knowledge are not absolute but relational, dependent upon history, cultural context and power structures in a given location. Therefore, the results and findings of this study are considered situated in the current historical, specific social contexts, and I acknowledge as well that they are co-constructed outcomes between the participants and the researcher. The meaning of the interview questions were unfolded and constructed by both the researchers and the participants together. And, I regarded students' responses in the interviews as also being influenced by power dynamics in the social context and under current institutional structures.

Furthermore, every step of the research process such as the choice of methods, ways of transcribing and interpreting, and writing are also interest-bound by the researchers' intentions. According to Roberts (1997), transcribing interviews and interactions are considered as social acts in which transcribers imbue their personal beliefs and ideologies in the transcripts (as cited in Gu, 2010). Interpreting narratives is a

process of interactively constructing meanings by the researcher and the participants together because researchers are “narrators” in the process of interpreting narratives (Chase, 2005). Even the way of representing findings is usually biased with researchers’ subjectivities. Toohey (2000) pointed out that all representations are political in that our “seeing and knowing” are invested in social/political/personal interests (Bordo, 1990 as cited in Toohey, 2000) and our writing is influenced by our particular social positions (Hall, 1990 as cited in Toohey, 2000). Therefore, Diana Burton and Steve Bartlett (2009) noted that, “No research into aspects of education, no matter how detailed, extensive and apparently objective, can tell the whole story. All research is positioned” (p. 2). In this regard, it is possible to consider that this study was subjectively performative, because it not only “describes” reality but also in some degree “creates” what the researcher, attempted to see (Law, 2004). Therefore, it is crucial for researchers to “engage in reflexivity” to make clear how one’s self is involved in co-creating the findings—through the design of research questions, the choices of methods, ways of representation for what to be included and what to be left out, and power dynamics between the researcher and the researched.

3.5.1. My life trajectory

It is important to reveal my life trajectories and positionality in this section so that my pre-assumptions and biases can be transparent to the readers of my research. I am originally from Shanghai, China and came to Canada as an international student in my twenties. I speak Shanghai dialect and Mandarin as my mother tongues with an advanced level of spoken and written English, and a self-taught low-intermediate level of Cantonese. My original field was in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. I obtained a Master of Education degree from University of Toronto in second language education with a research project concerning three case studies of Chinese language instructors from diverse backgrounds (from Mainland China, Taiwan and Canada). Through the course of my studies, I continued teaching and tutoring Chinese language to young adults both in and out of university settings. After graduation, I immigrated to Canada and since then have become a university lecturer of Chinese language in a middle-sized university in Canada. My academic interests in the social role of language and the impact of sociocultural factors on learning began to grow while teaching in the university.

Hence, in 2009, I started my journey of pursuing a doctoral degree of education with a focus on languages and cultures.

The years being a doctoral student were very fruitful. I was busy fulfilling my responsibilities as a teaching professional, an academic student, and a mother. My first child, Michelle was born in the second year of my course work, right before I took my comprehensive exam. When I started data collection, I was pregnant with my second child, Jefferson. At that time, I was in my mid-thirties. It was not easy to learn to keep a good balance between different roles in life. I remembered feeling anxious and exhausted during the time of collecting data, trying to concentrate and attend to the details of what I needed to observe. I acknowledged that these personal and emotional changes also affected my data—what I observed and ignored.

My interests in Chinese multilingual speakers' oral participation developed from a combination of factors including my personal experiences, professional concerns and academic relevance. I myself have experienced the difficulties and challenges of participating in academic discussions. In some groups, it felt easier to blend in and get involved in the discussions. Nevertheless, I felt that in some other situations, the dynamics of the context could affect my desire and confidence in participating in group or class discussions. Such atmospheres could be related to many elements such as the subject content, the setup of the group discussion, the attitudes of my peers or professors towards me and other international students or even simply the segregated seating arrangements of the class. From my personal experiences, from stories I heard from other international students as well as from my colleagues, and from scholarly work on critical theory and academic discourse socialization, I recognized a need for investigating the issue from a critical, sociocultural perspective. I felt a strong obligation, a sense of commitment to study multilingual speakers' group work, the historically, socially constructed aspect of their participation, and to better understand and bring light to their struggles in multicultural groups. The purpose of this research project is to increase awareness for instructors and for the focal participants of the power imbalances within academic groups so as to promote inclusive practices in multicultural classrooms.

3.5.2. Positionalities and voices in this study

In this study, I find myself at multiple, dialectical, fluid positions in relation to the participants in different times with different participants and in different contexts. As I outlined in Chapter 2, this study adopts a poststructuralist perspective on identity that sees identity positions as historically and socially imbedded, produced and reinvented through language and discourses in different social relations. This is what I have felt through the interviews with my participants. Some aspects of my identity were drawn out as primary in particular contexts and afforded me different positions/relationships to my participants. For example, one participant Jo is a mature female student from Taiwan. Through sharing my life and stories of adapting to Canada with her, my experience as a middle-aged woman, a Mandarin-speaking immigrant to Canada paralleled hers. She even offered advice on Chinese names for my daughter. I felt a strong rapport being built with her and she treated me like one of her peers, which made me feel like an insider. Indeed, she generously and truthfully revealed many of her personal biases with me and I sincerely appreciated her trust. However, in some cases, my positions to my participants were a bit ambiguous and complex. I might seem like an insider being a Chinese multilingual speaker like them, but also an outsider, as I am a university faculty member and a colleague to their professors.

Sometimes, the topics of interview questions formed certain contexts, which also played a role in situating my relationship to my participants. For example, when discussing gender issues in oral discussions, I noticed that I received different responses from my male participants compared to female participants. The male participants tended to dismiss the question quickly. My role as a woman might have affected the way the male participants reacted to this question. Another case worth pointing out was participant Candy, a native Cantonese speaker and a former student from my Mandarin language course. I noticed that she attempted to use more Mandarin in group work and voluntarily took up a translator role between Cantonese and Mandarin for her group members. In the interviews, she tried to justify the dominant use of Cantonese over Mandarin in their group interactions, which I suspect resulted from her assumption of my preference for them to use more Mandarin in their group work.

The multiple negotiations of my positionalities existed in my interactions with the course instructors as well. On one hand, I felt like an insider to university instructors

when sharing my concerns about multilingual speakers' oral participation and the purpose of this study with the instructor participants from a professional perspective. Meanwhile, I felt that in some situations, the instructors were very careful about making comments and sharing general impressions on the Chinese multilingual speakers. In this case, my status as a Chinese multilingual speaker versus their status as monolingual native English speakers could place me as an outsider in our interviews. Though my positions to participants in this study were multiple, on-goingly changing and locally negotiated, I was still deeply impressed by how they sincerely and generously shared their thoughts, beliefs, biases and feelings with me. The stories, concerns, emotions, and challenges that my participants experienced were brought to me vividly as I saw, heard or experienced with them together.

The multiple, dynamic researcher positions are likely to affect participants' voices in the accounts collected in the study. It is important in this critical study to share the privileged researcher's subjective experiences in the representation but equally important to not lose or silence the voices of the others—that of the participants (Fine, Weis, Weseen & Wong, 2000, p. 109). In order to include their voices in the representation, I followed two major principles. First, participants' lived experiences are provided, where applicable, with "long narratives, colourful and edited, drawn with/from informants" (Fine, Weis, Weseen & Wong, 2000, p. 119). Fine et al. (2000) suggested that researchers should allow the participants' voices to stand on their own without interrupting, reframing them with our own theories. She further emphasized that it is also important to situate participants' voices in specific historical, social contexts so as to minimize any misunderstanding or moral censoring. Therefore, when I present findings in Chapter 4 and 5, I give detailed descriptions of participants' behaviours in group interaction as well as its immediate context. In addition, interview questions were included with participants' comments so readers are clear the circumstances and the role I played in co-constructing meaning with the participants. Second, I keep the heterogeneity, contradiction and multiplicity of participants' accounts. According to Fine et al. (2000), convergence of participants' understandings is not desirable because human subjectivities are considered "multiple, varied, conflicting, and contradictory" from a poststructuralist perspective (p. 119). Therefore, acknowledging the multiplicity, fluidity and conflicting nature of voices in participants' accounts offered an opportunity to include

and respect the true meaning and “consciousness” (Fine, et al., 2000) of our participants.

3.5.3. Other impacts on research

My status as an observer as well as a faculty member could have altered my participants’ behaviours in their group discussions and could have created an unequal power relationship between my participants and me in this study. One student from Phase 1 and one from Phase 2 were my former students. They might have felt slightly uncomfortable and might have interacted differently in the group interactions had I not been an observer. For example, when there were conflicts arising from group interactions, students might have behaved “nicely” without revealing their true emotions or responses because “a teacher” was present. Furthermore, participants might not be straightforward about their opinions and/or “perform” particular thoughts to the researcher/the teacher.

I believe that my status as a regular university faculty granted me privileged access to find instructors to participate in this thesis study. Moe³ is my former colleague and director. When he learned about my difficulty in finding a research site as well as the topic of the study, he agreed enthusiastically to allow me to conduct research in his class and even revised his lesson plans to create more opportunities for group discussions. The other instructor, Bob, was introduced to me by Jack, the coordinator of the Business course and Jack had just participated in a study conducted by my colleague. Jack was very interested in the topic of Chinese multilingual speakers’ oral participation and introduced me to his colleagues who taught other sessions of the same Business course. Since we all have worked at the same university, they fully shared and appreciated the examination of issues related to Chinese multilingual speakers’ oral participation.

For a quick summary, this study adopts a critical constructionist paradigm, which places emphasis on the importance of the historical, social contexts and the socially constructed nature of knowledge in the study. I shared my background, roles, biases and assumptions that have shaped the design, collection, interpretation and representation

³ Moe: This is a pseudonym chosen by the course professor in Phase 1.

of this study. I acknowledged that the research findings were a co-construction among my participants, the historical social contexts and the researcher collectively. I present both voices of the researcher and the researched by clarifying my own subjectivities, explaining my impact on the study and my decision on presenting the multiple, fluid, contradictory voices of my participants through rich narratives and accounts in Chapter 4. Next, I continue to describe the specific process of the two study phases.

3.6. Overview of Phase 1

This thesis study contains two data sets from two separate courses. The first data set was collected in a lower division Linguistics course that ran from September to December 2012. It was a general elective course open to undergraduate students. The course focused on introducing fundamental linguistic concepts. The course instructor used a variety of instructional strategies such as mini-lectures, small-group and whole-class discussions. In almost every lecture (20 out of 23), the professor arranged one or two small group discussion(s) on assigned problems or tasks pertaining to the lesson topics. Students formed their groups usually with other students near them, and the groups ranged from two to five students. The instructor walked around the room to answer questions. The discussions usually went on for around 10 minutes. After each small group discussion, the professor usually led whole-class discussions for groups to share their opinions. Since the majority of students tended to sit at the same spot every class, some participants almost had the same group throughout the semester. The outcomes and opinions of the small-group discussions were not evaluated or counted in students' final grades.

3.6.1. Recruitment and participants in Phase 1

The course enrolled over 40 students with diverse cultural backgrounds. About one quarter of the students appeared to have Asian origins. Usually around 25 students attended the lectures. The groups usually consisted of three to four students. At the first and second classes, I introduced the study to the students and distributed flyers and consent forms. Twenty-one students agreed to participate in the study, giving me consent to videotape their group discussions. Three Chinese-speaking multilingual speakers voluntarily agreed to be the focal participants—to be interviewed twice --at the

beginning and the end of the semester. I asked the fourth participant to be a focal student and s/he accepted. The four Chinese multilingual speakers had various levels of English⁴ from a high-intermediate level (John) to native proficiency (Ann). Their proficiency in Chinese was also diverse—Jo and John were native Chinese speakers, Jenn’s Mandarin was native-like, but Ann only knew spoken Cantonese. These participants were aged from 20 to mid thirties. They had a diverse range of length of stay in Canada from three years to 20 years, and one was born and grew up in Canada. One participant was an international student who had been in Canada for three years. One participant was male and the rest were female participants. The participants had various experiences in group work and exposure to the academic culture. Group profiles are summarized in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Profiles of focal participants in Phase 1

Name	Gender	Age	Country of origin	Year of undergraduate study	Length of stay in Canada	Group work experience	Language
Jo	Female	30s	Taiwan	2 nd degree	15 years	extensive	Native Mandarin, Advanced English.
John	Male	22	China	1 year	3.5 years	2 years	Native Mandarin, High-intermediate English.
Jenn	female	21	China	3 years	12 years	extensive	Native Mandarin. Native-like English. Native like Cantonese.
Ann	female	20	Canada	1 year	20 years	extensive	Native English. Native-like Cantonese.

⁴ The descriptions on participants’ English and Chinese proficiencies are my impressions, which are not based on any assessment instruments. As a long-time language teacher, I assume they are approximately what such assessment would show.

3.6.2. Observing group discussions

Data set 1 included 11 videos of in-class group discussions—a total of 75-minute of video recordings, nine audio-recorded interviews—six hours of audio recordings, extensive field notes, handouts for group discussions, course slides as well as course materials. The four focal participants were seated in different parts of the classroom and thus in different discussion groups. For practical reasons, I decided to take turns to observe their group interactions one at a time in each class. If I observed Jo in one class, I switched to John in the next lecture. If a participant was absent, which happened only once, I observed that participant in a later class. By the end of the term, I had three videos of Jo, three videos of John, two videos of Jenn, two videos of Ann, and one video with John, Jenn and Ann all in one group. The observation protocol is attached in Appendix C.

I usually notified the participants about their days for recordings in advance, either in person or via email, so they could come early and prepare for it. Before the class started, I debriefed them briefly about what would happen, where they wanted the camera to be and how to attach the microphone. I then prepared the video camera on a tripod at the back of the classroom, connected the voice recorder and waited for the moment to set up and begin shooting. During the class, I observed the lectures as a regular student. When the instructor began to start group discussions, I set up the camera close to the focal participant's group, took notes and recorded their group interactions. There were two main challenges in videotaping participants' group interactions. One was to record clear voices in the group discussions. The classroom was spacious with over 25 students but with everyone in the course involved in discussions, the noise level was quite high. It was difficult to distinguish from the recordings the voices of the group especially if the participant was soft spoken. I dealt with this issue by using a wireless microphone recorder for the focal participant and a small digital voice recorder for the rest of the group. These supplemented audio recordings were a good triangulation approach when the voices in the videos were hard to distinguish.

The other challenge was to videotape the non-verbal features of the discussion group. Since the group usually faced each other, it was difficult to find an angle that could capture every member's face. The bolted-to-the-floor furniture in the classroom,

which constrained the camera to be placed only at one side of the group, increased the difficulty. Therefore, sometimes a non-focal participant's body language, facial expressions or eye contact were not captured in the video recordings. Since the group members' non-verbal conversational cues were not the focus of this study, I felt this shortcoming was not as crucial as it might have been.

3.6.3. Procedures and issues in semi-structured interviews

While participants could choose to be interviewed in English or Mandarin, all of them chose English except Sandy. The first and second interviews for focal participants used different interview schedules due to their different purposes. The interview schedules served as guides for me to stimulate their responses on the research topics. I revised the interview schedules after I had an initial preparation meeting with the course instructor, Moe. The revision received ethical approval from the university research ethics board as an amendment on September 10th, 2012. The first student interview at the beginning of the term was designed to get an understanding of beliefs about group work, their goals and expectations about how they would participate in the groups, and their past experiences in mixed groups. The second interview at the end of the term was intended to focus on participants' self evaluations of their oral participation in the course, their reflections on factors that affected their participation, and their feedback on the organization of group work in the course. Both interview schedules are attached (Appendix D).

The instructor interview was conducted after the term was over and after grades were submitted. The purpose of it was to gain an understanding of the instructor's thoughts of using and structuring group work in the lectures, views on multilingual speakers' oral participation, and impressions of the focal participants' performances in the course. The instructor interview schedule is attached (Appendix E).

The nine interview recordings ranged from 35 to 60 minutes. The interviews were kept open-ended, allowing participants to elaborate on a topic or to develop new topics that they felt relevant in the interviews. Two methodological issues needed to be noted. First, the interview questions about participants' beliefs and experiences with group work were intended to be general but caused confusion for the participants in the interviews. They seemed to find casual, general questions difficult to answer. They asked for further

clarifications and examples, urging me to be specific about what I was seeking through those questions. By providing specific examples and meanings for the questions, I as the researcher contributed to constructing the meaning of questions and a context for my participants' responses. My way of interpreting the issue and my standpoints inevitably affected their understanding of the issues. Second, the research process may have created transformative impacts on participants' views and beliefs. In the initial interviews, the four focal participants, especially John and Ann, were uncritical about issues related to social inequalities. They tended to neutralize issues arising from their past experiences or stories for objective reasons or simply with a "don't know". However, in the second interviews, they seemed more familiar and comfortable talking about critical aspects of things like race, nationality, accents and discrimination. Jo recognized and identified several situations in which she received what she perceived to be unfair treatment and her own biases towards fellow students. I think the research experience itself, as well as the co-construction of discourses in the interviews, might have raised the critical awareness of my participants and contributed in some degree to their changing perceptions.

3.7. Overview of Phase 2

The second study was conducted in an upper-division undergraduate business writing course for all business students from January to April 2013. Third year Business school students needed a certain grade from the course in order to get into certain majors. This writing course had multiple class sessions taught by different instructors. All these sessions were taught by different instructors but with a similar course design. The course had a reputation of a high failing rate and strict marking and the students were quite serious and nervous about it. The course focused on the mechanics of doing business research and formal writing in a business genre and was designed for students to have ample practice in individual and group writing, such as they would face in a real workplace. Therefore, the course content was delivered with many writing tasks for students to complete either in class or out of class.

The organization of group work was very different from that in Phase 1—high-stakes and strictly structured. In this course, each student group needed to complete four assignments, which counted a total of 40% towards their final grade. Groups were

usually assigned by the course instructor. At the beginning of the semester, students were asked to complete a survey on their goals in this course, their interests, learning styles and group preferences. Based on the results of the survey, the instructor assigned students into groups of three or four with a consideration of similar English writing skills (good writers with good writers) and goals but of mixed ethnic, major and cultural backgrounds. The groups then stayed working together on all the group writing assignments through the whole semester. The groups were expected to work extensively together both in and out of classes to complete the tasks. The group tasks included one research outline, one research draft, one letter case study, and one final written report.

This course in the past had exacerbated conflicts and varying levels of investment in group work among the students. The course coordinator and course instructors thus applied several measures to ensure students took responsibility for and showed accountability in their group work. Students were required to do three peer reviews on their group members' contributions and attitudes in the group work. Students needed to report problematic issues so as to solve them early to prevent causing further harm in the final written report. These reviews were counted 1% each, a total 3% towards their final grade.

3.7.1. Recruitment and participants in Phase 2

The study was originally designed to be conducted in the class of Jack, the coordinator of this Business writing course. Due to an enrolment issue, he was unable to participate but he referred me to another course instructor, Bob, who kindly agreed to participate in the project. Bob was a sessional instructor and he used teaching materials such as course syllabus, slides and marking rubrics that were mostly developed by Jack.

Recruitment of student participants was facilitated by the course instructor. I introduced the purpose, procedures and risks of the study in the first class. The instructor then included the consent questions in his survey assignment asking all the students whether they were willing to participate. According to their responses and some other factors like writing skills, cultural backgrounds and academic goals, the instructor assigned a group for me to observe in the course. There were a total of 48 students in this course. The majority of the students had Chinese backgrounds. As it was a third

year course, most of the students had studied in the university over three years and some were repeating the course for a better grade. There was one Chinese young woman who withdrew her consent to participate because she was afraid that she would be placed in a group with other Chinese multilingual speakers. She was concerned that she would receive a lower grade in this course if she participated in the project working with other Chinese speakers. It was clear to me that the students in this course were very concerned about their grades and the atmosphere was competitive.

All four students in the observed group agreed to be focal participants and signed the consent forms. These participants were of Chinese origin with diverse educational, language backgrounds and varied lengths of stay in Canada. Two were male and two were female and names here are all pseudonyms picked by themselves. Aaron, was born and grew up in Canada with native English proficiency, spoken Cantonese proficiency and a beginner level Mandarin. Sandy moved to Canada from Mainland China after her elementary education. She was quite fluent in English, Cantonese and Mandarin, with intermediate level in French and Japanese. Candy was an immigrant from Hong Kong to Canada in her late secondary education. Jackson was an immigrant from Mainland China. He was a native speaker of Mandarin and had a high-intermediate level of English. Detailed participant profiles are included in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Profiles of focal participants in Phase 2

Name	Gender	Age	Country of origin	Year of undergraduate study	Length of stay in Canada	Group work experience	Language
Sandy	Female	20	China	3 years	8 years	extensive	Native Cantonese and Mandarin; Advanced English, Intermediate French and Japanese
Aaron	Male	20	Canada	3 years	15 years	extensive	Native English, Spoken Cantonese, Beginner Mandarin
Candy	Female	22	Hong Kong	3 years	8 years	3 years	Native Cantonese, Native like Mandarin, Advanced English
Jackson	Male	23	China	3 years	3 years	A few years	Native Mandarin, High-intermediate English

3.7.2. Observing group projects

Data set 2 includes six video recordings of in-class group interaction, 10 audio recordings of individual interviews, 15 audio recordings of out-of-class group discussions, and extensive documents including course syllabus, lecture slides, requirements for writing exercises, grading rubrics, student writing samples and team reviews. Other than the in-class group discussions, the focal participants met often after class to complete their assignments together. These out-of-class discussions were audio recorded by one of the focal participants.

The observed group worked together in almost every lecture after their group was formed in the third class. The instructor allowed the group to work in a small room adjacent to the lecture room, in which I could observe them without interruptions or difficulty hearing. On the days for video recordings, I set up the video camera in that room with a microphone recorder before the class started. When the class split into

groups, my observed group would move to the small room, and I observed and recorded their interactions in the room. There was a round table with several chairs in the middle of the room. Participants usually sat around the table and faced each other. The lengths of videos in this course were usually about an hour.

Being able to record in the small room specifically for the observed group helped to improve the sound quality. However, capturing the participants' nonverbal communicational cues remained a challenge. As the students naturally sat around the table facing each other, it was not possible to capture every individual's face from the front angle. In addition, the participants sometimes moved around with props such as reading articles, laptops, etc. I did not move the camera around to follow them as I did not want to further affect their interactions and their work. Therefore, my strategy was to stand next to them and take notes about what I saw them doing. These field notes also served as useful tips when I had difficulty later interpreting what was happening in the videos.

3.7.3. Procedures and issues in interviews

The individual interviews were semi-structured as those in Phase 1. The interviews followed two guides that were slightly revised from Phase 1 to fit the context of this course. The two semi-structured interviews were conducted when the group was formed and when the course was over. Similar to Phase 1, the first interview was designed to gain understandings of participants' beliefs, views and past experiences with group work. The second interview focused on their evaluations of their and their members' contribution to the outcome in this course, the impact of language and other social factors on their participation and their feedback on the structures of group work in this course. Both interviews were kept open-ended so the participants and I could explore emergent topics if needed (The two interview protocols are in Appendix F). The instructor, Bob, was interviewed after the semester was over and the grades were submitted. Because Jack, the course coordinator designed the course and developed most of the course materials, I also interviewed him after the semester was over to enrich the data and to ensure I fully understood the intention, expectation of and issues in the group work in this course. The interview questions for the instructors are in Appendix G.

The student interviews ranged from 40 minutes to 90 minutes. They were conducted mainly in English. In a few cases, when there was a breakdown in communication, sometimes the participant or I switched to Mandarin. The transcripts were translated first and analyzed afterwards. The focal participants in this study expressed a feeling of difficulty in answering general questions related to their group experiences at the first interviews. A few of them not only asked for explanations but also asked me to translate the questions into Chinese for them. One difference of the focal participants in Phase 2 from Phase 1 was their deeper understandings of one another. They worked intensively and extensively together for one semester and some of them formed close relationships. They talked about registering in courses for the next term, sharing advice on applications to exchange, and so on. When being asked to evaluate each others' contributions, they gave me quite rich descriptions and were able to account for their opinions.

The last methodological issue was related to aspects of my identity as a Mandarin speaker and Mandarin instructor. Focal participants frequently code-switched among English, Cantonese and Mandarin. Sometimes the code-switching between Cantonese and Mandarin seemed a deliberate choice by the participants. Candy, my former student told me that she tried to translate more from Cantonese to Mandarin for Jackson and tried to maintain a cohesive group relationship because she thought my research studied the group interaction. I doubt if students' actions and interview accounts might be different if I were a native Cantonese speaker instead of a Mandarin speaker. Did they speak more Mandarin than they would do out of class when I observed them? That remains a question for me.

3.8. Conclusion

Tracy (2010) pointed out that one of the important criteria to ensure excellent qualitative research is to have sincerity (as cited in Cho & Trent, 2014). By sincerity, she meant, "The study is characterized by self-reflexivity about subjective values, biases, and inclinations of the researcher(s); and transparency about the methods and challenges" (Cho & Trent, 2014, p. 691) in accomplishing the study. This chapter of Methodology includes my attempt to provide such sincerity for the readers of this study.

My research focus on the socially constructed nature of Chinese multilingual speakers' participation falls into a critical, constructionist research paradigm, which favours a qualitative research design. I adopted ethnographic methods, participant observation and interviews, as my primary methods and have discussed my understandings of the implications of these two methods. I then provided a detailed description on the specific steps of my three cycles of data analysis and my considerations on using computer software, Nvivo10. To further reveal my impact on the study design and on interpreting the findings, I shared my life trajectory, my multiple, provisional and conflicting positions, and my biases in representation in this study. The last part of this chapter contained my efforts in creating transparency by providing details of the procedures, issues and challenges that I have encountered during the study process. In many ways, this thesis study is a collaborative work among the researcher, the participants as well as the particular historical, social context of the time. In the next chapter, I present the findings from both phases of the study.

Chapter 4.

Participants' Beliefs and Ways of Participation

In the previous chapter, I described the process of designing, conducting and interpreting this study of Chinese multilingual speakers' oral participation in academic groups in North American university settings. In Chapters 4 and 5 I outline the major findings from the data collected in both Phases to answer the following four research questions: 1) What beliefs and expectations do Chinese multilingual learners have about group work and oral participation? 2) How do they participate in small group discussions? 3) What kinds of social challenges and difficulties do Chinese multilingual speakers face in small group discussions? And lastly, 4) how do they respond to and act upon those challenges and difficulties? The findings for the first two questions are presented in this chapter and the findings related to learners' challenges and their reactions will be addressed in Chapter 5.

In this chapter, I first report the beliefs, expectations and attitudes of Chinese multilingual speakers about group work and oral participation in small group discussions. After introducing their beliefs and views about group work, I describe the eight focal participants'⁵ actions and the roles they played in their group discussions drawing from their self-evaluations in the interviews, comments from fellow group members and instructors, and an analysis of their silence, turn-taking, language use and body language in the video-recordings. I conclude the chapter by sharing some considerations on locating learners' beliefs and ways of participation in their larger social context—the ideologies, practices and discourses in North American universities.

⁵ The focal participants will be referred to as “participants” in later sections and chapters.

4.1. Participants' beliefs and views about group work and participation

4.1.1. Perceived benefits of group work

During the interviews, the participants in both courses shared positive views about doing group work, about successful groups, and about oral participation. Despite a possible influence of Confucian collectivist cultural traditions on their learning styles, the Chinese participants in this study demonstrated an appreciation of group work and group discussions in terms of their learning and social benefits. John from Phase 1, an international student who had attended the university for a year, shared why he wanted to participate in group work. He said that group work would help him develop active thinking and presentation skills.

Excerpt 1:

R⁶: What were the positive factors that have motivated your participation in this group discussion?

John: I think one important thing is it helps me to think. Because if I don't participate maybe I don't think a lot of the time. I am just receiving what other people are saying, so if I participate, I can think on my own behalf. And, it helps me to study [learn].

R: Any other positive factors?

John: Another thing maybe to practice my speaking skills because it's one thing to think of an idea, it is another thing to present an idea. So participating in group discussion helps me to develop this presentation skill. (Interview 1, 20120926, 20:12.9 -21:21.3)

Other than having learning benefits, Chinese multilingual speakers also perceived social benefits from interacting with classmates in groups, such as creating a sense of belonging. John felt that group discussions enabled him to actively involve himself in the class instead of being merely an observer.

Excerpt 2:

R: How did this group discussion make you feel about yourself?

John: I think, [group work] just let me feel part of the class, and I am not just going to a theatre, not just an audience. I am

⁶ R: the researcher was the interviewer who conducted all the interviews in this study.

participating in the discussion of the topic. (Interview 1, 20120926, 14:05- 14:29)

Students who have arrived in Canada recently like John often have limited access to the academic community in the university. Thus, group work and group discussions in their courses provided valuable opportunities for them to communicate in English, to interact with local students, and to experience western academic discourses.

Chinese multilingual speakers who have been in Canada for a fairly long time also recognized the importance of group work in cultivating social connections among students. Ann from Phase 1, a Canadian born Chinese speaker, was passionately positive about group work and thought it was a great way to meet new people. Sandy from Phase 2 believed that group work could contribute to the development of close relationships among team members.

Excerpt 3:

R: So, about your feeling about group interaction. Do you usually like group work?

Ann: I do. I wish there was group work in every single course in the university. Just because, it makes the class more fun to be in. I think it's a great way to meet new people to hear other's opinions rather than just sitting there and reading the textbook for one single opinion. I just feel like it's a great way to meet new people, listen to their opinion (Interview 1, 20121109, 17:44.8 - 18:35.5).

Excerpt 4:

R: What did you think of the group experience so far?

Sandy: I feel that in team work, team members gradually build up friendship, closer than friends (Interview 1, 20130207, 14:23.9 - 14:53.4.)

Participants also reported that group work had benefits for their future professions. Aaron in Phase 2 felt that group experiences helped students to understand and adapt to working environment after their graduation.

Excerpt 5:

R: What are your general beliefs about group work?

Aaron: Group work in university is really important because I know that when you work in the future you will be put in groups. Having this experience right now is good to prepare us for the future. And, I actually like communicating with other

people so I enjoy working in groups (Interview 1, 20130131, 28:32.9 - 30:29.8.).

However, even acknowledging the numerous benefits of working in groups, not all the Chinese multilingual speakers like to work in groups. Contrary to Ann's enthusiasm about doing group work, participant Candy from Phase 2 found that group work was very time consuming and caused too much work for her. She later shared an unpleasant group experience in a marketing course and this experience partially contributed to her decision to switch her major from marketing to human resources so as to avoid excessive amounts of group work.

Excerpt 6:

R: Can you talk about a group experience that you remember the best? Either the best or the worst experience.

Candy: [...] Before that, I want to choose my concentration either on Finance or Marketing. After that [group] report, I don't want to do marketing anymore. I don't really like group work. Even your group members are good, our final grade is very good but the process was really hard and I didn't enjoy it at all. I remembered it the most because I got sick (Interview 1, 20130130, 57:18.0 - 57:53.3).

Aaron in Phase 2 also shared an unpleasant group experience in which he had to take on extra work for his three male group peers from China. Overall, the Chinese multilingual speakers in this study identified the benefits of group work and group discussions in multiple areas such as for learning, for expanding social relationships and for adjusting to work environment. Though their group experiences were not always positive or pleasant, they all agreed that group work was an important part of their education.

4.1.2. The importance of speech

The participants in this study also perceived the importance of speech in group discussions. The old Chinese doctrine that silence is gold seems no longer a helpful axiom in western academic classrooms. John demonstrated his realization that the act of speaking itself is more important than giving correct answers because in so doing, he could make his voice heard in the discussion process.

Excerpt 7:

- R: Is there anything that actually was not great which could have improved the experience for you, to make it better?
- John: I think we have some time, some lag time when nobody was talking. [...] People maybe think about, they are thinking that, "I may give the correct answer or I should think more of the topics, or maybe my opinions are foolish or something." I think that doesn't really help. Even though sometimes we don't give the right answer, other people can help to improve the answer eventually. And, I don't think it really matters if we have the correct answer or not, it's more important to contribute, to discuss and just part of the learning experience. (Interview 1, 20120926, 22:17.0 - 23:34.6)

Other participants shared the view that the act of participating in the conversation itself, regardless of the speech's content, could be a significant form of contribution to the group discussion. Participant Jenn elaborated her idea that group members might make different kinds of but equally meaningful contributions to the group discussion.

Excerpt 8:

- R: So, how will you evaluate your group members' contributions to the outcome of the group discussion?
- Jenn: um, I think some of them contributed to the discussion process maybe by questioning and trying to clarify some other people's ideas, it helped the idea become more solid. They may not contribute the actual idea themselves, but they kind of helped us think about it. And then, there's like the other group member who did actually contribute an idea. So I think both of those types of contributions are still very important. So I think everybody did contribute equally to the discussion even if it was in different ways. (Interview 1, 20121003, 9:20.9 - 10:24.6)

My participants all recognized the importance of speech regardless of their diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, while some of them associated silence with negative meanings. Candy and Ann regarded silence as "dead", "awkward", pressuring them to speak, or a waste of the group's time. Candy did not like very quiet group members as she felt they usually would not be making many contributions to the group. Ann shared her worst group experience when her sociology group did not discuss the assigned topic at all in a 30-minute activity due to a lack of preparation. No one in her group had read the article to be discussed so the group sat there saying nothing. Ann said that she felt really bad for herself and her group because the time was totally

wasted in that activity. Ann also noted that she preferred speech rather than silence because the latter made her feel pressured and awkward.

Excerpt 9:

- R: How would you evaluate your group members' contributions to the outcome of the discussion?
- Ann: I would say because they are so engaged in this activity because they have so many opinions and they point out so many passages from the text. I feel like that it helps me. Because, I feel like, it's better if people are talking in the conversation rather than just having dead silence, making me feel like I should say something to start a new conversation (Interview 1, 20121109, 8:05.1 - 8:53.6).

As a result, participants actually favoured divergent opinions among team members over agreement to stimulate discussions. Some of them found that too many similarities in views could be harmful for the quality of discussions. Aaron (in Phase 2) expressed a desire in his interview to encourage his team members to disagree with him so that the discussion could be more critical and the ideas could be contemplated.

Excerpt 10:

- R: If we have this group meetings again, would you do anything differently?
- Aaron: [...]I think sometimes maybe we should have more disagreements because I think disagreements can make our conversation better because different opinions... sometimes I'm not always right. If we just have the same opinion, we could be wrong (Interview 1, 20130131, 22:33.3 - 23:20.4).

Meanwhile, sharing similar opinions may cause Chinese multilingual speakers to withdraw from participating as a polite consideration for not wasting the group's time. Jackson in Phase 2 said that he would not join his group's discussion if his opinions were the same as the other members.

Excerpt 11:

- R: Why would you talk little [if your opinion was similar to others]?
- Jackson: I thought [my speaking] would be a waste of breath. "I felt this this...", and all those things were already mentioned by other people. Wouldn't it be just me repeating after them? ...When we are discussing, someone else already mention all the points. I am the one speaking at the last then I will not talk (Interview 1, 20130130, 26:43.9 - 27:24.0).

Jackson's attitude was not an individual case. Some participants noticed that too much agreement did not stimulate members' participation in the discussion process. When Jenn from Phase 1 was asked about what factors could stimulate her participation, she said that:

Excerpt 12:

R: What could make you participate more actively in this group discussion?

Jenn: Um, I think if there were a lot of differences in opinion, and more in-depth discussion so that we can go back and forth and maybe debate about certain things. We were all kind of on the same page, so there wasn't much to really discuss over. So, a variety of different perspectives [helps to encourage participation] (Interview 1, 20121003, 3:38.6 - 4:31.4).

Participants like Jenn and Sandy both believed that differences in opinions make the discussions robust, profound and thorough. Sandy in Phase 2 thought conflicts could help to develop new original ideas.

Excerpt 13:

R: What are your general beliefs about? group work?

Sandy: [...] And, I think conflicts are good sometimes because through conflicts you can discover some valuable ideas that maybe we have never thought of before (Interview 1, 20130207, 54:39.1 - 56:20.9).

4.1.3. **Power dynamics in group**

Participants frequently mentioned aspects related to power dynamics when sharing their beliefs about an ideal group. In their view, all members interacting on an equal footing is a premise for having a cohesive, good group discussion. In such an ideal group, every group member would have opportunities to take the floor to talk and their speech would be appreciated by their fellow group members. Participant Ann from Phase 1, a Canada-born Cantonese speaker, thought that every member should be given opportunities to talk and that group members should value each others' oral participation as long as a member made an effort.

Excerpt 14:

R: What do you think other members will think of your participation?

Ann: I think it was beneficial because I actually said something. [...] Personally I don't feel like, ... If you're working in a group, I don't think one person should be doing all the talking. Everyone should be contributing. If you make an effort to say something, doesn't necessarily right or wrong as long as you say something, they will be like oh, you are contributing to the conversation (Interview 1, 20121109, 11:36.3 - 12:05.6).

This principle that all members be equal was important for Phase 2 participant Jackson. Jackson emphasized twice in his first interview that he preferred being treated as an equal: once he was asked about his past group experience; and another time he talked about his view of a good group.

Excerpt 15:

R: So do you want to be a group leader?

Jackson: No.

R: Why?

Jackson: I more prefer ...how to put it. Everyone is equal. Like everyone together discuss the schedules instead of one person above all of us. One determines that the group meet on Wednesday. He might still pick a day that works for everyone but one person makes decisions for others. I don't like to make decisions for others or other people make decisions for me. I think that everyone is equal that would be better (Interview 1, 20130130, 22:35.7 - 23:33.1).

Excerpt 16:

R: Your general beliefs about group work. What does it look like in terms of interpersonal relationship, for the group to be successful? How it should be?

Jackson: [...] Don't be too aggressive. Don't be above all of us like a group leader. I am not against having a group leader. But I reject if one acts like others were not capable and only he carries for the whole team. All in all, group members treat each other equally, that is better (Interview 1, 20130130, 46:04.6 - 50:05.4).

However, Jackson also understood that group discussions did not always take place on an equal basis—people with different roles had different statuses in a group. After a term's group project, Jackson had a new realization that members who put in "more effort", who received a bigger portion of the workload, could receive more attention from the group members as well.

Excerpt 17:

R: Is there anything to make your group members value your input more?

Jackson: [...] If I were the group leader, they might be more willing to listen to my opinions. (Interview 1, 20130130, 20:31.4 - 22:35.7)

Excerpt 18:

R: Other than the factors that we have talked about, do you have any other factors that you think would affect your participation or other people's attitudes toward you?

Jackson: I felt that efforts can affect the degree of one's contribution to the group. For example, Aaron wrote the most part [of the report] so his efforts were the most, so his relationship or his status in the group was quite important (Interview 2, 20130407, 38:45.0 - 39:44.1).

Similar to Jackson, Candy also felt that having leaders or members with leader-type personalities could cause conflicts among group members. She pointed out that members could actually share the leader role by taking turns and still treat each other equally and fairly.

Excerpt 19:

R: In these two meetings, are there any positive factors or things to be improved?

Candy: [asking for clarifications of the question] I think one positive factor is that none of us four is a leader. I felt that if all four of us had leadership personality, there would be conflicts. [...] We didn't specify who would be the leader. It was very natural like maybe sometimes Sandy was the leader, then I, next may be Andrew or Jason. Under different situations, whoever wants to make a new suggestion will just speak up (Interview 1, 20130130, 39:26.3 - 40:53.8).

Participants suggested that a key factor affecting cohesive and equal relationships among a group is members' attitudes towards each other. Being respectful and fair to each other could allow members with lower statuses to have equal opportunities to contribute. Jenn in Phase 1 found group experiences positive when everyone in the group was open, fair and friendly. Candy in Phase 2 shared a positive experience when her members were receptive to disagreements.

Excerpt 20:

R: What were the positive factors in this group activity?

Jenn: I think the positive factor was there wasn't anyone who is really overshadowing anybody. And, there was not anyone

who is just free riding. And, people were pretty nice about each other's opinions. There isn't any criticism. And, we were able to come to a consensus. I think that's the main one (Interview 1, 20121003, 15:35.2 - 16:38.1)

Excerpt 21:

R: Your general beliefs about group work. What do you think a good group is like?

Candy: I think that everyone should respect others' opinions. I think in these two weeks' meetings, we respect each others' opinions. If one raises up a different view, we will listen to his/her views. We do not deny it right away. We will listen to it then make a decision. So be respectful (Interview 1, 20130130, 50:16.8 - 53:23.8).

More than just being friendly and open, participant Jackson pointed out that it is important to have team spirit in doing group work. If one of the members was weaker than the others, the other group members should learn to be flexible and try to work with that member. Interestingly, Jackson became “the weakest link” in his group and its members unfortunately did not try very hard to cooperate with him. I will give a detailed discussion of Jackson’s participation in Section 4.2.8.

Excerpt 22:

R: Did you know if there were other groups that have had issues working together?

Jackson: I knew there was a group in which a member did not do much work. [...] They tried to work with that person. Let him do as much as possible and push him for meeting deadlines. They continue to cooperate with him. I think he had a suggestion that no matter what your member is like, you need to compromise and work with him because this is a team. If your member doesn't work, and you don't work well either, then your mark is likely to be bad too. It is similar like people sitting on one sinking boat, so we need to accept it (Interview 2, 20130410, 1:01:37.0 - 1:06:01.2).

Some participants drew a line between a successful team and a cohesive team. Sandy presented an interesting paradox—having a successful team is different from having a good cohesive group. Sandy, like her group members, believed that a good cohesive team involved everyone being equal and respectful. However, Sandy also believed that for a team to be successful, it required a strong team leader (like a boss) with a strict regulative system. This view conflicted with that of Jackson and Candy , neither of whom wanted a leader or to share the leader role in their group.

Excerpt 23:

R: What would you have done differently in this group experiences, meetings? If you had a chance to do it over, what would you do differently?

Sandy: If I had another chance, I would set out a clear deadline at a very early time. I was thinking about this. Every meeting, we need to have a clear agenda listing the items that we need to discuss on that day. That would be more efficient. Since we don't have a leader, it is not clear where our discussions would go every time.

Moreover, I think that we need to set up a system to regulate each other's work. Like now, before our meetings they came and said that they didn't have time to do this, that. There was nothing we could do then (Interview 1, 20130207, 47:48.0 - 49:49.3)

Excerpt 24:

R: What are your general beliefs in group work?

Sandy: How to form a successful team? There must be a leader. And must be good followers. Need everyone to be committing, contributing to the project. And, the leader must be fair. [...] But the most important thing is to have a strong leader (Interview 1, 20130207, 54:39.1 - 56:20.9).

4.1.4. A summary of participants' beliefs

Chinese multilingual speakers in this study all recognized the importance and numerous benefits of doing group work in Canadian university classrooms. These benefits could be related to the development of their academic skills like critical thinking and presentation skills; to the build-up of social relations like making friends or having a sense of belonging to a group; and to understanding their future professional environment such as working in business groups. Though acknowledging these benefits, some participants reported unpleasant group experiences in the past such as overwhelming meeting time or unfair work division.

Regarding oral participation, Chinese multilingual speakers recognized the importance of speech in their group work. Many of them believed that the act of speaking itself was more significant than the content of the speech. They often associated negative meanings with silence as well. Participants in the study appreciated divergent perspectives and believed that differences in opinions were helpful in provoking heated discussions and in stimulating members' participation.

The most salient theme in participants' interviews about good group experiences was about power dynamics in the groups. Chinese multilingual speakers in this study all emphasized that all group members should participate on an equal basis and their contributions should be appreciated equally by their members. However, participants also acknowledged that sometimes group members with different roles or division of work hold different statuses in the groups. Therefore, it was important for the members to have receptive, respectful and friendly attitudes to each other in order for the all members to have an equal footing to participate. A conflict in beliefs was identified in Phase 2 group. Whereas Jackson and Candy preferred not having a leader or sharing the leader role, Sandy believed that it was crucial to have a strong leader in order for the group to be efficient and successful. Next, I describe Chinese multilingual speakers' ways of participation in their groups in this study.

4.2. Participants' behaviours in group discussions

In this section, I depict how these eight focal participants participated in their group discussions in multicultural and multilingual classrooms at a Canadian university. The findings were mainly drawn from these sources: video recordings of the in-class discussions; researcher's field notes; students' self-evaluation of their own participation in the interviews; as well as the instructors' comments. For the video data, I focused on conversational details like the openings and closures, turn-taking, silence, code switching, etc. All these different sources of data formed the prisms of a crystal ball reflecting different colors and sides of participants' ways of constructing their participation or silence in their groups. The description on Chinese multilingual speakers' ways of participation is intended to be detailed and illustrative so that it lays an explanatory backdrop for the next two findings presented in Chapter 5.

The four participants in Phase 1 represented a mix of English and academic competences. The participants included a top student, two average students and a comparatively weak student in overall performance according to their course instructor. They had interacted in their discussions with peers from diverse ethnic, linguistic, cultural backgrounds. The group work in Phase 1, as I mentioned in Chapter 3, was short in length, ranging from 4-10 minutes; was not related to their marks; and was not evaluated in any way other than voluntary sharing in class.

The four participants in Phase 2 also had a range of different backgrounds: different English proficiencies, various multilingual abilities as well as experiences in Canada. However, the context for group work in Phase 2 was quite different from that in Phase 1. The four participants in Phase 2 worked in one group for several assignments throughout the semester. The group work made up 40% of their final grade and therefore all the participants were very serious and highly committed to their group work. They met several times a week for long hours. The video-recorded in-class group discussions lasted usually for an hour. Their audio-recorded after-class discussions often lasted three to four hours. As a result, data in Phase 2 were richer than Phase 1. Other than the aforementioned sources, findings for Phase 2 also drew from the recordings of focal participants' after-class discussions; their teamwork evaluation forms in the course; as well as participants' comments on other members' contributions in the interviews. It may seem at first glance a harmonious group of four Chinese multilingual speakers who share the same cultural origin. However, the results showed that the Phase 2 group had more conflicting issues than those in Phase 1. Next, I in turn describe participants' ways of participation in their group discussions.

4.2.1. Phase 1 participant: Jo

Participant Jo was the first student who volunteered to be a focal participant in my study. She was a middle-aged female student who was completing a second degree in communications at the time of the study. She immigrated to Canada 15 years ago and was quite fluent in English and Mandarin. Jo was one of the frequent speakers in class discussions. She was quite an open and social person. During our interviews, I sometimes felt like I was chatting with a friend and we comfortably exchanged opinions on matters. She regarded herself often as an initiator or a manager in discussions and described herself to be open, loud and "serious, too involved" in discussions (Jo Interview 1).

Excerpt 25:

- R: Can you describe a little more in detail, what do you think of your participation in [this discussion]?
- Jo: I usually start off. If we dwelt on a point for a bit long, I became impatient in discussion. I couldn't wait to jump forward. [...] I guess it's a bossy type...But in group projects, it's not really mean. I am more an initiator. I am not really a leader but I guess from time to time, I would be

impatient. If I don't feel there is progress (Interview 1, 20120921, 3:06.0 - 3:50.0).

In her four observed group discussions, Jo indeed showed her ability as an initiator. Her group members were mostly Caucasian students who were either native English speakers or multilingual speakers, except that John also participated in Jo's group's third discussion. In her discussions, Jo often took the initiative in forming groups by moving or turning to students sitting next to her and starting a discussion. She opened up discussions in three out of four video recorded group interactions. In terms of her turn-taking, Jo seemed comfortable at initiating turns or self-selecting by stating her views or asking for explanations. She also often back channelled in the conversations to indicate her attention. In her last recorded discussion (November 16, 2012), Jo found the topic a bit challenging and thus she started her turns with more requests for clarification from a white female native English speaker than expressing her own views.

Instructor Moe shared his impressions of Jo. He noticed that Jo often took the lead in proffering her views in class discussions and was keen in course content. However, he found her questions sometimes irrelevant and this made it difficult for him to move the class forward. In summary, Jo was an active participant in her group discussions by taking the initiative in forming groups, starting discussions or using a variety of conversational devices in interactions. Nonetheless, her way of participation sometimes seemed less meaningful or irrelevant by her professor.

4.2.2. Phase 1 participant: Jenn

Participant Jenn is a young female Chinese multilingual speaker who is in her third year of undergraduate studies. She came to Canada with her family at the age of nine and had studied in Canada since then. Jenn speaks Mandarin as her mother tongue but she is also near native in both English and Cantonese. She majored in accounting and achieved good grades in her studies. Jenn described herself as a gentle, caring person who was not very assertive in discussions (Jenn Interview 1).

Excerpt 26:

- R: Do you think you are not assertive enough?
Jenn: um, probably not.
R: Can you give me one example?

Jenn: Because I fell like in a group discussion, I don't like to make it seem like my opinion is any better than any other people's. So I tend to put out an idea but I don't really push it. (Interview 1, 20121003, 6:41.0 - 8:33.8).

Jenn did not speak much voluntarily during class discussions but was called upon by the instructor several times. However, from my observations and her self-evaluation, she often served as a leader in her groups. In her three video-recorded discussions, Jenn usually started discussions and nominated all or multiple group members to speak. She also often explained the tasks, clarified concepts to her members, organized the floor for speakers, and kept the discussions flowing by sharing her opinions, encouraging her members to share, or giving feedback to others. She was good at utilizing different conversational devices to facilitate her speech, such as using materials /props, eye contact, and question-answer pairs to construct turns. When she did not talk, she actively listened to the discussions, back channelled with the speaker, maintained eye contact, and offered feedback afterwards. Her own words about her participation in the first recorded discussion depicted the roles she often played in discussions.

Excerpt 27:

R: So, how would you describe your own participation in that group discussion?

Jenn: I would say that I contributed by having the material ready, and sharing them because some of them didn't have it. And explaining to the ones that didn't quite understand the insurance policy. And, also when one of the guys had very good insight, I complemented him and because I thought that was really good. And, I encouraged him to speak out for our group when we were called on (Interview 1, 20121003, 2:42.6 - 3:38.6).

Excerpt 28:

R: So the last question is if you have anything to add about your group experience. In general or in particular about this.

Jenn: I feel like in my group experiences, I am usually kind of the leader either voluntarily or involuntarily because someone else wants to step up. But I think I also try to be very peaceful to avoid any sort of conflicts (Interview 1, 20121003, 25:21.7 - 26:15.0).

Instructor Moe had very clear and positive impressions of Jenn. He noticed that Jenn was a mixed case. She sometimes spoke frequently in a class but other times she

was very quiet. However, Moe found her always “reliable” in giving “highly pertinent” and “very useful” input in classes (Interview 1). Moe shared that Jenn was the top student in this course, a frequent office hour visitor, a highly organized student and steadily showed excellent performances throughout the semester. In short, Jenn was a very capable and intelligent student who sometimes chose not to offer frequent oral participation so as to share the floor with other students.

4.2.3. Phase 1 participant: John

Participant John was an international student starting his second year of undergraduate studies in Linguistics. He had been in Canada for three years when the study started and had group work experiences for two years. John speaks Mandarin as his mother tongue and speaks English at a high-intermediate level. He had some difficulties in understanding complex structures in English. He was able to express himself in English but with constant pauses and errors. John expressed a strong desire in his interview to actively participate in group and class discussions.

I observed John’s effort to make oral contributions in class discussions. Despite his lack of English fluency, John voluntarily shared his opinions in whole-class discussions twice in the semester, trying hard to articulate his views. However, in his four videotaped discussions, John either played a minor contributing role or remained quiet most of the time during group discussions. In the first discussion (September 26, 2012), John worked with three Caucasian native English speakers, two female and one male. John made three utterances in this eight-and-half-minute discussion, two of which sought explanations from his peers. Staring at his notes and handouts quietly, John did not use eye contact or back channel with his peers to maintain communication nor did his peers explicitly or implicitly nominate him for a turn. In the second discussion from the same day, John made no verbal communication in another four-minute discussion with the same members. John’s third discussion (October 30, 2012) was with Jo and a Mexican young man. In my observation, John wanted to make some comments a couple of times but still had difficulty obtaining the floor to speak. Unfortunately, he spent most of his time reading his notes and did not join the conversation even when the other two were chatting. His fourth and last recorded discussion (November 30, 2012) was with

Jenn, Ann and two other Caucasian students. This time, John made some contributions by responding to questions and proposing an alternative solution to the task.

In general, John made an effort in participating in discussions but played a marginal role. When asked about his reticence in discussions, John ascribed it to a lack of understanding of the material, unfamiliarity with the group members, and a need for more guidance from the instructor. John showed strong determination to improve his group performance. He admitted that English made it difficult for him to participate actively but English would not be something to stop him from trying. John felt that he improved his oral participation through practice and would continue to improve by “being bolder” and to study the materials in advance.

4.2.4. Phase 1 participant Ann

Participant Ann was approached by the researcher to serve as the fourth focal participant in this study. She was a Canadian-born Chinese multilingual speaker in her third year of studies in Criminology. Ann had native fluency in English, was fluent in spoken Cantonese and was a beginner in Mandarin. She has had extensive experience in group work since she was in primary school. Ann described her personality as very shy and easy-going. However, she did not like to feel forced to speak or to speak about certain things. She preferred to a follower role in discussions unless there was a need for her to step up to be the leader.

Excerpt 29:

R: How will you describe your own participation in the group interaction?

Ann: I would say [I am] more a follower kind of. If it is obvious that there is no input on the activity, I would just start it. Get other people to engage. Whereas in this particular situation, the individual, the classmate just took that initiative. So, because I agree with his points so I just sat there and nodded saying "yeah" (Interview 1, 20121109, 3:12.7 - 3:54.0)

Ann showed a mixed style in participating in group discussions. In her three recorded group discussions, she played different roles in different situations. In the first group (October 19, 2012), Ann worked with two male students. The Anglophone student started the discussion and shared many of his findings. Ann played a cooperative

follower role by giving consent, asking clarifying questions, and giving verbal and non-verbal cues to show her attention to the speakers, sometimes called back-channelling. In the second discussion (November 9, 2012), Ann worked with another Asian female student and a South American male student. This time, the group was a bit quiet. Ann then served as the leader of the group by initiating discussion, encouraging ideas when no one talked, responding to others and voluntarily sharing her views in the subsequent whole class discussions. In the last recorded discussion (November 30, 2012), Ann again served as a cooperative follower when working with Jenn, another white Canadian female student and a white Canadian male student. She did not offer many insights but showed her participation through eye contact, back channelling and looking for answers in textbooks. In short, Ann personally preferred to serve as a cooperative follower in group discussions. However, under required circumstances, she had the capacity and potential to be a group leader to offer more active oral participation.

4.2.5. Phase 2 participant: Sandy

Participant Sandy from Phase 2 of the study originally came from Guangdong province in Mainland China and immigrated with her family to Canada at the age of 12. She had completed her secondary education in Canada and was now a third year student in the School of Business. Her mother tongues are Cantonese and Mandarin. Her English is nearly native and she has also studied French and Japanese. Sandy has had over five years experience in group work. Sandy described herself as a very straightforward person who shared her views and perspectives directly. She stated in her first interview that she wanted to be the leader for her group and had tried doing it by distributing work, encouraging members, and setting goals at the beginning of the meetings. In the end-of-term interview, she noted that no real leader emerged in this group project and her role was like “glue”, which glued the members together for a more fun, harmonious experience.

According to the six video recordings along with the dozen audio recordings and the field notes, Sandy played a central role in their group interaction by enforcing her opinions, leading the discussion topics, drafting the answer sheet, and more. Sandy was often the first or second speaker to open up the discussions in the group. For example, in the first in-class group meeting (January 23, 2013), Sandy was the first member to

talk, asking what languages other members speak, and she later ended the discussion by confirming the actions each member need to take before the second meeting. Furthermore, Sandy was quite competent in asserting her perspectives. In the second out-of-class group meeting (Jan 25, 2013), Sandy successfully persuaded the other three members to adopt a research topic that they initially rejected. Other than actively providing valuable input and sharing quality opinions, Sandy often sought other ways to contribute to the group. In the third in-class group discussion (February 27, 2013), the group was reading and discussing the instructor's and TA's feedback on their first research assignment. Sandy took notes about what actions they should take to revise and improve the draft. She also read aloud and provided her answers to the questions on a task sheet one by one for the members in the fourth in-class discussion (March 6, 2013). Sandy's participation style was quite voluntary: She did not wait for others to nominate and sometimes took the initiative herself. Table 4.1 illustrates a scenario in the sixth in-class group work (April 10, 2013), in which Sandy took the reporter's role from Aaron to complete a team review sheet for the group.

Table 4.1 Sixth in-class meeting on April 10th, 2013 (Group 6, 2:27.8-3:17.6)⁷

1	((Candy took the task sheet from Jason's side, took a look,
2	Then put it in front of Aaron.))
3	Candy: You write.
4	((Aaron gave a reluctant expression, pointing at Sandy.
5	Sandy: (CAN) <u><i>It's not graded.</i></u> Doesn't matter.
6	((Sandy pulled the sheet to herself.))
7	Candy: *You write. ((laughter)).
8	((Aaron took it back from her and took her pen.))
9	((Sandy turned to the camera and asking))
10	Sandy: [(MAN) <u><i>Are you recording now? Or</i></u>
11	Candy: [◦>Read out the questions◦<. ((to Aaron))
12	Sandy: Is it recording now?
13	R: ◦Yeah◦.
14	Aaron: ◦Can you describe how decisions are made by your team. Be:
15	[specific] ◦and state the processes [used] ◦.
16	Sandy: [specific] [Well,] I↑ ca↑n't hear you.
17	Aaron: FOR EXAMPLE, what kinds of que:s[ti]on]

⁷ Words or sentences following (CAN) or (MAN) that are underlined and italics are spoken in Cantonese (CAN) or Mandarin (MAN). For a complete list of the transcription conventions, please see Appendix A.

18 Sandy: [situations.
 19 Okay I will read. ((Pull the sheet towards her.)) What↑ kinds
 20 of situations required a vote or consensus? (1.0) What kinds
 21 of situations required the decision making of one or two
 22 individuals?

Another salient feature in Sandy’s participation was her code-switching. Sandy code-switched a lot between English, Cantonese, and Mandarin during discussions. She was fluent in all three languages. During the first few group meetings, Sandy preferred using Mandarin. She even asked Candy in an out-of-class discussion (January 27, 2013) whether they had to use English for the discussions and Jackson responded they should use whichever language they felt comfortable with. These two later started discussing in Mandarin. As the course progressed, Sandy started to use Cantonese more often with other two members, Candy and Aaron. The analysis of her language use showed that the different languages indexed the particular audience she intended for her questions. When she asked questions in English, everyone could understand her and thus everyone were able to respond to her. When she asked in Cantonese, only Candy and Aaron could understand and Jackson was excluded from the discussion. In the fifth in-class meeting (April 3, 2013) shown in Table 4.2, Sandy code-switched quite a few times from English to Cantonese even though Jackson was standing next to her. Sandy’s code-switching from English to Cantonese and her eye contact all indicated her intention to seek advice only from Candy and Aaron.

**Table 4.2 Fifth in-class meeting on April 3rd, 2013
 (Group 5-2, 17:37.1-19:49.1)**

1. ((Aaron and Candy stood next to Sandy to the information on
 2. Sandy’s laptop. Jackson moved to join the group to see the
 3. laptop screen.))
 4. Sandy: So “recover and recycle lumber” (CAN)are: are not on the building
 5. code”. (CAN)◦ Is this what it means? ◦
 6. ((Sandy turned around to look at Aaron then Candy.))
 7. (1.5)
 8. Sandy: ◦I don’t really understand. ◦
 9. All ((Stared at Sandy’s laptop.))(19.0)
 10. Sandy: (CAN) Because the building code indicate you can use those
 11. “innovative building materials”. “For planning or practice”,
 12. whatever. (CAN) But usually, “approval is required.” ()
 13. ((looking at Candy.))

-
14. Sandy: ()is required, then (CAN) building time will be longer, (1.3)
15. (CAN) because you had to wait (0.8) for their approval to use
16. those materials. () (0.6)
17. Aaron: °()°
18. Candy: (CAN) I find these are too hard to explain. It's very
19. Complicated. This is not a [simple draw: back°]
20. Aaron: [°This is not a draw]back. °
21. Candy: Yeah↑, this is not a drawback.
22. Aaron: (CAN) °But if you use this ° ((pointing at the screen))(2)
23. ()((reading content from the webpage)).

Sandy received quite positive evaluations on her contributions to the group project from her members during individual interviews and from their three team evaluations forms in the course. The members in Sandy's group felt that Sandy demonstrated leadership skills in their team. Candy described Sandy as the leader for their group. Candy explained that Sandy often distributed work for members to do and sent out reminders for the members to complete the tasks before the next meeting. However, the other members might not follow her words. Aaron mentioned that Sandy always had very good ideas and was strong at communicating her ideas. On three team evaluation forms, Sandy consistently got top or second top marks by all the team members. Her overall mark was 201 out of 216, the second highest mark of all four team members. Member comments about Sandy included being a critical thinker, making useful suggestions, but not always being on time.

4.2.6. Phase 2 participant: Candy

Participant Candy, originally from Hong Kong, immigrated when she was 16 during secondary school. At the time of study she was a third-year student in Business. She spoke Cantonese as her mother tongue but was also quite fluent in both English and Mandarin. Candy has had extensive group work experience since her elementary education. Candy was a very gentle, caring and patient female student. She said in the first interview that her group was very fair and all participants had equal opportunities to be the leader. In a later interview, she noted that she only wanted to be a cooperative member to follow along but sometimes served as the leader when she did not see her team progressing very much.

Excerpt 30:

R: What do you think about your role and participation in this group?

Candy: [...] But I don't want to be the leader as it was too much work. So I want to be the follower. Only when I feel the progress was too slow or couldn't stand something, then I will stand out. "You need to do this...." I started to do those at a fairly late stage. At the first a few months, I am more just a follower. (Interview 2, 20130419, 14:05.4-16:48.1).

The field notes, video recordings of in-class discussions and the audio-recordings of their out-of-class meetings showed the trajectory of Candy's role change from an active cooperative team player into a leader type. At the beginning of the term, Candy participated and contributed a fair amount in their group meetings. She constantly shared her opinions with her members and asked for feedback on her own work. She sometimes opened up the group discussions. She always concentrated on the task and kept the discussion focused by asking questions related to the project. She even volunteered to do some house keeping/secretarial work to save other members' time! In their first group meeting (January 23, 2013), Candy volunteered to write down everyone's names with their contacts and to setup an online page (Google Doc account) for sharing ideas and references. In the second in-class meeting (February, 6, 2013), Candy helped to proofread Aaron's writing and copied the final draft for submission. As the course progressed, Candy started to take more responsibility. In the fifth in-class meeting (April 3, 2013), Candy took the initiative and checked with Sandy and Jackson about how they would write up their own part and explained the format to use when sending it to Aaron to edit. Knowing Jackson's writing might be problematic, she tried to read his part in advance and then spent a lot of time talking to Jackson in Mandarin about his ideas. On the same day, Candy invited the course instructor to meet with their group. She was the first person to ask the instructor questions and asked the most questions. Sandy and Aaron also asked a few questions. In an out-of-class meeting (April 8, 2013) preparing for the final report, Candy took up a leader-like role to assign work and deadlines for every member when she was not satisfied with her group's progress and efficiency. Candy expressed her feelings and showed me a photo of her writing on the board.

Excerpt 31:

R: How satisfied are you about your role and contribution in this group?

Candy: Pretty satisfied because I saw the outcome after I pushed them three at the submission 3⁸.

R: What did you do exactly?

Candy: [...] On Monday, Andrew didn't finish writing his part and did not proofread the other parts. It was very rushed. So that day, I can't help but (stepping up). I wrote everyone's tasks on the board in the study room like "you need to complete what before this time"—Four people's names with the deadlines and tasks (Interview 2, 20130419, 16:49.5 - 19:34.5).

Candy also code-switched often between English, Cantonese and Mandarin during her discussions. Though English was used most often in in-class discussions, it was obvious that Candy used Cantonese when she sought opinions specifically from Aaron or Sandy. When she talked to Jackson, it was often in Mandarin. Sometimes Candy's code-switching was meant to keep every member involved in the discussion. In the fifth in-class meeting (April 3, 2013), the group discussed how to write the final report. Candy nominated Jackson several times checking his understanding and progress on his part. Towards the end of the term, Sandy, Candy and Aaron often discussed matters in Cantonese. Candy would sometimes voluntarily translate for Jackson in Mandarin so he could keep up with the other members.

In the team evaluations throughout the term, Candy received very positive comments and ratings from her group members. Candy often got the top marks in the team evaluations. Her overall mark was 203 out of 216 in three evaluation forms and was the highest among all the team members. The members' comments often mentioned that she was diligent, participated fully and took the initiative in preparing materials for the group.

4.2.7. Phase 2 participant: Aaron

Participant Aaron was born in Canada but his family moved back to Hong Kong after his birth. He lived in Hong Kong until he was five when he came back to Canada. He received all his formal education in Canada. He was also in his third year of undergraduate studies in Business. He regarded Cantonese as his mother tongue and had native-like proficiency in English. He was studying Mandarin at the time of the

⁸ Submission 3 refers to the final draft of the research paper in this course.

research. Aaron also had extensive experience in group work since his secondary education. Aaron was a very soft-spoken person, and seemed a bit shy. In the first interview, Aaron considered everyone equal in his group and regarded himself as the writer of the group as his writing skills were considered the strongest of the group by all the members. Aaron's perception did not change during the course of the study. He did not think there was one leader of the group but that everyone shared this role. He believed that everyone contributed equally and that he contributed a lot of writing. He also felt that the group project took too much time from him, including the group meetings and the writing, but overall he was quite satisfied with the outcome and the experiences.

When interacting with his group members both in and out of class, Aaron was not very talkative or active. However, throughout the whole term, Aaron played a critical role in this team as he had the most contextual knowledge in completing the task and was the strongest and main writer in the group. In the first in-class meeting when the group was first formed (January 23, 2013), Aaron self-selected this writer's role by saying that his strength was writing and that he enjoyed writing. In their out-of-class meetings (January 25 and 27, 2013) determining which research topic to work on, Aaron demonstrated his extensive knowledge of the local municipal system, topography of the area, and so on, which was necessary for making an informed decision. Since Aaron was the only member who grew up locally and who received local elementary education, his opinions were well respected by other three members and he dominated the discussion. In the second in-class group discussion (February 6, 2013), Aaron also played a central role by writing up the first draft of the assignment for the team, with Candy and Sandy contributing ideas for him. Another example was the third in-class group meeting (February 27, 2013), the team was discussing the TA's feedback on their first submission. They were not happy with their grade. Aaron was the one holding their assignments with the TA's comments, reading out the words and trying to provide some answers for improvement. Sandy was taking notes of his words for the team. The most important contribution from Aaron to the team was his editing or even re-writing of his members' parts in the final submission report. He mentioned in his second interview that in the final report, he found out that Jackson's writing did not meet the standard so he had no choice but to spend time to rewrite the whole part.

As Aaron played an increasingly important role as the project progressed, he received increasingly positive reviews from his group members. Aaron got the highest marks in the last team evaluation after the project was complete. In total, he got 196 marks out of 216 in all three evaluation forms—an average of 90%. He received comments like “knowledgeable”, “reliable”, “work quality is guaranteed” and “well prepared before the meetings”. Candy described him in her second interview as “not a leader, very cooperative to work with” (Candy, Interview 2).

4.2.8. Phase 2 participant: Jackson

Participant Jackson is originally from Beijing, China, and he immigrated to Canada three years ago. He was the oldest among all the participants and was in his third year of studies in Business. Jackson had received all his elementary and secondary education in China. He only had three years of experience studying and living in Canada. He speaks Mandarin as his mother tongue and is at an effective operational level of English with occasional errors. Jackson had few experiences with group work in his previous courses. Jackson mentioned in his two interviews that his role in this group changed from a contributor (“I raised up my opinions”, “I discussed what I can”) to a more passive role (“a mere follower”) as the course progressed. He shared opinions when he had some at the beginning but gradually made fewer contributions towards the end of the term (Excerpt 32). His perception of his role change corroborated with my observation, with the recordings of group interaction as well as with other members’ impressions.

Excerpt 32:

R: Were there any changes in the role you played in the discussions?

Jackson: I gradually turned into a mere follower. At the beginning, I raised up my opinions. For example, before Research Submission 2⁹, I would discuss about it. In RS3, everything was determined already so I thought I would just follow them. There was not a need to raise up new big changes so I just did the work (Interview 2, 20130410, 8:36.9 - 9:37.6).

⁹ Research Submission 2: the second draft of their final research paper in this course.

Jackson's participation and contribution in his group throughout the term can be understood in being in three stages (based on my field notes, his self-reports, the video-recordings of in-class group meetings, and the audio-recordings of out-of-class meetings). The first stage was the first week after the group just formed. During this initial stage, Jackson was motivated and enthusiastically participated in the discussions. In the first in-class group meeting (January 23, 2013), Jackson frequently shared his opinions with the group and responded to other members' ideas in English. In their first out-of-class meeting (January 25, 2013), Jackson was active and expressive when articulating and defending his opinions.

In the second stage, Jackson gradually had difficulty keeping up with the group's discussion as it started to involve localized, contextual knowledge, with which he was unfamiliar. He still made attempts to participate but his efforts were often disregarded by his group members. In the second out-of-class meeting (January 27, 2013), the discussion involved information about how municipal government works and the topology of a city area. Jackson had trouble understanding the information that Aaron provided, so he frequently asked for clarification. His questions took quite some time to answer. Another example of Jackson's attempts to participate was in the second in-class group meeting (Feb 6, 2013), in which the group was required to complete an email case study within 90 minutes. Jackson tried to participate by sharing his perspectives but ended up arguing with the other three members. The disagreements between Jackson and other members took some time, and needed resolution before the group could reach a consensus to draft the email. Because of this argument, Jackson was later assigned a minor role in completing this assignment—checking out replacement for negative words. And, the other three members started to use Cantonese in their discussions, which Jackson was not able to understand. Table 4.3 demonstrated that some of Jackson's efforts in trying to participate in this assignment—his questions and comments—were ignored by other members in that meeting (Feb 6, 2013).

**Table 4.3 Second in-class meeting on Feb 6th, 2013
(Group 2-2: 23:34.1-23:51.8)**

1	Sandy: Yeah, What happened and <why:>, <why:> (1.0) such happened.
2	(CAN) <Next is> (1.2)
3	((Jackson stood next to Sandy.))
4	Jackson: (MAN) <u>What are we writing now? The second fissue?</u>

5	Sandy:	(MAN) <i>[But↑ you, °uh:°,</i>
6		((Sandy turned to face Aaron.))
7	Sandy:	(CAN) <i>But what you wrote should mention they were</i> la: te↑
8		(CAN) <i>because()</i>
9		((Sandy extended her arm to point at Aaron's writing.
10		Jackson standing between them stepped back to make space.))
11	Sandy:	>°Let↑ me see< where I can add the sentence to. °
12	Aaron:	(1.0) Just add on top of this.

Sandy's second utterance in Mandarin was a natural response after hearing Jackson's question in Mandarin. She then deliberately switched the sentence to Cantonese right away. This code-switching indicated that her intention was to speak to Aaron only and to exclude Jackson from the discussion.

In the third stage, Jackson provided less input than in the first two stages. One cause could be an increased use of Cantonese in their discussions, which made it impossible for him to participate. On the other hand, Jackson seemingly got discouraged by the fact that he was not able to make valuable contributions and thus he made fewer attempts to try. Table 4.4 showed that in the fifth in-class group meeting (April 3, 2013), Jackson kept long pauses over five minutes in a discussion without back channelling or making eye contact. Later in that meeting, Jackson played with his cell phone for about six minutes.

**Table 4.4 Fifth in-class meeting on April 3rd, 2013
(Group 5-2, 35:52.3-36:23.1)**

1		((Jackson started looking at his phone.))
2	Candy:	((looking at Jackson))I think you need to put some key
3		phrases like < "educate" >, <"lower the light deficit" > ,
4		something like this in your paragraph.
5	Jackson:	(1.5) ((looking at Candy.))
6	Candy:	Do you understand?
7	Jackson:	(1.0)
8	Candy:	>For our part<, is about how to educate them; how to lower
9		the light deficit. So you need to write some KEY WORDS↑
10		to let him know we really care about, how↑ we address
11		that point.
12	Jackson:	Oh, °Okay↓, Okay° ((Looking back to his phone)).
13		((Jackson continued playing with his phone for five
14		Minutes. Other three members were discussing in
15		Cantonese.))

In the same meeting, when Candy invited the instructor to the group to answer their questions on the final report submission, Candy, Sandy, and Aaron took turns each asking several questions. Jackson did not ask any questions of the instructor. It is worth noting that Jackson was totally excluded from the group discussion on the day for binding and submitting their final report. Candy, Sandy and Aaron met on April 9th to work together on their final draft but they deliberately did not notify Jackson about their meeting. Therefore, Jackson did not attend. In other words, Jackson did not have an opportunity to see, to contribute, or approve the final version of the report his group submitted.

Jackson received decreasing marks on his participation in the team evaluations by his team members. His marks were considerably lower compared to the marks received by other team members. The lowest mark was from the third evaluation after the group project was complete. He received a total of 156 points out of 216, which is about 72% whereas his members' are at about 90%-94% range. The comments from his team members showed that they considered Jackson as an inconvenience factor for the group—his work did not meet expectations at all times, his disagreements with the rest of the team wasted a lot of time, and overall he was not able to fully participate or contribute much to the project. Below were Aaron's comments about Jackson after the project was complete. This excerpt showed that Aaron felt that Jackson wasted the group's valuable time and his writing did not meet expectations. However, it also showed Jackson's efforts in participating in the group by volunteering to write extra parts.

Excerpt 33:

R: How satisfied are you with each members' contributions?

Aaron: [...] Then, Jackson, he was a bit troublesome for our group. It was mostly that he always argued with other members about some of the research he did then we had to describe it. I didn't really like it because I thought it wasted a lot of time because we had to describe a lot of things to him. Um...and, I thought in the report, we gave him one part, the executive summary. What he submitted was not really good, and it was really short. So I just redid the whole thing, his part, the executive summary for S3. I think he uploaded to Google doc. It was really short if you look at it. Originally we didn't give him that part. But he said he didn't have that much to do so he volunteered to do the executive summary (Interview 2, 20130418, 10:34.5 - 14:42.8.)

4.2.9. A summary

The participants' beliefs and comments about group work showed that all the participants in this study were motivated to actively participate in the group discussions. Participants in Phase 2 were specifically highly motivated and engaged to work hard together for a good grade. However, some of them were unable to achieve their goals in their group discussions for various reasons.

Inevitably, some participants' lack of oral participation is related to their language competence, such as John in Phase 1 and Jackson in Phase 2. In Phase 1, English was the only common medium of interaction and thus English proficiency was the symbolic capital in the group discussions. As a high-intermediate English speaker, John may have been at a disadvantage when interacting with native English speakers who have ample knowledge and experiences of the conventions in constructing and taking turns in English. John also had difficulty understanding some of the task materials that were technical and specific to particular genres. Thus, he may have had less information to contribute or exchange in the group discussions. Jackson in Phase 2, however, had a different situation. Though Jackson's English was sufficient for the purpose of discussion, his group sometimes chose to discuss in Cantonese, a language dialect that was unknown to Jackson. As a result, Jackson was excluded from these Cantonese discussions and later discouraged him from continuing to actively participate in his group.

Language was not the only issue that affected Chinese multilingual speakers' participation in their groups. Knowledge about the course content, the local context or academic conventions could also be influential factors. Jackson started to encounter difficulties in participation when one of the tasks required knowledge about the local municipal system and topographic information. Moreover, he encountered challenges in researching and writing in this Business course because he was unfamiliar with procedures and norms in western education. Thus, his contribution to the project was limited in these aspects and he was regarded as a burden by his group members. Even his efforts to participate were regarded as time wasting and annoying. However, these kinds of knowledge—the localized information and the western research/writing basics—should not be linked with a student's academic capability or diligence. As a new immigrant from China to Canada, these kinds of knowledge were not straightforwardly

available for Jackson. Hence, Jackson was disadvantaged in the group discussions because of his lack of local knowledge, which was caused by his comparatively short length of stay in Canada. Similarly, John in Phase 1 had mentioned in his interview when asked about his long silence in one of the group activities that he lacked knowledge about the subject, Canadian warranty policies, and therefore he could not participate in the activity.

In some unfortunate cases, participants' lack of participation was caused by marginalization and/or demotivation. Jackson changed from a keen active contributor to a passive follower in the Phase 2 study. The change in his participation was not totally his own choice or original preference. Jackson was not considered a fellow member, but as an inconvenience by his group members due to his lack of local knowledge and insufficient writing skills in English. Therefore, his team did not value his ideas or input, nor give him many opportunities to participate at the end of the term. One of the ways that his group members marginalized Jackson was through code-switching. Code-switching was a salient and frequent phenomenon in study Phase 2. Though English was still used quite often in in-class group meetings, the video and the audio recordings showed an increased and frequent use of Cantonese in their group meetings towards the end of the term. Since Jackson was not able to understand Cantonese, whenever the group used Cantonese, Jackson was automatically excluded from the discussions. Even when he tried to keep up by asking in Mandarin or English, his questions were often ignored by his members. His members' disrespectful attitudes eventually discouraged Jackson from making attempts to continue to make further contributions. Jackson and other Chinese multilingual speakers' experiences in this study showed that that oral participation in group discussions is not always constructed on a level basis. The oral participation or the lack of it of in academic discussions should be viewed with reference to the power dynamics situated around Chinese multilingual speakers within their groups.

4.3. Conclusion

The findings of the participants' appreciation on group work and group discussions are convergent with what has been reported by constructivist scholars (Durkin, 2008; Gieve & Clark, 2005; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006; Wang, 2012).

Constructivist scholars observed that Chinese learners often adapt to some degree to the new learning culture under the influence of their contexts. Participants in this study, like John and Jackson who recently arrived in Canada, were eager to establish a sense of being and belonging in the academic community through their participation in group discussions. Therefore, they were enthusiastic in participating in the group discussions.

The second half of Chapter 4 depicted how Chinese multilingual speakers in this study participated in their group discourses or group work. Obviously, they all made efforts to participate actively in their group discussions. Some participants like Jenn, Aaron, Sandy and Candy played central roles in their groups. They gained positive group experience and feedback from their group members. Some participants like Jo and Ann demonstrated different styles of participation in different settings of group work. Sometimes they acted as leaders to direct their group's discussions and other times they played a cooperative followers' role when they had less expertise to share with their group members. Other participants, on the contrary, expected to receive fair opportunities and attention to participate but ended up feeling disappointed, frustrated and isolated in their groups in reality. These participants like John and Jackson encountered competition, disrespect, impatience, and marginalization explicitly or implicitly in their group experiences. These negative encounters had constrained their voices and contributions in their group work. And, John and Jackson's experiences were certainly not individual cases. There could be many factors that contributed to their unsuccessful experiences such as lack of subject knowledge, insufficient language competence for communication, lack of local contextual information, and so on. A detailed discussion on participants' negative group experiences is included in Chapter 6.

The findings presented in this chapter show a wide range of different experiences, actions and responses of Chinese multilingual speakers to group work in reality. Their attitudes, perspectives, background, and choices of actions were related to various personal, social, contextual factors, which have showed significant contingency and complexity in the issue. In the next chapter, I investigate the challenges and difficulties that participants had experienced in their group experiences, and how factors other than linguistic or cultural may affect Chinese multilingual speakers' participation, academic performances and positioning in their group projects.

Chapter 5.

Influential Factors and Negotiation Strategies

In Chapter 4, I reported findings about the study's Chinese multilingual speakers' beliefs and their ways of participation. In this chapter, I present findings related to the last two research questions: 3) What kinds of challenges and difficulties do these Chinese multilingual speakers face in small group discussions? And, 4) how do these Chinese learners respond to and act upon those challenges and difficulties? I first examine some of the social challenges and biases that these Chinese multilingual speakers have experienced and realized in their group work. Secondly, I explore through participants' own narratives their responses and strategies when facing difficulties and challenges in their group discussions.

5.1. Biases and challenges in group discussions

Participants reported in their individual interviews that their participation in university group work were affected by stereotypical preconceptions that are related to social differences such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, language, age, and appearance. Furthermore, participants also identified various classroom contextual factors that causes challenges for their voluntary participation. In the following, I present participants' reflections and narratives regarding the impact of social differences on their group interaction. It is worth noting that multiple social differences often function in complex, fluid, and interlocking ways and that the separation of social characteristics in this chapter is mainly for the convenience of presenting the data in a practical, clear way.

5.1.1. Race, ethnicity and class

Five¹⁰ participants out of eight reported three areas in which race, ethnicity and class affected their interaction with their peers: 1) choices of interlocutors; 2) roles that students played in their group work; and 3) group members' interpersonal relationships. The other three participants¹¹ reported that race, ethnicity or class did not affect their group interaction or their attitudes towards their peers' participation.

First, five of the participants reported that race and ethnicity influenced their and their classmates' choices of interlocutors—with whom they or classmates wanted to work and how they or classmates related to other members. The following excerpt demonstrated Jo's observation of how race and ethnicity affect people's choices of partners.

Excerpt 34:

- R: Let's talk about you. You actually speak pretty good fluent English. When you have a group with all Caucasian people [...], do you feel race or ethnicity is an issue?
- Jo: I don't feel that [my race or ethnicity] being an issue. Not in this [course]. Not from me for sure.
- [Recalling past group experiences.]
- R: Right now we are talking about race.
- Jo: Race, yes, it can be. I have definitely experienced about it but not towards me though. I have somehow participated...
- R: Towards other people?
- Jo: Yeah, I know it's bad. It has happened before, towards other people. Because I guess blacks are still minority, very, very minority in our campus. I had ended up need to work with a black person. Somehow she was singled out.
- [Talking about her group experience with a black female student in a French class.]
- Jo: It's interesting that ethnicity still plays a role in group activity cohesion and in group dynamics, for sure. Yes, there is interestingly a tendency to work with people, not me, but I am just saying what I have observed—There is a tendency for people to work with people who share the

¹⁰ The five participants are: Jo, Jenn and John in Phase 1, and Sandy and Andrew in Phase 2.

¹¹ The other three participants are: Ann in Phase 1, Candy and Jackson in Phase 2. I speculate that at the time of the interview, Jackson might not have the knowledge or the vocabulary to address the issue of social biases.

most similarities. For some reason, I tend to choose white, Caucasian people.

R: What are the reasons for doing so?

Jo: I am white washed, I don't know. I am white washed by Disney. (laughing) (Interview 2, 20121203, 26:14.1 - 29:37.4).

Though Jo wanted to work with White students, Aaron and Sandy from Phase 2 both reported that they felt more comfortable to relate to group members who are Chinese, and their preference corroborated Jo's observation of cultural enclaves. Aaron and Sandy expressed that they felt less comfortable, interacting with those not from their own ethnic group. The following two excerpts illustrate Aaron and Sandy's feelings.

Excerpt 35:

R: Have you ever felt that your country of origin, or ethnic background have affected your group members' attitudes toward you or your contribution?

Aaron: Well, sometimes if I were with people that are not Chinese origin, I feel less comfortable. I am not too sure [why] actually. It's...(10-second pause) I am not too sure why. I just feel like that sometimes. (Interview 2, 20130418, 29:42.2 - 31:41.4).

Excerpt 36:

R: How about you? Would you pay more attention to people from certain countries or of certain races? Or feel reluctant or pay less attention to people from other areas?

Sandy: I think I tend to talk to people who share the same ethnicity. But if the Chinese students have poor English, then I don't want to talk to them much either as it will take me too much time explaining things to them. (Interview 2, 20130416, 37:41.9 - 38:01.3).

Sandy in Excerpt 36 showed an intersection of ethnicity and language proficiency together in influencing her interactions in group discussions. Sandy mentioned that she preferred interacting with people from her own ethnic group—Chinese. However, with an increase of international Chinese students to Canada who she felt, often do not have sufficient English proficiency, Sandy seemed have appropriated a second important criterion—English proficiency—to choose who would be useful and convenient to interact with.

The second area of racial and ethnic impact on group interaction was found on the roles that the participants felt were available to them. Stereotypical perceptions

about Asian students may limit the roles that Asian students could play in their groups. Jenn, one of the top students in Phase 1's linguistics course, described such feelings in Excerpt 37.

Excerpt 37:

- R: Have you ever felt that your ethnicity or race was a factor, which affects your members' attitudes toward you or your contribution?
- Jenn: I think that some people would perceive Asians as very quiet and hardworking so they don't really give you a leadership role unless you really just take it. And also sometimes they would tend to stereotyping, assign tasks to you which are more like, do more research or behind the scenes type of work. And, sometimes [people] also take advantage of the factor that they think Asians are smarter or more hardworking. So [they] try to get you to do more work or more of the difficult parts. (Interview 2, 20121204, 15:54.7 -- 16:58.6)

According to Jenn, classmates' assumptions of Asian students as quiet and hardworking contributed to keeping them in peripheral roles—doing technical, “behind the scenes” work, despite their willingness or ability. Jenn further recalled a real example from her past group experience, in which she was excluded from the decision making process by her local Canadian peers (in Excerpt 38).

Excerpt 38:

- R: Please give me one example.
- Jenn: Actually in BUSXXX, we had the term paper and I was in a group with three members. [...] One guy was Caucasian and one girl was Asian but she was born here. [...] They always felt like I would be the more careful one and then they like to just kind of, I don't want to say "order" but they would prefer to generate a general idea but actually tell me to carry out the idea and figure out the details. Whereas sometimes I felt like my broad[er] kind of ideas or vision, I would call maybe, wasn't really accepted. (Interview 2, 20121204, 16:58.2 - 19:15.6)

Jenn experienced the stereotypes of Asian students as limiting the role and contribution of Chinese multilingual participants in their group discussions. On the other hand, racialized presumptions also affect the participants' perceptions and attitudes towards members from other minority groups. The following excerpt from John from Phase 1 illustrates how he might judge his group members' ability and knowledge by their ethnic and class background.

Excerpt 39:

- R: So how about...have you ever felt your ethnicity or race to be a factor affected your group members' attitudes toward your participation or contribution to the group discussion?
- John: Um...my race. No, I never experience that.
- R: How about other people's race or ethnicity affects your attitudes toward them?
- John: um...No, never. I don't have that experience.
- [...]
- R: So the same thing, if someone talks about their ideas from a white guy or come from some other a black person, will it affect your perception about what they are saying?
- John: hah, it will affect but I will.., it's not really like it depends on race. But basically, I will think that, you know, probably a black girl, maybe she has some, (pause)..., maybe she likes.., what should I say. Can I use some other ethnic groups because I don't know any black girls.
- R: So do you have a real example?
- John: Yeah, real example. I know many Burmese people, Burmese and Karen¹², the southeast Asians. And, I know most of them are not so wealthy. So they are not so, mainstream people. So if there is a student who is from Burma or Thailand, some countries around there. I would think their parents are refugees, they are not rich like that, [...] Probably they are..., they are like in the lower class family. They will think like working class people. That's the way. [long pause]. So sometimes when I see a white man, who speaks very formal English even though he is only 19, probably his parents are very well educated. Probably he is more rational than other people. He probably, I assume he has certain literature [literacy] before he is in college. So yeah, [a person's race] will affect. Because their background is different, there have different academic trainings and they experience different things. I probably assume they have different ...social values. That affects a lot. So basically, it's not really about race. It's about personal experience, and it's about how they are raised up. (Interview 2, 20121207, 29:52.2 - 33:17.5)

John initially denied perceiving any racial influence on his group interactions. However, gradually, through probing questions, he made a connection between race, class, education and quality of speech in Excerpt 39. In John's impression Burmese

¹² Karen: I assume that John meant Karen people, the sino-Tibetan language speaking ethnic groups who reside in Karen State in Myanmar, also known as Burma.

students were usually from “lower class families” whose parents were “refugees” and who “think like working class people”; whereas a young white male student who speaks formal English was probably from a “well-educated” family and literate before entering college. In John’s opinion, racial differences imply “different academic trainings”, different experiences, and “different social values”, and therefore affect people’s opinions “a lot”.

The third area where race and ethnicity exert their influence is on group members’ interpersonal relationships. Participant accounts showed that students from nations where tensions and competition long exist may have difficulty in forming positive relationships, and thus affect their group interactions. In Excerpt 40 and 41, Sandy reported that she “did not get along well with Korean¹³ students” from past experiences.

Excerpt 40:

R: Do you feel country of origin can be, including your group experiences in other courses, a factor affecting your group members' attitudes toward you?

Sandy: [...]I felt Koreans, the Korean girl, it's not like I can't talk to her in English, but she did not talk to me. I felt it was not an issue of language. Her English was good but not as native speakers. We can talk in English but she kind of ignored me.... [The Caucasian and Indian students] would give me feedback on my ideas or suggestions. But the Korean girl only talked to the male English Caucasian and Indian speakers (Interview 2, 20130416, 33:48.7-37:02.6).

Excerpt 41:

R: How about you? Would you pay more attention to people from certain countries or of certain races? Or feel reluctant or pay less attention to people from other areas?

Sandy: [...] In general, I find many Korean people are a bit arrogant. And, Korean people only like to interact with Korean students. So, I didn't get along well with Korean students. I also worked with Turkish, Russian students and they were fine. (Interview 2, 20130416, 38:20.7-39:02.6).

Sandy perceived that the South Korean female student showed different attitudes for working with male Caucasian students compared to Chinese female peers. I question whether such attitude might be related to an influence by white supremacy as well as male patriarchy, and by the political and historical tension between South Korea and

¹³ Korean: referring to students from South Korea.

China. The two nations had a hostile relationship since Chinese People's Volunteer Army participated in the Korean War in 1950-53 to help the North Koreans fight against the South Korean and UN forces (China-South Korea relations, 2016). It was only after 1992, had South Korea and China established formal international relations. The tension between the two nations have further aggregated tremendously in 2016 since South Korea government and US decided to deploy the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile system in South Korea (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, 2016). Though only reported by one participant, it is probably worth examining whether Sandy's experience and feeling with the South Korea students a commonly shared one.

The perspectives about race, ethnicity and class's impact on participants' group interaction represented in the above data excerpts show that these factors play an important role determining with whom participants and their classmates wanted to work, what roles they and their classmates can play and how cohesive their and their classmates' interpersonal relationships might be. Furthermore, some evidence seemed to suggest that there was a tendency among students to prefer and value opinions from Caucasian students than other racial groups (See Excerpt 34, 39, 40), and that students prefer working with peers from their own ethnic group (Excerpt 34, 35, 36).

5.1.2. **Gender**

When asked about gender's impact, participants originally reported that they did not perceive gender played a role in their own participation. However, a close examination of participants' descriptions of past teamwork showed that six¹⁴ out of eight participants had experienced some degree of gender stereotyping in their group work. These gender biases affected the roles that male or female students play and the interactive patterns between male and female students in their groups.

Some participants believed or experienced that female students often served a managerial role rather than a leading role in groups. Participant Aaron in Phase 2 described his impression of female team members in Excerpt 42.

Excerpt 42:

¹⁴ The six participants were: Ann, Jenn, Jo and John from Phase 1; and Aaron and Sandy from Phase 2.

R: How about gender? Did you have experience working with a group of female students?

Aaron: [...] In that HR paper, it was only three guys. It was not that good. I think usually girls tend to be more, they start things earlier than guys. Me and my other partner were saying, we wish the other girl was in our group [...]. So I usually prefer to have some girls on our team. They help to organize most of the work done. They usually start earlier they can push other people to start earlier. (Interview 2, 20130418, 37:10.9 - 39:17.0).

What Aaron described corresponded with the happenings in the Business group project in Phase 2. Both young women, Candy and Sandy, did most of the housekeeping work—such as booking the meeting room, setting up the online Google Doc, checking everyone’s progress, doing translation, and so on. I have outlined each of their roles in Chapter 4.

Similarly, participant Jenn from Phase 1 also noticed that females tended to serve as followers but males seemed to have more opportunities to take the leader roles. In Excerpt 43, Jenn shared her observation when teaching a tutorial that usually the only male in a group with females often served as the leader of the team.

Excerpt 43:

R: Let's talk about gender difference. Did you ever feel the influence of gender difference in group interaction? Either being the only female student in a male group or maybe a guy in a female group. Something like that?

Jenn: From my experience not really. but I did notice that when I ran my own tutorial with students this semester, there ended up being a few groups that had only one guy in it with either two girls or three other girls. [The guys] seemed to be the leader for some reason. Like the only guy. but it's not my own experience. It's just what I notice something interesting. (Interview 2, 20121204, 21:35.8 -- 22:27.6)

Another impact of gender on group interaction was on inner-group members’ relationships. Sandy in Phase 2 found from her past experiences that it was easier for her to work with males rather than with females (Excerpt 44). She believed that students of the opposite sex communicated better and more effectively than those of the same sex.

Excerpt 44:

- R: Do you feel your gender could be a factor affecting your group interaction? For example, a group of guys talked to each other, not to you?
- Sandy: No, on the contrary, I think guys and girls are easy to communicate with each other. Opposites attract. (R: So will you talk more to boys than girls in a mixed gender group?) I think so. I think in mixed-gender group, more communication between boys and girls, less talking to the same sex. (For you?) Yes. I think when I talk to girls if I am not careful, it's easy to get into quarrels. I think girls are more sensational. If they think the comments are personal, they are likely to have fights. But I think guys are more rational to analyze things. So they are easy to talk to (Interview 2, 20130416, 39:55.3 - 41:57.9).

Sandy's description of participants' interaction in the observed Business group project in Excerpt 45 supported her previous comment. Sandy noticed that Aaron and Jackson were nicer to her and Candy, another female member, than to each other.

Excerpt 45:

- R: Can you talk about in this course whether your group members' attitudes to you are different from each other?
- Sandy: I think, even Jackson and I have disagreements, we wouldn't, he did not give me bad attitudes at a personal level. Aaron and I were in the same accounting course, studying French together. Aaron is nicer to me. For example, when I expressed my opinions, he would pay attention. Aaron is also nice to Candy. I think it's a gender thing. Guys are nicer to girls. Jackson and Aaron talked very little. (Interview 2, 20130416, 54:46.2 - 58:28.6)

Accounts from other participants further supported this finding. Aaron from Phase 2 stated his preference for working with female students and recalled his experience in a male-only group to be "not that good" (Interview 2, 20130418). Moreover, Jo from Phase 1 pointed out that she got along better with male students than female students (Interview 2, 20121203).

Whereas the above participants found people of opposite sex work cohesively, Ann from Phase 1 reported she would feel nervous working with a group of guys.

Excerpt 46:

- R: Have you ever felt gender could be a factor in group interaction? ...Imagine you are the only girl in an all-guy group, or vice versa. Would you behave differently in these two groups?

Ann: Myself, I would. Just because it's more intimidating if it's like...if I can't relate to another person. [...] Just be a little more shy, not more participative. Because it feels like they're are gonna look at me differently.

R: When you say you become more shy, you mean you...?

Ann: I might have answers to questions or opinions, but I won't say it just because I know. (Interview 2, 20130102, 21:37.5-22:48.2)

The third impact of gender stereotypes on participation related to female Chinese multilingual speakers' style of participation. My observation showed that the following three participants all adopted a cooperative, supportive style in their participation. My observation corroborated with their own accounts in their interviews. Ann in Phase 1, who grew up in the local area, just followed along when her group members were already active. In another case, when her group were really quiet, she tried to actively contribute and lead her members to start a discussion. Candy in Phase 2 shared similar ideas. She did not want to be an active leader at the beginning as it was too much work. So only when she was unhappy about her group's achievements, Candy stepped up to check everyone's progress in their work. Sometimes, female participants used silence to share the floor with other members as a considerate gesture in their group discussions. Jenn in Phase 1 invited her members to express their ideas first before sharing her own. She did not contribute very frequently but helped to raise topics or solicit other members' opinions when the discussion stopped.

In summary, six participants felt that gender stereotypes affected the roles and styles they played in groups as well as the interpersonal communications between group members. According to these participants' experiences, female students usually played managerial, clerical, subordinate roles in groups whereas male students had more opportunities to take up leadership roles. On the other hand, gender stereotypes seemed to cause conflicting impact on inter-sexual communication. Several participants reported that communication between opposite sexes is usually more efficient and cohesive than that between the same sexes. Nonetheless, one female participant reported feeling pressure and intimidation speaking in front of a group of males. Participants' experiences and perceptions about gender differences seemed to be convergent with empirical evidences in mixed-gender communication studies that male tend to dominate and be hierarchical in mixed-gender conversations, such as men talking more and longer than women, more likely interrupting women than the reverse,

and utilizing more aggressive, competitive strategies (for overviews see Aries, 1996; Coates, 2004; Fishman, 1983; James & Clarke, 1993; James & Drakich, 1993; Kalbfleisch & Herold, 2006; Kaplan, 2016; Speer & Stokoe, 2011; Tannen, 1993)¹⁵. Nonetheless, woman tended to use supportive, collaborative strategies in their communication. Recently, more and more scholars have moved from a cross-cultural difference view to a constructionist approach in conversation and gender research, which argued that gender differences are constructed through discourses rather than prescribed by biologic sex (Aries, 2006; Cameron, 2003; DeFrancisco & Palczewski, 2007, 2014; Gamble & Gamble, 2014; Speer & Stokoe, 2011). From this perspective, participants' preferences and experiences of gender differences need to take into consideration the influences from the immediate context in which mixed-communications take place, and the larger context such as the dominant ideologies on gender roles in the wider society.

5.1.3. Language related aspects

Among various social categories, language and language-related aspects are the most salient factors mentioned by the participants that have caused difficulties and challenges in their oral participation. All the participants in this study acknowledged the central role that English proficiency played in their group interactions. Reflecting on their general group experiences in the university, participants believed that students who did not have sufficient English proficiency were unlikely to make good quality or numerous verbal contributions in their group discussions. Other than general proficiency, participants felt that different aspects of language such as slang, accents and eloquence can create different impacts on multilingual speakers' participation. Next, I present their opinions in four aspects: English variety, pronunciation, language sophistication and language's indexical function for personal identity.

In some contexts, participants found that the use of slang or a particular form of English variety in discussion could cause communication barriers. John shared in Excerpt 47 that he found it was easier to understand his professor's lectures than his

¹⁵ The current trend in conversation and gender research has moved from a cross-culture difference view to a constructionist approach, which argues that gender differences are constructed through discourse rather than prescribed by the biologic sex (DeFrancisco & Palczewski, 2007, 2014; Speer & Stokoe, 2011).

fellow students' discussions because his native English peers often spoke with slang and informal structures.

Excerpt 47:

R: Do you think language affect your group participation?

John: [...]

R: We are actually talking about your experience.

John: Yeah, my experience, I have that. Because [Native English speakers] are speaking English but they are not speaking the standard academic English like the professors. They are using English the way they speak at high school. It is quite informal. They are for native speakers. It's for them but it's hard for ESL, because ESL learn the standard, formal English. [...] English is not just one stuff. I think in the course, we used the term, sublanguage or something. It's sociolinguistic stuff meaning within a certain group of people they use their own terms or way of speaking. And, yeah, among professors they speak very formal. Sometimes, the students they don't use the real standard...they don't speak in standard way. (Interview 2, 20121217, 22:36.4 - 24:32.6)

The second aspect of language—pronunciation, accents in particular, also had a huge impact on students' oral participation in their discussions. Participants' experiences showed that foreign accents could increase difficulties in speech comprehension. Jo described such a case in Excerpt 48, in which she worked with a German female student.

Excerpt 48:

R: How do you feel about this group interaction?

Jo: [...]I tend to pay attention more to people who speak loudly and clearly. And, even though, there was this girl making really great comments. But she is sitting really far away from me. I couldn't really hear her. So, I tend to, not intentionally, but I did ignore some comments she made. Plus, also, English isn't really her first language. At times, I had trouble understanding her accents. But, even though later on I did find her comment was worth looking into but because the way she delivered, I couldn't really hear. And with some accents so I tend to ignore her comments. (Interview 1, 20120921, 1:24.0 - 2:09.4)

According to the video recording and my field notes, Jo mainly discussed with two other male students in that activity and made little contact with the German woman.

Jo's experience showed that foreign accents could impede effective communication in students' group discussions.

In cases when accents did not interfere with understanding, participants found that they related differently to different accents—a particular type of accent could stimulate positive or negative impressions of the speaker. Excerpt 49 showed how Jo reacted differently to European-accented English and to Cantonese-accented English.

Excerpt 49:

R: Do you yourself have some bias toward people who just arrived? Would you have some bias toward people who just arrived in Canada?

[...]

Jo: It's kind of...um mean to say this but I tend to pay attention to certain accents when people talk. For example, I would tune in more to maybe heavy European French Slavic kind of accent than a Cantonese accent. So accents determines my attention to what the content they have to deliver. I realize that is biased, making me a total racist. But I find certain accents interesting. Therefore, I know that person probably has something interesting to say. Or I would find interesting. Accents determine my attention for sure. (Interview 2, 20121203, 39:10.9 - 40:13.7)

Fluency, grammaticality, vocabulary and persuasiveness are the third aspect of English that can cause multilingual speakers challenges in discussions. Participant Ann, noted the grasp of grammar and vocabulary affecting the strength of voices, and consequently one's authority in the group (Excerpt 50).

Excerpt 50:

R: Why do you think [English] would be [an advantage]?

Ann: [If you are fluent in a language], I guess the words you will say or the grammar or the meaning of your words will be more persuasive to the group. So it will have an effect on the other people just because it makes yourself seems more knowledgeable of the topic. (Interview 2, 20130102, 15:41.4 - 16:23)

Ann's comment pointed out the sociolinguistic layer of language—word choice and sentence patterns in one's speech can produce an academic image of the speaker as either rational, knowledgeable, scholarly, or ignorant, inexperienced, and superficial. In Ann's opinion, people with standard grammar and sophisticated vocabulary choice

sound more convincing and authoritative than people with grammatical mistakes in their speech. Chinese multilingual speakers, often less fluent and less eloquent compared with their native English speaking peers, may appear less knowledgeable in discussions and thus experience difficulty earning an audience's attention.

The fourth aspect of language that tends to impact multilingual speakers' oral participation is language's function as a primary marker for personal identity. Findings imply that participants usually identify with their group members through their primary linguistic practices rather than their racial, ethnical background. The following excerpt illustrated that Jo identified herself more closely to Chinese EAL students than Canadian-born Chinese (CBC) students despite her fluent English and extended stay in Canada.

Excerpt 51:

- R: But if there is [a CBC group]?
- Jo: Bananas¹⁶? I probably wouldn't want to join, be one of them. No, I would stand out as a major F.O.B. So I would probably join the other "ESL" group.
- R: Why is that? Why you don't want to join the Banana group?
- Jo: I feel pressured.
- R: What kind of pressure?
- Jo: Self conscious, I know my English is not like theirs in terms of fluency, and even for group projects, for school work, they probably sometimes talk about other things, like culture, whatever topics that come up during conversations. I have a hard time identifying with them, nor carrying on a meaningful conversation with them because they will talk about things [that] I have no idea with.... I will have nothing to say. ... I don't share the same interests. Hard for me to blend in. (Interview 2, 20121203, 31:08.9 - 32:24.6)

Jo explained that she would feel pressure interacting with CBC because she felt less proficient in spoken English and had less experience/knowledge in the local context compared with the CBC students. Though Jo and CBC students may both appeared "Chinese", Jo felt different ("have a hard time identifying with them"), illegitimate ("my

¹⁶ Banana: a metaphorical term for Canadian-born Chinese, meaning that their skin color is yellow but their values/culture are predominantly white.

English is not like theirs in terms of fluency”) and deficient (“as a major F.O.B¹⁷.”) in front of them. Aaron, a CBC student, shared an experience working with several international Chinese students and referred to himself as “not from that culture” (Interview 1, 20130131, 33:09.5 - 34:25.4).

Participants’ accounts from both sides seemed to suggest that one’s linguistic practice serves as the primary marker for one’s personal identity. By pointing out her English as less fluent, Jo implied her perception of her identity as primarily Chinese and ESL. Such perceptions of identity and membership of speaking English would affect Chinese multilingual speakers’ statuses within the group, their relationships with other group members, and their confidence in interacting and participating in groups.

In this section, 5.1.3, I presented students’ reports of several linguistic aspects that have caused challenges and difficulties for them in voluntary oral participation in their group discussions. These aspects include general English proficiency, varieties, accents, and language as a marker for identity. Other than language-related aspects, another reoccurring theme from participants’ reports is the length of stay in Canada, which I discuss in the next section.

5.1.4. **Length of stay in Canada**

According to participants’ experiences, a student’s length of stay in Canada did not directly cause difficulties and challenges, but often intersected with other social characteristics such as language proficiency, academic capacity and immigration/citizenship status. These multiple factors intertwined and co-produced profound effects on participants’ ability and opportunities to participate in their group work. For example, participants might view a student’s length of stay in Canada as an indicator of his or her academic capacity or English proficiency, thus affecting that student’s status in a group. The following two excerpts illustrate this.

Excerpt 52:

R: So right now, your group members are counted as positive or negative factors?

¹⁷ F.O.B: the acronym stands for “fresh off the boat.” It is a term often used to refer to immigrants who have just arrived in a place and are perceived to lack common knowledge and understanding of the local context.

Jackson: Right now, my group members can be count as positive factors.

R: Because you have a native English speaker?

Jackson: Yes, and another member who has stayed here over 5 years.

R: Is that long or not long?

Jackson: Oh, very long. So they are in my eyes are considered having better English skills. (Interview 1, 20130130, 42:06.0 - 42:52.0)

Excerpt 53:

R: Were there times when CBC students were not nice to you, or people treat CBC better than you, or not very nice to international students who just came to Canada? Have you ever felt that?

Sandy: I think it goes back to the factor of language. Generally speaking, If you are here longer like you are a CBC, your English will be no problem like NES. So if you are here longer, they would treat you better. In teamwork, no one likes a member who don't understand anything, who can not communicate at all. So international students with poor English are likely to receive negative [attitudes], people don't want them in the group. (Interview 2, 20130416, 43:13.1 - 44:23.0)

These excerpts revealed that international students who were learning English were often regarded as burdens by their domestic peers because they had comparatively shorter stays in Canada and thus perceived having “poorer” competence (“who don’t understand anything”).

Other than serving as a primary indicator for one’s language and academic competence, length of stay in Canada also affected students’ understanding and knowledge of the local context and culture, which could potentially limit their contributions to the group project. Excerpt 54 exemplified that the lack of local cultural understanding had caused Jackson a lot of conflicts with his group members as well as difficulties in completing his work.

Excerpt 54:

R: Did you feel that because of your length of stay in Canada affect [how] you understand the culture...

Jackson: Right. Like that Green Committee [incident]. I think that is largely related to this factor. I have no understanding of this kind of stuff. I felt if I had had some experiences of it, I might not have that many disagreements with Sandy, or

wasting so much time writing and rewriting my part, or getting the sources that were not very relevant with our report. That wasted a lot of time. (Interview 2, 20130410, 35:11.8 - 36:11.9)

My field notes and interview accounts from other participants showed that Jackson's group members had suggested organizing a green committee as one of the effective business strategies for their project. Jackson, with little knowledge and experience of the operation of committees, had a lot of trouble grasping this concept as well as in delivering it in writing. There were a few other times when Jackson had extended discussions and arguments with his members over issues that required local knowledge. Jackson felt that if he had stayed in Canada for a longer period of time, he could have had more experience and knowledge of the local context and practices, which could possibly avoid his conflict with other members, and could improve his relationships with other members as well as his contribution to the project.

The length of stay in Canada not only affected how Chinese multilingual speakers were regarded and treated by their group members in their groups, but also affected their confidence in making valuable contributions to their groups. In the above incident, Jackson adopted his group members' suggestion of proposing a green committee in his writing part when he had not fully comprehended nor was convinced by the idea. The following excerpt revealed his thought.

Excerpt 55:

R: You have mentioned that your group had a disagreement on the recommendations. How was the disagreement settled?

Jackson: In the end, the other three members thought it was a good idea so I agreed too. It's not because they agreed so I agreed too. But I thought they have all lived in this environment for a long time so they might understand better on the workings of committee, these kind of stuff than me. I have never attended any committees before so personally I don't think it will have any effects on me. But they may have attended it before so they may understand it better than me. So we did the report according to their experiences so it should be fine. (Interview 2, 20130410, 20:24.6 - 21:28.7)

Jackson explained in Excerpt 55 that he compromised—following his members' decisions—because he felt they knew better than him because of their longer stay in Canada. In summary, length of stay in Canada created three kinds of impacts on

Chinese multilingual speakers' group experiences. First, length of stay was regarded as an indicator of one's English and academic capacity. Secondly, length of stay seemed to affect participants' understanding and knowledge of the local culture, which may limit the opportunities for newly arrived students to make valuable contributions if their projects required this information. Thirdly, length of stay in Canada also affected participants' confidence in contributing alternate ideas. Students who lived in Canada for a comparatively short period might surrender their opinions to their local peers or those who resided in Canada longer than them.

5.1.5. **More social-stereotyping factors**

The factors identified in the first four sections may cause challenges particularly for Chinese multilingual speakers. Factors in this section are not limited to Chinese multilingual speakers but applicable to the student population as a whole. These factors include appearance, age, GPA, work ethics, and more.

Physical appearance

Jo from Phase 1 made a connection between physical attractiveness and the quality of speech. Jo often found that charming people, who might not be "super-hot" but have a pleasant demeanour or interesting dress styles, usually have something interesting to offer in group discussions (Interview 2, 20121203, 41:33.1-43:05.1).

Sandy from Phase 2 found that physical attractiveness could positively affect students' grades and evaluations in substantial ways. Sandy reported two incidents from her previous group experiences in which she received exceptional marks when working with pretty partners. In the first case, Sandy worked with a handsome Russian student with poor English in an accounting course. Despite their challenges in communication, their work received full marks. Excerpt 56 depicted Sandy's feelings.

Excerpt 56:

R: What other factors will you take into consideration when choosing your group partners?

Sandy: I liked to work with handsome guys or pretty girls, good looking people. [...] For example, I worked with a Russian guy before. [Describing her group experience.] Then, our TA was a girl and our presentation even got full marks. so I thought, "oh, that Russian guy is quite useful".

R: You think that's why you get a good mark?

Sandy: I think we would get a good mark because we did a good job. But I was surprised that we would receive full marks. (Interview 2, 20130416, 49:15.6 - 50:11.3)

To augment her point about “beauty marks”, Sandy shared another case in which she deliberately paired with a beautiful female student. In this second incident, Sandy’s group received the highest mark in the class from a male teaching assistant (Excerpt 57).

Excerpt 57:

Sandy: [continuing from Excerpt 59] Other than this experience, the time I worked with that pretty girl she was also pretty strong. Our presentation received the highest marks in our class. That TA was a guy. Of course your content is very important, but if you also have visual [attraction] that is also good. I think people paid better attention to...“Eye candy”. Yeah, I was also surprised to see both incidents. (Interview 2, 20130416, 50:23.6 - 52:01.1)

Sandy concluded from these experiences that work content is important but physical attractiveness also helps to raise favourable attention. In other cases, physical appearance served as a negative indicator. Jenn in Excerpt 58 expressed that she made a connection between one’s dress styles with their work ethic.

Excerpt 58:

R: Based on your experience, are there any other factors that play a role in your group interaction? [...]

Jenn: I think maybe just appearance. Kind of, yeah, physical appearance. You kind of make a judgement about what kind of person they are. [...] So I tend to notice people's appearance better and I do make assumptions based on that. [...] if they dress very stylish I will make the connection that they either party a lot or they spend a lot of time socialization rather than working. Or if they dress more modest, I will make the connection that they seem more hardworking. (Interview 2, 20121204, 27:52.6 - 29:06.6)

The connection that Jenn established between physical appearances with working style revealed her concern for her partners’ work ethic. Her experiences seemed to suggest that a student who makes effort on looks probably pays less attention to studies.

While physical attractiveness could affect one’s group experiences in either positive or negative ways, an unpleasant physical appearance seemed to cause

challenges. For example, Jo confessed that she tended to pay less attention to people with pimples, bad breath or body odour (Excerpt 59, 60).

Excerpt 59:

- R: Any other factors that we have not mentioned? You noticed that plays a role in group dynamics?
[Jo talked about physical attractiveness.]
- Jo: For example, person with a pimply face. I probably would not be paying attention to that person regardless how charming that person is. That is a physical turndown for me.
- R: you won't listen to their comments?
- Jo: No, not that I wouldn't listen to it but I wouldn't be that interested, or that tuned in. (Interview 2, 20121203, 43:05.9-43:22.0)

Excerpt 60:

- R: Anything else?
- Jo: To add for the completeness sake, if people who can't take care of their personal hygiene, they have a particular set for example, major turnoff for me, I probably would not pay much attention to what that person to say. Bad B. O. or bad breath, those are factors as well, just to add to my biases. Personal reason, those factors do determine the quality of what they have to [say], the content of their utterance. (Interview 2, 20121203, 47:21.3 - 48:10.1)

In general, participants' comments in this study seemed to suggest that good-looking students were likely to receive more favourable attitudes and opportunities to participate from their peers and teachers than students that are ordinary or unpleasant looking. In addition, physical attractiveness might help to raise marks.

Work ethic and academic competence

According to participants' descriptions, work ethic referred to a student's willingness and motivation to do work well including paying attention to small issues like punctuation. Quite a few participants pointed out in their interviews that they regarded work ethic as one of the most important factors affecting their group experiences (such as Excerpt 61).

Excerpt 61:

- R: Based on your experience, are there any other factors that play a role in your group interaction? [...]

Jenn: [After Excerpt 59] Because personally for me in a group interaction, what I value the most is work ethic. I think that even if, like, I would prefer a very hard working group over a group who's just very good at English or something. (Interview 2, 20121204, 28:32.1 - 28:46.2)

Jenn's opinions corroborated Aaron's and Candy's comments from Phase 2, in which both were concerned about their partners' work ethic. Candy felt happy and fortunate to find out after a few initial meetings that her group members were all very "serious and committed, willing to pay efforts" (Interview 2, 20130130, 40:58.3-45:01.7). Aaron believed that work ethic and academic competence were more important than other factors (Excerpt 62).

Excerpt 62:

R: Imagine you are taking a course, and you need to select members for group work. What kind of criteria do you have? Who do you want to work with whom you don't want to work with?

Aaron: The most important is they are willing to put much effort into this. And also, how good their contributions will be so probably how smart they are. I mean, yeah, how smart they are so we can have a higher grade. So basically I just want to have the highest grade as possible. Other factors don't really matter (Interview 2, 20130418, 42:49.0 - 43:59.6).

Excerpt 62 revealed that academic competence was a crucial factor affecting students' positionalities in the group as what students valued most is their partners' ability to help the group to achieve the best mark as possible. Aaron stated, "What I really cares is how this person works in groups, how much this person contributes, so it doesn't matter where they are from" (Interview 2, 20130418, 32:08:5-33:54.3). Similarly, Sandy also felt that a student who was academically strong ("very good at academic work", "having high marks", etc) was likely to be respected, valued or followed by other members (Excerpt 63).

Excerpt 63:

R: In your opinion, what would make your group members value your input more?

Sandy: If my knowledge is broader, they might be willing to listen to me. I guess our group did not have a leader is probably no one really stands out.

R: Knowledge in what respect?

Sandy: Such as in research, in organization skills, and maybe leadership. Also, if I am very intelligent and very good at academic work, having high marks, they maybe listen to me more. It's like the doctor's degree, it means that your words are more reliable (Interview 1, 20130207, 41:40.6 - 44:03.9).

Age and experience

Age and experience were also raised as influential factors in participants' group interaction. However, participants had divergent opinions on this topic. Some participants like Jo and Sandy preferred working with older students for their real-life experiences but Jenn found older students often unable to fully commit to their studies. The following two excerpts illustrate the different opinions.

Excerpt 64:

R: Any other factors that we have not mentioned? You noticed that plays a role in group dynamics?

Jo: I would say also the person's general background in terms of schooling, formal education. If they are straight out of high school, they probably don't have something insightful to offer. But if they are like a major veteran like myself. I probably pay more attention and comment on it and try to get more out of that person. Try to get that person to elaborate it if that person hasn't really been dominating the conversation. (Interview 2, 20121203, 40:45.5 - 41:22.1)

Excerpt 65:

R: Anything else?

Jenn: Oh, maybe age. Because [the university] has a range of students here.

R: How does age affect you?

Jenn: I thought before age was a good thing. But then after working with some students who are quite bit older and still in the same classes as me, I feel like it's either because they are always too busy because they have to work full time and go to school, and maybe that's why they are a little older. Or they didn't do very well in school so they're either repeating the course or they have to transfer somewhere else first. SO my perception of them is a little negative. (Interview 2, 20121204, 29:22.0 - 30:24.9)

5.1.6. Classroom contextual factors

Seven out of eight participants¹⁸ reported that some classroom contextual factors affected directly or indirectly their oral participation in the group. These contextual factors include: general design of the group project, instruction, group formation, assessment measures, time constraints, and topic of discussion. The general designs of the group project in two phases were very different, which I outlined in Chapter 3 earlier. In short, Phase 1 had informal, ungraded and short group discussions, which I call low-stakes; whereas Phase 2 had strictly structured, heavily graded, long-term group projects, the high-stakes. The different designs of the group work seemed to produce prominent impacts on participants' interaction, interpersonal relationships and group experiences. Jenn went through both learning designs by the time of this study as she had taken the business-writing course previously. She compared the two experiences, saying:

Excerpt 66:

- R: Can you describe how these two courses are different in terms of their group work?
- Jenn: It's a very different purpose in [BUSXXX]. It's more intense where either you are working together to write something by the end of the class [...] [I]n [Phase 1] group, you don't really have to do anything and you don't have to worry if your group member don't want to talk or anything because it's just a group discussion. And [the instructor] usually goes over the group activity with you in the end anyways. You can still learn from him. You don't really need to rely or depend on your group members. But in [BUSxxx], you guys are really in it together. What [your members] do or don't do affect your grade. So, there will be very different dynamic I think.
- R: Other than the intense, what are the other feelings you have in [BUSXXX]?
- Jenn: I think there will be definitely more disagreement. Because people are trying to do the best they can on something. And, there is more pressure just because with the time limit usually we are given. I think maybe just in the business faculty in general, there is a more competitive side to it. We are all graded on a bell curve. (Interview 2, 20121204, 32:52.2-36:04.4)

Jenn's personal experiences concurred with my observation of the group interactions in two phases. Participants generally reflected positively on their group interactions and

¹⁸ All participants except Aaron from Phase 2.

group members in Phase 1. However, there were evidently more disagreements and power struggles between members in Phase 2 study including interruptions, ignoring others, and code-switching to exclude a partner.

The clarity and the level of detail of instruction were raised by four participants¹⁹ as influential factors to the amount and the quality of their participation. Both John and Jackson, the two Chinese multilingual speakers who had limited participation in their groups, felt that their instructors did not provide sufficient guidance and scaffolding in either course content or task instruction. Excerpt 67 illustrated Jackson's frustration about instructor's brief instruction on the content of the lectures.

Excerpt 67:

- R: What could have made the experiences better for you?
- Jackson: [...] I feel that the course is very fast pace. However, the instructor gave very little information in lectures. So it turns out that we haven't learned much from the class but were already asked to do a lot of writings [to be graded].
- R: Do you have any suggestions to make it better?
- Jackson: [...] I felt that the lectures right now are not very helpful because for the several classes that I have had so far, the instructor was just rushing over (the slides). [...] I felt the course could further improve on this respect. For example, to spend more time on providing more information, offering more opportunities for practice, and let students to ask questions during office hours for development and then the real test on the skills (Interview 1, 20130130, 37:07.1-40.43.7).

Ann's comments showed why clear instructions on the group task itself is important for students to participate actively in group discussions (Excerpt 68)--it affected learners' understanding of the task. John and Jenn both suggested that probing questions could be used as an effective way of providing explanatory instruction to encourage thinking and discussion. In addition, John pointed out that a clear structure for discussion (Excerpt 69) could have encouraged students' participation.

Excerpt 68:

- R: What could have helped you to participate more actively in this group?

¹⁹ The four participants are: Ann, Jackson, Jenn and John.

Ann: Um.. I would say better clarification of the activity itself. Because sometimes if I don't understand what the activity is, I just don't start talking unless people, other classmates start talking and I understand the activity a bit more, then focus more on the passage and going through all that again. (Interview 1, 20121109, 3:55:0-5:07.1)

Excerpt 69:

R: What can he do to make the discussion more lively in groups?

John: So, he might, in my personal opinion, group discussions can follow certain forms. If it's we can like, group discussion is always 15 minutes or 10 minutes. So we have first two minutes doing this, and then five minutes doing that, and the rest is doing this, so. If there is a form (structure) and we always follow that. We know exactly what to do [...]. (Interview 2, 20121217, 18:03.3-19:30.8)

The third contextual factor that produced impact on learners' participation and positionality is the group formation. Sandy felt that a mixed group of students from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds is productive. Jason's comment showed that instructors grouping method could crucially affect multilingual learners' motivation, confidence, participation, as well as their learning outcomes. The following excerpt illustrates it.

Excerpt 70:

R: How about the group formation? The whole process.

Jason: [...] Some teachers assign groups according to the language they spoke. Native English speakers group with native English speakers. International students group with international. This might be fair for the instructor as [...] [s]tudents who want As would like to group with those who also want As. However, I felt that for international students, our individual competence should not be linked with categories like native or international. If the instructor assigns groups absolutely randomly, it might be more fair for the international students. [...]

R: I just want to know your opinions. I didn't notice what kind of grouping this course was.

Jason: [...] I heard that Jack would group according to your level of English writing. If your writing is at D level, all the four members would be D level. So for D students, it's like to be sent to the hell. You won't have a chance to come back. So that means no chance for them [to pass] at all. (Interview 1, 20130130, 33:35.9 - 36:07.6)

The fourth area identified by participants is time constraints of a group task. John's comments showed that multilingual speakers especially ESL learners need longer time to process the discussion materials and to organize thoughts than native English speakers (Excerpt 71). Hence, John and Jenn each suggested that giving students extra for preparation such as giving out the materials before the class would help them participate more effectively in the discussion.

Excerpt 71:

R: What would you have done differently in this group discussion?

John: It's better to read the material before hand, more closely. It's a kind of a legal document, not easy reading stuff. Would be much more helpful if I prepare more before hand. (Interview 1, 20120926, 18:27.3 - 19:59.4).

Four participants, Jenn, Sandy, Candy and Jackson all mentioned assessment measures could affect their performance and participation in their group work. Jenn, Sandy and Candy showed mixed feelings about the team peer reviews. Both Jenn and Sandy felt that the team evaluations helped to improve the group cohesion and to prevent potential conflicts (Excerpt 72). Nonetheless, Candy felt that students did not reveal true happenings in the reviews as they might affect the grades. Jackson, on the other hand, expressed his disappointment in the grading rubrics. Jackson felt that many of the wordings in the rubrics were not precise or clear enough for students to follow and thus made it very difficult for him to achieve it.

Excerpt 72:

R: In terms of the organization of the group project, what do you think work well?

Sandy: [...] I also like the team evaluation forms. I think that's fair. Every team work, there will be something you like or doesn't like, especially a group project for 3 or 4 months. There should be some channels for students to release their feelings. Usually there needs to be something dramatic for students to go to the instructors. But every time, when we did the evaluation, it's like to release our feelings, not to speak ill of someone but you can talk about things you don't like. And, the instructors can notice potential conflicts and to take measures to adjust. this is better than wait till conflicts happen and then look for instructors to solve. It doesn't hurt feelings/faces as this was confidential. (Interview 2, 20130416, 58:28.6 - 1:01:59.6)

The last but not the least contextual factor that was identified by Jo, Jenn and Jackson is the topic of the discussion. Both Jo and Jenn felt that discussion topics that had straightforward answers were hard to have in-depth discussions whereas challenging topics encouraged divergent opinions and participation (For Jenn's comment see Expert 12). On the other side, Jackson pointed out that cultural specific information (i.e., green committee) in discussions could cause difficulties for him to participate in the group discussions (See excerpt 54).

5.1.7. A Summary

In this section, I have illustrated through participants' reports how various social and contextual factors constituted challenges and difficulties for them to make voluntary oral participation in their group work. These social and contextual factors affected participants' attitudes, motivation, interpersonal relationships as well as performances in their groups. Some of the social differences, such as race, ethnicity, class, language and length of stay in Canada, exert more power over Chinese multilingual speakers than their domestic and Caucasian peers. Some other factors, such as gender, physical appearance, work ethic and age, and contextual factors have an effect on the entire student body, which are not limited to Chinese students in particular. Next, I describe my participants' responses and strategies when dealing with discrimination and marginalization in their group work.

5.2. Participants' responses and strategies to challenges

Regarding Chinese multilingual speakers as active social agents, I was convinced by identity theory that stated that they would take action to negotiate desired positions in their group work. The findings show that participants' responses to biases and challenges can be primarily divided into two main types: active negotiation and passive cooperation. The first type is when participants seek ways to pursue a particular role to resist undesirable impositions. The latter is when participants accept unfavourable positions with minimum or no perceived struggles. These two types of responses are not fixed, unchangeable behaviours but contingent upon different circumstances. The active negotiators—how participants made effort to seek a desirable role in their group work is the focus of this first section.

5.2.1. Assuming a leadership role

The first strategy for claiming a desirable identity in group work that my participants described was assuming a leadership role. That is to say, when a group initially forms, a group member presents him- or herself as a leader and takes initiative in fulfilling a leader's responsibilities. Participant Jenn and Sandy used this strategy in their groups.

Jenn mentioned this strategy when reporting stereotypical biases keeping Asian students doing minute, technical work. She said, "so they don't really give you a leadership role unless you really just take it" (Excerpt 37). In my class observation, Jenn often voluntarily took responsibilities such as initiating a discussion, clarifying the purpose or questions of the discussion, organizing turns by inviting people to share opinions, providing feedback or filling the silence herself, etc. Jenn described her contributions to the first group discussion in Phase 1 in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 73:

R: So, how would you describe your own participation in that group discussion?

Jenn: I would say that I contributed by having the material ready, and sharing them because some of them didn't have it. And explaining to the ones that didn't quite understand the insurance policy. And, also when one of the guys had very good insight, I complimented him and because I thought that was really good. And, I encouraged him to speak out for our group when we were called on. (Interview 1, 20121003, Interview 1, 2.27.2-3.38.6)

This strategy was quite useful in assisting Jenn to occupy a leader's role in real life. According to my field notes, Jenn often served as a leader and played a central role in her group discussions in Phase 1. At the interviews, Jenn admitted that in her group experiences she often served as the group leader regardless of her intention (Interview 1, 20121003, Interview 1, 25.21.7-26.15.0).

While the strategy of assuming a leader's role might be helpful to elevate one's status in a group, nonetheless the strategy was subject to various contingent, contextual factors. In Phase 2, Sandy used this strategy but was not successful in assuming leadership in her group. She describes this in Excerpt 67.

Excerpt 74:

- R: What did you think of the group experience so far?
- Sandy: I felt that in this group it was not very clear about what everyone needs to do. No clear leaders or followers. For example, at the beginning in the Google Doc I have put up something what I heard from my friend, whose team did really well before. Their group had clear structure with a leader, in which members monitor each other's work and it worked really well. So at the beginning, I tried to do that, to allocate work. However, no one responded to me, which was okay. [...] So, I am satisfied. It's just that because we don't have a definite leader, our timeline is a bit messy. (Interview 1, 20130207, 14.23.9-16.43.4).

The excerpt showed that Sandy initially undertook leader's responsibilities such as allocating work, setting up a hierarchical group structure and sharing rules, but Sandy received little support from her members. In the later part of the Interview 1, Sandy admitted that she tried to be the leader of the group but did not succeed in becoming so.

The students' reports showed that assuming a leadership role can demonstrate a student's effort and dedication to participate actively in the group. It can assist a student, who already possesses plentiful required skills—capital in the group--, to stand out to be the leader, like Jenn in Phase 1. Being the leader is helpful to enhance one's presence and influence in their groups but only when the individual has appropriate capital to bring to the role.

5.2.2. The use of metalinguistic competences—code switching

The second strategy that I observed in this study is the sociolinguistic use of code-switching. Code-switching refers to the use of more than one language code within the middle of a sentence or a conversation (Heller, 1988, p.1). In Phase 2, I have observed that a few participants used code-switching extensively for social purposes, which I refer to the time when participants were able to express the meaning in one language, but deliberately choose to switch to another language.

This strategy was only observed in Phase 2 group discussions but not in Phase 1. The reason could be that the participants in Phase 1 were often grouped with other language speakers so that English was the only medium for communication. In addition, the group discussions in Phase 1 were in-class, brief (less than 10 minutes), and low-stake (ungraded) so the atmosphere was relaxed and casual. The group dynamics were

very different in Phase 2. First, the group was formed of four Chinese multilingual speakers who could communicate using English, Cantonese and Mandarin. Second, the group met very often and for a whole term (three months) so that the group members were familiar with each other's language abilities. Third, the group project contained several heavily graded tasks (over 40% of the final grade) so participants were under huge pressure and intense competition.

Each language in Phase 2 served different functions in the group discussions. According to participants' shared understanding, English was used when to involve everyone in discussion; Cantonese was used among Aaron, Candy and Sandy; and Mandarin was used for communicating with Jackson. It is worth noting that Sandy and Candy can both speak Mandarin and Cantonese, Jackson does not understand Cantonese, and Aaron knows very little Mandarin. The video recordings and audio recordings of Phase 2 group work revealed that Cantonese was used the most frequently in their group discussions especially towards the end of the project. As a result, Jackson had few opportunities to participate or contribute. I illustrate the participants' uses of code-switching in detail below.

Based on my observation, code-switching as well as language choices the students made were mainly for convenience before Submission 1—the first few weeks. There were two parallel groups: Sandy and Jackson discussed in Mandarin; Aaron and Candy discussed in Cantonese; and English was used across the two groups. The code-switching became more purposeful for exclusion after Submission 1. Sandy code-switched a lot into Cantonese to avoid talking to Jackson. One example is the coded group interaction in Section 4.2.8, Table 3. Jackson stood next to Sandy and Aaron during their discussion and asked Sandy a question in Mandarin. In reply, Sandy unconsciously used Mandarin for a word but then quickly code-switched to Cantonese to direct and limit her speaking to Aaron (Table 3, Line 5). Another example is Section 4.2.5, Table 2, about the group reading an English article on Sandy's laptop screen. Sandy constantly switched from English to Cantonese to direct her questions to Aaron and Candy. She only looked at them and totally ignored Jackson even though Jackson was standing next to them.

It appeared that the purpose of the above code-switching into Cantonese was more for social reasons than convenience. Sandy and the others did not want to interact

with Jackson, and they wanted to discourage or even exclude Jackson from participating. According to my field notes and video recordings, the use of Mandarin decreased noticeably after Submission 1 and the use of code-switching increased after Jackson had extended arguments with the other three members. The following two excerpts (68, 69) showed that the three members started to find Jackson “troublesome” as he was not able to contribute “useful” opinions during the Submission 1 process.

Excerpt 75:

R: What did you think of the group experience so far?

Sandy: [...] However, most of the time, Jackson's opinions were different from ours. Then, we need to spend some time explaining to him. So, that's why it took us so long. Like what happened yesterday, we all felt that it should be done in that way like what [the instructor] has said in class. We all agreed in that way but he would ask for reasons, feeling it should not be that way. Then, we had to spend time explaining again (Interview 1, 20130207, 16:47.8 - 17:43.7).

Excerpt 76:

R: How satisfied are you with each members' contributions?

Aaron: [Talked about Candy and Sandy's contributions.] Then, Jackson, he was a bit troublesome for our group. It was mostly that he always argued with other members about some of the research he did then we had to describe it. I didn't really like it because I thought it wasted a lot of time because we had to describe a lot of things to him (Interview 2, 20130418, 13.34.5 - 14.10.8).

Sandy, Candy and Aaron's interview comments revealed that they considered communicating with Jackson to be unproductive and even a waste of time. Since then, Sandy stopped talking to Jackson in Mandarin and sought to communicate with Candy and Aaron in Cantonese. The three members excluded Jackson from their discussions by using Cantonese and often overlooked his questions and opinions. Jackson, however, still made attempts to participate: he would ask Sandy about the discussion progress in Mandarin or try to join the discussion using English. Unfortunately, many of his attempts were ignored or rejected by other members. Gradually, the group discussion took the following model: Sandy, Candy and Aaron would discuss and form a decision in Cantonese, and then Candy would translate it into Mandarin to inform Jackson. It was thus, not surprising to see Jackson turn from an active, keen participator into a dispirited, passive follower in the group.

In Phase 2, code-switching from Cantonese to Mandarin, mainly by Sandy, served two purposes: to show her alignment with stronger players like Candy and Aaron; and to segregate herself from weaker players like Jackson. Code-switching was a very effective in-group gatekeeper because the choice of language directed and limited the conversation to only selective members—in this case, the Cantonese speakers.

5.2.3. **The strategic use of silence**

The third strategy that I observed among my participants for dealing with participation challenges can be described as a strategic use of silence. By this phrase, I refer to times when the participants were able to make verbal contributions, but chose to be silent for a particular purpose. In fact, sometimes participants would choose to be silent as an alternative way of participating. A closer examination of participants' silence in this study showed three major purposes: to resist imposed roles, to share the conversation floor with other members, and to learn from others.

First, some participants utilized silence as a resistance strategy to avoid undesired, imposed roles in a group. Such participants used silence to indicate their rejection of undesired identities. For example, Jackson turned from an active contributor to a passive follower in his group after being marginalized and excluded by his members. In the last stage near Submission 3, Jackson made few voluntary oral contributions in the meetings. Table 4 in Section 4.2.8 shows an episode during which time Jackson held long pauses and played with his cell phone while Candy was giving him some instructions in Mandarin. His silence seemed to show his reluctance and probable frustration at being forced into a mere follower by his group members. Another example is Sandy, who used silence to avoid being an ally with Jackson. During the project, Jackson made many attempts to direct his talk to Sandy by asking her questions in Mandarin. Sandy often ignored his questions by remaining in silence or by code-switching in Cantonese to talk to Aaron or Candy. Sandy's silence served to show her resistance to take up the role as Jackson's partner when he imposed such responsibilities—translating and explaining—on her.

In some cases, I observed the participants using silence as a polite gesture to share the conversational floor with the other group members. If other members did not contribute much, they would express their opinions. Jenn often invited her group

members to share their opinions first, and sometimes she provided the materials for discussion or clarified concepts for them so they could contribute too. Ann mentioned that she would just follow along with her group members when they had a lot of thoughts to share. If the group became very quiet, Ann would then contribute more actively. In the interviews and my field notes of these two participants, both Jenn and Ann had the ability to make verbal contributions, but they chose to remain silent sometimes so that their group members had the chance to contribute.

Lastly, silence could be used as a strategy to learn from other members' opinions, and to save the group's time from repetitive ideas. Jackson stated that his style of participation was to listen to others' opinions first. He would talk little if his ideas were similar to what had been discussed because he did not want to repeat others' ideas nor waste the group's time (Excerpt 11 in Section 4.1.2). Silence during these times indicated acute listening, and thus could be considered one way of participating and learning.

Excerpt 77

R: You can talk about what characteristics you have noticed about yourself, like something you didn't notice before but did now.

Jackson: That could be, if I don't have a strong or clear idea, I wouldn't say it out. I would listen to others more. I prefer listening. If I had some ideas later on, I would express them. If I found what they discussed have covered the purpose of the meetings on that day, I would talk little. This way, in other eyes, they might think my contribution was little (Interview 1, 20130130, 23:18.1 - 25:28.1).

5.2.4. Volunteering for more work

The third strategy that my participants used to try to elevate their positions was volunteering to do more work. This strategy was not always easily achieved as it required approvals from more powerful members from the group. The following excerpt shows the details.

Excerpt 78:

R: How satisfied are you with each members' contributions?

Aaron: [Following Excerpt 74] I thought in the report, we gave him one part, the executive summary. What he submitted was not really good, and it was really short. So I just redid the

whole thing, his part, the executive summary for S3 [submission 3]. I think he uploaded to Google doc. It was really short if you look at it. Originally we didn't give him that part. But he said he didn't have that much to do so he volunteered to do the executive summary. (Interview 2, 20130418, 14.10.8 – 15.26.9).

Jackson believed that an individual would have a high status in the group if he or she had the most workload and gave the most effort (Excerpt 18, Section 4.1.3). Therefore, his request for more work showed his intention to resist an imposed low status and to negotiate for a more powerful position for himself. My observation of the group's interaction also showed that Jackson made multiple attempts to increase his contribution to the group project. He tried to keep informed by asking for translations, by standing close to other members to share materials, and by volunteering for more work in the first two submissions. Unfortunately, his effort for a more power position seemed not approved by other members of the group as he was excluded from the group eventually.

5.2.5. **Summary**

In this section, I describe four major strategies that my participants employed in negotiating their positionalities in their groups. These strategies include assuming a leadership role, code-switching, strategic use of silence, and volunteering. Some other strategies that have been mentioned by individual participants include: being assertive, well prepared with supporting evidence, being descriptive and specific in expressing opinions, providing constructive feedback to others, seeking interference from external authority, and more. The findings show that participants' negotiation of their identities is provisional and contingent upon contextual factors such as who the other members of their group are, the course policies, the nature of the project, and so on. These strategies were helpful in assisting participants to acquire a preferred status in some situations. For example, Sandy used code-switching and obtained a better status—a Cantonese speaker than a Mandarin speaker in her group. Jenn assumed a leadership role and often served as a leader in her groups. Yet, sometimes, participants made an effort to elevate their in-group status but they did not necessarily accomplish it. Jackson, for example, used silence and volunteering strategies, but was still forced to take a peripheral role in the group. Sandy tried to get a leadership role for herself but did not succeed. After all, the use of strategies was a helpful method but the negotiation process

of one's positionalities involved numerous, complex, and multidimensional elements in that social context, which will be the topic in Chapter 6.

5.3. Conclusion

This chapter reports on the remaining findings of my thesis research project: the social challenges that participants encountered in their group work, as well as the strategies they employed to deal with difficult situations. Participants reported in this study that all of them have experienced some degree of inequality in their group experiences regardless of their diverse linguistic, culture, and social backgrounds. The findings show that discrimination and power imbalances are not uncommon in academic groups. Stereotypical biases established on race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, length of stay in Canada, appearance, and other social differences affected participants on group formation (whom to work with), roles that they can afford, communication patterns, and interpersonal relationships between members. These social differences intersected with each other and with contextual factors determine students' positionalities within the groups, which either privilege or limit their participation in their group work. Despite the pressure of power imbalances within the group, Chinese multilingual speakers utilized strategies for more desired positions including assuming a leadership role, code-switching, a strategic use of silence, and volunteering.

Before presenting my interpretations and discussion in Chapter 6, I have attempted to demonstrate in two finding chapters that oral participation in academic groups is a contested site, in which historical, social layers of power come into play. Students from different backgrounds and cultures compete against each other in this discursive site over valuable but limited resources such as time, attention and learning opportunities. And, their success in this competition produces profound influence on their learning process and learning outcomes. Meanwhile, Chinese multilingual speakers as well as other vulnerable social groups, have often been regarded, in these competitions, as inferior, illegitimate members of the academic community in western universities, who need to and have continued to struggle to claim their "right to speech" (Bourdieu, 1977) with limited capital/powers that are allocated to them. More than often, Chinese multilingual speakers are in unfavourable positions in such "battles" because institutionalized structures and policies such as educational policies and ideologies in the

larger society may constrain and undermine their efforts. In the following Chapter, I examine the impact of institutional structures on Chinese multilingual speakers' positionalities and participation in their group discussions.

Chapter 6.

Conclusion: Participation as negotiation of positions

In this thesis, I have examined Chinese multilingual speakers' beliefs about small group discussion, their participation in academic group discussions, the social challenges they encountered, as well as the strategies they employed to deal with difficult situations. The findings of the study suggest that Chinese multilingual speakers' oral participation, especially in highly-weighted group projects, should not be viewed simply as a cultural preference or a result of enculturation, but as a contingent, complex co-construction of multiple sociocultural factors intersecting with one another in a given situation. These factors include but are not limited to participants' beliefs and perceptions about group work, their social characteristics (who they are), their peers' social characteristics, the classroom and ideological contexts, the tasks professors assign, and so on. Chapter 5, in particular, illustrates through participants' personal accounts and real group experiences how stereotypical biases of social differences such as race, ethnicity, gender, class and language as well as contextual factors have significantly affected their oral participation and experiences in university group discussions. In this concluding chapter, I explore the connection between stereotypical biases within the educational and larger contexts exploring how symbolic capital was constructed and established in classrooms, and how some learners were disadvantaged by classroom discourses and struggled to negotiate their positionalities. First, I demonstrate that social differences function in complex, interlocking ways and identity categories become fluid, and multidimensional in the era of diaspora. Second, I discuss how stereotypical biases are presented in university groups, as well as disseminated and reproduced as objective knowledge in the larger society—how biases are practiced and internalized. Third, I investigate the construction of symbolic capital in group work as well as participation as a way of investment. Last, I discuss how learners exercised their agency by utilizing their multilingual competences to “perform” and construct a particular identity position for the purpose of negotiating a desired position. I conclude with a few

recommendations for professors attempting to make small group work more productive in multicultural and multilingual classrooms.

6.1. Social positioning in group work

6.1.1. Intersectionality

The investigation of Chinese multilingual participants' group experiences has identified how stereotypes of social differences could affect their motivation, confidence and opportunities to participate orally. Such differences include race, ethnicity, class, gender, linguistic competence, length of stay in Canada, and so on. The findings are convergent with the theory of intersectionality (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Davis, 2008; Naples, 2009), showing that the impact of social characteristics often functions in complex, interlocking ways to affect learner participation. The intersectionality of social characteristics has demonstrated the following three features.

First, stereotypical biases often come from multiple sources—different social characteristics of a person—rather than from one single aspect. Participants' accounts have illustrated this. For example, John's impression of Burmese students (Excerpt 39) as less literate and educated than white, middle class students intersected with several social characteristics including Asian race, working class, less academic education and poor English competence. Jackson from Phase 2, was excluded from the last meeting by his group members in his Business writing course. Jackson's marginalization was related to social biases on several aspects of his characteristics such as ethnicity (Mandarin Chinese), language (being less proficient in English), academic experience (unfamiliar with the North American academic conventions), and length of stay in Canada (lack of knowledge of the local context). Another example of intersectionality is Jenn's experiences in her business-writing course (Excerpt 37, 38). Jenn was restricted by her group members to do only behind-the-scene and technical work because of her Chinese background, her femininity, as well as her comparatively shorter residency in Canada.

Jo's comments (Excerpt 51), which reflected her preference for working with international students rather than Canadian-born Chinese (CBC), illustrated how

intersecting social characteristics affected learners' confidence in oral participation. Previous studies using a constructivist approach to Chinese students' oral participation suggested that Chinese students adapt to a certain extent to western learning culture largely based on their individual needs, agency, motivation and goals. Jo's comments, however, showed that oral participation is a more complex process than simple adaptation. Jo was very fluent in speaking English, had resided in Canada over 15 years by the time of the study, and was a highly motivated student. However, Jo positioned herself as an illegitimate speaker of English in front of CBC students even though her English is very fluent and fully functional. In addition, Jo felt different (having different interests) and inferior (knowing less about Canadian culture) when interacting with CBCs in discussion groups. English competence, L1 language practice, length of stay in Canada and cultural knowledge all contributed to Jo's uneasiness in working with CBC students. Having fluent English, having an extended stay in Canada and strong motivation did not grant Jo the confidence to feel equal to her CBC peers. Feeling different and illegitimate as an English speaker, Jo felt timid and insecure when working with CBC students and such feelings could affect her oral participation in such groups.

Second, my investigation of the impact of social characteristics has also revealed that intersectionality is more than a simple addition of multiple subordinations and social differentiations; rather, it is a complicated, dynamic and fluid process. In this research project, the effects of each social characteristic changed according to time, space and context. A social characteristic that was advantageous in one setting at one time could become a disadvantage in another time in another context. For example, Jo felt that her fluent English competence and long-time immigration experience earned her authority and respect in front of the international ESL students (Excerpt 51). However, when interacting with the local CBC students, Jo felt that her English and immigrant status could embarrass or disgrace her in front of other group members. As illustrated above, the utility of Jo's language skills and local knowledge serving as an asset or a drawback varied under different contexts.

Below is another example to show the changing effects of one social characteristic under different settings. Jenn from Phase 1 and Aaron from Phase 2 both mentioned that native-like English competence could be an advantage and a disadvantage. Aaron occupied an authoritative position in his business-writing project

due to his native English proficiency and abundant knowledge of the local context. However, when he worked with a group of international Chinese students in an organization behaviour course, he felt isolated. His strong English skills and experiences in the Canadian context turned out to be a hindrance in interacting with other group members. In addition, his English competence caused him an extra workload and responsibility for writing and editing the paper for the group.

The weight of social characteristics varied according to different subjects under different circumstances. Different participants considered different social characteristics as important for creating cohesive group dynamics. Jenn from Phase 1 valued one's work ethic more than one's English skills (Excerpt 61). Jo from Phase 1 believed that shared interests and culture among the group members were more important than language skills (Excerpt 51). Aaron from Phase 2 believed that academic ability and attitudes are the most important (Excerpt 62) qualities for good group members.

The third aspect of intersectionality that the findings have demonstrated is that an individual might encounter biases for one social characteristic, but might simultaneously receive privilege because of another. The overall effect of social characteristics on an individual's participation depends on the balanced weight of various additive or conflicting factors in that particular context. In Phase 2, Sandy's role in the group was confined to some extent by gender-stereotypes—Sandy was not able to serve as the leader as she wished but fulfilled a managerial role, doing housekeeping work. On the other hand, in the same group, Sandy benefited from her linguistic competence (English and Cantonese) and comparatively longer stay in Canada to occupy a higher position than Jackson in the group.

In sum, the intersectionality of social characteristics in this study has showed that discrimination through stereotypical biases is always a fluid, multidimensional process of intersectionality rather than a simple, clear, binary division of a privileged position or a subordinated one. Students may be marginalized in one area but gain advantage in another; or discriminated against in one circumstance but privileged in another context. Therefore, the impact of social biases on students' oral participation always involved various intersecting social characteristics within the given contexts.

6.1.2. Discursively-constructed social positioning

Participants' accounts about their group interaction in the study indicated that stereotypical biases of social characteristics in the wide society also produced an effect on learners' perceptions of who they are and who they can be. Their understanding of themselves as well as their social characteristics was no longer static, but constructed and reconstructed through discursive interactions with their group members and their surroundings. The following are two examples.

Aaron from Phase 2 showed a fluid and sometimes contradictory sense of his ethnicity and culture, which changed according to his group members and contexts. Aaron was a CBC student whose family was originally from Hong Kong. In Excerpt 35, Aaron expressed that he preferred working with students of Chinese origin and sometimes felt uncomfortable if his group members were not Chinese (Interview 2). Aaron could not give explicit reasons for his preference (a long pause over 10 seconds). Recall Jo's observation (Excerpt 34) that students tended to work with people from the same culture, Aaron's preference for Chinese partners could imply that to some degree Aaron identified himself as Chinese. In another interview, Aaron talked about an unpleasant group experience with international students from Mainland China. He commented that their communication was not good and "obviously there were some cultural barriers" (Interview 1, 20130131, 30:29.5 - 33:09.5). He further pointed out that the international Chinese students were friendlier towards each other than to him—"the person who is not from that culture" (33:09.5 - 34:25.4). In the two scenarios, the label of "Chinese" ethnicity seemed to evoke more than one meaning for Aaron. The label in the first case seemed to be more general and embracing, probably including Cantonese speakers from Hong Kong and other CBC students. However, the label in the second case seemed to be more specific referring to international students who had just come to Canada from Mainland China. Indeed, Aaron's shifting self-perception of his ethnicity and culture exemplifies the ambiguity and fluidity of social characteristics in the era of diaspora.

Another case is Jo who seemed to identify her ethnicity and culture primarily through linguistic practices. Excerpt 51 illustrated such a view. Jo mentioned that she felt pressure interacting with CBCs because she was less proficient in spoken English and had less experience/knowledge in the local context ("being a F.O.B.") compared to the

CBCs. Instead, Jo mentioned she would just “join the ESL group”. At the phenotype level, Jo and CBCs might have appeared to share the same cultural origin as being Chinese. However, Jo felt she would “have a hard time identifying with them” and would find it “hard to blend in” (Excerpt 51). By pointing out that her English was less fluent and that her interests different, Jo perceived her identity as primarily Chinese and ESL in contrast to CBCs as Canadian and NES. Such perceptions obviously affected Jo’s confidence and motivation interacting with CBC students—“I will have nothing to say”. This excerpt has showed that Jo perceived her ethnicity mainly through her linguistic practice—her English proficiency, rather than physical characteristics or country of origin. Her accounts revealed that not only participants’ general proficiency of English affected their oral participation but also their self-perceptions of who they are in relation to their group members.

The writing group in Phase 2 is another example. Four participants appeared to be a “Chinese” group according to their physical appearance, but within the group, participants did not identify themselves as from the “same culture” or ethnicity. Within that “Chinese” group, participants initially formed subgroups like Mandarin speakers versus Cantonese speakers. As time passed, new subgroups emerged, such as the local Canadian, veteran immigrants and recent immigrant groups. During that process, participants emphasized particular social characteristics to highlight particular aspects of their identity. It showed that social characteristics and identity positions are multiple, fluid, contingent, and even contradictory.

The previous cases show that in this diasporic era, social characteristics are no longer a matter of birth, nor can they be captured by fixed unchangeable categories (McCall, 2005). Social characteristics and relationships are contingent, ambiguous, discursive and even contradictory. Therefore, the examination of social characteristics should always be embedded in its context and take into consideration the dynamic, complex process of identity construction (McCall, 2005). Both cases revealed that linguistic practices seemed to serve as a primary trigger for ethnicity rather than phenotype or citizenship. Such a finding is also discussed in other literature. Researchers have found that language often serves as a marker for national and ethnic identities, and thus precedes a phenotype to serve as the primary trigger for race and ethnic identity (Bailey, 2000; Edwards, 2010). In other words, even when people share

the same skin color and “ethnicity”, they might not identify with each other as being from the same culture if their linguistic experiences are very different. In sum, social characteristics at least in these cases were not fixed or unchangeable. Instead, they became a discursive, variable, social construction. A poststructuralist view of social characteristics as well as identity provides possibilities and space for Chinese participants to construct new personal identity positions, which will be the topic of Section 6.4. Before that, I will first examine the influence of contexts, such as the educational environment as well as the larger society, that contributed to the social biases and inequalities within university group work: how classroom discourses differentiated students from different social groups, how social biases were propagated through ideologies in the large society, and eventually were incorporated by the social participants themselves, the very victims of such biases.

6.2. Reproducing social biases through institutional structures

6.2.1. Educational structures

The investigation of Chinese multilingual participants’ group experiences has identified multiple social differences in perplexing, intersecting ways affecting participants’ motivation, confidence and opportunities to participate in their groups. In this study, participants reported receiving differentiated treatment and different statuses in their groups due to their racial, ethnic, linguistic, and social backgrounds. Participants’ experiences show that at least these Asian background students, especially those who speak English as an additional language, were often assigned minute, marginal positions in discussion/project groups. Participants further reported a tendency for university students to prefer and value peers from a white, male, middle class, European background (Excerpt 34 and 49 from Jo, Excerpt 39 from John, Excerpt 40 from Sandy). According to their experiences, students from vulnerable social groups such as Black students (Excerpt 34 from Jo), Asian students (Excerpt 37 from Jenn), refugee students (Excerpt 39 from John) and international students (Excerpt 53 from Sandy) are often discriminated against in group work. Jo in Excerpt 34 mentioned that a Black female student was singled out from a self-selected grouping in her French class. Sandy reported a case in Excerpt 40 in which a Korean female partner ignored her and only

interacted with Caucasian male partners. My observation of participants' group interaction corroborated that international students and those who came to Canada for a fairly short period were often kept in subordinate positions in their groups (for example, John in Phase 1 and Jackson in Phase 2).

The results of this study support previous findings by critical researchers in the field (Duff, 2002; Ellwood & Nakane, 2009; Leki, 2001; Morita, 2004, 2009; Remedios, Clarke & Hawthorne, 2008). These studies show, as does my research, that there are power differentials among social groups such as between international EAL learners and their domestic English-speaking peers. Asian students were often regarded as a burden and needed to negotiate with their peers so as to gain fair opportunities to participate. As bell hooks (1994) pointed out, some racial and gender groups are granted more power and authority than other groups in North American universities and colleges (p. 139).

Critical pedagogy theorists believe that knowledge acquired in school is socially and historically constructed, which serves to protect the privileges and interests of the dominant groups (Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2009; Giroux, 1983; McLaren 1989). Furthermore, daily classroom discourses are often racialized (Dei, 2006; Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001; Lankshear 1997; Weedon 1999). Lankshear (1997) and Dei (2006) explained that dominant groups, through establishing curriculum, examinations, language use policies and classroom practice, are able to make social differences salient and thus empower and privilege some groups more than others, as well as keep subordinate groups at the margins of activity. In Chapter 4, I discussed how a hidden speech-privileged curriculum affected participants' general beliefs about group work and participation, as well as how such views may harm Asian learners' self-perception and confidence in group work.

Chapter 5 illustrated how course curriculum, classroom practice and grading policies could also put students of some social groups in disadvantaged positions. The course curriculum in Phase 1 was on language use in legal documents. It focused on the use of English in law-related documents such as credit card terms, warranty certificates, insurance policies, and so on. Needless to say, the analysis of these documents required knowledge of English and local practice, which were not common to international, non-native English speakers like John. Without extensive knowledge and proficient English skills like NESs, John was placed in a disadvantaged position even

before the group discussion started. In addition, the setup of the group work in this course also caused difficulties for John to participate actively in the discussion. The discussion tasks usually involved understanding of a piece of document in English. It would take EAL speakers a longer time to comprehend the document than native English speakers. Furthermore, the group discussion in Phase 1 was usually around 10 minutes and the instruction about the task, according to John, was brief. Therefore, John felt that once he got an idea about what to do and how to do the task—by the time “we are like warmed up, the time [for discussion] is up” (John, Interview 2, 20121217, 17:00.3-17:40.8). English in a specific genre, insufficient preparation as well as guidance, and restricted group work time all contributed to John’s limited oral contribution in the group discussions. It could have gone differently: it may have been that international comparisons of such documents could have been asked for, and those students who could read and report in two languages might have been privileged.

My Phase 2 study was conducted in a required upper-division writing course in the Faculty of Business. The main objective of the course was to develop writing strategies for students to apply in realistic business contexts. A close examination of the course syllabus showed that though the core learning elements were “strategy, mechanics, and professional image”, the evaluation was predominantly on students’ written assignments in English. The course syllabus stated clearly that students were assessed on their abilities “to create professional, finished [written in English] products”. In the grading scheme, four written assignments took up 80% of the total marks including drafts and final product, and only 12% was allotted to aspects that did not directly relate to writing—9% on a presentation as well as 3% on team collaboration. Furthermore, evaluation of writing itself was mainly based on writing mechanics such as grammar, business conventions, and APA formatting. The following is an excerpt from the course syllabus:

Your assignment in BUSXXX will be evaluated for writing mechanics in the following areas:

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| --verb tense | --spelling |
| --verb form | --punctuation |
| --subject-verb agreement | --capitalization |
| --article use | --apostrophe use and possessive forms |

--singular and plural noun forms --dangling and misplaced modifiers

--word form --syntax

--word choice (proper context) --sentence structure

--unclear referents --ambiguity

In addition to writing mechanics, your assignments in BUSXXX will be evaluated for convention mechanics in the following areas:

--proper use of business conventions

--proper use of APA formatting and ethical citations (p. 6)

The above was a general guideline for all the written assignments in this course. Analysis of the grading rubric specific to the final report, 20% of the final grade, showed that many criteria were related to cultural-specific knowledge and contextualized understandings. For example, some grading categories were about ethical documentation, conformity to APA standards, context for sources, research quality, reader resistance, feasibility and cost-efficiency of solutions, and establishment of professional image. In addition, 12 out of 25 marking categories were related to English grammar and writing conventions. It seemed that the evaluation of learners' understanding on writing strategies, mechanics as well as professional image—what were supposed to be measured according to the original objectives of the course—were confined to an assessment of students' writing skills in English based on North American academic conventions. Again, it is not difficult to imagine alternative assignments and/or rubrics that would not have disadvantaged EAL learners right from the beginning.

In both phases, the examination of the course content, the setup of the group work and the grading policies seemed to suggest that university classroom practices reinforced the perceptions that English is the only legitimate language at the university, and Canadian academic conventions are the only legitimate norms. Such classroom discourses are likely to disadvantage non-native English speakers and students who were not familiar with western, local academic conventions and practices.

More importantly, these classroom discourses, which are often institutionalized structures, significantly affected Chinese multilingual speakers' beliefs about languages and their self-perceptions about themselves. The investigation of participants' views

about linguistic competences showed that all participants, regardless of their first language background or English proficiency level emphasized the utmost importance of English in their group discussions. Based on their interview accounts, participants believed that English is a primary metric to judge one another's academic competence as well as themselves. In his discussion of the production and reproduction of legitimate language, Bourdieu (1991) stated in his discussion on symbolic dominance that the condition for a legitimate language to operate and exert its symbolic power is by making social subjects believe who they are and "lead him to become durably what he has to be" through "the medium of the structure of the linguistic field" (p. 57). He further pointed out that the structure of educational institutions often played a crucial role in shaping students' values, views and hierarchical power relations.

The position which the educational system gives to the different languages (or the different cultural contents) is such an important issue only because this institution has the monopoly in the large-scale production of producers/consumers, and therefore in the reproduction of the market without which the social value of the linguistic competence, its capacity to function as linguistic capital, would cease to exist (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 57).

Under the "monopoly" of classroom structures, international and immigrant Chinese students were likely to accept such perceptions and believed that if they spoke less English or if they were new to the local culture, their opinions were less important or valuable compared to their native, local peers. Jackson in Phase 2 gave up on his opinions about the green committee because he felt his group members had been in Canada longer and he should listen to them. And, even veteran immigrant Jo in Phase 1, also felt pressure and inferior when interacting with CBC students.

Critical theorists have pointed out that the classroom interactional order often reproduces larger societal social order—patriarchal, hierarchical and hegemonic relationships (Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001; Norton & Toohey, 2004). The classroom practices identified in this study supported this view. Classroom structures and practices in this study contributed to the reinforcement of stereotypical biases which privileged local, native English speaking students whilst disadvantaging international, non-native English speaking students. As a result, international and immigrant Chinese participants often faced challenges and difficulties when participating and contributing to group discussions and having their opinions valued by their peers. Heller & Martin-Jones

(2001) emphasized that schools and educational institutes are key sites for social groups to compete for resources and power, as well as a site for struggles over inequalities. By being second class in the learning activities, international, non-native English-speaking students could lose valuable learning opportunities and resources such as time, attention and the 'floor' to make academic contributions.

In summary, the examination of Chinese multilingual students' group experiences has identified stereotypical biases with regard to social differences in existing classrooms and also showed that classroom discourses and practices contributed to stereotypical biases and differentiation in academic group work. Other than classroom discourses, ideologies that were established and promoted in the larger society intersecting with classroom discourses afforded differential statuses and images for different social groups, which will be discussed in the next section.

6.2.2. Ideologies in the society

Biases identified in this study have centered on several common themes. First, white, male, native English speakers were regarded as strong, capable, preferable partners and often occupied a central, powerful position in groups (Excerpt 34, 38, 40, 43, 46, 50, 52). On the other hand, international students, non-native English speakers and those who had come to Canada for a shorter period of time were often considered by their domestic peers as unhelpful, inconvenient or lacking academic competence (Excerpt 36, 53, 55). In addition, Chinese students as well as female students were considered quiet, hard working and thus often assigned for minute, supportive roles (Excerpt 37, 40, 42, 44). These themes exposed an influence from existing dominant ideologies in the wider society such as Eurocentrism, White superiority and Orientalism with respect to classroom discourse practices as well as students' relationships.

Scholars investigating Chinese students in North American schools and universities have pointed out that racialized discourses influenced by ideologies like Orientalism and Eurocentrism find daily expression in North American classrooms (Cheung, 1993; McKay & Wong, 1996; Pon et al., 2003). Such ideologies posit Orientals as a negative, deficit opposition to the Occidentals for the purpose of proving "a western style [has the power to] dominat[e], restructure[e] and hav[er] authority over the Orient" (Said, 1979, p. 3). According to Said, Orientalism, established by the Anglo-French as

early as the 19th century and later joined by Americans after World War II, is “a cultural and a political fact” rather than merely academic abstraction, and it has served to justify the west’s colonization and exploitation of the Orient (p. 13). Kubota & Lin (2009) argued on a similar note that ideologies that were established on physical, biological differences might seem neutral and scientific but serve to maintain the existing social hierarchies. Jenn’s case (Excerpt 37, 38), in which her male Caucasian partner assigned her tedious, “behind-the-scene” work and excluded her from contributing ideas because “Asians are hardworking”, illustrated the influence of Orientalism.

Another example of dominant ideologies’ impact over students is Jo’s preference for working with white students (Excerpt 34) and for European accents (Excerpt 50). Jo’s comments disclosed that the influence from ideologies was often implicit through pop culture and mass media. Jo could not or did not want to clearly identify the reasons for her preference when I asked for it. She believed that her interest for a European-Slavic accent of English over a Cantonese accent was just a personal preference (Excerpt 51)—“I find certain accents interesting”.

Jo’s interests in European accents might not be a simple, personal preference. Bourdieu’s notion of language as a symbolic capital suggests that different language varieties are often bestowed with different level of power and status (Bourdieu, 1991), such as European-accented or Cantonese-accented English. Consequently, varieties of English occupy diverse levels of authority and thus receive different levels of attention from their audience. Sometimes, a language variety that is very low-status may even be rejected by its own speakers (Edwards, 2010). The power and status of language varieties, according to critical scholars (Cameron, 2000; Giroux, 1999; Lippi-Green, 1997, 2012; Thomas & Wareing, 1999), are usually constructed and regulated through institutional structures such as school curriculum and practices, and by the dominant ideologies disseminated in mass media. Giroux (1999) pointed out that media culture such as Disney films exert a power on regulating meanings, values and common sense conceptions in the society, which “set the norms that offer up and legitimate particular subject positions—what it means to claim an identity as male, female, white, black, citizen, noncitizen” (p. 3). Young people are exposed to and socialized into the dominant attitudes and values about language variations via watching movies, TV shows, radio programs, jokes, and other forms of media (Lippi-Green, 2012).

Interestingly, Jo mentioned the influence from Disney on her with a mocking tone in the interview when she tried to explain her preference for white peers—"I am whitewashed. I don't know. I am white-washed by Disney" (Excerpt 34). Disney is one of the leading companies in the production and distribution of popular culture. Many scholars have recognized Disney's power in establishing and communicating cultural norms through narratives of "right or wrong" (see a collection edited by Budd & Kirsch, 2005; Giroux, 1999; Giroux & Pollock, 2010; Lippi-Green, 1997, 2012). Artz (2005) listed a number of scholars who believe that Disney has the power to replace school and family in teaching values and truth (p. 80). A number of studies which examined Disney animated films have found a correlation between the concept of good and evil and race, ethnicity, linguistic variations, accents and so on (Giroux & Pollock, 2010; Jhppan & Stasiulis, 2005; Lippi-Green, 1997, 2012). Jhppan & Stasiulis (2005) primarily focusing on the analysis of *Pocahontas*, pointed out that Anglophilia and Eurocentrism are common features in Disney animation and American cultural products, which implicitly "equat[e] "Britishness with civilization, high culture, knowledge, intelligence, erudition, and authority" (p. 153). Lippi-Green (2012) did an analysis of the language use in animated films from Disney and her findings show that Disney established a correlation between good and evil with race and ethnicity (p. 126) and established a voice of authority for dominant varieties of English over other forms of English. Hence, Jo's preference could be affected by her over-a-decade's exposure to mass media in North American society. She might have been socialized consciously or unconsciously into an ideology which promotes European culture over Asian, Eastern cultures.

In summary, ideologies such as Orientalism, Eurocentrism and white superiority in the large society have an impact on classroom discourses and learners' perceptions about various social groups. These ideologies often protect the power and interests of the white, the middle class, and males whereas they contribute to keeping minority groups in low positions in society (McKay & Wong, 1996; Pon et al., 2003; Said, 1979). Students from subordinate groups such as international, Asian, non-native English speakers who were exposed to these ideologies as well as racialized discourses in university could incorporate such perceptions as "truth" and believe that male, white, middle-class classmates are superior to and better than them. In the next section, I discuss participants' internalization of the racialized discourses and ideologies which serve to work against them and other vulnerable social groups.

6.2.3. Internalization of racialized ideologies

Chinese multilingual speakers in this study not only reported stereotypical perceptions from powerful, dominant social groups against the Chinese students, but also biases from the Chinese participants against other vulnerable groups. Most of the participants in this study agreed that they preferred group members with good English as well as those who were familiar with the North American academic norms. Participant Jo revealed her preference for working with Caucasian and European-Slavic speaking students over Chinese Cantonese speakers (Excerpt 34, 49). Participant Sandy did not want to work with Chinese students with poor English (Excerpt 45). Participant John felt that South-East Asian students are usually poor, less literate or rational than white male students (Excerpt 39).

Scholars in critical pedagogy have warned that subordinated groups may incorporate racialized daily practices and ideologies, consciously or unconsciously, into their doings and beliefs, which reproduce the social orders and power hierarchy that keep minority groups in vulnerable positions (Weedon, 1999; Dei et al., 2005). In addition, Riggins (1997) observed that “discourses of Otherness are articulated by both dominant majorities and subordinate minorities” (p. 6). John’s comment (Excerpt 39) seemed to exemplify such a case.

Excerpt 39 showed that John believed that a young White male student was likely to be more literate and rational than a Burmese student. John equated racial backgrounds with knowledge, intelligence and social values. However, John’s comments showed that John did not realize his impression of South-East Asian students and about white, male students could be stereotyping and racially biased. At the beginning of the excerpt, John firmly asserted that he perceived no impact from racial biases in his group experiences. At the end of that excerpt, he said, “So basically, it’s not really about race. It’s about personal experience, and it’s about how they are raised up.” Dei, Karumanchery, and Karumanchery-Luik (2004) pointed out that identifying commonplace racist discourse is difficult when it is often veiled as “truth discourse”, (p. 48). When neutral words like “different” were used, stereotypical biases could be disguised as a neutral perspective—the two social groups have “different upbringing” and thus “different social values”. However, the hidden meaning behind the word

“different” or “difference” in that comment seemed to suggest that White, middle class is viewed as good and superior, whereas what is different from it is inferior.

This is exactly how Orientalism and Eurocentrism work against other social groups—to make them recognize, respect and value Western culture as the best norm. As Weedon (1999) and Dei et al. (2004) pointed out, stereotypical biases often come from an internalization of racialized ideologies and discourses that are disseminated in the larger society. Such ideologies and discourses often serve as “truth” and “knowledge” of some social groups. By incorporating biased impressions of Burmese and Thai students, John would be likely to evaluate opinions from Asian students including himself as less legitimate and less authoritative than Caucasian students, and such beliefs will make a difference in his confidence in participating and interacting with other students in group work.

According to Dei et al. (2004), racist ideology and assumptions function to convince the underprivileged that the privileged have the right to control, and that the respective racial rules are internalized controls through which people learn to discipline themselves in ways the dominant groups desire. When John was convinced that white, middle-class values means good and superior, and that being different from it meant being inferior, John could be equally convinced that Chinese multilingual speakers like him are also less intelligent than their white peers. John and other students with similar thinking are likely to accept being treated as less valuable and secondary in classrooms and in their lives. Such beliefs no doubt can harm the confidence, learning opportunities and outcomes for Chinese multilingual speakers as well as other subordinate social groups.

In this section, I try to explicate ways how classroom discourses and ideologies in the larger society have contributed to the stereotypical biases that have caused difficulties and challenges for Chinese multilingual speakers in making oral participation in their group work. In the next section, I examine in detail how classroom discourses at the level of discussion groups privilege some social groups whilst disadvantaging others by designating particular sets of skills and knowledge as legitimate.

6.3. Symbolic capital and participation as investment

6.3.1. Institutionalized symbolic capital in group work

One of the ways that racialized classroom discourses exert their influence over students and their participation is through evaluation and grading policies. Good grades are crucial for students in academic settings. One needs a certain accumulated grade point average (GPA) to apply for majors, exchanges, scholarships, and graduation. Findings from the present study suggested that students with strong GPAs and grades were considered intelligent, authoritative, and an asset in group work. Participant Aaron expressed that his goal in courses are “to have the highest grade as possible. Other factors don’t really matter” (Excerpt 63). Hence, what Aaron valued the most in his group members is “how smart they are so we can have a higher grade” (Excerpt 63). Another participant Sandy, felt that students with good grades were more appreciated and that she could have obtained the leader role as she had wished if her grades were high (Excerpt 64).

Grading assessment is used as the primary method in current educational settings to measure learners’ academic achievements. Yet it is not always as fair and equal for all learners as it might appear to be. Only certain sets of skills and knowledge are measured in grading rubrics, and often those skills and knowledge often are culture-specific. In Section 6.2.1, I illustrated that both courses in this study required good English proficiency and local knowledge in their group work. The linguistics course required familiarity and knowledge of the wording of legal documentation. The business-writing course in Phase 2 allocated close to 80% of the total marks on English writing skills and knowledge about North American academic norms. For example, “research skills” actually involved familiarity with North American research databases; the ability to judge the trustworthiness of sources; knowledge about quotation and citation norms; knowledge about research ethics; the ability to follow APA style, and so on. In addition, participants in Phase 2 needed specific local geographical and municipal information to provide feasible and sensible solutions to the assigned problems. Therefore, English proficiency, North American academic conventions and contextual knowledge became valuable, important skills—the symbolic capital—in those two classrooms.

English proficiency often serves as one of the essential skills in western academic institutions. Participants in this study all believed that English proficiency is key to academic success (Section 5.1.3). In reality, as many university instructors assume, English proficiency (in an academic variety of English) often serves as a proxy indicator for a learner's academic capacity or intelligence. Heller (2007) pointed out that linguistic performance and interaction are often not only used as indices for linguistic competence, "but as indices of other kinds of competence (intelligence, work skills, personality, and so on)" (p. 14). The ability to use other languages, or knowledge from other cultures is often perceived to be of little value and of limited relevance in university classrooms. Participant Aaron from Phase 2 had said that he only wanted to have the highest marks as possible in his courses (Excerpt 62). He further mentioned that what he valued the most in his group partners were only their English skills—"Other than English proficiency, it does not really matter. There are not many other factors" (Aaron, Interview 2, 20130418, 43:59.0 - 45:29.6).

The establishment of symbolic capital through classroom structures could be explicit such as the business-writing course in Phase 2. The instructor may explicitly emphasize the importance of grammaticality to the class. More often, the establishment of symbolic capital is rather implicit like a mutual understanding between the students and the instructors, such as the course in Phase 1. Jenn from Phase 1 mentioned in her interview that she developed an understanding that English grammar is very important through reading the grading rubrics. She said, many instructors "don't like to explicitly say it but then we do see how much mark they assign to say writing or grammar or things like that, [not even] a very conscious thing. [...], your mind just makes that connection" (Interview 2, 20121204, 26.20.2-27.18.0).

Bourdieu's (1991) theory of symbolic domination insinuated that once a linguistic variety is defined as the legitimate language through institutional practices, it gains the symbolic power to exert influence over other language forms (p. 45). Symbolic domination is not just limited to the language use field. By associating marks with knowledge of North American academic norms, grammaticality in English and the Canadian context, this knowledge becomes symbolic capital in university classrooms, and dominates. As a consequence, other forms of skills and knowledge, such as skills in

other languages or knowledge about other areas of the world all become inferior and illegitimate or irrelevant knowledge in that context.

Bourdieu (1984) asserted that social subjects are often positioned at different ranks and power in a particular field based on the volume and structure of capital they possess and usually the distribution of capital is not equal. Bourdieu (1991) further argued that those who have capital often exert power over those who do not. In reality, the students in my study do not have equal possession of English proficiency and context-specific knowledge. When standard academic English, western educational skills and localized knowledge are defined as the legitimate language, skills and knowledge, local native English-speaking students have the most symbolic power and the most authoritative voices compared to their multilingual international peers in groups, regardless of the latter's literacy competence or academic capacity. Even length of stay in the country may also make a difference on how one is treated, as it implies understanding of the local culture. International students who speak English as an additional language and those who came to Canada in the past few years probably had less knowledge and experience in English, with North American academic norms or local geographic information. Consequently, these students are likely to be placed at disadvantaged positions under the current grading rubric since their own cultural knowledge and skills were not acknowledged or accredited in North American university classrooms.

The four Chinese multilingual speakers in Phase 2: Aaron, Sandy, Candy and Jackson had different statuses in the group due to the different amount of symbolic capital they possessed. Aaron, the NES who was born and educated locally, evidently had the highest status and authority in the group. Sandy and Candy, both fluent in English and residents in Canada for 8 years, had the second highest positions in the group. Jackson, who was less proficient in English and a recent immigrant to Canada, certainly had the lowest status in this group. Students' accounts in individual interviews, their individual reviews on team members as well as the observation of group interaction, which were reported in Chapter 4, corroborated such a hierarchy. Having little power to wield, Jackson eventually was treated as a burden that other members could legitimately marginalize and exclude from group discussions.

International, NNES students, and recent immigrants from other cultures often lack symbolic capital in North American classrooms, and thus are considered to be “inconvenient” “unhelpful” or “unworthy”. As Bourdieu (1991) pointed out, “speakers lacking the legitimate competence are *de facto* excluded from the social domains in which this competence is required, or are condemned to silence” (p. 55). Many students like Jackson experience disrespect, neglect, rejection and isolation in their group work, which affects their confidence and voice in participating in university group work, and ultimately affects their learning process and outcomes.

6.3.2. Participation as investment

In Chapter 4 Section 4.2.8, I described the case of Jackson’s marginalization and his decreased participation throughout the group project. The change of his participation and others’ attitudes were recorded and illustrated in participants’ interviews, video recordings of their group interactions, my field notes from class observation, audio recordings of after-class discussions, and the team member review forms. Bourdieu’s (1991) theorization of symbolic capital and Norton’s concept of investment (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2013) are helpful in interpreting the nuanced power dynamics in that process. During the first week of discussions, Jackson was an active player in his group who did not hesitate to share ideas; in turn, he received a fair amount of attention from other group members. As the project progressed, Jackson started having disagreements with other members and having difficulties keeping up with the group’s discussions. The disagreements and difficulties involved culturally specific knowledge such as selecting references from reliable sources, the working of committees, municipal administration, or the topology of a city area. In this stage, Sandy, Candy and Aaron started to find Jackson’s contributions to the project limited and his questions and arguments time-consuming, which delayed the progress of the project. Gradually, they ignored some of Jackson’s questions and increasingly used Cantonese in discussions, a language that Jackson was not able to understand. Hence, the communication pattern of the group after 3-4 weeks became like this: the three members, Aaron, Sandy and Candy discussed and formed a decision in Cantonese and then translated it into Mandarin for Jackson. Jackson thus was marginalized and excluded from the decision-making process. Jackson understandably got discouraged by other members’ attitudes, and changed from an active, expressive player into a passive, quiet follower.

In the previous section, I have discussed that from the perspective of symbolic capital, Jackson lacked the necessary capital such as English proficiency, knowledge of North American academic norms and local contextual information required by the course. Before the project even started, Jackson was doomed to be placed in a low position compared to other members due to his social characteristics. Regardless of his motivation or individual preference, Jackson was likely to have struggles in speaking with an authoritative voice as his skills and knowledge were not valued in that project. Indeed, he was “determined unworthy to speak” (Bourdieu, 1991) by his group members and deprived the opportunities and the membership to participate legitimately in the group discussions.

Other than Bourdieu’s symbolic capital, Norton’s (2013) notion of “investment” also helps to explain the changing attitudes of Aaron, Sandy and Candy towards Jackson. Norton proposed the notion “investment” to capture the dynamic relationship between language learners and the target language (2013). Norton suggested that language learners invest in a language if the target language is likely to bring valuable symbolic resources and to increase social powers for them. The findings of this study showed that under intense, high-stakes circumstances, participants utilized the “investment” thinking in interacting with other members in their group work. Time, attention and the conversational floor are all valuable resources. Participants would assess the symbolic capital of particular group members and determine whether interacting with the particular members were likely to yield useful, productive results for their academic work. Some useful results might be creative ideas, constructive suggestions, critical feedback or clarification on concepts. If the answer was positive, they were willing to give attention and the conversational floor to that group member. On the contrary, if students considered talking to a group member would not yield valuable returns, they tended to give less conversational floor or even avoid talking to that member.

From the perspective of investment, Jackson’s marginalization was not random but entailed a careful calculation of his symbolic capital and potential contribution by his group mates. When the group members first met, all members discussed actively using Mandarin, Cantonese and English. After the members felt that Jackson lacked the required skills and that he was not able to give “useful” contributions for the group to get

a high grade, they withdrew their attention and decreased the conversational floor for Jackson. They excluded Jackson from the discussion process because they wanted to invest their time and attention on the members they felt who could make valuable and helpful contributions to the project.

This investment view of participation was evident from participants' comments in their interviews. Quite a few participants such as Jo, Jenn, Aaron and Sandy mentioned that they did not like to interact with international students with poor English. Sandy felt it was not worth interacting with international Chinese students with poor English since they were not helpful to her and she couldn't gain much useful information from them (Excerpt 36). In the same excerpt, she also felt that it was usually inconvenient for her because it might take her a lot of time to give explanations to international students. Sandy further revealed in her comment (Excerpt 53) that international students were often discriminated against by their domestic or immigrant Canadians peers, who had lived in Canada for longer periods of time. She said, "so international students with poor English are likely to receive negative [attitudes], people don't want them in the group" (Excerpt 53). The findings corroborated previous studies (Ellwood & Nakane, 2009; Leki, 2001, 2007; Morita, 2004, 2009; Remedios, Clarke & Hawthorne, 2008) of Chinese and Asian students' group experiences in that they were usually considered as "problems" or "burdens" by their domestic peers. Even international students who have strong English competence and capacity may need to struggle to prove their ability and their "investment value" so as to have a fair opportunity to participate in group work. Such pressure and perceptions definitely can harm the self-perception and confidence of those NNEs, international students and their learning process. One example is Jo in Excerpt 51, who had lived in Canada for over 15 years, but was afraid to be targeted as a newly-arrived immigrant student by her Canadian born Chinese peers.

In summary, classroom structures such as the grading rubrics in North American universities may privilege some social groups and disadvantage others by designating certain cultural-specific knowledge and skills as symbolic capital. Non-native English speakers, international students, or recently arrived immigrant students could be placed in inferior positions due to their limited possession of capital and accordingly considered as low in investment value by their peers in university group work. The disadvantaged individuals (usually members of disadvantaged social groups) often struggle with their

positionalities in academic groups, and need to prove their value and competence so as to gain legitimate membership and fair opportunities to participate in the group work. Though pressure from institutional discourses and structures may limit learners' participation, Chinese multilingual speakers in this study demonstrated their efforts and agency by negotiating or resisting undesired positionalities. In the next section, I discuss how a participant utilized her multilingual competence through code-switching to attain a more desired position in Phase 2.

6.4. Identity construction and negotiation of positionalities

The theoretical underpinning of this study follows a post-structuralist view of identity, which conceives identity as multiple, dialogic, contradictory, and constantly evolving and restructuring through language and discourses (Edwards, 2010; Gee, 1990; Hall, 1996; Holland et al., 1998; Norton, 1997, 2013; Norton Peirce, 1995; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Weedon, 1997). This perspective on identity sees social subjects as exercising agency to “perform” variable, contingent identity positions through discourses under particular circumstances. The findings of this study, reported in Chapter 5 Section 5.2, showed that participants were autonomous social agents who actively made efforts in negotiating their positionalities and statuses by utilizing various strategies. One prominent case, which I discuss in detail in the next section, was participant Sandy, who was able to use her multilingual competence to reconstruct and perform a new identity position during the process of the group project, once the in-group dynamics and context had changed.

6.4.1. Code-switching as an empowering and regulating means

In my observation, Sandy was anxious to find out the multilingual competence of her group members. When the group was first formed, Sandy quickly checked each member's language skills and asked whether they had to use English (Section 4.2.5). Jackson quickly responded to her that they should use a language they prefer. In addition, my observation of Sandy's group interaction (Section 4.2.5) further showed that she was proficient in using all three languages in group interaction: English, Cantonese and Mandarin. She used more Mandarin than English or Cantonese at the beginning period of the project, and interacted often with the Mandarin speaker Jackson. Later on,

she decreased her use of Mandarin considerably, but increased her usage of Cantonese with Aaron and Candy, the two Cantonese speakers. Jackson, who did not know Cantonese, was automatically excluded from their discussions.

A close look at Sandy's use of the code-switching (Section 5.2.2) revealed that the code-switching into Cantonese in the later period of the project served two main purposes. First, it afforded a new identity position and a new role for Sandy in the group, which helped elevate her position. Second, code-switching was used as a regulating means for conversational turns, which limited Jackson's opportunities to interact with her and excluded him from participating in the group discussions. The power of code-switching as both an empowering means and a regulating means in this study was granted by Sandy's multilingual competence.

Multilingual competence in these group interactions is crucial to the construction and reconstruction of new identity positions. Cameron (1995) suggested that the lexical, grammatical and interactional choices that one makes contribute to the construction of a social and personal identity for the speaker. Language not only serves as the primary marker for personal and ethnic identities (Bailey, 2000; Marshall, 2009; Edwards, 2010), it is also an essential force in remaking new identities through repeated speech and behavioural acts (Edwards, 2010; Lippi-Green, 1997; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2013; Pennycook, 2007). With her multilingual competence in Mandarin and Cantonese, Sandy had two identity positions available to her: a Mandarin Chinese and a Cantonese Chinese in this group, whereas Jackson was presumed having one identity—a Mandarin speaker. Since language was the primary index for ethnic identities, Sandy thus had the power to evoke one particular identity position by speaking a particular language variety at a given time and place.

Code-switching through multiple languages creates opportunities for learners to elevate their positionalities and statuses in groups. Sandy successfully negotiated her positionality—raising her status—in the group by reconstructing the Cantonese identity over her initial performance of Mandarin identity. When the group had just formed, Sandy's position as a Mandarin speaker aligned her with the other Mandarin speaker, Jackson. After lengthy arguments with Jackson in the first few meetings, Sandy, Aaron and Candy felt that Jackson was “different”, “slow” and “troublesome” (quoted words from participants' descriptions of Jackson). Jackson did not possess much symbolic

capital—the required “skills” for the project—based on the setup of the course, and thus he was deemed by his group members as unhelpful and inconvenient, and therefore low in investment value to interact with. After that, Sandy produced a Cantonese identity position by using Cantonese language predominantly in her discussion. This change of language use helped Sandy break down her connection with Jackson and instead establish a new alliance with the stronger Cantonese players in the group: Aaron and Candy.

Sandy’s case showed that code-switching can be utilized as an effective “in-group strategy” where the domain of language use was associated with different subgroups (Heller, 1988, p. 83). It lets multilingual speakers align with a preferred subgroup that is different from the native one, and to appeal to an established but undesirable hierarchy so as to elevate their positions within the group. Heller (1988) pointed out,

[C]ode-switching works where there is ambiguity to be created or exploited in a situation where participants agree as to what the ambiguity is. It permits people to say and do, indeed to be, two or more things where normally a choice is expected. It allows people to take refuge in the voice of the other, in order to do or say things that normally they would not be able to get away with. Or it allows them to assert their own voice to claim new roles, new rights and obligations (p. 93).

Code-switching can be used as an empowering means to claim for a new voice. On the other side, it could also be used as an effective gate-keeper to regulate the conversational floor and membership in the group. For example, the use of code-switching in Cantonese granted Sandy the power to determine the intended audience and the next speaker in her communication. In the interaction recorded in Table 3, Jackson initially self-selected himself for a turn by asking a question in Mandarin. Sandy was the only one who could answer it as Andrew did not speak Mandarin and Candy was not there. Nevertheless, Sandy code-switched from Mandarin to Cantonese, indicating her rejection of Jackson’s participation in the discussion. Instead, Sandy directed her comments to Aaron, and nominated Aaron to take up the next turn. In this case, the use of code-switching regulated the conversational turns, determining who was the intended audience and who was allowed to participate. Code-switching was the main regulating means used by the group members to limit Jackson’s opportunities to oral participation and kept him in a marginal position in the group. The findings suggest that

the discursive use of code-switching where the language is not known to all members serves to regulate legitimate membership in a group. Those who are considered low in investment value due to their limited possession of symbolic capital, may be deprived of their right and voice to participate in discussions and activities.

In sum, code-switching among multiple languages can serve as an empowering means for learners to gain a new identity, a more desirable positionality, and a more powerful voice. Alternatively, it can be used as a censoring means to regulate interactional orders and group memberships, controlling who gets to participate and who does not. Furthermore, both the construction and reconstruction of new identities are under the constraints and pressure of social structures such as classroom discourses and societal hierarchical orders, to which I now turn.

6.4.2. Identity construction under regulation

The findings of the study showed that participants' used various strategies to actively negotiate their positionalities in their academic groups. Some negotiations succeeded and some did not. Such results have shown that the negotiation of positionalities is not totally free. Post-structuralist scholar Butler (1990, 2009) argued that constructing and reconstructing new identity positions are "always a negotiation with power" (Butler, 2009, p. i). In Butler's view, identity performances and productions are highly regulated under the power hierarchy established by the social structures in the larger context.

Participant Sandy in Phase 2 had successfully obtained a higher position in her group by reproducing a Cantonese identity over the initial Mandarin identity she performed. However, Sandy's efforts for a leadership role in the group did not succeed due to the constraints of the social and classroom structures. Section 5. 2.1 reported that Sandy had attempted to serve as the leader by taking up a leader's responsibilities—setting up a group structure, allocating work for other members and setting up deadlines. Nonetheless, her actions received little responses from her group members. There could be multiple reasons for this unsuccessful negotiation. First, Sandy's team members all preferred to have equal statuses in the group. Candy believed that it was more beneficial for the group if "none of us four is a leader. I felt that if all four of us had leadership personality, there would be conflicts" (20130130, Interview 1, 39.26.3–40.23.8).

Similarly, Jackson also preferred to have everyone equal in the group instead of “one person above all of us”. He further emphasized that “I don't like to make decisions for others or other people make decisions for me. I think that everyone is equal, that would be better” (20130130, Interview 1, 25.35.7-23.33.1).

The other reason could be that Sandy's capital and power, which were defined by the social and classroom structures, were not sufficient to support a leader's role. On one side, Sandy was not the strongest player in her group —she did not possess the most symbolic capital. The course curriculum and grading policy endowed Aaron with the most symbolic capital. Thus, he was regarded by other members as the most crucial player of the team: he was a native English speaker, good at writing, born and educated locally, and familiar with North American academic conventions. The individual interviews and the peer team reviews from other participants demonstrated such views. On the other hand, gender bias as well as patriarchal hegemony in the wide society may have played a role in Sandy's unsuccessful attempts to lead the group. Jenn from Phase 1 mentioned that she had observed that guys usually served as the leaders for the groups (Excerpt 43). Aaron reported that he felt female students are often excellent in doing managerial roles such as organizational work and time keeping tasks. These gender stereotyping might have undermined Sandy's efforts in leading the group.

Other than Sandy, Jackson's silence in Phase 2 also showed the constraints from classroom and societal structures on participants' negotiations. When Jackson received marginalization and isolation initially, he made attempts to participate more actively and to negotiate for a more important position. He kept asking his members about the progress of the project, requested more work to do, and eventually used silence (even being asked in Mandarin) to show his resistance for a passive, peripheral role imposed on him (Section 4.2.8). Unfortunately, Jackson's efforts and negotiations were largely disregarded by his group members. To his group members, Jackson had too little power or symbolic capital to utilize for negotiation. His English skills were the least proficient, his knowledge of the Canadian contexts was very limited and he was unfamiliar with the North American academic conventions. His symbolic capital was so limited that he was almost dispensable in this project to his group members. Consequently, Jackson's efforts in negotiating for a better position in the group failed. The examples of Sandy and Jackson's unsuccessful negotiations have demonstrated

the powerful scrutiny from the social and classroom discourses on individual participants' efforts in making active oral participation.

6.5. Recommendations and future directions

The examination of Chinese multilingual speakers' group experiences has shown that oral participation in North American university classrooms is not constructed on a level basis. It is a contested site in which power hierarchies are negotiated with respect to various socially, discursively constructed differences under the constraints of the given contexts. Power struggles and exclusion in academic groups can cause significant ramifications on multilingual speakers' participation and learning achievements, as previous studies have shown (see my literature review in Chapter 1, Section 1.4.3). It is crucial for educators and students to increase their awareness of the hidden power imbalances within group work and to utilize inclusive strategies so as to empower underprivileged social groups' voices and positionalities in their groups. Next, I draw some implications that I have learned from this study, and hopefully it will also be useful for other educators and researchers.

6.5.1. Implications for pedagogy

The discussion in Section 6.2 and 6.3 in this chapter demonstrated the strong connection between racialized educational discourses and the reproduction of stereotypical biases. Thus, the key step to reduce social biases and to create a fair and supportive environment for group participation is to transform our classroom practices. Below I discuss four recommendations for teaching practices, each regarding one aspect of group work: general design, task content and assessment, instruction, and team-skill training.

First, a specifically tailored design of group work which takes into consideration the subject matter, students' backgrounds and needs, and the development of intragroup relationships is more likely to reduce conflicts and marginalization. For example, the findings have shown that high-stakes tasks under intense and pressured settings cause more conflicts and struggles than informal and low-stakes task design. Therefore, it might work better to use a combined approach of low- and high-stakes group tasks in a

course. Having short, ungraded group discussions at the beginning of the term can enable students to build rapport and establish understandings. After students learn each other's skills and styles, they can work more efficiently and productively in long-term, graded tasks during or towards the end of the term. In addition, the design of the group work should make students clearly perceive the need to coordinate with others to succeed (positive interdependence) and simultaneously the responsibility to do well on their own (individual accountability). Research on collaborative learning show that small group discussions characterized with positive interdependence and individual accountability work better than those do not and can also raises students' achievement (Barkley, Major & Cross, 2005, 2014; Johnson & Johnson, 1994; McCafferty, Jacobs and DaSilva Iddings, 2006; Thousand, Villa & Nevin, 1994, 2002). Some hands-on tips are: setting up a common goal for the group that every member has to achieve; assigning every member a unique role or resource to contribute; adding joint bonus rewards if all members reach a challenging goal; to give both group and individual assessment; and to record the frequency or quality of each member's contribution.

The second implication is related to the task content and assessment. Findings of this study show that the course curriculum and assessment criteria play an important role in establishing the forms of symbolic capital in a group. A hidden curriculum that focuses on English as the only legitimate language, local contextual knowledge, North American academic conventions, or western educational ideology can disadvantage multilingual speakers and students from non-western countries. On the contrary, a curriculum that can incorporate intercultural communication, multicultural and multilingual content is likely to elevate their positions and give them a louder voice to be heard in the academic community. Sandy made a comment in her interview that her group would have given more attention and opportunities to Jackson if he was an important contributor to the group—"If Jackson's opinions were really important to have or if he was really important throughout the whole project, we may use more Mandarin in our discussions" (Interview 2, 20130416, 22:56.9-25:15.4). A multicultural and multilingual curriculum suggested by critical scholars is the trend to meet the challenge of a fast growing student body with global mobility, and the key to social and cultural justice in higher education (Au, 2014; Banks, 2008; Dolby, 2012; Gollnick & Chinn, 2013; Grant & Portera, 2011; Bhandari & Blumenthal 2011; Van der Walt, 2013). Some practical tips can be: introducing teaching materials in languages other than English and

from other countries; inviting students to research and discuss knowledge and practices from their home culture and legitimize them; making intercultural understanding and competence part of the skills to be assessed; and designing activities that multilingual students can make valuable contributions such as writing business proposals to foreign corporations located in other countries.

The third implication concerns the clarity and the level of details for task instruction. Participants' comments from the interviews revealed that instructors' detailed and clear explanation on the activity as well as its process can stimulate participants' oral participation and improve learning outcomes. It is not hard to understand that multilingual speakers and students who are new to Canada rely significantly on instructors' explanations and guidance to overcome barriers such as cultural-specific knowledge or some common but unspoken rules in their group work. However, Duff (2010) pointed out that many university instructors "do not provide explicit and appropriate scaffolding, modeling, or feedback to support students' performance of oral assignments" (Duff, 2010, p. 181). Jackson in his interview mentioned several times that he was lost and confused with the instructor's general and unclear requirements and expectations. Attention needs to be paid to the way instructions and guidance are given so that confusion and cultural barriers can be reduced. In addition, participants' comments indicate that having sufficient preparation time is important for multilingual speakers to make meaningful contributions. Preparation time is probably even more important in subject areas where the language is technical and genre-specific. Some pedagogical suggestions include: making transparent the cultural- and context-specific knowledge that was implied in curriculum and tasks; making background information and explanations available to students; giving detailed and specific task instructions in writing so that students can refer to it; posting task materials in advance to allow preparation; giving some probing questions to warm up the activities; providing various forms of assistance during the task if it is high-stakes, such as individual meetings, instructor-group meetings and intergroup (students to students) meetings; illustrating grading criteria with concrete examples in comparisons; and offering prompt and specific feedback on students' oral participation and ways of presenting.

The last implication, also a long-term one, is to offer courses and workshops for the university community to develop and increase our understanding and awareness in

the workings of academic groups. As I discuss in the introduction of this thesis, group work become an essential component of university curriculum and a daily reality for undergraduate students. Yet, there was very little explicit teaching and training on effective and cohesive group interaction. Some Chinese international students who are new to collaborative teaching approach are often equally evaluated and judged through their oral participation as their native, local peers. On the other hand, the findings of the study show that stereotypical biases do not exist in just a few dominant groups; they are accepted and reproduced by the members from underprivileged social groups as well. As intersectionality shows, biases exist across multiple social groups and affect everyone in the university community. We are all in someway advantaged and disadvantaged from the stereotypical biases. Yet, Jackson made an insightful comment that people sometimes need to make compromises for other members if they are one team (Interview 2). He had hoped that his group members would have some team spirits—support and help him to accomplish together instead of simply excluding him from the group. It seems to me that the first step to promote support and social justice in our university community is to raise awareness and understanding about how social biases affect and change us as who we are, and the responsibility is on everyone. Some themes for the courses and workshops can include team building skills, effective communication strategies, conflict resolution, stereotypical biases and intersectionality, individual feelings and positionalities, and power negotiation strategies.

6.5.2. Implications for theory

Other than pedagogical recommendations, this thesis study also contributed valuable understandings of Chinese learners' oral participation in the field of academic discourse socialization. The findings of the study filled in gaps in the previous literature, which I outlined previously in Chapter 1 Section 1.4.3, in the following aspects: power imbalances between students, the impact of institutional structures, and the use of negotiation strategies. One of the most noteworthy contributions of this study is probably the perspective of “participation as negotiation of positionalities”, which highlights the tension between institutional constraints and individual agency in the phenomenon of oral participation in mixed groups. I discuss these understandings in detail below.

The literature review in Chapter 1 showed that there were very limited studies that examine the power struggles that Chinese learners' experience in academic groups in western universities. The findings of this study corroborated and enriched previous studies on Chinese and other Asian students' group work that oral participation in mixed groups is a complex and fluid process, which involves linguistic, cultural, personal and critical factors. Specially, this study pointed out that the power hegemony constructed historically and socially through social biases and ideologies with respect to social differences such as race, gender, class, language, length of stay in Canada and other factors have significant impacts on students' positionalities and their participation in academic groups.

Second, this thesis study showed the crucial role that institutional structures such as curriculum, assessment and task design play in constructing students' power and their participation, which has been under-reported in previous studies. By connecting concepts like symbolic power, capital, and investment, this thesis was able to show that classroom discourses not only affected the dynamics of the group (supportive or competitive), but also affected the distribution of capital/power either equally or unevenly to different group members. In some contexts, the academic groups can turn into a contested site where some students view participation as a way of investment for new knowledge, ideas, understanding and better grades. Thus, participation in some settings becomes a process of "negotiation of positionalities" in which students compete for learning resources and opportunities to participate. In addition, I pointed out that uneven capital distribution could undermine students' confidence, motivation, and efforts in making oral participation and eventually produce negative impacts on their learning process and outcomes.

Third, this thesis study identified several strategies that students used to negotiate their positionalities in their group interaction, which were not noted in previous literature. One interesting contribution is participants' use of code-switching as a gatekeeper for regulating intragroup memberships, and as an empowering means for performing alternative, new identity positions. The study indicated that students have the agency to use their multilingual competence to negotiate for a desirable position though such performance is still under the pressure of institutional structures.

Furthermore, this thesis also revealed findings that are different from previous studies. For example, previous critical studies of Chinese and other Asian students commonly reported marginalization from domestic, NES students on Chinese and other Asian students. However, this thesis disclosed that Chinese speaking students also held biases against members from their own cultural group as well as from other vulnerable social groups. Power play in academic groups is not a simple binary. Some Chinese-speaking students, and I suspect not Chinese students alone, were socialized by racialized discourses into believing that international and NNES students are inferior and less competent than their domestic, NES peers. Therefore, in practice, they themselves sometimes reinforced the racialized ideologies against their own interests by marginalizing other international, NNES students. This thesis confirmed the complexity of social inequality in academic groups that, under particular circumstances, “the Oppressed becomes the Oppressor” (Friere, 1993).

6.5.3. Future directions

After summarizing some realizations that I have had for teaching practices and theory, I shall report the limitations and future directions of this thesis. This study is only conducted in two university courses with eight Chinese multilingual speakers. Though its findings represent some common issues in academic group interaction, the results should not be generalized to the whole Chinese students population in other North American contexts due the small scope of the study.

There are three directions that future studies can further explore. First, future studies could examine the impact of research projects on participants’ awareness and understanding of the power issues in academic groups. The co-constructing interview practice allowed me to notice that some participants showed some growth in their understanding and awareness of the impact of stereotypical biases and power imbalances on their group interaction and oral participation. Participants like Jo, John and Jackson seemed unprepared and unfamiliar with critical topics that concern race, gender, class and other social factors at the initial interviews. The research questions stimulated them reflecting closely on their group experiences and their own perspectives. At the end of the term, they seemed keener in answering the questions and showed more in-depth thinking. For example, through the interview process Jo

became consciously aware that her preferences for partners and accents are racialized. The influence of the research project on participants was not the focus of the study and I did not have sufficient information to conclude their possible growth in their understanding. More research is needed to examine whether participating in critical research might improve participants' the awareness and knowledge in power issues in educational settings.

Second, due to the focus and limited scope of this study, I did not include the perspectives and practices of my focal participants' group members in Phase 1, nor the instructors' views, attitudes, and experiences regarding power issues in the group work. The next step for me could be to extend this study to include voices of all group members and the instructors of the Chinese multilingual students to get a more complete and balanced view of the issue.

Third, I am interested in duplicating this study with students from other social groups and in other contexts. The understanding of intersectionality suggests that all students are likely to experience power struggles in academic groups as social inequalities operate at multiple dimensions and from various sources. Therefore, it is also pertinent to examine the experiences and challenges for students from other social groups. In addition, both courses in this thesis happened to contain a language-related component in their curriculum: the linguistic course and the business-writing course. This could be one major reason, especially in Phase 2, for the instructors to assign a substantial part of the marks to English skills and North American academic conventions, which eventually caused the significant power differentials in the academic group. I question whether the power hegemony would be improved or remain the same in courses of other disciplines, such as in courses of science or engineering majors.

Last, one of the pedagogical suggestions that I have made is for the university to develop courses and workshops on group work dynamics including power imbalances within groups, conversational strategies, and conflict resolution skills. It would be interesting to examine whether such education and training might help to encourage inclusive, cohesive group interaction as well as to reduce marginalization and exclusion.

6.6. Conclusion: The journey I have taken

In the past a few decades, teaching practices in North American post-secondary institutions have become increasingly interactive. Meanwhile, the student body in these institutions has grown more and more ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse. These changes impose new challenges on the university community as how to best incorporate learners who have significantly different beliefs and views about learning. One of the central issues is learners' oral participation in class. The purpose of this study is to investigate at the sociocultural level how Chinese multilingual speakers construct their participation in mixed academic groups. The findings of the study have shown that oral participation in academic groups in North America is more than a simple learning activity subject to one's personal preference, or a cultural adaptation. More than often oral participation is constructed through multiple layers of historical, political, social relations—involving negotiation of one's positionalities. Stereotypical biases on social differences, racialized classroom discursive structures, and ideologies in the larger society all affected the opportunities, the confidence, the motivation, and the power that one affords to make voluntary oral participation. Discrimination and marginalization existed widely and affected every student's academic life.

I started this thesis research aiming to identify the challenges and difficulties that Chinese multilingual speakers face in their group discussions. To some degree, I assumed that by doing this study, I was able to identify “bad” biased practices and then we could “fix” it together. Obviously, it did not and will not happen. It was through this long, painful research process—through listening, sharing, reading, reflecting and writing, did I realize: similar forms of racialized views lain within me, and so racialized practices too. I came to the understanding that stereotypical biases are not like “blots” only for “other” privileged social members. It exists widely in the society within everyone including me: from the dominant to the underprivileged; across places: from educational to professional settings; and an on-going process. Living with and through biases is a common daily reality.

My second piece of personal understanding is that research is a never-ending process. It is messy, definitely not a clean and linear process, sometimes going back and forth, and sometimes going in unexpected directions. It is also a process full of regrets and imperfections. When I transcribed and coded my data, I could not help but

often questioning myself: “What was I thinking when interrupting such an important point?” “How I hope I had followed up on that comment!” “Oh, No! I can not hear what they were saying?” Yet, sometimes it created amazing moments when I received a thought-provoking response or discovered a fresh new understanding. My research process was like a journey: when I started it out, I went towards an initially determined direction. I never knew where my destination would be and how long the trip would take. I made turns here and there, having some easy moments going downhill and some self-doubting moments climbing uphill. Along the way, I met different people, having seen some wonderful, pleasant views and some unexpected views. I know I have strayed away from the original path that I set out. I was nervous but I felt content. When I finally stopped, I was at a place that I have never been. I was sweating, out of my breath and worn out but I felt proud and rewarding.

The journey is hard, especially for a full time instructor and new mother of two. I started my journey alone and harvested two angels along my way. The biggest challenge I find in the whole process is to be separate from my angels to focus on writing. Luckily I received a lot of support from my family, my parents, my supervisors, and my friends. Every small step forward in this journey was accompanied by my children’s growth and development. Please allow me to record down here these precious memories, as they have also been an important part of this journey.

My first child was born on my presentation day. I remember how I learned to breastfeed her with one arm while holding a research article in the other. My conversations with another new-mom classmate were often a mixture of Freire or Bourdieu, and baby care tips. When I took my comprehensive exam, Michelle was chubby like a marshmallow, and my parents used to rock her to sleep. My second child observed and completed the fieldwork with me in my tummy. I remember feeling stressed to and uncomfortable while videotaping and interviewing the participants with my clumsy, pointy tummy. My participants, however, shared with me their opinions on good baby names. When Jefferson had his first tooth, I learned to use NVivo10 and started transcribing and coding my data. When Michelle was three and Jefferson one, I started writing the first chapter of this thesis. Michelle is five now and will start Kindergarten next month. There were times when I felt sad and guilty for missing their milestones because I had to leave to write; there were also times when I had to fulfill my

duties and could only write few hours over a whole week. Gradually, this journey came to a stop. These unforgettable moments will stay in my heart for a long, long time, and they have made this journey of doctoral study full of colors and wonders for me.

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Appendix A. Transcription conventions

The transcription symbols used in this thesis are based on the notations developed by Gail Jefferson (2004), which are common to conversational analysis. A few symbols, as specified, are developed for the particular purpose of this study. The following symbols are used in the data.

Symbol	Notations
(.)	A full stop inside brackets denotes a micro pause, a notable pause but of no significant length.
(0.2)	A number inside brackets denotes a timed pause. This is a pause long enough to time and subsequently show in transcription.
[Square brackets denote a point where overlapping speech occurs.
> <	Arrows surrounding talk like these show that the pace of the speech has quickened
< >	Arrows in this direction show that the pace of the speech has slowed down
()	Where there is space between brackets denotes that the words spoken here were too unclear to transcribe
(())	A description enclosed in a double bracket indicates non-verbal activities or contextual information.
Underline	When a word or part of a word is underlines it denotes a raise in volume or emphasis
↑	When an upward arrow appears it means there is a rise in intonation
↓	When a downward arrow appears it means there is a drop in intonation

◦ ◦	Degree signs indicate that the talk is spoken noticeably quieter than the surrounding talk
CAPITAL S	where capital letters appear it denotes that something was said loudly or even shouted
::	Colons appear to represent elongated speech, a stretched sound
The following are developed by the researcher for this study.	
(CAN) <i>Italic</i>	Words or sentences that are following “(CAN)” and underlined are spoken in Cantonese.
(MAN) <i>Italic</i>	Words or sentences that are following “(Man)” and underlined are spoken in Mandarin.

Appendix B. Data matrix and coding matrix

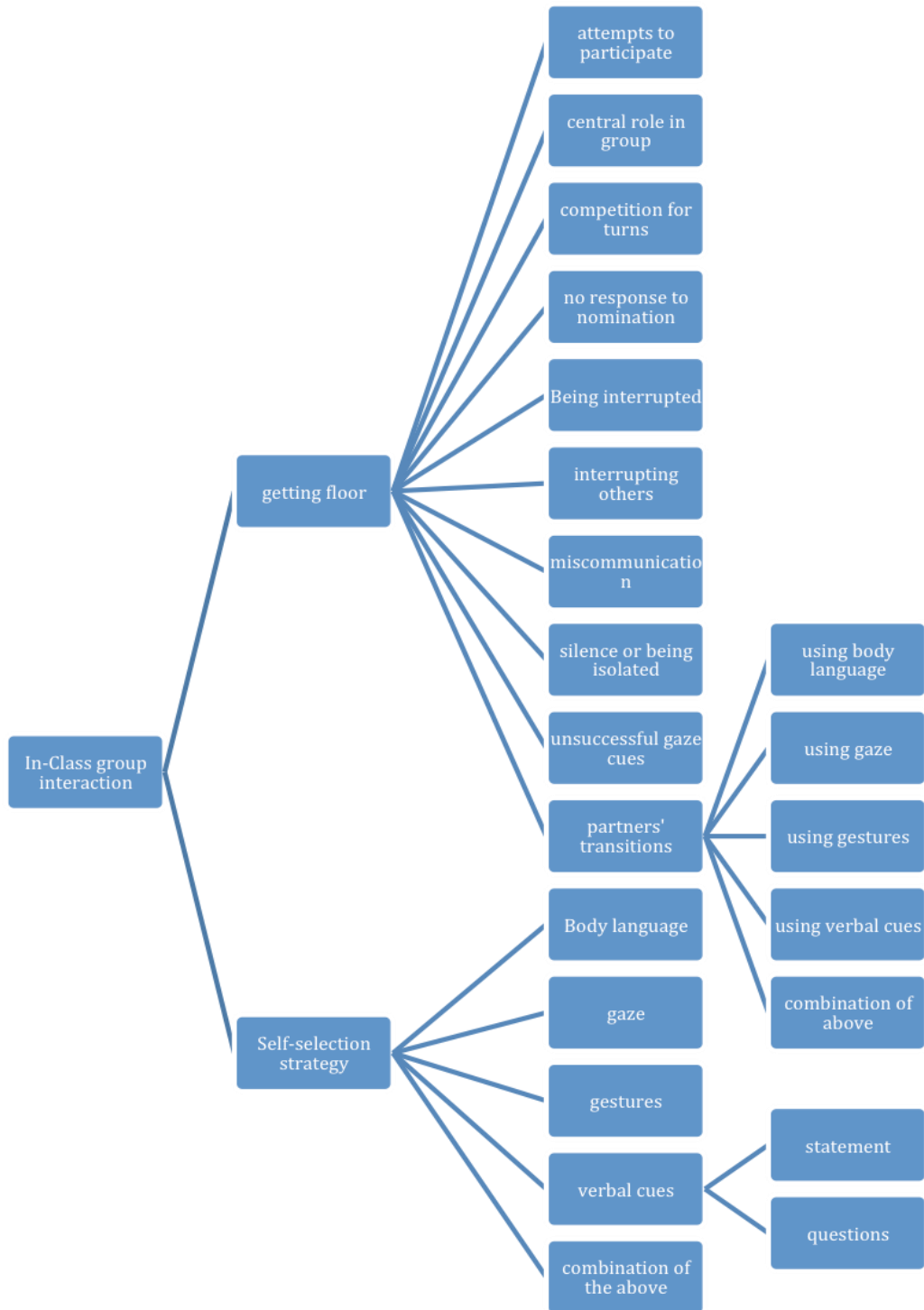
1. A sample data matrix of group interactions in Phase 1

Note: The data matrix of the whole study consists of four sub-matrix like the following, which I used to display, pattern and cross-analyze.

A. Class Discussion		self-selected seating formed groups			Openings	CA	CA2		Group Analysis	
Date	Participant	members	Duration	Discussion topic/tasks	Turns taking: start, when and how P begins	floor (language, eye contact, naming, frequency, etc)	roles playing /assigned	Seating /Proximity	member relationship	knowledge /grades
2012-09-14	Tryout									
2012-09-19	Jo	three german Caucasians. 2M+1F	9min 06sec	Linguistic analysis transcript (Grice's maxims)	Boy in cap starte before Jo joined. She joined and asked questions.	Use a lot of words, syntactic cues. Lack eye contact or body language cues	participate actively, ignore the girl because of proximity	initiator. Boy with cap started before she joined. She joined and asked questions.	far end due to video camera, can't interact with the girl sitting far	other three were friends, share bonding.
2012-10-10	Jo	One Mexican Caucasian.	5min 30sec	court case	Jo started.	Not use gazes as often as other Caucasian students. Use questions more.	fast pace and shorter pause perception than Mexican boy, so cutting off him	pair work. Jo started.	turning back and force for screen.	
2012-10-31	Jo	John, Mexican		reading level and semantic biases	Mexican boy started.					
2012-11-16	Jo	One Caucasian female, one Spanish EAL	9 min 20sec	trademark	Jo started.	Use questions often for explanation, confirmation of meaning, etc.	Didn't pay attention to body language caused miscommunication	Jo started. Discussion focuses on clarification of meaning than to solve tasks		
2012-09-26	John	Two Caucasian F, one Caucasian M	8min 30sec	use plain English to improve warranty doc		Not as many gaze cues as other speakers.	Not much participation. Spoke three times, two of which seeking explanations.	Not giving floor much (when competing), lack of understanding	Task not simulating discussion. The whole class was quiet over half of the time.	john spoke in class in w5, w7
2012-09-26	John	Two Caucasian F, one Caucasian M	4 min	To identify words that cause reading difficulty		Did not participate verbally, not once	body language showed him willing to participate but maybe lack of content.	Use some gazes but not successful: not given gazes, not exchange gazes	topic gives EAL speakers' content to talk but maybe lack of confidence or preparation.	maybe afraid to lose face? Three voluntary ps were quite active speakers in class. Ann was approached by the researcher.
2012-10-30	John	One Mexican boy + Jo	7min 10sec	identify reading level and semantic bias	Jo and Mexico boy often exchange opinions	Jo had difficulty getting floor. (lack of gaze cues.) reading notes a lot.	Not talking even the other two were chatting.	Not use gaze or backchannel.		
2012-11-30	All	1wm+1wf, Jenn, Ann and John	6min 45sec	reviewing material and find questions	Jenn and white girl started.	Jenn, and two whites discussed more. John and Ann isolated.	John's proposed a question and said limited/unrelated stuff. Not much responses. His contribution was not recognized/forgotten by his members	Jenn and two others were familiar and often grouped together.	Paul use gaze as indicator for turns.	Girls all backchanneled. John didn't use gaze or backchannel. The video was shooting from the back of three girls. Much prosodic features could be missing.
2012-10-03	Jenn	1WF, 1 South American M, Two Chinese	7min 20sec	argue for and against insurance compensation	Jenn started.	Jenn started the discussion and holding notes in a central seat.	Jenn using gazes, props, and primarily statements.	Jenn took a central role, central seating, holding notes, answer questions.		
2012-11-07	Jenn	Andrew, Aliwa and Jenn	4min 20sec	Determine suicidal notes are real or not	Jenn started.	Jenn started the discussion.	Using gaze/or questions often to incorporate others.	Often try to speak after silence. Smile when disagree.		
2012-10-19	Ann	Ann, one Caucasian, one Asian	5 min	analyze the language of a reading		D started with a combination of techs. Often start with his findings.	Ann backchanneled often with David. Start once with question. Offered insights twice.	It seems people with central roles are better at using gazes to indicate turns. Asian speakers use gazes less often.	David being the leader to go over the list of questions and give most answers.	
2012-11-09	Ann	Ann, Andrew, Asian Girl	10min	identify stylistic markers of a ramson letter		Ann was the leader/central role in the group. She spoke the most after silence, responded to others and kept good eye contact.	The group compared with other groups in class was pretty often got in silence.	Ann gave her insights using statements. Didn't explicitly invite other people to talk.		

2. A sample of the coding matrix in Phase 1

(Note: The overall coding matrix of this study consists of four sub-matrixes like the following: one for group interaction, and one for interview data.)



B) Timed Group Interaction Observation

who says what, to whom, when, turn taking, pause time, outcome

1. Time to start: _____ End time: _____
Brief ideas:

2. Participant's participation:

Opening: Who _____ Content _____

How to gain floor: _____ body language _____

instrument: _____ What follows _____

Who _____ Content _____

How to gain floor: _____ body language _____

instrument: _____ What follows _____

Who _____ Content _____

How to gain floor: _____ body language _____

instrument: _____ What follows _____

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3. Closure:

Who _____ Content _____

How to gain floor: _____ body language _____

instrument: _____ What follows _____

Result/Outcome:

Appendix D. Student interview guides in Phase 1

1. Please describe the objective of the group work and what happened during group interaction in details.
2. Please describe your own participation/role in this group discussion.
3. What role do you want to play in group work?
4. What did you think of this group experience? Why?
5. What is in your view a good, successful group experience?
6. What are your general beliefs and understandings about group work?
7. How was the group formed?
8. What were the responses to your opinions, suggestions and contributions?
Examples.
9. During the discussion, do you have any conflicts, misunderstandings or disagreements with others? How were those instances resolved?
10. How will you evaluate your and your group members' contributions to the group discussion?
11. What factors help you participate more actively in this group interaction?
12. How do this group interaction make you feel about yourself?
13. What would you have done differently in this group interaction?
14. What were the positive factors in this discussion? What could have made this group experience better for you?
15. Could you describe your most memorable (either the best of the worst) group interaction in this university? What were the reasons?

2nd Focal Participant Interview

1. Please describe a) the purpose of the group work and what happened during group interaction in details.
2. Please describe your own participation/role in this group discussion.
3. What did you think of the group experience? Why?
4. How was the group formed?
5. During the discussion, do you have any conflicts, misunderstandings or disagreements with others? How were those instances resolved?
6. What would you have done differently to participate more actively in this group interaction?

7. How was this group experience different from your previous group experiences in this course?
8. How do you feel about (think of) these difference?
9. In terms of how the group work was organized in this course, what has worked well? What suggestions do you have?
10. From your previous experiences in group work, have you ever felt that your language proficiency (either English or Chinese) has impeded your group participation? Or given you an advantage? Can you give an example?
11. Have you ever felt your ethnicity or race to be a factor which affected your group members' attitudes towards you or your contributions? Give an example. Or affect your attitudes toward others?
12. Have you every felt the influence of gender differences in group interaction? E.g., being the only girl in a male group or vice versa.
13. Have you ever felt that the length of your stay in Canada may affect your group participation and/or your members' attitudes toward you?
14. Based on your experiences, are there any other factors playing a role in your group experiences?

Thank you for your time in answering these questions.

Appendix E. Instructor interview guide in Phase 1

1. Can you please describe how the group work is commonly organized in this course?
2. What are the purposes for having group work in this course? Are they fulfilled?
3. How students are usually grouped and why?
4. What kinds of tasks do students need to complete through group work?
5. What has worked well in terms of how the group work is organized?
6. What are some of the problematic issues in group work in this course? What complaints do you receive from students about group work?
7. In general, what is your general impression of Chinese multilingual students' participation in group discussions as well as in class discussions?
8. What factors have you noticed that might have encouraged Chinese EAL or multilingual students' participation in the group/class discussions?
9. What factors have you noticed that might have impeded their involvement in group discussions?

About the focal students:

10. Based on your impressions, can you comment on how well each of the four focal students have contributed to the class discussions and group discussions?
11. Can you also describe each of the four focal students' their academic performances and achievements in this course?
12. In your opinion, are there any correlations between students' participations in group discussions and their academic achievements? Please give details.

Thank you for your time in answering these questions.

Appendix F. Student interview guides in Phase 2

1. How many group meetings have you had with this group?
2. What was achieved respectively in each of the group meetings? Please describe what happened in each meeting.
3. Please describe your own participation/your role in those group discussions.
4. What role do you want to play?
5. What did you think of the group experience so far?
6. What is in your view a good, successful group experience?
7. What are your general beliefs and understandings about group work?
8. How do you think of your and your group members' participation/contribution?
9. During the discussion, do you have any misunderstandings, disagreements or conflicts with others? How were those instances resolved?
10. What were the responses to your opinions, suggestions and contributions?
Examples.
11. What were the positive factors in this discussion? What could have made this group experience better for you?
12. What factors help you participate more actively in group interactions?
13. In your opinion, what factors can let your group members value your input more?
14. How do group interaction make you feel about yourself?
15. What would you have done differently in this group interaction?
16. Could you describe your most memorable (either the best of the worst) group interaction in this university? What were the reasons?

2nd Focal Participant Interview

1. Overall impression of the teamwork in this whole course:
 - (1) What have you discussed in these discussions?
 - (2) How did you think of the group experience in this course?
 - (3) What was your role and participation in this group? Any changes?
 - (4) How satisfied are you with your role and your participation in this group? Please give reasons.
 - (5) How satisfied are you with each group members' contributions to the group? Please comment on each.

- (6) Throughout the semester, have you had any conflicts or disagreements with others? Please give one example.

How were those instances resolved?

2. Language use in the group.

In my observation, English, Mandarin and Cantonese were constantly used in your discussions.

- (1) What was the function/purpose of each language used in your discussions?
- (2) What language(s) did you use mainly in discussions? Why?
- (3) How did you feel when your group members discussed in a language that you understand poorly? What did you do with it?
- (4) Have you ever felt that your language skills have impeded your group participation? Or given you an advantage? Can you give an example?

3. Other social factors

- (1) Have you ever felt your origin to be a factor affecting your group members' attitudes towards you or your contributions? Example. Will it affect your attitudes toward others?
- (2) Have you every felt your gender could affect your contributions in groups? Do you value male opinions more than females'?
- (3) Have you felt that the length of your stay in Canada may affect your group participation and/or your members' attitudes toward you?
- (4) Based on your experiences, are there any other factors playing a role in your group experiences?

4. Others

- (1) Were there any changes in your group members' attitudes towards you through the semester? If yes, what was the turning point?
- (2) In terms of the design of the group work in this course (assignments, evaluation, etc), what has worked well? What suggestions do you have?

Thank you for your time in answering these questions.

Appendix G. Instructor Interview Guides in Phase 2

1. Can you please describe what kind of group work do students do in this course?
2. Usually, writing is an individual capacity. What are the purposes for organizing group work this way in this course? Have your purposes been fulfilled?
3. How students are usually grouped and why is that?
4. What are the purposes for arranging peer team evaluations and including them in grades?
5. Based on your experience in teaching this course as well as the feedback you have received from students and TAs, what has worked well in terms group work?
6. What are some of the problematic issues in group work in this course?
What kind of complaints did you receive from students about group work?
7. In general, what is your general impression of Chinese multilingual students' participation in group discussions as well as in class discussions?
8. What factors have you noticed that might have encouraged Chinese EAL or multilingual students' participation in the group/class discussions?
9. What factors have you noticed that might have impeded their involvement in group/class discussions?
About the focal students:
10. Based on your impressions, can you comment on how well each of the four focal students have contributed to the class discussions and group discussions?
11. Can you also comment on each of the four focal students' their writing skills and performances in this course?
12. In your opinion, what is the relationship between students' participations in class/group discussions and their academic achievements? Please give details.

Thank you for your time in answering these questions.