INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
LANGUAGE, IDENTITY AND EXPERIENCE FROM A HOLISTIC
PERSPECTIVE

VANDER TAVARES

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Abstract

Over the last decade, international student enrollment in Canadian universities has increased significantly (Statistics Canada, 2018). This rapid growth in enrollment has often led us to view and discuss international students as static numerical figures rather than as whole individuals with unique needs and diverse experiences. In response to this and other concerns, this study constructs and adopts a holistic framework in order to better understand the lived experiences of four multilingual international students at a university in Canada.

This study is informed by a multidisciplinary theoretical framework. Language and second language acquisition are viewed through the lens of multilingualism and socio-cognitive theory, respectively, while identity is understood through insights stemming from post-structuralist theory as well as social and cultural psychology. To explore experience in detail, this study draws on case study and portraiture for its methodological design, and on interviews, photographs, newspapers, and observations as its instruments of data collection. In addition to the four students whose experiences are the focus of this study, the voices of 38 other participants—domestic students, faculty, and support staff—are also included in this investigation to better understand the context of the institution to which the students belong.

Findings highlight some of the complexity in and uniqueness of individual multilingual international student experience. The students' experiences are generally characterised by challenge, but also success, as the students navigate life in another language and culture while attempting to both meet the expectations of their academic studies, and enact new identities which they progressively construct for themselves. In terms of

community, the students' experiences reveal a social distance between multilingual international students and their domestic peers, despite the importance placed by the international students on developing meaningful connections with domestic students. Recommendations and implications for theory and practice are presented in light of these findings.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

From many to one

In May of 2019, Jobandeep Sandhu got in trouble with the law. Jobandeep, a multilingual international student from India studying in Canada, and working temporarily as a truck driver, was stopped by the police roadside, handcuffed, and taken in the back seat of the police officer's vehicle to the closest Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) office. His crime: working more than 20 hours a week, exceeding the legal stipulation on his study permit. Frightened and facing deportation, he defended himself: "I didn't kill anybody. I didn't rob. My only crime is that I was working" (Hill, 2019). The coverage of this crime by the media evoked a number of complex reactions from both the local and national community.

The reactions communicated dichotomies: support and attack, mercy and condemnation. Comments on the news piece published by Global News (Hill, 2019) were as frightening as Jobandeep's supposed reaction. On one hand, commentators clamoured for deportation, blamed international students for taking jobs from Canadians, and characterised Jobandeep and his fellow international students as wily, unlawful, and a danger to Canadian society. On the other hand, commentators in support criticised the high cost of tuition fees for international students and emphasised the significant financial contribution made by the students to the Canadian economy. Although the 220 comments delivered conflicting messages, the majority explicitly excoriated the student and his behaviour.

Oftentimes, multilingual international students tend to make the headlines for their "bad" behaviour. Stories like Jobandeep's can reinforce the dominant focalisation of international students as subjects of deviance, disruption, and deficiency. Indeed, from analysing 391 international student-focused media texts produced in Canada between 2000 and 2017, Anderson (2019) concluded that international students had been predominantly portrayed as "threats" to Canada. Nevertheless, having read many news stories in the past concerning international students in Canada, I found the story on the episode involving Jobandeep written by Hill (2019) noticeably unconventional. What made it so was the adoption of a rather underused "framework" for discussing and understanding the event under consideration. This "framework" is one I consider to be a *critical examination* of international students' experiences.

More specifically, what rendered the examination of Jobandeep's crime more critical was the placement of the event within its pertinent context. In fact, not only was the context unique, it was also indispensable for an adequate understanding of the ultimate crime. The news story took the surrounding context into account by critically examining and inter-relating the multiple factors—political, economic, sociocultural, and academic—that had mutually influenced Jobandeep to (need to) commit the crime. The context was essential for understanding the student's reality for it exposed limitations of Canadian policy in relation to an international student's lived experiences. Although not all media coverage transpires from a place of neutrality, a contextually-sensitive, situated analysis, like that encircling Jobandeep's case, may at a minimum afford the critical reader sufficient information to draw autonomous conclusions in connection to the event in question.

Yet, a critical examination as I see it should still be characterised by more than only a critical attention only to the context. After all, in addition to context, stories also need characters, and characters need voices. But who assigns voice? And whose perspective does one's voice reflect? Considering these two important points when speaking for and about the other, a critical examination of one's lived experiences is then not only about subjects who can speak, but that can speak for themselves. In Jobandeep's story, Hill (2019) integrated what seemed like an *emic* assessment of the crime by enabling Jobandeep to speak from his own subjective position and by evaluating the event from the perspective of the student. Therefore, a critical examination should embrace the "risk" involved in allowing the minoritised to speak freely for themselves.

A critical examination of lived experiences may be further enhanced by one final point. Equally important here is the notion of time. More precisely, considering time entails exploring multilingual international students' lived experiences in the present day not discretely, but instead as part of a temporal continuum in which the present is inextricably connected to past and future. An attention to the continuity of time is intended to foster an understanding of the present as a dynamic rather than static time, influenced by experiences of the past and in motion to an envisioned future. Questions such as *"where" is Jobandeep coming from?* and *"where" is he headed?* are not to be answered merely with reference to physical destinations. Rather, they are critical to understanding experiences in the present, especially those related to multilingual international students' identity, as experiences *in trajectory*.

From one to many

How many multilingual international students in Canada have their lived experiences heard as critically as Jobandeep's? This number may be impossible to speculate, but considering the current context of higher education in Canada, the need to explore multilingual international students' experiences in such a manner may be greater now than ever before. According to the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE), the number of international students enrolled in post-secondary institutions[1] in Canada surpassed 370,000 in the 2017-18 academic year (CBIE, 2018), and increased at a higher rate than that of domestic students (Statistics Canada, 2018). This number is only expected to continue to grow significantly over subsequent years (Choudaha, 2017) as Canada continues to compete to maintain and elevate its current standing in the international education market.

In fact, thinking in numbers is crucial for the visibility of internationalisation of Canadian post-secondary institutions in today's global competition. Data by CBIE[2] reveal that the United States hosted over one million international students at the post-secondary level in 2017 (CBIE, 2018), maintaining its traditional number one position worldwide. The United Kingdom was second with over 500,000 international students, followed by China with over 442,000 international students. In fourth place stands Canada, at a 370,957 figure. However, Canada has only recently become such a prominent destination for international students, and in comparison to previous years, this figure suggests a rather radical growth in enrolment considering Canada's history in international education.

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[1] Post-secondary includes only students holding study permits in Canadian universities, colleges, and Quebec's CÉGEPs. International students in these institutions without a study permit have been excluded, such as those in short-term academic exchanges.
[2] CBIE only considered international students holding a valid study permit.

In 2011, for instance, this number was significantly lower for Canada, nearing a 158,000 figure instead (CBIE, 2012). With those numbers, Canada was behind other iconic destinations, such as France, Australia, and Germany (CBIE, 2012), all of which it has now surpassed. Yet, over the six-year period from 2011 to 2017, the number of international students at the post-secondary level in Canada more than doubled. This increase was fuelled largely by global political and sociocultural factors (Choudaha, 2017). However, international student recruitment efforts in Canada also intensified over the same period, in addition to structural changes that have occurred at the provincial and national level, designed to make Canada a more attractive destination. These included shorter visa-processing times, post-graduation work permits, and immigration programs designed explicitly for international students (CBIE, 2012).

Nevertheless, Canada's enhanced international performance has been contingent on viewing international students primarily as numbers. In the context of internationalisation of higher education, higher numbers can indicate "progress" and result in higher rankings for a given institution or nation for both intra- or international competition (Gao, 2015; Green, 2012; Paige, 2005). However, progress does not necessarily equate to quality (Knight, 2001). In arguing for the difference, Knight (2001) proposed that progress is "movement toward a desired objective or circumstance" (p. 231). Quality, on the other hand, is related to "trying to do the best job possible and achieving excellence" (p. 231). Consequently, international students are often seen as tools in the "hands" of internationalisation—they are the means through which to meet numerical objectives. However, with an attention to *quality* in international students' experiences, Knight (2011) argues that:

A long-standing myth is that more foreign students on campus will produce more internationalized institutional culture and curriculum. While this may be the expectation of universities, reality often paints a different picture. In many institutions international students feel marginalized socially and academically and often experience ethnic or racial tensions. Frequently, domestic undergraduate students are known to resist, or at best to be neutral about undertaking joint academic projects or engaging socially with foreign students— unless specific programs are developed by the university or instructor. International students tend to band together and ironically often have a broader and more meaningful intercultural experience on campus than domestic students, without having any deep engagement with the host country culture. Of course, this scenario is not applicable to all institutions, but it speaks to the often unquestioned assumption that the primary reason to recruit international students is to help internationalize the campus. While this is a well-intentioned rationale, it often does not work out that way and, instead, serves to mask other motivations—such as revenue generation or desire for improved rankings on global league tables. (p. 14)

Indeed, treating international students solely as statistics in the name of progress is problematic, and should continue to be problematised. By nature, statistics are used to reduce large data to comprehensible numbers according to pre-defined categorical divisions. Today, however, understanding the complex sociology of human experience through numbers may be too reductionist and simplistic when representations of one's lived experiences are increasingly conceived of in light of one's sense of *identity*. And identity, in itself, continues to be theorised in ways that challenge facile, structural, and essentialist views of human experience, especially in applied linguistics (Norton, 2013). Therefore, reducing multilingual international students and their lived experiences to lifeless figures may only continue to obscure our understanding of the nuances behind being a number.

In fact, research in applied linguistics focused on the social experiences of language learners has gained prominence over the last two decades. Ignited by the theoretical and methodological approaches characteristic of the "social turn" in the field (Block, 2003), this body of research has been continuously illuminating our

understanding of the ways by which sociological issues can critically interfere with the experience of second language acquisition in the broader sense (Block, 2015; Darvin & Norton, 2014; Dovchin, Sultana, & Pennycook, 2016). More recently, however, research has focused on learners' identity-related experiences in the social contexts of their second/additional languages (L2s), reflecting a diverse range of concerns and orientations that had been largely neglected in previous research (Anya, 2016; Flores & Rosa, 2019; Quan, 2018).

Yet, researching lived experience in applied linguistics may be important for the field as a whole. While the majority of research focused on experience may be generally aligned with social perspectives of second language acquisition (SLA), recent advances in the fields of neurology and psychology suggest that experience, whether novel or continuous, can alter the structural and functional plasticity of the adult human brain (Kim et al., 2014; Li, Legault, & Litcofsky, 2014; May, 2011). Within the range of the kinds of experience examined by this research are social experiences related to second language use and their impact on the brain. These findings have challenged "assumptions that changes in brain networks are possible only during crucial periods of development" (May, 2011, p. 475), which have been the foundation for much of the cognitivist view of SLA (Myles, 2013). Ultimately, researching lived experience in SLA may be even more important than previously thought as scientific progress is made in relation to better understanding the relationship between language and the human brain.

This study: Approach and research questions

This study seeks to contribute to our understanding of the social-experiential dimension of applied linguistics by exploring the lived experiences of four multilingual international students at an English-medium university in Ontario. Today, the majority of international students in English-medium colleges and universities are multilingual speakers for whom English is not a first language, with the vast majority of these students coming from Asia (Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, & Forbes-Mewett, 2010; Tan, 2015; Yao, 2016). Consequently, within this sociolinguistic context, research in applied linguistics has mainly investigated how the proficiency levels in the English language by multilingual international students who acquired English as an additional language—individuals commonly labelled as English as a second language (ESL) students by their institutional communities—impact the students' academic success (Andrade, 2009; Cheng, Myles, & Curtis, 2004; Evans & Morrison, 2011).

However, despite the importance of such an investigation, research has traditionally examined international students' linguistic experiences against those of native speakers and domestic students (Cook, 1997; Cruz-Ferreira, 2010). From this comparative standpoint, multilingual international students have been often portrayed in the literature as deficient and incompetent speakers who are likely to fail academically solely due to their insufficient non-native proficiency in English. The heavy focus placed on language difficulties has not only perpetuated the marked image of multilingual international students as deficient speakers (Shapiro, 2014). It has also increasingly contributed to the conflation of insufficiency in language proficiency with intellectual and cultural inferiority, and consequently, portrayed multilingual international students as

individuals who disrupt the academic culture of their host institutions (Fernsten, 2008; Liu, 2011; Marshall, 2009; Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008; Straker, 2016).

In response to the concerns identified above, this study adopts a *holistic* approach to "viewing" multilingual international students and to understanding their lived experiences. My own work experiences in higher education have highlighted the ways in which the challenges and concerns of international students are rooted in complexities that are not limited to the linguistic dimension, but interwoven with experiences that are easily neglected. Rather than positioning these individuals strictly or primarily into the categories of ESL speakers, on the basis of the English language, or that of international students, on the basis of national status—both of which can, to some extent, define their identities and constrain the course of their experiences—in this study I construct and undertake a theoretical approach in which the students are considered as whole individuals, whose multiple knowledges, positions, skills, and roles—including but not confined to those in the position of multilingual international students—are not only acknowledged, but also celebrated.

By extension, a holistic approach also seeks to explore multilingual international students' experiences beyond the linguistic dimension. Departing from the criteria foregrounded in the critical "framework" I proposed in reading the story presented early in this chapter, which took context, voice, and time into account, in the present exploration I also consider multilingual international students' experiences holistically in order to better understand their lived experiences and thereby recognise the whole individual as such. The holistic approach I engage with is characterised by the

philosophical assumption that the whole may be better understood by attending to the multiple parts that constitute it.

Therefore, understanding multilingual international students as whole people consists of examining multiple aspects of their identities. Similarly, understanding their linguistic experiences entails exploring the multiple dimensions of lived experience— e.g. linguistic, academic, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual—which cannot be adequately understood apart from one another because in this paper they are conceptualised as inextricable. Anchored in this holistic philosophical foundation, this study then seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do four multilingual international students experience life at a Canadian University?

2. How do the experiences of four multilingual international students throughout the course of their studies impact the development and enactment of their identities?

3. How do four multilingual international students perceive their language learning and development during their time as students at Pond University[3]?

4. How might the perceptions and experiences of other members of Pond's community help shape the context in which the multilingual international students experience life?

Synopsis of thesis

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[3] Pond University is the pseudonym for the university under consideration. More information is provided in Chapter 4.

This study is organised into ten chapters. Chapter two provides context for this study by reviewing literature concerned with the sociopolitical trends which have contributed to the increase in enrolment of international students in Canadian institutions of higher education. Additionally, this chapter synthesises findings from previous studies concerned with the experiences of multilingual international students in Canadian universities.

Chapters three and four assemble the theoretical and methodological construction of the study. Chapter three presents the central concepts that constitute the holistic framework of this study. In particular, this chapter defines multilingualism; builds an identity framework by integrating insights from post-structuralism, social and cultural psychology; and explains the sociocognitive approach to second language acquisition adopted in this study. Lastly, chapter three also challenges traditional views of domestic and international students as two distinct groups.

Chapter four explains the research design of this study. This chapter describes the two methodological approaches employed in this research: case study and portraiture, and outlines the data collection methods utilised: interviews, photography, observations, and documents. Lastly, this chapter also delineates the process of data analysis undertaken in this study.

Chapter five is about community. This chapter foregrounds the voices of members of the academic community at Pond University—domestic students, faculty, and support staff—in relation to their experiences with and perspectives of interacting with multilingual international students on campus. Chapters six through nine

individually explore the experiences of the focal participants: Claire, Seth, Pablo, and Sabrina (pseudonyms).

Chapter ten brings this study to a closing. This chapter responds to the guiding concerns and presents the recommendations and implications of this study.

Chapter 2
Literature Review

This chapter reviews literature concerned with multilingual international students' experiences in Canadian universities. It begins with an outline of the relevant sociopolitical trends which have influenced the rapid growth in the number of international students in Canadian universities and then examines empirical studies that have focused on the linguistic, social, cultural, and academic dimensions of the multilingual international student experience in Canada. The goal of this review is to identify gaps in the literature, and accordingly, formulate questions that can guide future research. This chapter concludes with reflection on how the concerns identified support the aims of this research study.

Setting the context

Each year, thousands of international students come to Canadian universities to study at the undergraduate and graduate level. Canadian universities have seen a major increase in the number of international students on their campuses, particularly over the last decade. To put it into context, in the academic year of 2004-2005, the number of international students registered in bachelor, master, and doctoral programs in Canada was nearly 66,000, representing 7.4% of all students in post-secondary education in the country (Statistics Canada, 2016). The latest data available from Statistics Canada (2018) reflect the 2016-2017 academic year, when the number of international students grew to nearly 244,842, representing then 12% of all students in post-secondary education in Canada. While this number may still be small when compared with those of

other top destinations for study-abroad and international higher education, it is significant for the Canadian context because it reveals a steady increase in the number of international students.

At a first glance, such trends demand both additional and ongoing research. After all, despite the considerable growth in the number of international students enrolled in Canadian universities, the majority of research concerning the multilingual international student experience in higher education continues to originate from the American context. This is because the United States has historically been the number-one destination for international students for a number of important reasons, including its size, investment in research, political power, and English as its official language (Altbach, 2004). Consequently, research-based knowledge in relation to the multilingual international student experience has been largely and primarily informed by the U.S. context (Tavares, 2016).

This context-specific knowledge has been crucial for the development of a seminal understanding of the experiences of multilingual international students. For example, while insights from American-based research have been particularly useful for research in applied linguistics focused on the relationship between the use of English as a second or additional language by multilingual speakers in academic settings and their achievement of socio-academic success, findings from the American context cannot fully represent and adequately account for knowledge gaps that continue to exist concerning these students' experiences in *other* English-speaking nations (Davies & Zarifa, 2012; Grayson, 2008).

As a result, the need for a more holistic exploration of this experience in Canada remains. There are some relevant conclusions and transferable insights for better understanding the multilingual international student experience in contexts of higher education—both in general and in relation to Canada in particular—gained from examining research from the United States. However, research in Canada would be important in providing a more *situated* understanding of all dimensions of lived experience that characterise the multilingual international student experience. Research on students' experiences could explore dimensions such as the academic, social, cultural, linguistic, professional, psychological, and spiritual; and the relationship between all these. Considering the rapid increase in the number of international students in the Canada, such research is then timely.

The impact of global trends on international student mobility

An analysis of recent trends in international student mobility can provide some context for the steady growth in the number of international students in Canada. Choudaha (2017) has proposed a conceptual framework for understanding the trends in international student mobility by categorising the phenomenon into three waves. In the first wave (1999-2006), hosting institutions of higher education were better able and willing to assist highly talented international students financially. Studying abroad generally provided international students opportunities for economic return after graduation in the destination country partly because of the gap in the high-demand workforce. One major event in this time period which led international students to consider emerging destinations such as Canada was the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001. The event did not stop international students from going to American

universities—the traditional number one choice—however, it played an influential role in the foregrounding of emergent destinations (Choudaha & de Wit, 2014).

A succeeding globally significant event was the financial recession of 2007-2008, which largely characterised the second wave (2006-2013). As a result of the recession, many institutions of higher education around the world experienced drastic budget cuts. To cope, they intensified international student recruitment strategies. Generally speaking, universities were no longer able to provide substantial financial assistance to international students. At the same time, international student tuition began to not only rapidly increase, but also have a direct positive impact on the operating budgets of institutions of higher education (Choudaha & Li, 2012).

Events in the third wave (2013-2020) have been even more influential in expanding international students' destination choices. To specify, the election of Donald Trump and Britain's potential exit from the European Union have propagated a strong sentiment of anti-immigration, questionable safety, and limited work opportunities for immigrants (Najar & Saul, 2016). Therefore, Choudaha (2017) has envisioned that "alternative destinations like Canada and Australia with more welcoming immigration policies are likely to gain from an uncertain and unwelcoming environment" (p. 830). Moreover, there has been a decrease in the number of students from China—the largest sending source—due to economic reasons in the country. In Canada, immigration programs for college and university graduates have recently gone through positive changes at both the national and provincial level, thus facilitating international students' chances of gaining permanent status and finding meaningful employment post-graduation (Government of Canada, 2018).

Yet, research suggests that international students' choice of Canada is motivated by a number of complex factors. In spite of prospective immigration and employment opportunities, and of the role played by global events, for most international students at the university level, the choice of Canada is also influenced by the relative ease through which visas may be obtained (Chen, 2007). In comparison to the processes for obtaining a student visa of other countries, Canada's may be more accessible and faster than most, which renders international students' study plans more attainable in the first place. Beyond the legal level, the motivating factors differ for international students within the graduate level, and between graduate and undergraduate students.

For international students at the *research* graduate level, both the quality and reputation of Canadian education tend to be the greatest motivating factors. Contrastingly, for those at the *professional* graduate level (e.g. business, accounting, management), the lower cost of tuition and living expenses relative to those of other countries, such as the United States and United Kingdom, tend to be the greatest factor (Chen, 2006, 2008). However, for international students at the undergraduate level, the costs of education and living expenses do not tend to hold the same weight as they generally do for graduate students.

The choice by international students at the undergraduate level is normally more directly influenced by family preferences. This may be especially true for students from an East Asian background (Chen, 2008), who represent the vast majority of international students abroad. Familial influence is a factor because pursuing undergraduate education—for the first time *and* abroad, simultaneously—tends to be a decision made collaboratively (Tan, 2015), and implemented in stages. In fact, some

students are enrolled into bilingual secondary school education at an early age in their home countries by their parents with the objective of easing the linguistic and academic transition into an English-medium university later in life (Chen, 2008). However, other factors may also contribute significantly to the choice of Canada by students in all three groups distinguished above.

To begin with, perceptions of Canada as a safe, studious, welcoming, and multicultural environment are particularly important considering the current sociopolitical climate in the traditional destination countries. Additionally, perceptions of a positive relationship between Canadian degrees and future mobility in terms of employment opportunities in Canada or abroad are also relevant, especially for students in *professional* graduate programs. Canada's proximity to the United States is another relevant factor; and finally, as stated earlier, a favourable immigration prospect based on programs designed especially for international student graduates (Chen, 2006, 2007, 2008).

Student experiences

Broadly speaking, the experiences of multilingual international students have been discussed monolithically. However, when approached with a focus on the individual rather than on the group, the research literature suggests that the students' lived experiences are rather complex. As demonstrated in the following paragraphs, studies highlight that while students' needs and challenges often converge in certain dimensions, especially in the linguistic in relation to proficiency in the academic register of English, the *impact* that a common challenge has on a student's overall experience

can vary significantly from individual to individual. While the focus of research in applied linguistics in the Canadian context tends to be on the English language, findings from studies in other fields reveal that language is rarely the single influential factor. The following discussion seeks to demonstrate this by weaving together findings from Canadian studies.

For some students, the socio-academic experience is influenced extensively by the unfamiliar cultural norms of the new academic environment. In their study, Guo and Guo (2017) reported that a Chinese student encountered linguistic challenges when completing her assignments in a content-specific class. When receiving her assignment back with a grade lower than anticipated, the student expected her instructor to provide her feedback on both language and content because of her international student status. However, the student reported not receiving the feedback she hoped for. Another Chinese student reported feeling as though she was treated indifferently by her supervisor when he did not include her in his research project, and when he assigned her a book to read from the 1970s, an act which the student understood as showing a lack of care and consideration. These experiences of unmet expectations led both students to feel instructor and supervisor support were unavailable, and consequently, to develop feelings of frustration, dissatisfaction, and isolation.

Students in the study also reported experiencing language difficulties not only in relation to academic performance, but also to social experiences outside the classroom. In their attempts to form meaningful friendships with local students, multilingual international students ascribed the lack of success to low language proficiency, and sometimes to a divergence on the sociocultural dimension. International students

explained some common social activities associated with the local university student life, such as clubbing and drinking, were not part of their life-styles. As a result, socialisation with local students remained mostly a superficial experience for the international students.

From another angle, studying and living in a new language may contribute positively to personal growth. Enhancing communication skills, developing a sense of independence in learning, and improving self-confidence were common themes for the multilingual international students in Guo and Guo's (2017) study. The experience as first-time (international) university students also fostered the acquisition of personal skills—cooking and budgeting, for example—which were meaningful for the students considering their individual life trajectories and their transition to the unfamiliar Canadian sociocultural environment.

A common language or national background may not be an adequate criterion through which to generalise international student experience. Burnham (2017) explored the experiences of eleven female students from a Brazilian background, who spoke Portuguese as a first language, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, focusing on the students' perspectives on their post-arrival social and academic experiences. For some of the students, developing meaningful friendships with their classmates was challenging not primarily because of language proficiency, but of rather the age difference between them. Amanda, Julia, and Sophia, for instance, were older than their classmates by at least a 10-year difference, and reported most of their classmates were 19-21 years old. These students expressed they encountered an unamendable disconnection to local students, caused by different personal interests, educational backgrounds—Amanda

and Sophia previously working as dentists with graduate degrees in Brazil—and life experiences, as some of the Brazilian students had moved to Winnipeg with their spouses and children. Traditionally, age has been an underexplored aspect in research exploring multilingual international students' experiences in Canada, although Burnham's (2017) findings suggest it might be an important one to consider.

For some international students, the academic experience may be seen only as a process to a desired, long-term non-academic goal. The participants in Burnham's (2017) study positioned themselves not only as international students who were learning in a new language, but also as future immigrants to Canada. While all students held student visas at the time of the study, they referenced their post-graduation plans for employment and immigration, thus evoking and working toward an imagined and hoped-for identity. This observation contributes to a better understanding of the multilingual international student experience in Canada as it contextualises the varying degrees to which international students may invest in specific opportunities that they consider helpful for the attainment of their long-term goals and enactment of their anticipated identities. Additionally, this observation provides insight into how multilingual international students' perceived identities transcend those of simply students or "ESL speakers."

Unfamiliarity with teaching and learning practices of Canadian higher education can be the source of numerous adjustment challenges for multilingual international students. All students in Burnham's (2017) study reported feeling initially overwhelmed and unprepared for the academic workload of their courses, and unacquainted with the assessment methods, such as weekly tests, quizzes, and "small" assignments.

Adjustment challenges were exacerbated when coupled with insufficient linguistic proficiency. All students reporting studying English as a foreign language in Brazil prior to moving to Winnipeg; however, Burnham (2017) explained that the students were not sufficiently linguistically prepared.

In particular, the acquisition of discipline-specific language was the most significant challenge in the linguistic dimension for some of the students. One student, Luiza, explained she was familiar with the concepts of dentistry, but not in English: "the subjects [courses] were not very hard to me because I was already a dentist so nothing was new but to learn all the terminology in English was a mission" (p. 54). Similarly, Rita, who arrived in Winnipeg in 2015 and was completing a Master of Education at the time of the study, explained the acquisition of academic English was a continuous challenge for her: "academic language is very difficult. It seems until today like a third language I am learning even though it's English, but it is different" (p. 54). Therefore, although the students expected to experience an easier transition into academic studies in English because of familiarity with the subject matter, they quickly realised that their proficiency in English was not on par with that specifically of their academic disciplines.

Despite the opportunity to study in an English-medium setting, for some students the potential for language acquisition may be limited by contextual factors. In Burnham's (2017) study, a student named Mariana had envisioned that the academic classroom would be an ideal environment to practice her English. However, this affordance was unavailable as she had been placed into an international-cohort class. Under this circumstance, Mariana reported her international classmates, most being from China, not only stayed within their own ethnolinguistic groups to study and socialise, but also

spoke in Chinese among themselves in the classroom. Altogether, these factors did not meaningfully facilitate the improvement of her linguistic skills, and since no other international student from Brazil was present in the same cohort, she felt socially isolated from the rest of the class.

Insufficient language proficiency may interfere not only with academic, but also with social success, despite previous linguistic preparation. Liu (2011) provided valuable insight into this aspect of the multilingual international student experience by documenting her own trajectory as a graduate student from China at a Canadian university. Prior to her studies in Canada, Liu had passed three language proficiency examinations, two of which were the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). However, she later reported that the exams did not sufficiently prepare her for the dynamic use of English that she would later encounter in and outside the graduate classroom.

In her first three months of study in Canada, Liu reported she could not understand what her professors and peers discussed in class. Moreover, Liu explained that even though she had good ideas to share with the class, she could not express herself clearly and eloquently in English, and in comparison with her more proficient peers, she felt incompetent. As a result, Liu's self-esteem lowered, and as a coping mechanism, she opted to avoid speaking and interacting with her peers, which ultimately only worsened her overall experience, especially her social experiences, since self-isolation prevented her from making new friends. Yet, the lack of linguistic proficiency also meant her daily, non-academic tasks were at times very challenging to complete. To illustrate, Liu reported that she had difficulty in asking for and

understanding directions given to travel to places off campus, and at certain occasions, she could not figure out the correct buses to take.

The academic community which a multilingual international student seeks access to may present barriers for integration that exist in addition to those related to language proficiency. Morita (2004) explored the experiences of six multilingual international students from Japan at a large research-oriented university in western Canada. This study focused on classroom-related contextual factors, constructs, and experiences that often influence multilingual international students' experiences: membership, participation, acceptance, competency, and agency. In Morita's (2004) study, all of these were constructed around proficiency in the English language, which the Japanese students had insufficient levels of. As a consequence, the students' experiences were initially characterised by strong feelings of illegitimate or inferior membership within their classroom communities.

Findings from Morita's (2004) study support the need to recognise the inextricability of the different dimensions within the multilingual international student experience. To elaborate, in Lisa's experience, linguistic and psychological challenges were experienced in conjunction. Lisa, a 29-year-old who taught English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at a Japanese high school, and who was highly motivated to learn about language education and to access education research at the Canadian university, experienced ongoing linguistic challenges—as in difficulty with listening for comprehension and fear of making mistakes in English in front of others—which triggered feelings of anxiety, insecurity, and inferiority. As a result, the inability to meet the expectations around effective academic English in place in that classroom

community prevented Lisa from accessing opportunities for language improvement, networking, and from enjoying her new experience in Canada.

Morita's (2004) study is the only one to provide meaningful insight into the ways students' classroom experiences can affect their sense of identity. However, this insight was related to students' "immediate" identities, rather than also their long-term, hoped-for identities. To exemplify, Nanako, a 23-year-old graduate pursuing her master's degree for the first time, was silent in one of her classes because following the fast-paced discussions on new topics was a considerable challenge for her, and jumping into a discussion to express herself on a given topic was almost impossible. Also, Nanako felt frustrated at times when she could not understand the jokes or playful comments made by others. Her inability to participate in class led to her to feel as if her personality had been denied, which also resulted in feelings of irritation, frustration, and depression, as she stated in her personal journal. Another factor that contributed to Nanako's silence and passive participation stemmed from her status as the youngest in the class. Being the youngest influenced her to develop a feeling of a less knowledgeable and experienced member of the classroom community.

Oftentimes, identity conflict is not the result of language difference alone. Besides the unfamiliarity with the content and insufficient linguistic proficiency, Nanako reported feeling that in another course, her race, ethnicity, and institutional status as an international student—in other words, as an outsider—also played a part in her constant silence and isolation. Nanako's classmates, who were all undergraduate and Caucasian, did not invite her to participate in class discussions even though the discussions concerned *gender*-related issues in education in a course entitled "Gender

and Education," which consisted of female classmates and a female instructor. Therefore, her perceived identity of a passive and silent participant in class was the product of different intersecting contextual aspects, such as (complex) language, race, ethnicity, and age, which were in place in the classroom community which she hoped to be a part of.

When multilingual international students experience social disconnection from the local community, it is not uncommon for them to form emotionally stronger bonds with other international students. From her study exploring the socio-academic experiences of Mexican students at a large university in western Canada, Zappa-Hollman (2007) found that local Anglophone classmates (and instructors), whom international students often view not only as receptive, but also more knowledgeable, "may not always be as helpful as expected. Indeed, they may not even be available for support" (p. 225). The lack of peer support can thus lead international students to invest in relationships with other international students, from whom they may gain both academic and affective support in return. While some multilingual international students may be criticised for remaining with other international students or with co-nationals, the reasons for this may be rather complex.

While international students tend to find emotional and academic support among themselves, their perceptions of the extent to which they can help one another progress linguistically may differ significantly. Similar to the language-related experiences of the students in Burnham's (2017) study, Myles and Cheng (2003) found that not all international students perceive interactions with their international peers as linguistically beneficial due to the variation in language ability between them, particularly with respect

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to speaking. Myles and Cheng (2003) highlighted the experience of a graduate student from Japan who was asked by her peers to express herself in writing rather than speaking, because they could not comprehend her spoken English. Another experience unconducive to linguistic development occurs when international students from the same linguistic background resort to their first language in the presence of other international students who do not share that language (Burnham, 2017).

As for conversational interactions with Canadian students, both cultural and linguistic differences seem to influence the outcomes of this experience. Similarly to Guo and Guo's (2017) findings, Myles and Cheng (2003) explained that international students "feel like outsiders so they do not participate in social activities with host nationals" (p. 258). The feeling of exclusion is informed not only by discrepancies between the activities that typically constitute acceptable and enjoyable socialising for international and Canadian students, such as drinking and clubbing, but also from the inability to understand dynamic and contextual language, which includes jokes and cultural remarks. However, Myles and Cheng (2003) stressed that international students need to participate in the "host cultural milieu" (p. 258) so they can acquire the cultural knowledge and skills necessary for social integration.

For some international students, multiculturalism may be meaningfully experienced on the university campus, but not within the curriculum. More specifically, while the presence of international students has become more prevalent in the Canadian university classroom, making it more linguistically, culturally, and ethnically diverse, Myles and Cheng (2003) noted that for some international students, teaching and learning still proceeded from an ethnocentric perspective. In this sense,

instructional practices may become systemic barriers for international student integration in which local students' knowledge is rewarded but that of international students can remain excluded from teaching and learning. As Myles and Cheng (2003) have proposed, an internationalised curriculum can help to not only make international students feel less excluded, by fostering a personal connection between their lived experiences and the content presented, but also avoid "misunderstandings and potentially insulting remarks" (p. 252) in intercultural content, although internationalisation of the curriculum may also depend on how intercultural approaches are taken up in such curricula.

The academic experience in Canada can also foster the development of Western-based critical thinking in some international students. Alqudayri and Gounko (2018) explored the academic, social, and cultural challenges of ten female graduate students from Saudi Arabia at a university in British Columbia. For these female students, one specific challenge that brought the educational, social, and cultural dimensions together was that of studying in mixed-gender classrooms. In the past, these students had attended gender-segregated classes in Saudi Arabia, but once in Canada, this cultural norm was no longer in place, which was challenging for some participants at first. However, over time, this experience also led them to question, or reject, the continuity of the traditional social and cultural norms governing their interactional behaviour that "required women to behave in certain ways" (p. 1742). For some, this experience was transformative enough to the point that it motivated them to distance themselves from their national communities in the new environment because through these communities, "the same judgmental culture ha[d] moved from Saudi

Arabia to Canada" (p. 1752), which was conflicting and limiting for their newly-developed identities.

Despite the challenges, the authors emphasised the personal growth experienced by the students. The new sociocultural-academic experience afforded the multilingual international students not only the acquisition of "tools," such as critical thinking, but also the space in which these tools could be applied, thus supporting students' psychological development in regards to confidence, independence, responsibility, and agency. In turn, these new experiences allowed the students to feel closer to their true selves, which were previously left unacknowledged because of gender-specific cultural norms that affected the students' lives. Although these challenges and successes related directly to students' identities, they were not explicitly explored as such by the authors.

A point of departure

In this chapter, I reviewed the broader trends which have characterised the international student fluctuation toward Canadian universities, and findings of relevant empirical studies which have helped contextualise the multilingual international student experience in Canada. In closing, two points are worth mentioning.

First, the findings from empirical studies help make evident the multifaceted nature of the multilingual international student experience. While the focus in applied linguistics tends to be on the linguistic dimension of the student experience, the studies reviewed above, some of which come from other disciplinary orientations, such as psychology and education, suggest that other dimensions of a student's lived

experience may be just as important to examine. Language proficiency appears to be

central for a positive integration experience and a sense of overall satisfaction;

nevertheless, it is rarely the only factor. Furthermore, the review above also suggests

that some dimensions remain underexplored or excluded from knowledge of the

multilingual international student experience in the Canadian context. Dimensions such

as the professional and spiritual[4], when applicable, may also contribute to developing a

richer understanding of the multilingual international student experience.

Our present understanding of the multilingual international student experience

depends on bringing findings from numerous studies together. However, from a holistic

perspective, this is problematic because the investigations into students' experiences

were conducted in very different times and places. Consequently, understanding one

student's whole experience remains a necessity. Additionally, the focus on exploring

challenges, particularly those of a linguistic nature, prevails. Such focus on language

and difficulty continues to propagate a marked image of multilingual international

students as individuals with deficits and little relevant knowledge to contribute to their

communities in comparison to the experiences of their native-speaker domestic peers.

Second, there remains a need to more closely understand the ways by which

these experiences relate to students' identity development and enactment. Morita's

study (2004) brought this important experience-identity relationship to the surface within

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[4] It is worth noting that no universal definition for this construct exists in the research literature. However, Zinnbauer and Pargament (2005) propose that spirituality "has come to represent individuals' efforts at reaching a variety of sacred or existential goals in life, such as finding meaning, wholeness, inner potential, and interconnections with others. For example, spirituality is now being depicted as a search for universal truth and as a form of belief that relates the individual to the world and gives meaning and definition to existence. In contrast, religiousness is substantively associated with formal belief, group practice, and institutions. As such, it is often portrayed as peripheral to these existential functions" (pp. 24-25).

the boundaries of language proficiency-informed identities in the university classroom. Burnham (2017), on the other hand, highlighted students' views of themselves as potential immigrants to Canada post-graduation, which expands our understanding of the role played by experiences in higher education to students' short- and long-term plans as well as their imagined and hoped-for identities. However, all identity-related experiences have been explored around a *student* position. Therefore, an investigation into multilingual international students' beyond-student identities remains systematically overlooked. By neglecting other positions, roles, skills, and identity-related experiences of multilingual international students, we may continue to fall short of seeing them as whole individuals.

Chapter 3
Theoretical Frameworks

This chapter presents the study's theoretical architecture. This study brings together three major areas of investigation: language, identity, and second language learning and use. The theories selected to support the inquiry into each of these areas of investigation are aligned through one common aspect: they are all philosophically and epistemologically concerned with a *holistic* approach to understanding their object of study. First, the inquiry into language is framed through the theoretical lens of multilingualism, in which the whole linguistic repertoire of the individual is not only considered, but also celebrated. Second, the inquiry into identity is guided by a combination of insights stemming from post-structuralism, social psychology, and cultural psychology: post-structuralism proposes a holistic mode of viewing identity through a critical attention toward the (often unacknowledged) roles, positions, and experiences of the whole individual L2 user; while social and cultural psychology highlight social and cultural influences, respectively, over an individual's identity-related experiences. Third, the inquiry into second language learning and use is led by a sociocognitive approach which centrally suggests that cognition, body, and environment form an inextricable relationship that is indispensable to understanding second language acquisition (SLA) experiences. The final part of this chapter explores and challenges the dominant ways by which international and domestic students, and their experiences, are discussed and evaluated in the research literature today.

Multilingualism

Multilingualism is not a new phenomenon. When Walden (1909) described the beginnings of Western university education in antiquity, he emphasised the multilingual nature of the academic learning experience of young, foreign students—especially Romans—who had moved to Greece to study under the mentorship of Greek philosophers. But before and since then, multilingualism has been for many a natural aspect of everyday life, so much so that it had never received enough scholarly attention until relatively recent times. Today, research on multilingualism has intensified and amplified as a result of large-scale sociopolitical trends, such as globalisation, transnationalism, and technology, which have contributed to the current valorisation of multilingual practices (Aronin & Singleton, 2008; Dor, 2004; Edwards, 2004).

Multilingualism is commonly conceptualised at two levels. Cenoz (2013) explained that multilingualism can be viewed as "an ability of an individual" or as "the use of languages in society" (p. 5). However, individual and societal practices of multilingualism are often intertwined, as exemplified by the diverse linguistic tapestry of Canadian society where, on one hand, English and French are the official languages, co-existing broadly at the national level, while on the other, at least 200 other non-official languages were reported by Canadians as either their home language or mother tongue (Statistics Canada, 2011). Therefore, it may be inadequate to discuss one conceptual level without making reference to the other because increased individual use can then foster language contact at the societal level.

Yet, definitions of multilingualism, both at the individual and societal levels, are not uniform. This is not only because multilingualism is a complex phenomenon, but also because it is approached from various discipline-specific theoretical and

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methodological perspectives that seek to understand one or more particular features of multilingual practices at the individual or societal level, or both. More recently, some scholars have employed the term *plurilingual* in order to focus on multilingualism at the individual level (Coste & Simon, 2009; Flores, 2013; Moore & Gajo, 2009), although others may see multilingualism and plurilingualism, even at the individual level, as two separate approaches (Piccardo, 2013). This is because plurilingualism is concerned with a holistic and integrated development of a speaker's linguistic-cultural competency in which even partial knowledges are valued.

This study is concerned with multilingualism primarily at the individual level. As such, it considers an individual to be multilingual on the basis of varying levels of proficiency—rather than perfect mastery—in two or more languages that are used actively and contextually by the individual in accordance with the specific nature and needs of both the interlocutor and task at hand (Grosjean, 2010; Lüdi & Py, 2009; Skutnabb-Kangas & McCarty, 2008). Unlike a literal definition of multilingualism in which the prefix *multi* is used to indicate "multiple" languages with a focus on number but lacking distinction in proficiency, the definition above is more sensitive to multilingualism as a *situated* phenomenon occurring both socially and cognitively, but nevertheless contingent on differences in proficiency that exist within and from individual to individual.

Under this perspective, language proficiencies constitute a single, hybrid, and dynamic repertoire. Within the multilingual repertoire, "languages" are considered more broadly, rather than through a fixed, traditional Chomskyan definition: they are "not only varieties such as national languages, but also regional languages, minority languages, sign languages, and, in the broadest sense, dialects" (Franceschini, 2011, p. 344). The

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multilingual repertoire presents such flexibility to reflect the varieties (i.e. linguistic codes) "that a group adopts as a habitual way for communication. Dialects are included here as important identifying codes. Like other varieties, they are part of the multilingual repertoire" (Franceschini, 2011, p. 346). Multilingualism at the individual level is connected to an *emic* perspective toward language use—the language variety spoken is taken as important and linked to an individual's identity—and to discursive language use in social interaction among the speakers of that variety.

The multilingual repertoire

A multilingual framework considers the languages in the multilingual individual's repertoire to interact with one another. Research has shown that languages are not organised as separate, unrelated units, but are instead interwoven. The presence of linguistic features of one language in the production of another, especially in terms of vocabulary and syntax, has been extensively observed and discussed through the theoretical lenses of translanguaging, wherein languages are combined for the purpose of better communication and individual (multi)identity expression (García & Wei, 2013), and code-switching, wherein languages are alternated in conversation (Auer, 2013). For multilingual users of three languages, research demonstrates they may not only mix the three languages together, but also transfer specific morpho-syntactic rules of one language into the others (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011). The co-existence of these linguistic abilities is expected to foster a kind of communicative synergy rather than interference for the multilingual individual, expanding the communicative potential in interaction.

The linguistic proficiencies of the multilingual individual are also not static. As multilingual individuals navigate different social contexts through life, their proficiency in one language may change accordingly (Cenoz, 2013). In addition to the influence of the social context, language proficiency is also tied dynamically to communicative practices. As technology progresses, so does communication. An international student who moves to Canada alone from a non-Anglophone country will gain a new kind of social exposure to the English language, and may still communicate with family members in his or her first language, but likely through different media. Therefore, there is ample variance in the way by which one's multilingual repertoire can be developed or expanded—this process is not considered formulaic.

The notion of the multilingual individual as a competent language user has faced challenges related to legitimacy. When first studying multilingualism from a psycholinguistics perspective, researchers tended to measure the competence in a language by the multilingual individual against that of a monolingual native speaker (Cruz-Ferreira, 2010). Although this juxtaposition is now considered inadequate and problematic because the minds of the multilingual and monolingual individuals are not regarded as identical (Franceschini, 2011), it contributed to the early view of the multilingual individual as a deficient speaker who could never come close to perfection in their other languages when compared to the monolingual speaker (Cook, 1997). However, the multidisciplinary nature of current research into multilingualism has fostered a shift in the way we discuss proficiency, especially by highlighting the ways in which multilingualism may be socially and cognitively advantageous for the individual in

terms of enhanced pragmatic competence, working memory, and additional language

learning ability (Cenoz, 2008; Diamond, 2010; Higby, Kim, & Obler, 2013).

Multicompetence

Multilingualism has led to the notion of multicompetence. Cenoz (2013) defined

the term as "a complex type of competence, which is qualitatively different from the

competence of monolingual speakers of a language" (p. 10) because not only does the

same mind process more than one language, but the language in question in the

multilingual mind can also be influenced by the other languages frequently used (Cook,

2003; Jessner 2008). Multicompetence is a broadening of the construct of (monolingual)

communicative competence that aims to capture the wider range of communicative

experiences multilinguals have, not necessarily from a quantitative perspective of

having more than one language, but instead from the possibility of more diversity of use

in the available languages (Hall, Cheng, & Carlson, 2006). For Franceschini (2011),

multicompetence is:

> Part of the individual capacity of a person and develops in interaction with his or her social or
> educational environment. Multicompetent individuals make use of their linguistic knowledge
> when interacting within a range of linguistic settings, including both multilingual and monolingual
> situations. Multicompetence, or multilingual competence, is thus at the same time a tool and a
> state and relates to the complex, flexible, integrative, and adaptable behavior which multilingual
> individuals display. A multicompetent person is therefore an individual with knowledge of an
> extended and integrated linguistic repertoire who is able to use the appropriate linguistic variety
> for the appropriate occasion. (p. 351)

In addition to greater competence, multilingual language practices are also

connected to the individual's identity. When the socially-situated multilingual individual is

in interaction, the choice of language may be seen as more than an automatic response

to the linguistic demands of the communicative task at hand. From a multilingual identity perspective, language choice accounts for a conscious act of identity by the individual, surpassing the boundaries of communication as simply an exchange of information within a code mutually shared between speakers (Cenoz, 2013). This framework has been widely applied especially in post-structuralist research exploring the relationship between identity, multilingualism, and immigration, where identity in the new space must be re-constructed through negotiation and resistance in uneven relations of power (Norton, 1997; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). This framework subscribes to a perspective wherein language is inherently a sociocultural resource rather than a neutral linguistic code.

Plurilingualism in complement to multilingualism

Plurilingualism is a framework for an integrated linguistic-cultural knowledge. Despite its prominence in the European context, plurilingualism as a term and a framework remains under-used in the English-speaking academic environment (Piccardo, 2019). According to Piccardo (2019), plurilingualism is centrally concerned with capturing and representing "the dynamic and developing linguistic repertoire of an individual user/learner" (p. 184). The framework's explicit holistic and dynamic approach to conceptualising language competency, in which partial language competence and curiosity are valued, has been considered a defining and differentiating factor between multilingualism and plurilingualism. While multilingualism is argued to value the social co-existence of multiple languages and cultures *side by side* in a given space, plurilingualism views the intermixing of these as natural phenomena.

In harmony with this, plurilingualism is concerned with *holistic* development. When a plurilingual speaker's competency in one language increases, the whole individual is considered to have grown as a result, instead of only the competency in that target language within the speaker's linguistic repertoire—a conceptual view of languages as discrete, traditionally associated with multilingualism. Other foundational aspects of plurilingualism include the "monolingual" speaker as plurilingual, multidimensional development from language use (i.e. cognitive, emotional, linguistic, and cultural), individual agency, and the reciprocal modifying interaction between speaker and community (Piccardo, 2019).

Multilingualism has been adopted as theoretically aligned with the study's context and goals. This study is situated within an institutional context in Canada where English—and to a significantly lesser extent, French—is the official language of instruction. In the context of the academic classroom, English remains the sole language of instruction, with the exception of classes in which a foreign language is the focus of teaching and learning. This aspect suggests that while other languages may unofficially co-exist and also be valued within the institutional context, they do not normally intermix for official purposes. This contextual feature may be understood through the lens of multilingualism, whereby the linguistic diversity of a given community is sustained around one or more dominant languages.

At the institutional level, plurilingualism may complement multilingualism in discussions about the internationalisation of higher education. More specifically, if the goal of internationalisation is to make education more ethical and inclusive (Haigh, 2002), it is relevant to consider the ways in which plurilingualism may be more

theoretically responsive to this concern. Plurilingualism as a framework which envisions the academic learning environment as a site in which linguistic and cultural diversity may be not only cultivated, but also organically integrated into teaching and learning practices to reflect learners' experiential realities, may more meaningfully support institutional efforts for this view of internationalisation.

In addition, this study is concerned with the possibility of new lived experience in light of difference, or in other words, in light of novelty. One of the goals of this study is to understand the ways in which experiences of transnationals in one language—that is, in one "unit" within the interconnected multilingual individual's linguistic repertoire— relate specifically to new possibilities and challenges for the individual self in terms of identity in a *new* linguistic and cultural environment. This concern may be well situated within the dimension of multilingualism wherein a change in linguistic, sociocultural, and political landscapes may dynamically present certain affordances and constraints for the multilingual individual, particularly in consideration of how the other linguistic and cultural knowledges of the individual are perceived by the host community (Mady, 2012).

Concluding remarks

At the societal level, multilingualism as a theoretical framework has been employed to study the broader relationships between languages, language practices, and language communities within a single space. Multilingualism for societal-level research has fostered discussions around the importance of language policy for the long-term cultural and economic sustainability of a multilingual society (Banda; 2009, Lo

Bianco, 2010; Nieto, 1992) and the role formal language education can play in the integration and exclusion of minority or immigrant languages in society (García, 2011; Hélot & De Mejía, 2008; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2009). The comprehensive range of research under the umbrella of multilingualism suggests that it has become a useful and prominent theoretical framework to examine both societal and individual language use as situated language practices.

In closing, multilingualism offers a contextually sensitive view of language and language users. It recognises the importance of holistically understanding multilingual individuals' language competencies in their own right rather than in comparison with an imaginary monolingual native speaker. Furthermore, multilingualism can provide a practical lens through which to understand competence in a given language: competence is more relativised, and examined in relation to the needs expected for a particular, contextually-embedded communicative task, and not measured statically for language knowledge's own sake. Lastly, as a theoretical framework, multilingualism does not view each language separately in the multilingual repertoire. Instead, it considers that these languages form a single competence, thus further enhancing an individual's multicompetence.

Developing an identity (framework)

"Looking only at the L2 parts of the L2 user is inadequate; they are complete people, some of whose parts are played in one language or the other, some in both at once" (Cook, 2002, p. 275).

Identity from a post-structuralist perspective

This study attempts to understand the multilingual international student experience holistically. Yet, because experiences are embodied, it is imperative to also consider the (whole) self as doer and receiver of an experience—the self, not just the language, is at the centre of the experience. However obvious this proposition may seem, as Cook's (2002) aforementioned quote demonstrates, on one hand, research in applied linguistics has been concerned mostly with *L2-related* aspects of the multilingual individual's self, especially in terms of L2 proficiency and L2 community assimilation. In here, the multilingual individual self has been confined and defined exclusively by results of L2-to-L1 comparisons. On the other hand, research in education has predominantly discussed the international student experience in terms of acculturation, especially by focusing on the degree to which international students are able to overcome academic challenges and cultural barriers. Together, these perspectives have reinforced the notion of the *other* individual as someone in a perpetual state of deficit in comparison to a native speaker and a domestic student.

These orientations have offered important insights in regards to the multilingual international student experience. But solely, they are inadequate: they can reduce and fragment the whole individual to particles examined in isolation from the whole and from the surrounding context. Therefore, this study draws and builds upon a post-structuralist theoretical framework to conceptualising identity and identity-related experiences whose central thesis argues for a view of the self in which all subject positions, roles, and experiences come together to reflect the whole individual (Pavlenko, 2002). *Identity* is the umbrella term used in current post-structuralist-oriented research to encompass individual identity and identity-related experiences (Norton, 2010). Pavlenko and

Blackledge (2004) have re-defined identity as "a dynamic and shifting nexus of multiple subject positions, or identity options, such as mother, accountant, heterosexual, or Latina" (p. 35).

Yet, identity and identity development as psychological phenomena per se are not an area of study of post-structuralism. Notably, post-structuralist ways of discussing identity focus on what can be seen on the surface, especially through discourse. Post-structuralist theory frames language as a site of identity construction (Bourdieu, 1991; Davies & Harré, 1990; Pavlenko, 2002), but is less concerned with identity from an individual psychology stance, which would seek to explore identity-related constructs such as the individual's traits, motivations, goals, and emotions—whether real or perceived by the individual—that not only are, nonetheless, part of the individual, but can also interact with the experience of SLA (e.g. Dörnyei, 2003; Imai, 2010; MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). Therefore, a more comprehensive definition of the construct of identity for this study is adopted from Oyserman, Elmore, and Smith (2012), who explain that:

> *Identities* are the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is. Identities can be focused on the past—what used to be true of one, the present—what is true of one now, or the future—the person one expects or wishes to become, the person one feels obligated to try to become, or the person one fears one may become. Identities are orienting, they provide a meaning-making lens and focus one's attention on some but not other features of the immediate context. Together, identities make up one's *self-concept*—variously described as what comes to mind when one thinks of oneself, one's theory of one's personality, and what one believes is true of oneself. In addition to self-concepts people also know themselves in other ways: They have self-images and self-feelings, as well as images drawn from the other senses—a sense of what they sound like, what they feel like tactically, a sense of their bodies in motion. (p. 69, italics in original)

Nonetheless, a post-structuralist approach to identity *in the context of SLA* is more inclusive. As Pavlenko (2002) has identified, the L2 learner identity was always

seen as fixed: L2 learners were nothing but L2 learners, and in the case of English as a second language—the linguistic context in which most SLA research has been conducted—the whole individual, who was *also*, but not only, an L2 learner, was viewed firstly as an ESL learner. This identity label has been not only problematic, but also irremovable: even when learners achieve native-like proficiency, they still tend to be regarded as speakers of English as a second language (Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008). Conversely, the identity of the individual learning an L2, when viewed from a post-structuralist perspective, is recognised as being more complex and multidimensional—of which the L2 learner role is only one of many others. Under this perspective, the other roles of the L2 learner are not only acknowledged, but also regarded as interconnected, altogether constituting the whole individual.

Understood as a dynamic nexus of roles and positions, identity can then change across time and space. In her extensive case study with multilingual immigrants who were learning English in Canada, Norton Peirce (1995; Norton, 2000) highlighted the issues of legitimacy revolving around and stemming from insufficient proficiency in English faced by two focal participants—Martina and Eva—in their work environments. By drawing on a post-structuralist framework to understanding the complexities of additional language learning as a negotiated experience, Norton Peirce demonstrated the ways by which, over time, the two women resisted marginalisation by incorporating knowledge and experience from other roles and positions they had, such as those of being a mother, transnational, or multilingual, into their attempts to overcome English language-related challenges in the new sociocultural space. The participants' identities were more truly reflected when other important roles and positions they held were

brought into any experience that subjected them to an inferior position constructed around insufficient language proficiency, immigrant status, and gender.

Identity through social groups

This study's theoretical framework on identity is strengthened by incorporating insights from social psychology. In particular, within the study of social identity on the basis of group membership, seminar perspectives propose that people have a natural orientation toward self-categorisation into groups (Turner, 1999), thus seeing parts of their identities in alignment with that of their broader group while simultaneously maintaining boundaries with those from different groups (Tajfel, 1978). In a study exploring experiences of multilingual international students, considering identity also from a notion of group identity is more than relevant at least at two levels: first, students in higher education are divided into domestic and international groups. Second, while this study views students' language abilities through the lens of multilingualism, academic support services—and the academic community in general—still discuss language proficiency as being either native or non-native, for which remedial programs are then created accordingly (Marshall, 2010). These aspects of a linguistic (native or non-native) and national (domestic or foreign) nature may be only two of several that can divide university students into different groups (Morrison, Merrick, Higgs, & Le Métais, 2005).

These group-identifying aspects cannot be neglected. Since the experiences of multilingual international students in this study are socially situated within an institutional space which approaches students' memberships as such, identity must be understood

not only as individually but also collectively complex and negotiated. These group-specific aspects are normalised at all levels of policy, and become even more explicit to the community, including multilingual international students themselves, when one pays attention to the surrounding environment of the institution under consideration in this study. At a trivial level, posters on campus target services and events at international students, such as weekend trips, English tutoring, and banking services, to cite a few, but not at those who belong to the unmarked group. Less explicit mechanisms of social group division and identification include admission application forms, tuition fees, and international English language tests, which cannot be seen at the surface level, but nevertheless contribute to the construction of group difference among students.

Inevitably, membership to these two social groups is constructed differently. There are undeniably different sets of values ascribed to being a member of the native speaker or domestic student group, in comparison to being a member of the non-native speaker or international student group (Grayson, 2008). The separation of domestic and international students as two distinct groups is something I challenge in more detail in the latter part of this chapter. Still, based on different membership values, issues of legitimacy may arise both to the individual group member and the group itself within the larger community in which the group is embedded. Issues of legitimacy are related to the ways by which the group, and by extension, the individual member, is seen by members of the unmarked group (Ellermers, 2001; Tajfel, 1978; Turner, 1999).

Group membership has implications for exploring identity-related experiences. First, the central, defining status which characterises in-group membership of a target group may vary significantly in its nature and essence from group to group. At times,

this status may be something more easily achievable by out-group members, but at others, it may not. The latter is the case with native speakers: in-group membership is granted on the basis of native proficiency, and non-native speakers cannot easily "become" native speakers, though they can achieve native-like proficiency. However, the term still signals clearly that the member would be a non-native speaker through the suffix *-like*. Furthermore, this extended basis for membership—of possessing a near native level of proficiency—is still defined around conditions set by more legitimate members: native speaker members themselves (Clahsen & Felser, 2006; Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2000; Medgyes, 1992; White & Genesee, 1996). A post-structuralist approach to identity helps contextualise the tension between two different language-based groups by proposing that language and native language proficiency function as symbolic power in addition to means of communication (Bourdieu, 1991).

Second, groups constructed around a principle that is foreign to the local sociocultural environment may encounter more challenges, restrictions, and disadvantages (Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen, & Van Horn, 2002). International students must pay twice, three, or sometimes four times more than a domestic student does for the same education. Despite the elevated costs of tuition, international students are often restricted to both the number of hours which and the location where they can work. Other relevant factors are related to a potential lack of a foundational, established support system through family or friends (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Mori, 2000; Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002). While I later argue that there is much more similarity between a domestic and an international student if both are viewed as *university students*—a position they share in common regardless of national status—

arriving as foreign means arriving to a group whose identity has already been largely pre-defined for the new member as a result of interactions, tensions, and differences between the minority and the dominant group.

Recognising group differences can help understand members' behaviour. If joining the other, more advantageous group is not an easily attainable endeavour because of uncontrollable factors, members of the less advantageous group can act upon factors which they do have control over in order to re-position themselves (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel, 1981). More specifically, in the context of native and non-native, domestic and international groups, individuals can minimise, conceal, and reject aspects of their selves—they can modify their behaviour—that allude to membership in the less privileged group. In her study, Ortmeier-Hooper (2008) found that some multilingual undergraduate students who were also immigrants avoided speaking openly about their families to strangers because disclosing family-background information could "out" them as the non-native speakers of their group. Similarly, Lee (2009) found that multilingual international students would opt for silence when non-native proficiency evoked inferior images for them in academic classroom discussions. Insights into identity from a social psychology perspective can offer a more nuanced understanding of multilingual international students' individual and collective identity-related experiences.

Identity and culture

Lastly, identity is also informed by culture. The seminal work of Markus and Kitayama (1991) on construals of the self proposes that identity construction generally

occurs in alignment with the values of the cultural context in which individuals are

embedded. Although there can be some individual variation, Markus and Kitayama

employ two distinct cultural construals to reflect the ways whereby the individual's view

and presentation of the self may be influenced by the sociocultural environment.

Recognising the role of culture to one's identity construction illuminates our

understanding of the different values one ascribes to the self, the other, and the

relationship between the two, and of the extent to which identity conflict can result from

intercultural experiences in multilingual and multicultural spaces. Markus and Kitayama

(1998) emphasise the importance of the relationship between cultural values and the

sense of self by saying:

> From a cultural psychology perspective, the communities, societies, and cultural contexts in which people participate provide the interpretative frameworks—the theories, images, concepts, and narratives as well as the means, practices, and patterns of behavior—by which people make sense (i.e., construct meaning, coherence, and structure to their ongoing experience) and organize their actions. These frameworks are not applied after behavior has occurred. They are not folk beliefs that are separate from actual behavior. Instead, these frameworks are fully active in the constitution of this behavior; they are the means by which people behave and should be taken into account in an analysis of this behavior. The claim is that with respect to the psychological, the individual level often cannot be separated from the cultural level. A cultural psychology approach assumes that personality (most broadly defined as the qualities and characteristics of being a person) is completely interdependent with the meanings and practices of particular sociocultural contexts. People develop their personalities over time through their active participation in the various social worlds in which they engage. A cultural psychological perspective implies that there is no person without culture; there is only a biological entity. Being a person is a social and cultural achievement. (pp. 66-67)

As far as cultural influence is concerned, the self may be better understood

through two construals. The first is the independent, in which one's sense of self is

reflected through collectivism and is most meaningful when in a harmonious relationship

with others. The needs of the interconnected group are prioritised over the needs of the

individual—the self cannot exist apart from its cultural community (Bond, 1986). In

contrast, the second is the independent, in which one's sense of self is reflected through

independence and individual achievement in disconnection from the group, as shown in

figure 3.1. The needs of the individual take precedence over those of the group

(Sampson, 1988). The independent construal is discussed mostly in the context of non-

Western societies, particularly Asian societies (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis,

2018). These two cultural construals can help extend the influential role of culture into

holistically understanding individual behaviour, such as in how and when it may be

appropriate for one to express oneself, what one tends to expect from their society, and

the view of self in relation to others.
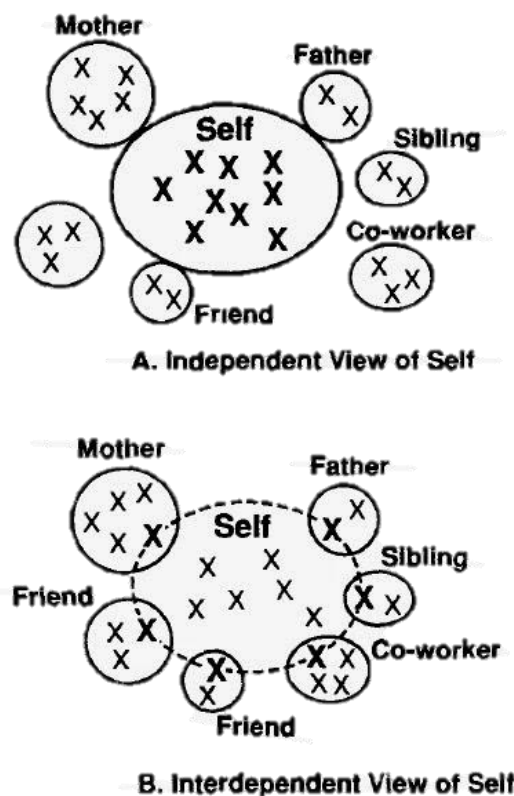
Figure 3.1. Conceptual representations of the self (A: Independent construal, B: Interdependent construal). Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 226, reprinted with permission.

Concluding remarks

The multilingual speaker's identity has become a key area of investigation in education and applied linguistics. In this study, identity is central to understanding the experiences of multilingual international students. Considering identity experiences as multidimensional and these dimensions as interconnected, this study is grounded in a multidisciplinary view of identity that includes insights from post-structuralism, social psychology, and cultural psychology. This study takes as its basis a theoretical position which recognises the complexity of the L2 user identity at the individual, social, and (inter-)cultural levels, and the interrelatedness of all these: experiences are not confined to only one level, but are rather dynamic, coming into contact with one another as students act from their multiple individual, social, and cultural roles and positions on a daily basis. However, it is worth mentioning that the insights from social and cultural psychology considered above do not account for the notion of power dynamics in the experiences of identity development of individuals. Insights from post-structuralism, as proposed previously, are helpful to understanding particular aspects of the students' experiences as forms of symbolic power which inform or interfere with some of their identity construction and enactment experiences.

SLA as a sociocognitive experience

A sociocognitive approach to learning postulates that learning is not necessarily characterised by pre-scheduled, pre-designed, and controlled processes. Rather, a sociocognitive approach views learning as a naturally-occurring experience stemming from humans' continuous and dynamic *adaptation* to the demands of the surrounding environment (Atkinson, 2011). As Atkinson put it, learning is understood to be the "default state of human affairs" (p. 143), thus challenging and parting with the traditional

notion of learning as primarily a classroom-based experience. Successful adaptation is linked to the fundamental role of cognition in providing specialised and contextualised input. The body is then inextricably connected to its social environment.

This approach to learning has its origins in social psychology. The central assumption of the early sociocognitive learning model is that, when in a new environment, an individual learns by observing the behaviour of successful local community members, and then modelling his or her behaviour accordingly (Zimmerman, 1989). A sociocognitive learning model is based on the intrinsic human need for survival. When an individual determines that the consequences of the behaviours of others are beneficial, rather than attempting to adapt and survive by risk, trial, and error, the new member models their behaviour through observation and imitation to match an existing, effective one (Bandura, 1986).

Second language acquisition as a phenomenon of study may be theorised from one out of several possible angles. A sociocognitive-oriented perspective of SLA borrows some concepts from the sociocognitive learning model in psychology—the most important concept being the role of the environment—while exploring learners' L2-focused or related experiences. Inevitably, an approach which recognises the environment as an integral component for understanding L2 experiences confronts traditional, exclusive definitions of cognition in SLA experiences (Myles, 2013). Considering the dynamic relationship between individual and environment, characteristic of a sociocognitive approach, the mind is not assumed to exist in a vacuum.

Cognition is then not structurally inalterable. Instead, it is seen as a flexible

property of the human mind, changing and adapting to reflect the environment as an act

of survival (Atkinson, 2011; Clark & Chalmers, 1998). In SLA, then, meaning-making in

the target language is both a social and cognitive experience as the mind and the

environment complement each other. The learner's cognitive processes are supported

and organised by ecosocial tools invented by humans—the internet, grammar books,

cell phones, for instance. The tools are tied to the sociocultural environment for which

they are created, thus facilitating socially-embedded learning activities that would be

otherwise difficult to succeed in without support extending from appropriate

mechanisms that can mediate cognition throughout the learning process (Shaffer &

Clinton, 2006).

In this approach, second language acquisition supports adaptation. SLA

becomes a multifaceted process meant to foster ecological alignment between the

individual learner and the unfamiliar environment. Atkinson (2011) argues that "the best

way to promote SLA is to place learners in situations where the L2 is necessary for

social action—where they need it to survive and prosper" (p. 144). For a multilingual

international student who acquired English later in life, these socially L2-related

situations could be the unfamiliar, often intimidating academic classroom, where the L2

user depends on developing academic proficiency in the L2 in order to successfully

meet the academic and social expectations of their L2-medium institution (e.g. Liu,

2011).

A sociocognitive approach also considers adaptation to be behavioural. Hence

the *mind-body-world* triad normally employed to capture the focus of a sociocognitive-

based approach to SLA. Nishino and Atkinson (2015) have exemplified this in the context of collaborative second language writing, where the bodies of the participants align in interaction within the immediate context of situation (i.e. a writing task) through "gesture, gaze, facial expression, head movement, nonlinguistic verbal expression (e.g., laughter, sharp intakes of breath), body positioning and posture" (p. 51). Such coordination through bodily communication for meaning-making is understood to facilitate the completion of the task at hand. Adaptation is then a socially and cooperatively embodied experience. Nishino and Atkinson (2015) explain that this kind of bodily alignment is a natural behavioural response to everyday situations:

> Examples of alignment abound in everyday life. Thus, people unconsciously adjust their speed, proximity, and direction when walking together, while drivers follow landmarks, lane markers, street signs, traffic signals, and other cars in the social action known as driving. Homes are likewise engineered to afford easy and efficient alignment: closets, bathrooms, kitchens, etc., are elaborately designed and organized to alleviate effortful, time-consuming problem-solving. In the linguistic domain, interlocutors employ turn-taking, repair strategies, intonation, backchanneling, gaze, head and body movements, gestures, and facial expressions to coordinate their conversation. (p. 39)

An approach which holds SLA to be an embodied experience has implications for L2 learning. First, learning and *being* are an integrated process: L2 users learn language by using it (Atkinson, 2011; Dewey, 1997; Zuengler & Miller, 2006). This is contrary to strictly cognitive-based models of SLA in which L2 acquisition is considered a purely individual, cognitive, and abstract process, discussed separately from socially-embedded L2 use (Lantolf, 2011; Ortega, 2011). Second, L2 learning is a progressive, scaffolded, and adaptive process mediated by the self, the environment, others, and objects—it is interactive by default (Swain & Deters, 2007). Lastly, L2 learning is a situated, meaningful participatory experience for the individual, and the context in which

L2 learning occurs can influence the experience in dynamic ways (Atkinson, 2011; Lave & Wenger, 1991). From a sociocognitive stance, "the brain is in the head, the head is in the body, the body is in the sociomaterial world, and the fundamental purpose of the brain from this viewpoint is to keep the body viable in that world" (Nishino & Atkinson, 2015, p. 52). Brain and environment—and, by extension, the body—are inextricably connected in L2 learning.

The mind-body-world relationship has been mostly examined in the context of instructed SLA. Churchill and colleagues (2010) highlighted the socially-embedded and embodied nature of L2 experiences by exploring the interactions between a tutor, tutee, and a grammar work-sheet in a cooperative effort to foster the acquisition of the present perfect in English by the tutee. The grammar work-sheet is argued to be central in fostering learning and mediating cognition for both tutor and tutee—it is an adaptive tool. Yet, the researchers demonstrate, through photographs, the role of bodily movement, especially gesture, in facilitating the acquisition of the grammatical feature by the tutee. From that, the researchers emphasise not only the social and participatory nature of L2 learning, but also the alignment between cognition, bodies, and environment in order to achieve a common language goal.

The relationship between mind, body, and world has also been strengthened through the work of Tanous (2014). In her work, Tanous worked with learners of French as an L2 at an informal setting called "The French Table"—a table in a campus coffee shop where learners of French gathered once a week to practice the language. One of Tanous' findings focuses on embodied learning through the use of gestures by the learners. While participating in socially situated interactions, the students communicated

meaning in the L2 by aligning their bodies to the sociomaterial set-up of the site where learning was taking place. Tanous (2014) argued for a mind-body-world relationship by explaining that "the meaning or purpose of each gesture was created by establishing it within its own environmental context" (p. 57). Her work helps robustify the notion that not only is L2 learning a social, participatory, and situated experience, but that the body also plays a central role in the experience—it responds to the task at hand in alignment to the particular environment in which it is embedded.

A sociocognitive approach to SLA is not employed in this study to *analyse* L2 acquisition—whether instructed or otherwise. This study is concerned with multilingual international students' *emic* perspectives toward learning and using the English language. Therefore, a sociocognitive approach is applied herein as a rubric to help guide the exploration and understanding of international students' *perspectives* of their L2-related experiences. Additionally, the approach-as-rubric is intended to help draw broader connections, based on the students' perspectives, between the English language, the whole embodied individual, and the sociomaterial environments which the students navigate, especially from the notion of adaptation for successful (academic) integration.

The role of the social context is foregrounded in this approach. However, as Atkinson (2011) has identified, even though a sociocognitive approach shares theoretical and methodological features with other approaches characteristic of the "social turn" in SLA, such as sociocultural theory, language socialisation, and an identity-focused approach, it is a newly proposed approach in itself, open to new ramifications by future research. One outcome of this research study may be that its

findings might contribute to broadening our understanding of SLA as a sociocognitive experience by holistically exploring the (embodied) multilingual international student experience.

International and domestic students: Lines blurring

In this section, I challenge the binary construction that has traditionally separated international and domestic students as two distinct groups. Over the last few decades, the student population on university campuses has become increasingly more diverse. The rapidly growing number of international students has been one major force fueling this phenomenon, as a response to intense internationalisation strategies (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Yet, domestic students now also constitute a significantly more diverse group of students as well, especially in urban universities (Birani & Lehmann, 2013; Wächter, 2003). Together, the two groups have changed the cultural landscape of the modern university campus. Consequently, continuing to dichotomously categorise university students as either discretely international or domestic students may no longer be adequate, especially in relation to support service provision (Jones, 2017), because the overall university student population has become more linguistically, ethnically, and culturally heterogeneous, and their needs more complex but also interblended.

Conventionally, a student is classified as international on the basis of country of origin (Jones, 2017). In this sense, any student holding a passport different from that of the host nation is an international student, whose move has been made for the purpose of study. While higher education policy development has been directly informed by this conceptual definition (Guo & Guo, 2017), the definition is, however, too simplistic. It has

failed to account for the nuance found at and within the intersection between the traditional international-domestic student theoretical divide, and projected an inaccurate image that portrays not only international and domestic students as having two remarkably disparate academic experiences, but also international students as a homogenised group whose academic experiences follow an overgeneralised and predictable pattern (Carroll, 2015).

Thus, the need for a more nuanced approach remains. The theoretical perspective through which I view and discuss the international student experience in this study pays closer attention to this gray area and contributes to a recent problematisation around the inadequacy of such an uncritical dichotomous classification. After all, this increasingly large group has significant—though underexplored—diversity within. Although the traditional definition of international student is still useful, particularly when it comes to understanding international students' financial obligations (Guo & Chase, 2011), in the following paragraphs I outline the main points which a more far-reaching theoretical perspective should seek to consider, supported by the findings of this study.

First, a domestic student is not a native speaker by default. The politics of the host environment can influence the definitions of both international and domestic student. In Canada, for instance, students who hold permanent residence status are considered domestic students. While studying as a domestic student lowers the tuition cost for a foreign-born student, the new status does not erase or diminish pre-existing individual factors, such as language proficiency and sociocultural adjustment. However, not all language-related services of an academic nature are targeted to students

registered as domestic students, but who might, nonetheless, still require linguistic support considering their linguistic profile. Such foreign-to-domestic students might be neglected when services are provided dichotomously.

In a similar vein, an international student is not necessarily a non-native speaker. As ongoing efforts are made to internationalise academic education, more international partnerships and cross-cultural exchanges between universities occur—a trend inclusive of universities which share the same language of instruction. Under this consideration, international students' difficulties in the host environment should not be assumed to result from insufficient language proficiency *alone*, but rather from or in conjunction with any other possible relevant factor, such as unfamiliar educational practices or unforeseen psychological challenges for the student (Sovic, 2008).

International students are likely to encounter more challenges in university. However, the majority of these challenges may also be faced by domestic students (Gale & Parker, 2014). Between international and domestic students, international students' national backgrounds account conspicuously for the challenges they may face (Jones, 2017). The national dimension includes and determines a student's degree of familiarity with: the host institution's educational system, the language of instruction, the host country's climate and health system, among other aspects. Yet, challenges stemming from any other dimension constituting the typical university student profile, such as a student's family background, personal life experience, and academic transition, are characteristic of both groups (Clark, 2005; Musoba, Collazo, & Placide, 2013), especially so for domestic students of an ethnically minoritised background (Carter, Locks, & Winkle-Wagner, 2013; Hernandez, 2002). International and domestic

students' needs and experiences only diverge more pronouncedly in the nationality dimension. In every other, the needs, challenges, and experiences are not exclusive to one group.

The academic experience engages the whole self. Therefore, language is only one factor correlated to a successful academic transition. This notion is echoed in Krause and Coates' words (2008), who state that the academic transition is taxing because it "often challenges existing views of the self and one's place in the world" (p. 500). In the new space, students encounter values and perspectives that may conflict with those they carry over into the unfamiliar experience from before. The academic environment can feel alien to students even within the same country, whether they are recent high school graduates or mature students (Grimshaw, 2011). Both international and domestic students may then benefit more from academic acculturation support if this service is developed on the basis of common academic skills rather than of students' national background—for instance, domestic or international—or linguistic background—native speaker or ESL (Jones, 2017).

Neglecting the parallelism between international and domestic students' experiences has led to stereotypes of deficit toward international students. In turn, stereotypes of deficit have contributed to the characterisation of international students as a marked group lacking knowledge of academic practices, such as critical thinking and plagiarism (Hanassab, 2006), when, on the contrary, best practices to foster this kind of knowledge also in domestic students have historically been an ongoing topic of discussion in the field of education (Batane, 2010; King, Wood, & Mines, 1990; Park, 2003). Without a more critical understanding of the challenges generally faced by

university students—both international and domestic—international students will continue to be surmised as problematic and disruptive (Leask, 2016), despite evidence that strongly suggests their educational issues are not unique or exclusive.

The international student experience tends to follow a trajectory circumscribed by the host university. From the very first day on the new campus, international and domestic students are streamed into diverging directions according to their academic status. This includes, but is not confined to, orientation-related events and language support programs. Although speakers of English as an additional language do constitute the majority of international students in English-medium universities (Tan, 2015), it remains unclear by how much such an early division of service can affect international students' sense of belonging and degree of integration in the host environment (Straker, 2016). International students' experiences may be better understood through a multifaceted framework integrative of personal, structural, and organisational factors. When discussing international students' experiences, it is important to also consider the structural factors that may contribute to the outcomes of their experiences, rather than only individual factors, such as language, age, or country of origin.

In brief, this study takes all these critical insights into consideration. These important points are embedded in the construction of this study from the recruitment of participants to the discussion of their experiences. By referring to the participants as international students, I also hope to demonstrate through this study that this broadly-applied institutional "label" needs to be further critically examined.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the theoretical construction of this study. By drawing on a number of concepts and insights from multidisciplinary sources, this study seeks to explore four major research areas simultaneously: language use, identity, second language acquisition, and international students as a growing, complex group. In analysing and discussing multilingual international students' experiences hereafter, language use is approached from a perspective of multilingualism, in which the ways multilingual speakers use language are tied to the diverse and dynamic communicative needs of the immediate task or interaction. As for identity in the context of SLA, this study views the L2 user as a whole individual, rather than only as an L2 user—a theoretical view informed by an emic and holistic approach to understanding identity, characteristic of a post-structuralist orientation to the study of SLA as socially situated experience. Yet, the identity-related experiences of L2 users are examined more comprehensively by integrating insights from social and cultural psychology into its exploration. Furthermore, this study is concerned with SLA as an embodied, situated, participatory, and adaptive experience. As such, it relies on a sociocognitive approach in which mind, body, and environment form an inextricable and indispensable relationship within the SLA experience. This chapter was concluded with a critical reflection around the need to consider international students from a more nuanced and inclusive point of view.

Chapter 4
Research Design

This chapter presents the methodological design of my qualitative inquiry into multilingual international students' experiences. Case study and portraiture were the approaches employed in order to understand lived experience in context. Leavy (2017) explained the suitability of qualitative approaches to the overall focus of qualitative research by saying:

> Qualitative approaches to research value depth of meaning and people's subjective experiences and their meaning-making processes. These approaches allow us to build a robust understanding of a topic, unpacking the meanings people ascribe to their lives—to activities, situations, circumstances, people, and objects. (p. 124)

This study took an *exploratory* orientation, characteristic of qualitative research: it approached a topic—multilingual international students' experiences—from a different perspective—that is, holistically—in order to help strengthen our understanding of the topic (Leavy, 2017). This chapter explains the theoretical foundation of the approaches employed, and describes the participants, the data collection and analysis processes undertaken in this study.

Methodological approaches

This study adopted two approaches to qualitative research: case study and portraiture. These approaches are explained below with a focus on their core concepts.

Case study

This study adopted a multi-unit single case study approach (Yin, 2017) to explore the lived experiences of four multilingual international students at a university in Canada. A single case study approach is suggested for researchers seeking to explore and understand a single thing or a single group of people in depth (Gerring, 2007; Yin, 2017). A multi-unit single case study allows the researcher to draw on a select number of units which can help represent the broader population of concern, and to "explore the case with the ability to analyse the data within the case analysis, between the case analyses and make a cross-case analysis" (Gustafsson, 2017, para. 7). Gustafsson (2017) explained that a single case study with multiple embedded units gives the researcher the ability to understand the case by analysing the embedded units in detail. In this study, four international students are the units comprising a multi-unit case study of the broader multilingual international student population.

When the focus is on individuals, the units are studied systematically in their natural setting. The case study approach recognises the indispensability of exploring the case in its real life context in order to understand the complex and situated nature of meaning-making in subjective experiences (Creswell, 2013). Normally, case study researchers draw on multiple sources of data in order to study and theorise about one or more aspects surrounding the units of study from different methodological perspectives (Duff, 2012; Yin, 2017). Considering the depth with which the units are studied, as well as the multiple sources of data employed, the case study researcher may often be able to provide a richly detailed explanation for the broader case under study, one which considers the interaction between the multiple contextual factors and the units explored.

Portraiture

Portraiture is a methodological approach to qualitative research pioneered by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997). Because of its ethnographic nature, portraiture may be found primarily in research in education, sociology, and anthropology. Some studies in applied linguistics have adopted the "framework" of "learner portraits" (Muramatsu, 2013; Prasad, 2014); however, such an approach to presenting multilingual learners and their experiences is fundamentally different from portraiture as a unified *method* designed not only for the presentation of findings, but also for data collection and analysis. Nevertheless, the epistemological orientations and methodological features of portraiture productively lend themselves to research in applied linguistics, some of which I discuss below.

One of the central features of the method is its deliberate ideological orientation to exploring and documenting success rather than failure. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) argue that, while failure should not be ignored or unproblematised, it should also not constitute the focus of research aimed at studying people. When focused on shortcomings, research can only (continue to) generate a distorted view of any object of study, and by extension, normalise the expectation for failure in research involving human subjects. Therefore, portraiture seeks to *first* find and document—through exploration, negotiation, and introspection—the goodness in the study participants in every stage of the research study. Considering multilingual international students have been often portrayed unfavourably in the research literature, this feature of the method becomes ethically important for this study.

Additionally, similarly to the case study approach, portraiture does not see research to be possible outside of its physical, social, and cultural contexts (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Therefore, as the portraitist weaves together the findings, they include detailed descriptions of the context in which the research took place. It is precisely for this reason that portraiture has been defined as the combination of art and science, in which the findings—produced through rigorous scientific research methods—are presented with an attention to the aesthetic, with the goal of not only painting a more accurate and representative portrayal of the actual setting and its participants, but of also producing research that is of an artistic nature in order to reach and speak to an audience that resides outside the walls of the academy.

In alignment with the epistemological orientation of the method, portraitists do not see themselves as "objective" researchers, disconnected from their study (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The portraitist is an integral part of the experience through his or her relationship with participants and presence at the research site, built and enhanced over time through continuous participation in the community. From this stance, some implications for research arise: participant experiences of interest to the researcher are viewed as collaboratively constructed, socially situated, and mutually negotiated. The researcher does not assign meaning to participant experiences without seeking the participants' understanding and interpretation of the same experience first. In other words, findings reflect both research and participant perspectives.

When analysing and producing the findings, the portraitist draws on portraiture's concept of *voice* (Chapman, 2005). This concept contextualises the multifaceted involvement of the researcher as a complex individual who brings into the research a

number of previous and current experiences, knowledges, biases, intentions, and concerns about the object of study. The "layers" of voice include: voice as autobiography: the portraitist's background in (dis)connection with the sociocultural context of the site and community studied; voice as preoccupation: the portrait's concerns that fuel the investigation; voice in dialogue: the co-creation of data; voice as witness: the portraitist's individual experience, often through observation; voice as interpretation: the search for meaning through careful analysis; and finally, voice discerning other voices: the creation of a final, powerful portrait (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

My roles of researcher and portraitist are informed by some of my personal and professional experiences. As Duff (2014) has argued, the qualitative researcher is a "kind of research instrument" throughout the processes of data collection and analysis, contextualising some of the research experience through their own subjectivity, thus holding "a certain amount of power" (p. 14) and influence as they interpret the data and decide on how and what findings to share. While I had not known or met any of the participants prior to this study, at the personal level I shared the (complex) experience of transnationalism with them. I believe that the experience of making sense of life from a transnational and translinguistic position helped me more easily connect with the participants and possibly better understand some of their experiences in Canada.

In relating their experiences to mine and vice-versa, I was careful in my attempt to present portraits that reflected some level of uniqueness, which as a researcher I could identity in each participant's experience, despite the convergence we found among ourselves. At the professional level, I have worked with multilingual international

and domestic students in higher education for more than a decade. As an instructor, I have learned about international students' challenges and successes through first-hand observation and discussion with students over the years. This experience has been defining for my teaching practice, and has informed some of the concerns and hopes I bring into this research now in the position of researcher.

Moreover, through positions I held designed to support multilingual internationals students, I became increasingly aware of the complexity involved in achieving academic success. Based my own professional experience, achievement of academic success is predicated on multidimensional progress, such as social, psychological, financial, among other areas. However, from engaging in reflection with colleagues or with the research literature, I often learned that the idea of achieving such progress was inadequately tied to a perception that linguistic improvement on the part of multilingual international students would singularly lead to academic success. Overall, my awareness of this prevailing (mis)perception, and my concerns about the consequences it holds for multilingual international students, have informed some of the ways I have approached the accounts shared by all participants in this research.

Research setting

Pond University[5] was the research setting for this study for two reasons. First, Pond University is known for its multilingual and multicultural campus and student population. Since this study is concerned with multilingualism and international students, the research setting afforded me, as the researcher, ease of access to a student population

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[5] "Pond University" is the pseudonym for the institution where the research was carried out.

in which both could be found. Second, Pond University was a convenient site for both researcher and participants. The participants were often on campus attending classes during the week, some of them even living on campus residences. This made it easier for me to schedule and meet with participants. There were a number of places on campus where the interviews could be conducted, such as coffee shops and study rooms, and the campus was also easily accessible by subway.

Pond University is a large, research-oriented university with two campuses located in Ontario. One campus is known for its bilingual profile, offering courses in French and English. I will refer to this campus as "Crandall" hereafter. At the time of this study, university enrollment included over 40,000 undergraduate students and approximately 4,000 graduate students, of whom approximately 6,000 were international from more than 150 countries, and approximately 7,000 faculty and staff.

Participants

The participants in the study are categorised as focal and non-focal. Non-focal participants were those whose one-time participation, through an online survey, helped me understand some of the academic culture of the university and the interactive aspect of the multilingual international student from a position other than that of an international student. On the other hand, focal participants were those who participated throughout the entire research period (i.e. four months) and whose experiences I was interested in exploring in detail.

International students who were the focal participants of the study were first identified within the non-focal participant pool of international students. However, this

pool is not presented in the first table below since the pool was formed for the purpose of participant recruitment only (through a survey). The pools presented in table one represent the actual participants of this research. The focal participants were international students who opted to participate fully in the study by indicating their interest on the online recruitment survey. They were accepted into the study on the basis of being (1) an international student with a study permit, and (2) multilingual speakers of two or more languages, with English being an additional language. Information about the participants is provided in tables one and two below. Pseudonyms are used for all participants.

Table 1

Number of Focal and Non-focal Participants

Role	International students	Domestic students	Faculty	Support Staff
Focal	4			
Non-Focal		17	14	7

With the exception of Sabrina, all focal participants were undergraduate students. I decided to include Sabrina in the study for a few reasons. First, since she was a *graduate* student, I was interested in learning about how her experiences differed (or not) from those of the other participants. Originally, my objective was to have both undergraduate and graduate students as focal participants because I hoped to explore and represent experiences at both academic levels. After all, multilingual international students at Pond University are present across all academic levels. Second, Sabrina

would be the only participant whose first language was Portuguese. Third, she would

also be the only participant from a field other than the liberal arts.

Table 2

Focal Participants[6]

Participant	Country of origin	Age	Gender	Program of study	Time at Pond as of January/2019	Multilingual repertoire[7]
Claire Champs	France	19	Female	BA in International studies	4 months	French, English, Spanish, German, Latin
Pablo Ferrera	Colombia	22	Male	BA in Criminology	3 and a half years	Spanish, English, Portuguese, French, ASL
Sabrina Franco	Brazil	31	Female	Master of Business Administration (MBA)	4 months	Portuguese, English, French, Italian, Spanish
Seth Wang	Macau, China	24	Male	BA in Linguistics	4 months	Cantonese, English, Mandarin, Japanese

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[6] Each focal participant is introduced in more detail in their individual chapter.
[7] The languages in each of the focal participants' multilingual repertoires are organised in descending order from the strongest language first, as identified by the participants themselves.

Informed consent was obtained from both focal and non-focal participants through a consent form pre-approved by the university's research ethics office. A copy of the consent form is provided in appendix A. Participation was voluntary and participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the study by masking any personal information collected, analysed, or presented that could potentially identify the participants. All focal-participants have been assigned pseudonyms, while information from non-focal participants was collected anonymously (more detail is provided in the data collection section below).

Recruitment and sampling

The recruitment of participants consisted of (1) an invitation distributed by email to international students, domestic students, faculty, and support staff, and (2) an invitation posted on an international students-related Facebook group associated with Pond University. Considering the large number of students, faculty, and support staff at Pond University, an invitation circulated electronically was considered the most effective recruitment strategy. Recruitment began in December, once the study had received ethics approval by the research office at Pond University.

In this study, the multilingual international student experience is explored as a collaborative phenomenon. In this sense, I approach student experience as something informed by not only their individually-initiated and intrapersonal experiences, such as thinking and feeling, but also their experiences occurring in or resulting from social interaction with members from different groups of the academic community. Thus, a

more holistic understanding of the multilingual international student experience in this study may be acquired through an exploration that includes, at least to some extent, insights from others who are also part of the academic community at Pond University.

Therefore, in addition to exploring the perspectives of the focal participants in depth through a case study approach, I sought to invite the perspectives of members of the broader academic community with whom international students often interact. These insights were sought for the purpose of understanding, learning about, and expanding the range of voices, experiences, and perspectives that influence the multilingual international student experience at Pond University at the broader level. I categorise these participants as non-focal participants, whose insights helped contextualise the academic community at Pond from perspectives other than those by multilingual international students themselves. There was no limit to the sample size of non-focal participants. My purpose was to draw on data gathered from non-focal participants to understand the community through individual experience. With this aim, I accepted all non-focal participants willing to participate in order to diversify the range of institutional perspectives in this study.

As for focal participants, I administered an online survey to recruit multilingual international students, which I describe in detail below. Six multilingual international students out of all those who completed the online survey indicated interest in participating fully in the study. However, one of them never responded to my messages requesting to meet to discuss the level of participation expected. One other student,

Bruna[8], concluded that she could not commit to the full study after we had a chance to meet in person and discuss participation at length.

Invitation sent by email

The first part of the recruitment process entailed the compilation of email addresses for faculty and support staff. I included both full- and part-time faculty in order to increase the pool of participants from this group and to potentially include more diverse perspectives. The email message—available in appendix B—contained a link to an electronic survey along with an explanation and purpose of the study. The recruitment of support staff followed a similar process. However, in an attempt to maintain confidentiality, I do not provide the specific names of each support service unit, as officially listed on the web site. However, the list of services generally included advising, writing, and career centres, in addition to counselling, accessibility, language, and library services.

As for the recruitment of international students, I searched "student clubs" on the university's site. Pond University has a web page dedicated to student clubs and organisations, which total about 350. On this page, I searched "international" and the results showed 60 organisations listed alphabetically. I read the short, publicly available description of each student organisation and only accessed those pages whose descriptions offered content related to international students—some of them had an international focus, but did not relate to international students (e.g. volunteering abroad). In the end, I found 12 relevant student organisations, which ranged from more

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[8] Pseudonym.

general, such as "international students at Pond University," to more group-specific, such as "Chinese students at Pond University."[9] I accessed the directory of each relevant organisation and contacted the manager of the group directly. In my message to them, I requested that my invitation be forwarded to their group members by email or shared on the main medium of communication in place for members of the group, in case the organisation held a Facebook or Twitter page.

Lastly, the recruitment of domestic students followed a similar method to that of international students. Considering its large size, Pond University is divided into smaller "colleges." According to Pond's website, the colleges are intended to make the undergraduate student experience at Pond less intimidating, more intimate and community-like. I contacted the student office of each college and requested that my invitation be circulated among the college members. However, these colleges are open to undergraduate students only, which resulted in my invitation being sent to undergraduate students exclusively.

Invitation posted on Facebook

At the time of the study, there was a Facebook group created by and for international students at Pond University. My request to join the group was accepted by the group manager in December of 2018. The group was used mainly to advertise social and cultural events of interest to international students. Occasionally, there were individual posts by newly admitted international students who sought information and advice from senior members of the group. I posted the same invitation I sent to student

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[9] This is not an actual name. I only use it to exemplify the level of specificity.

clubs and associations on the group newsfeed. The message contained information about the study and a link to the survey.

Data collection methods

To holistically explore the multilingual international student experience, I drew on the following five data collection methods: online surveys, interviews, observations, documents, and photographs. Data were collected from December of 2018 to April of 2019. These multiple sources were important for the practice of triangulation (Creswell, 2013), through which I was able to approach the analysis of data from distinct methodological perspectives in order to strengthen the process and, consequently, the findings.

Online survey

For this study, I chose to use online surveys on the basis of convenience as I hoped to reach a large number of individuals. Wyatt (2000) identified a few advantages to opting for online surveys in research, all of which were directly applicable to this study: online surveys are more inclusive, they can include participants who are not physically present in the research setting; they are cost-effective, often free; the data are "captured directly in electronic format, making analysis faster and cheaper" (p. 427); they are interactive, allowing the researcher to check the responses easily and quickly; they allow material related to the study to be included onto the survey interface, such as external links; and allow the researcher to modify any of its content with ease, should the need arise.

I designed three different online surveys—one for each non-focal participant group: domestic students, faculty, and support staff. I was interested in accessing information about the multilingual international student experience from the perspectives of three different groups who all interact with multilingual international students, but with some degree of variation in terms of physical context (e.g. classroom, office, online, coffee shop), frequency (e.g. daily, weekly, beginning of term), interaction (e.g. in English, in groups, one-on-one), and relationship (e.g. instructor, classmate, friend, staff). A fourth survey was developed for international students; however, it was only used for the purpose of recruitment rather than data collection. The information international students provided on the form was used to ensure the students' profiles were adequate for their participation as focal participants should they have indicated their desire to do so. Therefore, this data was only used for the purpose of filtering participants. All surveys are provided in appendices C, D, E, and F.

The surveys contained both closed- and open-response questions. Close-response questions were intended to capture participants' academic and demographic information, such as the length of their time at Pond University up to the time of the study, their faculty or department's association, and other similar information which varied from group to group, consisting of check boxes and limited-choice items on a drop-down menu. On the other hand, open-response questions were intended to explore an area of concern more closely. As Brown, J. D. (2009) has pointed out, open-response questions can enrich the data "by not restricting the respondents to a set of answers but asking them to express their own ideas more fully or inviting them to

elaborate or explain their answers to closed-response items in their own words" (p. 202).

Open-response questions varied in scope from group to group, but together sought to explore participants' opinions, experiences, and concerns. As Brown, J. D. (2009) proposed, open-response questions can provide "striking examples and illustrative quotes, so they offer a far greater richness, adding more depth and color to the data" (p. 205). In total, the surveys contained a combination of 15-20 close- and open-response questions as I expected that participants might lose interest and focus if completing an excessively long survey in front of the computer.

All online surveys were anonymous, for three reasons. First, concerns regarding confidentiality can often influence one's motivation for completing a survey, and accordingly, I hoped that by not requiring participants to share their personal, identifiable information, such as first and last names, and email addresses, would *encourage* them to participate (Wyatt, 2000). Second, there has been a growing concern toward the extent to which identifiable information gathered through online surveys can be realistically kept secure and confidential (Atzori, Bonchi, Giannotti, & Pedresch, 2008; Sun, Wang, Li, & Pei, 2011). Lastly, I was more interested in the *content* of the responses rather than the identity of the individual completing them, since I already had separate online surveys for members of each academic group as a measure to keep responses from intermixing.

In developing the questions, I prioritised the concerns guiding this research. Generally speaking, these concerns related to the topics of academics, culture, social

interaction, psychological experiences, and language. I drew on findings and gaps from the studies included in the literature review to help me narrow down the questions to a point in which they could be usefully applied to the context of Pond University. My intention was not to generalise or compare the open responses from members of each group, but rather to learn and develop a sense of the personal experience each individual participant had toward the topics included in the survey. I adopted the following guidelines for developing open-response questions in research in applied linguistics, proposed by Brown (1997):

- Avoid overly long questions;
- Avoid superfluous information;
- Address only one concern in each question;
- Avoid negative sentences;
- Avoid putting a group in a better or worse position;
- Pilot your questionnaire.

Once the survey questions were designed, I organised all close- and open-response questions into a list, and shared them with a researcher from the field of applied linguistics whom I knew previously for input. In person, we discussed the questions, and I made notes to myself that I could later use to help me improve the scope and clarity of each question under consideration. Once this process was complete, I transferred the questions from paper to digital form on *Google Forms*, and saved each survey with a different title and link. Each survey link was then included in its corresponding email invitation to its respective academic group.

The surveys also provided participants an optional space in which to type any comments they felt were relevant, but not addressed in the survey. Surveys designed for non-focal participants in the multilingual international student group were primarily demographic in nature, and provided participants an optional field in which they could indicate their interest in participating fully in the study as focal participants by typing in their email address. I contacted all non-focal participants who supplied this information.

Interviews

In this study, the interviews were semi-structured in format because while I had a well-defined idea of the range of topics I hoped to address, I designed the questions specifically as an *invitation* to participants so we could progress into a dynamic conversation thereafter. Richards (2009) defined a semi-structured interview as "one where the interviewer has a clear picture of the topics that need to be covered (and perhaps even a preferred order for these) but is prepared to allow the interview to develop in unexpected directions where these open up important new areas" (p. 186).

While planning my interviews, I created a list of guiding questions that could help me begin to access the participants' perspectives about topics I deemed important for the study. A sample interview schedule is provided in appendix G. Topics included, but were not limited to, academics (e.g. peer interaction, curriculum, teaching and learning, workload), social life (e.g. campus events, networking, friendships), culture (e.g. Canadian culture, cuisine, travelling), multilingualism (e.g. language learning, successes and challenges, language attitudes), emotions (e.g. homesickness, psychological challenges, mental health), spirituality and religion, finances, and work. I met with the

participants at different locations mostly on campus, such as study rooms, student

lounges, and coffee shops, but on two occasions it was more convenient to meet at

coffee shops downtown.

I recorded four one-on-one interviews with each participant—one interview

monthly. Recording interviews in the intervals of one month provided me enough time to

transcribe and analyse the interview, and reflect on its content in preparation for the

following one. Initially, I expected to have to record several interviews with each

participant. However, over time, each interview gradually afforded me sufficient

meaningful information to develop a comprehensive understanding of each participant's

experience at four interviews per participant. In total, 16 interviews were recorded. Each

interview lasted one hour on average. One hour was an appropriate amount of time

considering the participants' busy schedules during the week. I recorded all interviews

through the *Voice Memos* application on my phone, and logged the location and time of

each interview into a digital list I created.

Observations

In this study, I was interested in learning about participants' experiences in

context: I wanted to be able to understand, imagine, and document the physical, social,

and cultural aspects of the places which participants referred to while sharing their

experiences in the interviews. For instance, when participants described the physical

arrangement of a particular place on campus or how that place made them feel, I

wanted to be able to visualise these situated references by personally paying close

attention to the characteristics of the place. Through observations, I wanted to connect account to place.

I developed a general field note template based on the observation guidelines proposed by Merriam (1998), available in appendix H. Although Merriam's guidelines focus on three categories, I did not consider the second one below in my template as I was not conducting *participant* observations:

- The physical environment: observing and documenting the surrounding context, and later providing a description of it;
- The participants: observing and documenting the participants in detail;
- The activities and interactions in the physical environment: "the frequency and duration of those activities/interactions and other subtle factors, such as informal, unplanned activities, symbolic meanings, nonverbal communication, physical clues, and what should happen that has not happened" (as cited in Kawulich, 2005, para. 43).

My methodological approach to observing the setting may be better seen as that of a *complete observer*. Kawulich (2005) characterised this approach as one normally unobtrusive and unknown to those in the setting. Theoretically, I did not want to participate in the setting, in an attempt to avoid altering the natural flow of activity occurring in it. But of course, even by not intentionally participating, as in verbally interacting or engaging with those around me, my presence still altered the context in some way or another; after all, I was probably noticed by the people who walked behind me down the hallways, or as I sat down—taking up space—and as I stood up, or as I made eye contact with people. In other words: I was probably noticed because of my embodied presence.

First, I observed the places which the participants mentioned in their interviews. These were specific places, such as the library or the food court, as I hoped to achieve a sense of the place, and its physical arrangement and social activity. Then, I observed activities and interactions in places and spaces I walked through every time I came to campus, but never previously paid attention to, such as the path I would take to get to a classroom for a meeting or a coffee shop to meet with a participant. From the interviews, I focused on specific places, while from my own activity on campus, I focused on seemingly ordinary places.

In preparation to conduct the observations, I read the field note template in advance so I could be better aware of what to examine. I did not have a pre-set amount of time for the observations as I was not scanning for a particular person or event. My objective was rather to get a general sense of the place I was in. On average, I spent 30 minutes in each place under consideration. Some places I observed more than once as they were brought up by more than one participant in their interviews. These places on campus included, but were not restricted to, the cafeterias, entrances, libraries, restaurants, hallways, and open study spaces. Once I left a place, I would find a quiet space on campus to complete a new field note on my computer. Completing each field note took about half an hour, and I completed 20 observation field notes in total.

The observations helped me *situate* participants' accounts of their experiences—though from my own embodied perspective—by placing myself in that location. As Cowle (2009) explained, observations afford the researcher a different kind of exposure to data collection: "the sights and sounds, the smells, even the temperature of a place will leave a visceral impression on the researcher long after she leaves. For this reason

alone it is worthwhile doing observation" (p. 168). I drew on non-participant observations as a method to specifically understand the *place*: its cultural, social, and spatial construction. As a portraiture and case study researcher, I knew that part of my task was to document and describe the setting (Creswell, 2013; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997); therefore, observations could help facilitate the task and systematise the process.

Documents

Oftentimes, researching second language teaching and learning experiences requires the researcher to consider and analyse a wide range of documents, such as course syllabus, school curricula, teachers' lesson plans, students' assignments, and other personal, documented data produced by language teachers or learners, like diaries or letters (Bailey, 1991; Numrich, 1996; Pavlenko, 2007; Yang, 2013). Indeed, of working with documents in qualitative research, Coffey (2013) explained that they help "understand personal lives and experiences, and to place biography within and in relation to social context" (p. 369).

In this study, I drew on the campus newspapers to gain some insight into the student experience at Pond University.[10] Of course, the student newspapers do not necessarily represent the perspectives and opinions of the entire student population at the university. Nevertheless, reviewing the newspapers afforded me the opportunity to learn about some of the concerns, views, and issues from a perspective other than my own, since the campus newspaper was written by the *students* of Pond University.

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[10] Scanned pages of the newspapers are excluded from the appendices to help avoid direct identification of the institution.

Drawing on the student newspapers as an additional source of data was useful as these documents covered a number of topics related to the domestic and international student experience and had an established reputation in the community. I will name the main campus newspaper as "The Word."

During the winter term, I collected and read 7 paper-based issues of The Word. I picked up a copy of the newspaper every time I was on campus and when copies were still available. I had no other pattern for collecting the newspapers. After reading 7 issues of The Word, I felt I had gained sufficient understanding of the mechanics of the newspaper: style, purpose, language, and audience. Additionally, the bilingual campus of Pond University had its own student newspaper as well, written in English and French, which I will call "Le Mot." Upon reading Le Mot, I felt that it was more student-centered than The Word because it was written completely by and for the students at *the bilingual campus* of Pond University. The news pieces were more situated in the sense that they discussed concerns and issues related to student life at the bilingual campus only.

Unfortunately, however, I only came to discover that this separate newspaper existed in the last month of data collection. Therefore, I was only able to obtain one issue of it. I tried to access the newspaper's website for earlier issues; however, the website had been taken off the internet every time I checked, the last time being April 22, 2019. The exploration focused on Crandall which relied specifically on the student newspaper for contextual insight may have been less enriched as a result, in comparison to the insight gained about the main campus' community from analysing The Word. The newspapers which I did have access to were drawn upon in order to

understand the ways by which some of the student population interpreted and discussed events connected to Pond's community or those of a national or international scale.

Photographs

Photography has long been associated with qualitative research, and its use continues to grow today (Byrne, Daykin, & Coad, 2016). Photographs have been commonly used as an elicitation tool—fostering discussion between researcher and participant—or as a collection tool, through which researcher and participant can visually document and represent the phenomenon under study (Epstein, Stevens, McKeever, & Baruchel, 2006). Over the last two decades, with the popularity of digital cameras, researchers have increasingly drawn on photographs provided by participants in order to gain insight into participants' life experiences. Allen (2012) defined participant photography as "a visual method in which research participants are encouraged to visually document their social landscapes through photography" (p. 443).

Leavy (2017) argued that participant-driven photography can be a participatory and inclusive research practice. She explained that asking participants to create or share data in the form of photographs can invite the participants to be co-researchers as they collect data on their own which can be later included in the research study. Furthermore, Leavy (2017) argued that this experience can be empowering for the participants as they are in control of deciding what and how experiences are documented and revealed to the researcher. Participant-driven photography provides

the researcher an opportunity to visualise, and thus understand, something from a different perspective (e.g. Tavares, 2020).

I was drawn to include photography in this study for two reasons. First, I was interested to learn what aspects—such as moments, feelings, interests—of the multilingual international student experience could be photographable and so visualised beyond a purely textual representation. However, and second, for those aspects that could be documented through image, I wanted them to be documented from the perspective of the experiencer rather than my own. This choice was aimed at not only enhancing participant engagement in the research experience, but also at developing a sense of individual authenticity. By asking participants to share their own photographs, they were (re-)presenting a personal experience from a unique, personal perspective.

When working with participant-driven photography, the researcher normally provides the participants a set of guidelines. In my study, I intentionally provided the participants very broad directions. As Allen (2012) proposed, providing too much direction can impose an idea of what is more important to be captured—participants may then take and share photographs primarily to meet the expectations communicated by the researcher. Therefore, my instructions were as follow: *I would like you to share pictures of anything that could help me visually understand your personal experience as a multilingual international student.*

Such broad guidelines meant that participants often felt they needed to check with me during the interviews on whether the photos they had gathered were appropriate for the study. I suggested to participants that they take and share pictures

as if they were creating a photo gallery of their experiences on Instagram. Because the decision of what to share was solely the participants', I also accepted pictures taken prior to the beginning of the research study. For instance, pictures taken during the fall term or of experiences which took place beyond the academic campus were acceptable because I did not want participants to be limited to photographs from experiences in the winter term only.

One major concern in using participant-taken photos is that of maintaining confidentiality (Leavy, 2017). Photographs showing participant faces may compromise the participant's right to privacy and to remain unidentified once the photographs are included in published material. For this reason, I specifically asked participants to only share photos in which they or other individuals were not present. I only accepted photos that met the requirement of presenting things and places, but not people. While this may have limited participants' freedom to self-express, my concern for confidentiality was greater. As for the number of photos, I asked participants to share one picture weekly for a period of 16 weeks as the interviews were conducted once every four weeks. I wanted to be able to discuss and ask questions about the pictures during the interviews when necessary.[11] By the end of the study, the participants had shared more pictures than expected (table 3).

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[11] The appendix for the interview schedule reflects sample questions asked in the first interview. The first interview was also taken as an opportunity to explain the photography aspect of the research to each participant. Consequently, questions related to photography do not appear on the interview schedule.

Table 3

Photographs Supplied by Focal Participants

Participant	Number of photographs shared
Sabrina	21
Claire	23
Pablo	26
Seth	13
Total	83

Data analysis

In the sections below, I describe the analytical processes I undertook in order to organise and make sense of the data collected throughout this study. However, by discussing the analytical processes as a separate section, I do not mean to suggest that analysis occurred either separately from data collection or as the final step in the methodology of the study. As Creswell (2013) has noted, data collection, analysis, and report writing "are not distinct steps in the process—they are interrelated and often go on simultaneously in a research project" (p. 150). Because I had extensive previous practical experience analysing data by hand as a research assistant, I opted to not use a software to complete the analysis process in this study.

Interviews, online surveys, and newspapers

Analysis of interview, survey and newspaper data followed a series of general steps proposed by Creswell (2013) for case study research. I opted to follow Creswell's recommendations as the directions were provided clearly and logically (table 4). The first step, *data managing*, consisted of transcribing the interviews so I could visualise the data in its entirety. I spent an average of six to seven hours transcribing each interview. I used a free online software called *O Transcribe* to help me with the transcription process. Because data from the online surveys and newspapers were already typed, transcription was not necessary.

Table 4

Data Analysis and Representation, Adopted from Creswell (2013, p. 156)

Steps for data analysis and representation	Case study
Data managing	• Create and organise files for data
Reading, memoing	• Read through text, make margin notes, form initial codes
Describing	• Describe the case and its context
Classifying	• Use categorical aggregation to establish themes or patterns

With each interview transcribed and printed off, I moved on to the second step of analysis: *reading and memoing*. At this stage, I included the survey and newspaper data. I read the content from each source multiple times to get a holistic sense of it. For

the newspaper, however, after a first reading, I decided to proceed only with the news pieces that had direct relevance to understanding the international student experience and Pond's community culture. I discarded all advertising content and weather forecasts, for example.

In reading the interviews, my objective was to get an overall idea of each participant and their individual experiences so as to "see" a unique storyline for each of them. I read each interview question and response, highlighted parts of it, and manually scribbled key words or phrases in the margin next to that particular question or response. The point was to code the data in response to emerging topics: "at this stage, it does not matter how many or how specific these are – the aim is just to get down as much as possible… if you spend time working out categories these will determine how you 'see' what follows" (Richards, 2009, p. 192).

The key words I used for the topics sometimes mirrored those spoken by the participants in their responses, reflected key words used in the applied linguistics research literature (e.g. agency, identity), or originated naturalistically from the process of analysis. As Creswell (2013) explained, these analytical "labels" tend to originate dynamically from more than one source throughout the process. I coded the survey and newspaper data in the same manner: I highlighted meaningful parts of the text, and assigned a topic next to it. This process was connected to the idea of reducing qualitative data to more manageable pieces (Gibbs, 2007).

Subsequently, I engaged in the process of *classifying* the data. For Creswell (2013), classifying involves taking the qualitative information apart, and "looking for

categories, themes, or dimensions of information" (p. 153). However, because I was concerned with *dimensions* of experience within the multilingual international student experience, I went through the interview, survey, and newspaper data using a red pen and labelled parts of the text, based on the emergent topics identified in the previous stage, as belonging to one of the following pre-defined categories that could represent dimensions of lived experience: academic, social, cultural, psychological, linguistic, spiritual. I used "other" for anything that did not directly relate to the other dimensions. When a topic belonged to more than one category, I assigned the categories in order of relevance.

My rationale for approaching this step of the process as such was twofold. First, I sought to limit the number of categories I would be working with in order to make the remainder of the process more manageable (Creswell, 2013), since data from the interviews, surveys, and newspapers were extensive. Second, for the focal participants in particular, I wanted to be able to analytically approach all their accounts of their experiences from a common point of departure, that is, from common categories. These pre-defined categories were intended to facilitate the process of analysis not only within, but also across, the units of study.

Lastly, I attempted to meaningfully re-construct the data (Stake, 1995). To do this, I divided the process into two dimensions. The first dimension was "contextual," and the second was "individual." For context, I organised all coded data according to the groups from which they originated: faculty, support staff, and domestic students, with each group having their own Word file. In this dimension I also created a new file for

data coded from the newspapers. This set of coded data was organised to gain insight into the culture of Pond and its relationship to multilingual international students.

As for the "individual" dimension, I created one new file for each focal participant and used headings to organise the categories. Under each heading, I typed the related topics I had identified previously in bullet points, and under each topic, I pasted the participant's response that supported the emergence of that topic. In the process of doing so, I also collapsed together some of the topics that were too similar. Finally, once the data had been re-constructed, I examined it for general patterns within the categories of experience. I made note of any patterns directly below the categorical headings in the document.

Observations

To analyse the observations I conducted, I employed a process of *description* as analysis. As Marvasti (2013) explained it, the primary purpose of observations in qualitative research is to aid the researcher in later describing the setting in which the research was conducted, so as to convey the physical and social environment to the readers. Yet, even the act of describing a setting should be considered a process of analysis because the researcher, intentionally or otherwise, makes decisions as to which elements are included in the description and how they are explained (e.g. at what length and order). As Emerson (1988) elaborated:

> What is included or excluded is not determined randomly; rather, the process of looking and reporting are guided by the observer's implicit or explicit concepts that make some details more important and relevant than others. Thus, what is selected for observation and recording reflects the working theories or conceptual assumptions employed, however implicitly, by the ethnographer. To insist on a sharp polarity between description and analysis is thus misleading; description is necessarily analytic. (p. 20)

Departing from this understanding, I analysed the observations by re-writing the content in descriptive form. For instance, in reporting the findings in the participant chapters, I make reference to the relevant places or events on campus which I observed. To describe such a place or event, I first re-read my field notes, which I sometimes wrote in bullet point format or free-writing style, and subsequently re-wrote them descriptively into paragraphs to form a coherent and understandable written depiction of the place or event under observation. In the findings, the descriptions are juxtaposed or interlaced with data from other sources, such as excerpts from the interviews and newspapers.

Photographs

My approach to analysing photographs was based on visual semiotic analysis. Van Leeuwen (2004) explained that this approach is concerned with "two fundamental questions: the question of representation (what do images represent and how?) and the question of the 'hidden meanings' of images (what ideas and values do the people, places and things represented in images stand for?)" (p. 92). Since I was interested in using photography as a method to visually represent and understand human experience, I drew on semiotic analysis to explore not only what a particular image depicted, but also what meanings it conveyed. A visual semiotic analysis normally follows two steps to extract meaning from an image. According to van Leeuwen (2004), meaning is covered in layers:

> The key idea is the layering of meaning. The first layer is the layer of *denotation*, of 'what, or who, is being depicted here?'. The second layer is the layer of *connotation*, of 'what ideas and

values are expressed through what is represented, and through the way in which it is represented?' (p. 94, italics in original)

Denotation is considered a more straightforward part of the process: photographs provide a one-to-one representation of reality. In other words, photographs denote what is directly in front of the camera (van Leeuwen, 2004). In the process of denoting visual representation, van Leeuwen (2004) called for an attention to the context in which the representation is situated. On one hand, the context may be singular: the author has one message to convey; on the other, the context may be plural: the author encourages multiple and subjective interpretations, which is often the case with abstract imagery. To understand the context, van Leeuwen (2004) proposed some "pointers" that should be taken into account:

- Categorisation: refers to how general that which is represented appears. This can sometimes be indicated through a caption or typification, the latter which "comes about through the use of visual stereotypes, which may either be cultural attributes (objects, dress, hairstyle, etc.) or physiognomic attributes. The more these stereotypes overshadow a person's individual features (or the individual features of an object or a landscape), the more that person (or object, or landscape) is represented as a type" (p. 95).
- Group vs. individual: refers to whether the person, object, or place is presented in groups or individually.
- Distancing: refers to how close the person, object, or place is depicted. For instance, showing someone far away has some implications, such as communicating unfamiliarity, "because from a distance we will be less able to discern their individual features" (p. 96).
- Surrounding text: refers to the relationship between text (or other images) and the image under consideration. How does the surrounding text or image generalise, individualise a person, object, or place?

After denotation, the researcher analyses an image at the level of connotation. This part of the process involves examining the values, ideas, and concepts of what the person, thing, or place means or "are signs of" (p. 96). Connotative meanings can be broad, encompassing a collection of values under one single representation, and can be ideological, naturalising the status-quo when the representation is taken as an objective capture of "the way things are" rather than as one out of many constructions of that which is represented. A photograph, then, can be suggestive of something without overly saying it.

The way an image is styled is also indicative of meaning. Considering aspects such as light, focus, shadow, distance, framing, and colour can help uncover and understand meaning. These aspects may be present in the act of taking or editing an image. The process for visual semiotic analysis I describe here is by no means extensive or detailed. However, this process of analysis was facilitated by the inclusion of a sentence-long description by the participants of what the photograph represented or why they chose that particular photograph. To uncover meaning through the process of denotation and connotation (van Leeuwen, 2004), I used the following scheme for each photograph, where I supplied corresponding information in the right-side column to each of the guiding points in the left-side column:

Table 5

Visual Semiotic Approach to Data Analysis

What is the picture showing?
Categorisation
Group vs. individual
Distancing
Surroundings
What's in focus?
Stylistic aspects

In selecting photographs to be included in the participants' chapters, I considered quantity, quality, and thematic connection. Overall, I aimed to have the photographs only *complement* the textual composition of each participant's portrait. In this study, photography was not the primary instrument of data collection to understand lived experience; therefore, the number of photographs to be included was considered according to the secondary methodological "position" of the instrument itself, similarly to purpose of and weight assigned to observations and student newspapers. With this rationale, I opted to not include more than five photographs in each chapter. Additionally, and with respect to quality, not all photographs were of good definition. When the resolution, colour, clearness, and size of a photograph supplied by a participant compromised its use, the photograph was excluded from the participant's chapter, though it was still used for analysis.

Finally, after following these two parameters and conducting a semiotic analysis, photographs were chosen on the basis of their degree of connection to the major themes emergent from the process of analysis of data. This thematic connection was also the guiding factor for the choice of where the photographs were inserted within the individual portraits. Once included, a caption accompanied each photograph. The construction of each caption was informed by the results of a holistic analysis of all data collected: interviews, observations, documents, and photographs themselves. Each caption includes keywords which were borrowed directly from names ascribed to themes or categories identified after data analysis. However, the linguistic construction and organisation of the keywords into comprehensible sentences was solely my creative choice as a researcher.

Conclusion

This chapter described the design of this study. It began by outlining the central features of case study and portraiture as well as their relevance to the concerns guiding this research. This chapter also presented a profile of the institution which comprised the research setting, and explained how sampling and recruitment were operationalised. The five methods of data collection used in the study—interviews, surveys, observations, documents, and photography—were explored in detail and followed by an explanation of the process of data analysis. The next five chapters present the findings of this study, beginning with an attention to the context, and subsequently to each participant's experience. Chapters six to nine—the focal participant portraits—are presented in the order in which their data collection and analysis were completed; chapter six being the first of all four.

Chapter 5

Through the Voices of the Community

Introduction

As a researcher on Pond University's campus, one of the first contextual features I observed was the institution's rich cultural and linguistic diversity. One need only walk through the spaces where students gather to experience Pond's multicultural and multilingual synergy first-hand. In fact, multiculturalism and multilingualism on campus may be embodied predominantly by the student population. After all, the number of students has grown significantly over the years, presently extending beyond 40,000 undergraduate and graduate students combined, together representing more than 150 countries on campus. Yet, these phenomena are not a student-only embodiment as the approximately 7,000-large faculty and staff community at the university also play an essential role in creating and fostering campus-wide experiences of multiculturalism and multilingualism.

This chapter is about the academic and sociocultural contexts of Pond's community and the intergroup experiences of its members. Through this community-focused exploration, I seek to understand the ways by which the broader context might influence multilingual international students' experiences at Pond. To do so, I access the community members' perspectives and experiences in order to help understand some of the culture of the campus community, and the multilingual international student experience at the intergroup level of contact. The accounts I explore hereafter are not meant to represent or generalise the views of the larger academic group to which the

participants belong. Rather, participant voices are foregrounded to understand experience at the individual interactional level first.

I organise the findings according to the institutional positions from which they originated: domestic students, faculty, and support staff. Overall, the findings emphasise the irrefutable complexity and subjectivity of human experience. They are based on the participants' individual *interactional experience* with multilingual international students, but also, at a deeper level, on the participants' *beliefs* about the world, which consequently inform the mechanisms by which participants come to uniquely ascribe and extract meaning out of an interaction with *the other*.

Yet, in some cases, individual accounts clearly align. In doing so, they suggest new or reinforce existing collective perspectives through which to view and discuss multilingual international students. Such alignment between two or more individual accounts is only possible when participants are brought together by something they share in common. Since this research is bound by an institutional context, it may be only natural that participants' experiences are similar on the basis of their shared institutionally-constructed positions.

I do not suggest, however, that individual beliefs are superseded by one's institutional position. I argue that sociological constructs should not be underestimated in the reading of the accounts that follow. Besides a parallelism in experience sustained by a mutual institutional position, sociological constructs such as a mutual language or ethnicity, and even sometimes, a mutual racism or xenophobia, can powerfully (dis)unite people. These possibilities only underscore the critical role of interpersonal

contact and experience as a praxis for better understanding the other, and by extension, ourselves (Dodman, Cardoso, & Tavares, forthcoming). All participants mentioned below have been assigned pseudonyms.

Domestic students

Domestic students comprise the largest group within the academic community at Pond. They are students registered as either permanent residents or Canadian citizens. In response to the rapid increase in the number of international students in contexts of higher education worldwide over the last two decades, researchers have sought to better understand the intergroup relations between domestic and international students as the two groups remain in close contact throughout their academic journeys. However, findings continue to highlight what has been identified as a major area of concern: a lack of meaningful interactions and long-lasting relationships between domestic and international students (Arkoudis et al., 2013; Glass & Westmont, 2014; Jon, 2013). Needless to say, the lack of a robust social network can negatively affect multilingual international students' experiences in their new environments (Arthur, 2017). In this study, I also seek to contribute to this line of investigation by broadly exploring the perspectives of 17 domestic students in relation to their interpersonal contact with multilingual international students. I present the findings in the two subsequent sections.

Experiences with multiculturalism and multilingualism at Pond

Prior to exploring domestic students' accounts of their interactions with multilingual international students, I want to delineate some context. By context, I am

interested in describing the academic culture of campus with respect to multiculturalism and multilingualism from the perspective of domestic students. These students' perspectives are of cross-cultural interaction *situated* specifically within the physical and sociocultural context of Pond University. By providing some context, I hope to demonstrate that interactions are culturally-situated and mutually-produced activities: they are influenced by the sociocultural terrain as the terrain is influenced by human activity (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

The voices below are of undergraduate students who, except for one, all spoke English as a first language. Additional self-reported languages included American Sign Language (ASL), Arabic, Cantonese, French, Hebrew, Hindi, Ilocano, Italian, Japanese, Lithuanian, Marathi, Mohawk, Nepali, Polish, and Spanish. These undergraduate domestic students were in a number of different academic programs, including cognitive science and psychology to linguistics and kinesiology. The accounts below reflect experience of students in all levels of undergraduate studies, from first to fourth year.

Generally speaking, there was a consensus among domestic students that Pond was, in fact, a multicultural and multilingual university. Experiencing multiculturalism and multilingualism, however, was often associated with acts of seeing and hearing *the other*. This could mean seeing someone who looked different or hearing other languages which one did not speak. These experiences were not considered exclusive to a particular place on campus. Rather, the whole campus was discussed as an organically multicultural and multilingual space. However, domestic students rarely directly included themselves in their conceptualisations of experiencing or contributing

to multiculturalism and multilingualism on campus—they assessed these experiences in light of the other:

> If I'm not mistaken Pond is one of the most diverse universities. Everyone stands out to me. *No one looks or feels the same when I'm* on campus. (Sumaya)
>
> I've met people from all around the world at Pond. Just walking in the halls, *I hear* dozens of languages being spoken. (Gabriel)
>
> I do consider Pond to be multilingual and multicultural because *I hear people talking in other languages* sometimes *more than English*. (Mark)

For Lucas, Patricia, and Faris, multiculturalism and multilingualism at Pond were group-specific phenomena. Unlike the previous responses, which did not associate multiculturalism and multilingualism to a particular group within the university, the three students below referred specifically to student-led initiatives when discussing their perspectives on multiculturalism and multilingualism at Pond. In particular, the students viewed student clubs and associations as the material *porte-parole* of multiculturalism and multilingualism. Therefore, multiculturalism was conceptualised as having foreign cultures represented in contrast to one another through separate student clubs and associations. Additionally, food also emerged as a signifier of multiculturalism in this cosmopolitan academic space (see Block, 2006):

> I consider Pond's campus to be very multicultural and multilingual. There are many different cultures that have their *clubs* around campus, and also many *different food places from different cultures*. While walking around campus, one can hear the many different languages being spoken by different groups of people. (Lucas)
>
> I believe that Pond is multicultural and multilingual because the *student body* is quite diverse. Also, there are many *groups and clubs* that make events of other cultures outside of Canada. (Patricia)
>
> I often see posters advertising *student clubs* for various ethnicities, religions, etc. I also *hear* conversations in many different languages as I walk around campus. (Faris)

Other students commented on the far-reaching visibility of specific cultural groups on campus, but questioned the level of inclusivity and access for out-group members. For instance, in Jessica's experience, the majority of multicultural and multilingual activities had been a student-initiated effort. Consequently, student-leaders had directed their effort toward attracting students of the same cultural background. As a result, Jessica believed that cultural groups tended to be more exclusive to outsiders, failing to create a meaningful intercultural connection between international students of *different* cultures. Jessica ascribed the in-group and out-group division to "natural" human social behaviour, and compared the organisation of Pond's cultural context to the ethnic neighbourhoods in Toronto which, in her view, while still embodying cultural diversity, remained separated from one another:

> I think Pond University makes great efforts to include multicultural and multilingual activities. However, these are mostly student-driven. As such, many become exclusive to those outside of the culture being exhibited. Due to this lack of inclusion, many international students, in my opinion, fail to fully connect with *others who are not of their culture*. This I believe is partly due to human nature, because who likes to be out of their comfort zone continuously? This phenomenon is not new, to see this one needs only to walk through the many "sub-villages" in Toronto. (Jessica)

For Marcel, representation of diversity through boundaries around cultural identity was conflicting. On one hand, he argued that it contributed to increasing the visibility of the other. In turn, this visibility could then allow for more immediate in-group identification and more cultural exposure to those of different backgrounds. On the other, he argued representation through singular cultural identity might also be divisive. He questioned whether this approach to fostering multiculturalism was effective in bringing different cultures together for exchange. As for Stephanie, multiculturalism was

experienceable only outside the classroom. For this reason, she did not consider Pond to be fully multicultural.

> Yes, I think there are quite a few ways that people identify their diversity through student groups, fundraising and other activities. This visibility allows students to find one another and creates exposure for others. The question becomes, how much do people mix, or do we *segregate according to identity*? (Marcel)
>
> It's multicultural *in a way*. There's a lot of events catering to the expression of multiculturalism and how people can experience different sets of cultures. In the classrooms, however, I am not sure because *I have not experienced that myself*. (Stephanie)

Since Stephanie did not elaborate on her classroom experience, it is impossible to know *what* within the classroom context characterised the absence of multiculturalism for her. Nevertheless, the lack of inclusive multicultural teaching and learning practices in the higher education classroom has been widely identified as a barrier to fostering multicultural interactions between domestic and international students (Guo & Guo, 2017; Zhang & Zhou, 2010). For instance, Zhou, Liu, and Rideout (2017) identified that multilingual international students often rely on the instructor to promote interactive multicultural learning opportunities between the two groups in the classroom. Therefore, the researchers emphasised that instructors should be mindful of this expectation when developing collaborative activities and be deliberate in grouping culturally and linguistically different students together so that both groups might then gain a better chance of linguistically and culturally benefit from working with each other, although other aspects might also need to be considered.

Interacting and socialising

In this section, I explore domestic students' perspectives on interacting with multilingual international students. I began this investigation by asking domestic students general questions related to intergroup interaction. First, I wanted to know whether they believed there were enough opportunities to meet and socialise with multilingual international students on campus. Nine out of 17 students (53%) reported there were enough opportunities, while 8 (47%) reported there were not. Then, I asked whether they had ever worked on an assignment or group project with a multilingual international student, whether in or outside the classroom. Nine students (53%) reported never participating in this experience. Lastly, I sought to know how many of the domestic students had experienced life as an international student. The majority of the students reported never having studied abroad (70%).

In general, domestic students understood that it was the responsibility of the university to mediate domestic-international students' interactions. This view was often discussed with reference to the university developing or supporting campus events and programs that would be able to bridge some of this intergroup interactional gap. Yet, at a more critical level, the responses provided by domestic students strongly suggested that multilingual international students were, by nature, individuals in lack and in need of help (see Rienties & Nolan, 2014). For instance, while Sumaya's and Gabriel's responses conceptualised interpersonal interaction as an opportunity for mutual exchange of knowledge and experience, other responses brought forth a belief that multilingual international students might be unsuccessful if mentorship were not provided by their more "knowledgeable," domestic peers:

Partner a domestic and international student together for a few weeks to learn about culture in Toronto and their culture back home. (Sumaya)

Teachers could maybe pair international students up with domestic students to *help them* understand and feel more welcome. This is also a great opportunity for those people who are domestic to learn about another place and another culture. (Gabriel)

Perhaps the university could introduce a buddy system in which an international student is paired with a domestic student as a peer mentor. That way, they have a buddy who can *help them* navigate *not just* Pond's services, but Toronto as well. I think a day or a week dedicated specifically to all the different cultures at Pond could work too. Each culture could have a booth or area dedicated to their traditions, food, music, language, etc. (Mark)

I think that Pond University could help by partnering students with multilingual international students. They could offer community involvement points to those willing to participate. This could be presented by individual departments in order to make matches. In this way, international students would not be left to their own devices and instead have a language/cultural mentor *from the moment they arrive on campus*. (Lucas)

Cultural and linguistic proficiency were also identified as relevant factors for successful intergroup interaction. For Patricia, interaction was based primarily on mutual cultural identification. Nevertheless, she saw domestic students as sharing the responsibility of fostering integration between the two groups. She expressed that domestic students might not be doing enough on their part, and that they might need to recognise that positive experiences between linguistically different groups might not depend exclusively on proficiency in English. However, for Jessica, another domestic student, proficiency was a key factor for multilingual international students to not only make friends, but also understand lectures. Similarly to Patricia and Jessica, Faris highlighted the role of language in facilitating interactions, but placed more weight on interaction as a naturalistic result of cultural and linguistic intragroup identification:

I think that sometimes *they just stay in their own groups of people* who are familiar to them, this is understandable, but *we could do a better job* at inviting them to places if we see them alone or even in a group just making sure they know that you don't need to speak English to have fun. (Patricia)

Many of them may not speak English fluently and so it may be *very difficult* for them to understand classes and make new friends. (Jessica)

The potential for language barriers is always a concern, and as much as people might not like to admit it, I feel people tend to gravitate to socializing with people of their own culture and language, so *there may be barriers between students* socially. (Faris)

Lahti believed that both groups should interact, but that multilingual international students would benefit from having activities designed for them in isolation. Although multilingual international students have been known to form their own support networks on campus through communities of practice (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009), Lahti's comment suggests that multilingual international students' needs and challenges are fundamentally different from those of domestic students, and should be thus dealt with according to their academic group identification. However, as Jones (2017) has argued, domestic and international students share most of the needs and challenges associated with being a university student for the first time. Furthermore, Jones has proposed that academic support services should not be designed on the basis of nationality or language, but on common academic need instead, which might help shift the way in which universities develop and promote their services.

I think it's important to have clubs and activities *geared specifically towards* multilingual international students. That way, they can meet people experiencing what they're experiencing and can build a support network. It might also be a great way to relieve some homesickness if they get to eat food or participate in an activity that reminds them of home. (Lahti)

Stephanie, another domestic student, believed that interacting depended fundamentally on personal disposition and willingness to do so. She argued that both groups had "plenty" of opportunities to meet and socialise, but that, ultimately, this was an individual and conscious choice. Indeed, engaging in meaningful social interaction

may be a complex experience for both domestic and international students. Even when interactions are not negatively influenced by linguistic difference, ongoing engagement will depend on a number of other aspects shared between domestic and international students, such as their personal interests, class schedules, age, and cultural behaviours (Heng, 2017). Despite individual differences, social interaction with domestic students has been discussed as central for multilingual international students' sense of satisfaction and belonging on the academic campus (Arthur, 2017).

> Lock us in a room together. I don't know, I think people have plenty of opportunities to connect, they will *if they want to*, I'm not sure what more could be done. (Stephanie)

Faculty

Faculty are another group with whom multilingual international students regularly interact. Faculty play a multifaceted role in the academic experiences of multilingual international students: they are not only the students' instructors, but sometimes also their advisors, supervisors, and colleagues. Exploring interactions between multilingual international students and faculty is important because the outcomes of these intergroup interactions have been known to affect students' views on teaching, learning, and their motivation to attain their goals of an academic nature (Cole, 2010; Glass et al., 2015).

Fourteen faculty members participated in this project. Eight of them were in the faculty of Liberal Arts, three were in the faculty of Health, one in the faculty of Law, one in the faculty of Environmental Studies, and one in the faculty of Visual Art. The majority (*N*=9) taught undergraduate-level courses only, and the remaining five taught both

undergraduate and graduate courses. This section is structured into three areas: the first examines faculty's perspectives on the contributions made by multilingual international students to Pond's academic community; the second explores faculty's perspectives on the challenges the students may encounter; and the third highlights faculty's approaches to supporting multilingual international students in their achievement of academic success. I use the term "Professor" to encompass and represent all faculty members, despite understanding individual differences exist, as I did not have enough information to propose connections between one's rank and time at Pond, among other criteria, and the nature of their accounts.

Contributions to Pond's community

Overall, faculty members characterised multilingual international students as a valuable group within Pond's community. In particular, they spoke of multilingual international students as contributing to an increased visibility of multiculturalism and multilingualism on campus. These contributions were considered organic in that they related to the very essence of being international: a student who was international at Pond was likely someone who was studying in a language other than their first one and whose cultural experiences were likely more internationally diverse, encompassing those experienced at home and in Canada. Furthermore, the students' contributions were not considered to be restricted to a particular dimension of the academic experience. Instead, they were argued to be important to the community as a whole:

> One of Pond's strengths is its multicultural diversity. Students *benefit* from being with students who may be different from them *in a variety of ways and may learn to view things from different perspectives*. Especially in small classes, they have to move outside the bubble of their earlier life experiences. (Professor Gallant)

> They are *a vivid representation of true multiculturalism*, and *bring much awareness* of other ways of thinking and being in the world. (Professor Li)

> As with all aspects of life, *diversity teaches tolerance, flexibility, empathy*. I think these are essential skills for all students (and professors!), and ultimately a successful society. (Professor MacArthur)

Multilingual international students' contributions were also considered important in the context of the academic classroom. For Professor Campbell, multilingual international students contributed by providing unique international insight into the classroom experience, normally by means of giving specifically cultural examples. In fact, she considered her teaching to be its "best" when these contributions were present. She drew multilingual international students' languages into teaching and learning by asking students to translate foreign advertising content. In a similar vein, for Professor Frescatti, teaching multilingual international students was also advantageous as they possessed linguistic and cultural knowledge that could benefit pedagogical practices:

> My best teaching is when I use them to *bring in global examples*. They *offer unique perspectives*. Sometimes I use images with other languages in them and ask students what they say – I teach advertising so this is easy. (Professor Campbell)

> Multilingual international students contribute to the university's multiculturalism and multilingualism. In my case, it's a huge benefit to be able to *count on them to speak their languages and to share their culture* to those who want to learn it. (Professor Frescatti)

However, despite the notion that multilingual international students were a valuable addition to the academic community, for some, contribution was a matter of choice. For instance, by homogenising multilingual international students into one large cultural group, Professor Nboni commented that their contribution to diversifying academic discourse depended on their understanding of the "active" role expected of

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students in a learner-centred academic culture. As research suggests, however, international students transitioning from diverse teacher-centred academic cultures tend to encounter conflicting expectations around teaching and learning in English-medium, learner-centred environments, especially around the extent to which students are expected to actively and orally participate in their academic communities (e.g. Tatar, 2005; Wu, 2009). Professor Nboni argued as follows:

> Diversity and multiplicity of viewpoints reflecting a broad range of value orientations, world views and life experiences brought by multilingual internal students contribute to the academic discourse – *if and when these students overcome often strongly ingrained attitudes of reserve and deference to authority.* (Professor Nboni)

The characterisation of multilingual international students as a "more reserved" group prevails in the research literature. The absence of an active, often vociferous, behaviour whether in the classroom or in other academic spaces has often been uncritically ascribed completely to a lack of linguistic proficiency or intelligence on the part of multilingual international students. However, "reserve" by means of silence is a complex social, cultural, and linguistic behaviour (Harumi, 2010). Bista (2012) argued that international students cannot simply isolate the sociocultural aspects informing their identities in a new cultural environment, especially students from an Asian background, who typically view instructors and elders as being more knowledgeable and respectable based on their cultural values. He further argued that instructors might be better equipped to work with multilingual international students' silence if they are more critically aware of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and of how these may inform their beliefs concerning classroom behaviour and student-instructor interactions.

For Professor Gylys, the students' contribution to enriching the academic community was also a matter of choice. In her experience, not all multilingual international students "choose" to participate in their host communities by sharing their cross-cultural perspectives. However, analogous to the previous point, a more critical understanding of "engagement" should be considered. Engagement may not be a construct defined equally by all members of an academic community. Definitions may depend on the institutional position from which one is (un)able to speak, as well as on the sociocultural resources made available to the individual on the basis of their group identity (e.g. nationality, language, race).

In fact, community engagement by multilingual international students should be understood from a place of reciprocity. For example, in a study exploring the experiences of multilingual and minority university students at an American university, Oropeza, Varghese, and Kanno (2010) found that the multilingual students would not invest in their academic communities when their investments would result in the extended institutional construction of themselves as ESL students. Because ESL students did not collectively enjoy the same range of academic support services at the university as native-speaker students did, the ESL students refused to use the exclusive services in place for them. The authors stressed that "a lack" of engagement was a form of resistance to services that implicitly sustained marginalisation. Professor Gylys proposed that:

> Students who *choose to engage* in the community bring a richness of perspectives to everything. (Professor Gylys)

Challenges

This section presents faculty's perspectives on the challenges faced by multilingual international students at Pond University. In general, faculty expressed a concern primarily in relation to language proficiency. This did not refer only to insufficient proficiency to express oneself in casual interactions in English, but also proficiency in the "academic register" of higher education. For Professor MacArthur, for example, insufficient language proficiency was not an issue for all multilingual international students. Yet, those students for whom it was, she considered the impact to be significant, affecting students' clarity of communication. Professor MacArthur reported that language proficiency was particularly problematic for her when she could not understand students' ideas. As for challenges of a social nature, she believed that the majority of students did not seem to experience them considering the visibility of their membership in small groups:

> It really depends, as many multilingual students speak English well (they just also speak a second or third language). For those for which English is a difficulty, I think this has an impact on them academically – I can see this reflected in *the quality of their writing*, and *confidence in their public speaking*. Although I try to be more forgiving, but it can be an issue when I simple *do not understand the ideas and concepts they are attempting to convey*. This may translate to difficulties professionally. It appears that most have cliques of friends however, so I don't think *the social aspect is as challenge*. (Professor MacArthur)

Furthermore, while language was viewed as a common challenge, it was rarely considered to occur by itself. In particular, language-related challenges were accompanied by unfamiliar cultural expectations of classroom participation between the context of Pond and of where the students lived prior to moving to Canada. Professor Nboni mentioned that in her teaching experience, many multilingual international students did not have sufficient language proficiency and did not engage in typical

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western-based classroom behaviour, such as in asking questions or challenging the points of view expressed by instructors during lectures.

> Linguistic challenges: many international students have *marginal command of writing skills in the English language required to express themselves in written assignments*. And cultural challenges: from some cultures, students *are not used to questioning and challenging their teachers even if/when they have doubts about the assertions made by instructors*. (Professor Nboni)

Professor Gallant's experience closely mirrored that of Professor Nboni. She reported that many of the multilingual international students specifically from China lacked sufficient language skills and preferred more "passive" engagement with learning. She associated the students' choice of studying economics to their limited language skills. Indeed, some multilingual international students whose academic language skills require further improvement might opt for less linguistically-demanding academic programs—programs wherein oral communication is less frequently expected, such as mathematics and computer science—in order to minimise the potential for linguistic challenges (Zhang & Mi, 2010). Additionally, Professor Gallant mentioned that multilingual international students were often minimally involved in the other dimensions connected to the experience of being a university student:

> Many of the students coming from China, especially through Pond's language institute, enrolling in economics do so because *their English language skills are limited*. They *strongly prefer equations delivered by lecture method and multiple choice tests* to a more engaged classroom encouraging critical thinking through discussion. Socially, educationally, professionally, these students stay *quite apart* from the university learning experience. (Professor Gallant)

For other faculty, some of the identified challenges could not be ascribed exclusively to multilingual international students. Professor Li commented specifically on challenges around social and cultural integration into the academic community, which

may be a new experience for both domestic and international undergraduate students alike. However, she argued that this challenge might be greater for newly arrived international students, and cited age as one of the possible reasons. A consensus among researchers proposes that younger immigrants tend to acculturate to the host society with fewer challenges in comparison to older immigrants (Kuo & Roysircar, 2004; Scott & Scott, 1989; Yeh, 2003). In the case of international students, this may be true as well. The older the international student, the higher the probability of experiencing greater social and cultural adjustment issues in the new academic environment (Yeh & Inose, 2003).

> Those born in Canada have fewer challenges than new newly arrived immigrants. It seems that *social and cultural integration would be the most challenging* for recent immigrants at the age level of our undergraduate students. (Professor Li)

Professor Gylys highlighted linguistic challenges as one of her central concerns. She explained that multilingual international students with whom she had worked often possessed insufficient proficiency in academic English despite passing internationally recognised language exams. In the research literature, personal accounts shared by multilingual international students with respect to their academic English language-related experiences strongly suggest that international language exams for college and university admittance fall short of realistically testing students for the complex and specialised register of English utilised in the academy (Lee, 2009; Li, 2004; Liu, 2011). However, Professor Gylys also reported encountering this kind of challenge in monolingual, native speakers of English:

> Linguistic difficulties—*receiving acceptable grades in the IELTS and TOEFL tests does not in my experience necessarily translate into adequate levels in English language comprehension or*

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oral and written expression for post-secondary study. To be fair, these skills are sometimes lacking in native unilingual speakers of English as well. (Professor Gylys)

Finally, challenges were also identified specifically at the graduate level. To exemplify, Professor Campbell expressed some concern toward multilingual international students' communication skills in the form of written language. She characterised their writing as a distinguishably marked, "awkward" variation of standard written English, in the same way that some non-native speakers may speak the target language with an accent. However, she reported approaching written discourse in a second language in a manner that positioned difference as an expression of identity— the material production bore the identity of the producer—rather than as a language deficit. Moreover, she suggested that the expectation that all academic writing in English should be native-like could potentially silence the multicultural "voice" embedded in the writing produced by international students.

> For grad students, the biggest challenge I think is the question of their *writing*, which is good, *but written as a second language speaker*. I am of the camp that I don't want to erase that voice – of being an international student – to make it sound like a native Canadian. But others think that the writing should be flawless. I am not talking about improper grammar, but *awkward writing*, because the student is an international student: *the writing equivalent of an accent*. (Professor Campbell)

Another concern focused on challenges resulting from an incongruence between students' former and current education. In particular, Professor Nboni referred to the lack of uniformity in the labelling of course names by different institutions as a potential disadvantage for multilingual international graduate students. In this sense, she argued that a multilingual international graduate student who began graduate studies in the same discipline, but at a foreign institution (i.e. outside Canada), might not be able to

progress in a given course as linearly as their other peers who advanced to graduate studies within the same educational and linguistic context.

> Especially at the graduate level, international students may have taken courses with the same labels as our courses but which have very different content. For example, in my discipline a course titled "Syntax" may have been a general history of thought with regard to the subject matter rather than learning how to analyze data and apply theory to new data. They are thus at a disadvantage in that *they may not have the same background preparation as other students.* (Professor Nboni)

Supporting achievement of academic success

While the previous section focused on identifying challenges, this section highlights the strategies adopted by faculty in support of multilingual international students in the academic community. Faculty's responses suggest that supporting the students' achievement of academic success is a complex task. Additionally, responses illustrated that support mechanisms were context-dependent, rather than employed uniformly across the board, despite most challenges previously identified being of a linguistic nature.

The ability to support multilingual international students was considered to depend on several factors. These factors were more or less influential in accordance with the specific teaching context of each individual faculty member. For some, class size was a significant factor. Professor Gylys, who taught a first-year lecture, reported supporting multilingual international students in her 400-student class was "impossible." Comparably, Professor Campbell reported it was difficult to support these students in her large classes. She mentioned resorting to the teaching assistants to provide individual support and to evaluate the students' writing differently. Furthermore, she

expressed that it would be helpful, in her context, if students themselves could explain

their needs and preferred strategies for individual support *in writing*.

> Not in a classroom of 400. (Professor Gylys)

> In a big class, this is really hard. I try to *work with the TAs* to support them and *have different expectations of their writing*. I think what would be great, is if there is a way for us as professors to hear these students' voices. Maybe *a page that has quotes from these students of their challenges*. Or *a list of 5 things* that they would like us to do to support them. It is easy to just teach and forget about all the ways that students need support – which are constantly changing. (Professor Campbell)

For Professor Li, supporting students equated to providing personal guidance

and encouraging the use of support services for those with language-related

challenges. However, in relation to support services, some research suggests that

multilingual international students may not always take part in the services because

such services are normally developed and promoted only to students who are

considered deficient. For instance, among many important findings, Roberts and

Dunworth (2012) found that a lack of student-friendly language and an emphasis on

failure contributed to both students' and staff members' negative perceptions of the

effectiveness of support services at an English-medium university. In parallel, Oropeza,

Varghese, and Kanno (2010) argued that services which position multilingual students

inferiorly may only contribute to the exclusion of the very same students they seek to

support. As emphasised previously, some of the students in the study by Oropeza and

colleagues refused services as an act of resistance to institutionalised marginalisation.

> In addition to *personal guidance*, I always *encourage students with poor English skills to take advantage of the many services available at the university*: learning commons, writing centre, etc. (Professor Li)

Professor MacArthur reported drawing on "teach-back" as a strategy to ensure that students understand course content. However, despite the support provided, she expressed the "poor" communication skills on the part of multilingual international students posed challenges to the overall quality of teaching and learning in her classes. Peters and Anderson (2017) identified language as one component by which "rigorous standards of academic excellence" of higher education are maintained (p. 46), and argued that embedding language-focused resources in the curriculum from the very beginning of a course may help maintain the high standards of academic education when concerns about the possible impact of language proficiency on teaching and learning exist.

> I try to *explain things many times over*, and *use a "teach-back"* method to try and ensure that ideas were understood. Often they use their own representative analogies to a concept and I can confirm if they have grasped the content. Honestly, it is very challenging for me as a professor to teach students when their communication skills (or English skills) are so poor that information cannot be conveyed. I think while there are clear benefits to diversity, on campus, socially, academically, but it can also introduce challenges that affect the quality of education. (Professor MacArthur)

Challenges by multilingual international students in regards to understanding and developing proficiency in academic language have been reported by both faculty and students themselves. In response, some faculty opt to modify the language of instruction by simplifying it. For instance, in a university-wide survey, Peters and Anderson (2017) found that some faculty adopted simpler language in quizzes and tests, and when this was not feasible, other faculty allotted extra time during exams in an attempt to foster better comprehension. Unruh (2015) found the faculty in her study adopted language-related strategies in the form of posting announcements on the board and avoiding the use of slang. Professor Nboni reported supporting multilingual

international students by drawing on a similar strategy, while also acknowledging and encouraging students to express their opinions.

> As much as is practicable to *use simpler English in teaching; encourage and reinforce efforts made by students to express themselves* even if their difficulty with the English language might be manifested in inefficiency and ineffectiveness in expression. (Professor Nboni)

In Professor Gallant's experience, many of the multilingual international students who lacked language proficiency also happened to not attend class. Consequently, she contemplated assigning points for participation as a strategy to help mitigate attendance issues. Additionally, she differentiated the level of cross-cultural contribution to the class between multilingual, multicultural international students and multilingual, multicultural first-generation students. She argued the contributions made by the latter group were more meaningful, and reported modifying her teaching to include practices aimed at inviting contributions by this group.

> I am clearly differentiating between those students who do not yet have the English language facility (many of the international students in economics) from the many first generation students from many other countries who are quite broadly capable at the university level. The latter group enriches the discussion and so *changes to teaching include ways to bring the varying perspectives into the classroom*. The former do not attend class at all, but only show up for the tests... I suppose I could try *giving points for participation*... (Professor Gallant)

Professor Gallant's experience, however, contrasts with findings of earlier research conducted with over 1,000 students in four universities in Canada, including Pond. In the study, Grayson (2011) found that domestic first-generation students were the least academically engaged by means of attending lectures and tutorials, studying outside class times, and visiting the library. Conversely, international students who were not first-generation—the term meaning "the sons and daughters of parents with less

than post-secondary education" (p. 605)—had the highest level of academic involvement.

Support staff

The voices of support staff toward interacting and working with multilingual international students in colleges and universities remain the least explored. Nevertheless, staff provide continuous support service to multilingual international students that comprehensively support their academic experience from admission to graduation. Moreover, the kind and effectiveness of support services have been known to influence the experiences of multilingual international students, especially in terms of persistence, graduation, and satisfaction with their academic experiences (Ikwuagwu, 2011; Perez-Encinas & Ammigan, 2016; Tinto, 2006). Though support services differ from institution to institution, generally they are services focused on supporting the education system of an institution at both macro and micro levels (Steyn & Wolhuter, 2000).

Seven members of the broader support staff group at Pond participated in this study. Despite the small sample, the voices foregrounded in the sections below reflect unique perspectives stemming from diverse institutional positions (Table 6) and interactional experiences. To begin with, I explore support staff's perspectives on their lived experiences with multiculturalism and multilingualism at Pond for the purpose of sociocultural contextualisation. Secondly, I highlight their perspectives on multilingual international students' contributions to Pond's academic community. Then, I share some of multilingual international students' challenges from a support services point of view and introduce their insights in regards to supporting these students at the university.

Table 6

Support Staff (Pseudonyms) and Their Respective Service Units

Name	Support service unit[12]
Bret Clark	Writing centre
Melissa Power	Academic program office in the Liberal Arts faculty
Harman Kur	Admissions office in the Law faculty
Julia Rocco	Professional development program in the Law faculty
Gregory Palmov	Library
Maria Guzman	Academic program office in the Liberal Arts faculty
Oliver Port	English language bridging program

Experiences with multiculturalism and multilingualism at Pond

This section explores support staff's perspectives on the academic culture of Pond with respect to multiculturalism and multilingualism. All staff considered Pond to be a multicultural and multilingual community. This characterisation was based primarily on the staff's experiences interacting with the study body and with hearing a diverse range of languages being spoken on campus. In addition to students, however, staff's experiences with faculty were also highlighted as representative of multiculturalism and multilingualism.

To illustrate, Gregory spoke of Pond's multiculturalism and multilingualism by referring to specific statistics. He mentioned the multiple partnerships held between Pond and other international universities, and the number of internationals students at

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[12] Job titles were excluded in order to maintain full anonymity.

the university as indicators of Pond's diversified profile. Other aspects he included were "diversity and inclusion," and his "customers" at the library who were non-native Anglophone Canadians. Lastly, Gregory also made reference to language—Pond's bilingual academic programs and English language support—as representative of multilingualism.

> Yes, Pond has *over 6,000 international students, partners with 280 international universities. Diversity and inclusion are founding principles*. Many of my customers *are not native born English-speaking Canadians*. Pond encourages *bilingual study* and offers *pre-university English language training programs* for students seeking admittance. (Gregory)

In conceptualising multiculturalism and multilingualism at Pond, staff referred to a number of different personal experiences. Melissa spoke first of the student body, and second to faculty specific to her academic department, as embodying these phenomena at the university. Bret's experiences with multiculturalism and multilingualism involved interactions with students, staff, and faculty. In Maria's experience, Pond's visibility of diversity grew consistently over the 25 years she has worked on campus. While Oliver also considered Pond to be a multicultural and multilingual university on the basis of visibility of diversity, he challenged the idea that all cultures and languages were represented equally, or at all.

> Yes, in that the *student body* is multicultural and multilingual. Based *on where I work*, I am also *surrounded by faculty members* who actively engage in *languages and cultural initiatives*. There is a positive feeling around this. (Melissa)

> Yes, absolutely – Pond University is home to *students, staff, and faculty from many diverse backgrounds and languages*. Whether the university properly supports acquisition of literacy in Standard Academic English is another matter. (Bret)

> I have been a campus member for over 25 years and in that time I have visibly seen *an increase in the number of ethnic groups and languages spoken and taught in the department*. (Maria)

It's multicultural and multilingual in a sense that *there are students from various countries* at Pond University and the university *allows students to host student activities (events, clubs) on campus*. Pond has two campuses and the Crandall campus *offers classes in French*, which is unique compared to other universities in the area. That being said, having international students and offering language courses on campus do not necessarily equate to *being a multicultural or multilingual [community] if the students do not feel they can share their cultures or languages on campus*. (Oliver)

Contributions to Pond's community

All responses supported a view of multilingual international students as a valuable group to the academic community at Pond. The main contribution was considered that of adding cross-cultural insight originating from diverse lived experiences into the dominant ways of thinking within the academic culture at Pond. Bret exemplified the range of possible contributions uniquely made by multilingual international students to the university by citing the insights offered by students from Afghanistan after the September 11th terrorist attacks. He expressed the students' perspectives challenged default modes of understanding and discussing the same event, thereby confronting dominant ideologies in the academic community.

Multilingual international students help *provide different perspectives in classrooms*. Often, students from abroad with a different language and culture can *provide key experiential knowledge about issues that are taking place in the world*. A key example would be in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in America. Many students from Afghanistan began attending the university in the post 9/11 years. These students had a very different perspective on Afghanistan, war, terrorism, and the Taliban than was circulating in our corporate media. Students speaking from different places, power, and perspectives help *challenge any particular types of ideological assumptions being made in the classroom, or community*. (Bret)

Similarly, Melissa and Oliver viewed multilingual international students as contributing agents to challenging the normative academic culture at Pond. For instance, Melissa attributed the visibility of diversity on campus to the activity and

presence of these students. Rather than seeing disruption to the academic culture as something negative, Melissa considered it important for fostering a diversity based on difference. Oliver also mentioned that multilingual international students "challenge" all students' ways of thinking.

> I think they contribute *by disrupting homogeneity*. Diversity in language, customs, religious identity and expression is more vibrant on campus *because of international students*. (Melissa)

> International students *bring various cultures and mindsets that challenge all students to think differently and appreciate the differences in the world*. (Oliver)

Overall, these perspectives were echoed in the responses provided by Julia and Maria below. More specifically, Maria reported that her parents' immigrant background in Canada helped her understand and appreciate the contributions made by multilingual international students to the community.

> *Diverse perspectives and ways of thinking.* (Julia)

> They contribute *tremendously by providing different views and world experiences*. Being a child of immigrant parents myself, I can understand and appreciate the contributions they make, *including cultural events, religious beliefs, foods, and their basic approach/attitude to life*. (Maria)

In Gregory's perspective, multilingual international students benefit the academic community multifariously. First, he mentioned a broadened mode of thinking as a result of cross-cultural interactions, wherein multilingual international students' ways of thinking challenge and expand the normative, "narrow box" through which people view the world. Moreover, he argued interaction with the students leads to better communication skills on the part of support services staff. Lastly, he also viewed multilingual international students as agents of internationalisation at home and abroad:

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They give *a breadth to community issues. Make us think outside the narrow box we live in by providing other viewpoints, more of a global view.* They make us *improve our communication skills.* They *connect us to the rest of the world and expand the global reach of the university.* (Gregory)

Challenges

In regards to possible challenges faced my multilingual international students, staff suggested several of them. The ways by which staff discussed these challenges suggest two opposing, overarching perspectives from which to view them. On one hand, some responses reinforced the notion of multilingual international students as deficient individuals in relation to meeting the expectations set by Pond. On the other hand, some responses proposed that rather than being intrinsic to individual students, challenges result from the very structure of the university, which may privilege some students, but not others.

To exemplify the latter, Bret spoke of an "implicit" structural racism in the support services at Pond. In his experience as staff at Pond's writing centre, he reported that support services generally approached multilingual international students as deficient. What's more, he stressed that many members of the other academic groups of Pond's community equated insufficient academic language proficiency to insufficient intellectual ability. In the scholarly literature, racism at a structural level has been identified as a major theme in multilingual international students' experiences in higher education (Hanassab, 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007; Smith, 2011). Lastly, Bret argued that financial challenges were multifaceted in nature, and thus affected other dimensions of the multilingual international student experience:

> There is *implicit racism* in many of the support structures or institutional structures: there is *an assumption that multilingual learners are coming from a place of deficit and many professors, staff, and Canadian born students may be of the opinion that a lack of expertise in Standard Academic English may be indicative of a lack of intelligence or critical thinking.* Multilingual International students *face financial barriers to their success* – whether that is *the price of tuition, healthcare, or a support network that is readily available. This also creates social and psychological vulnerabilities potentially*. (Bret)

Melissa identified similar challenges in relation to language proficiency being uncritically considered a direct indicator of intelligence. She mentioned witnessing multilingual international students receiving a kind of support at the university differentiated by racism. In particular, she spoke of faculty unfairly altering assessment-related practices, such as a grade breakdown weights and deadlines, on the assumption that these students were passive, uncritical, and unfamiliar with their rights as students. She argued that such discriminatory approach only rendered support services "less effective" in the end, thus impacting students' experiences cyclically.

> From my experience, one challenge faced academically is *encountering faculty who take advantage of students' unfamiliarity with the academic system*, and do things like *change grade breakdown weights or deadlines without notice, assuming that student do not know their rights, or counting on the fact that marginalized students would not contradict an authority figure for fear of consequences*. Socially and psychologically, I have witnessed *students being treated as less intelligent due to language barriers*, which is demeaning and makes the assistance that is provided less effective and less supportive. (Melissa)

Gregory suggested a number of general challenges. He argued language-related challenges might affect the students' ability to understand and produce academic work, in addition to impacting service-oriented communication. In a similar vein, Harryba, Guilfoyle, and Knight (2011) found that language proficiency was a significant barrier encountered by support staff in their attempts to understand, communicate with, and provide support to multilingual international students at an English-medium university in

Australia. Analogous to the other responses, Gregory also mentioned financial and

psychosocial challenges which he believed stemmed from being away from family and

in an unfamiliar cultural environment:

> Some students *have trouble with the English language which makes communicating with them more difficult. Financial costs* for international students are much greater than those for Canadian students. *Stress* is a factor for international students who are far from home and their normal support networks as they strive to meet academic expectations. They are *often alone on holidays they don't celebrate and eating food they are not used to eating.* Academically, if English is not their first language they *may have difficulty writing assignments, understanding lectures and assignments.* (Gregory)

Maria identified comparable challenges to those identified by Gregory: language

and finances. She explained that specific linguistic features of English had caused

miscommunication between her and some of the students with whom she had worked

at Pond. Additionally, she also mentioned the cost of housing as a possible factor

behind multilingual international students' financial challenges. Indeed, at the time of

this study, it was reported on the news that several Toronto-based universities had

come together to establish an affordable housing plan for students in response to the

expensive cost of living in the city. This multi-institution project was named

StudentDwellTO[13].

> I believe the biggest challenges they face are *linguistic and financial.* Through my own experiences with students, they *often have difficulty grasping the speed of speech and understanding language pitch and therefore can misinterpret the context of information. As the cost of living* continues to increase within Toronto*, financial constraints also result in many challenges during their time at Pond.* (Maria)

Finally, Oliver identified dealing with mental health issues as a possible

challenge. He suggested specifically that multilingual international students might have

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[13] Website: www.studentdwellto.ca.

difficulty understanding what constitutes mental health in the Canadian context.

Research suggests that help-seeking behaviour is largely culturally informed, and many

international students come from cultures where seeking support can be regarded as a

sign of weakness or from cultures whose counselling services differ significantly in their

approaches, thus rendering the services offered in Western universities unfamiliar or

intimidating (Harryba, Guilfoyle, & Knight, 2012; Russell, Thomson, & Rosenthal, 2008).

> I find that some international students *take longer to recognize that they are experiencing mental health issues* compared to domestic students. A lot of times, these international students *do not know what mental health is as they are from cultures that do not talk about these issues as much*. (Oliver)

Supporting achievement of academic success

This final section presents support staff's insights into how multilingual

international students may be better supported at the university. Responses generally

suggest that community integration should be prioritised as a means of support. Staff

believed integration could be accomplished through interaction between multilingual

international students and Pond's more experienced current or former students,

fostered through networking opportunities, bridging programs, and mentored one-on-

one support.

All support mechanisms proposed were seen as an institution-led effort. Melissa

proposed domestic and international students should be matched for mentorship on the

basis of mutual individual interest. Julia suggested support could be offered through

academic bridging programs and networking opportunities with Pond's alumni. Similarly,

Gregory recommended additional support for integration, but through individual

mentorship. Furthermore, he mentioned additional linguistic support could be made available for "struggling" students. Maria also spoke of Pond International playing a part in creating a network for students to connect with for the purpose of easier adjustment.

> I think *mentoring programs that link domestic and international students*, organized in a way that *matches interests* would be an excellent idea. This could be easily done in a format not unlike an online dating site, where algorithms match students. (Melissa)

> *Bridging programs; networking opportunities with similar alumni*. (Julia)

> Pond does offer assistance to those who seek it but *perhaps there should be more. More community engagement for newcomers*. Perhaps more *one on one* to make sure they are succeeding. *More writing/speaking labs* for those struggling with English. (Gregory)

> *Pond International should work closely with international students to provide community support groups within the university*. This would help create a "family" network to *help them adjust quicker to living and studying here and understanding the Canadian culture*. (Maria)

Bret considered that the provision of adequate support depended on a number of complex changes at the institution. He argued that his service unit lacked financial, and therefore material means to support the growing number of international students admitted at Pond. He juxtaposed the high cost of international student tuition to an insufficient amount of support available in return to multilingual international students. Nevertheless, Bret's central argument criticised structural and behavioural "racisms" and "elitism" propagated by support staff and faculty. For him, the branding of language support for multilingual international students as "ESL" services was also problematic:

> First off, there needs to be *far more support materially*. The *budget* for a unit like the writing centre is small and hardly capable of dealing with the numbers of students that the university is taking in. Financially, international students are *paying twice the tuition, but they are not receiving the material supports they need to succeed and transition successfully*. Next, and this is critical, *all support units and teaching structures need to critically self-reflect on the implicit and latent racisms and elitism that they exhibit*. Whether this is *structural or behavioural*, there are real issues that need to be addressed. *The university needs to get away from the "ESL" brand and focus on English Language Learning, or multilingual learning*. The fact that we continue to use this language of second language learning *reflects certain assumptions*. (Bret)

Lastly, Harman suggested that Pond maintain its current support strategies, and that concerns voiced by multilingual international students should be considered by the university. From a different point of view, Oliver recommended that support should be provided to faculty and staff in how to work with multilingual international students. He believed that cultural training should be a strategy employed continuously, in addition to specifically hiring future faculty and staff who possess previous work experience with multilingual international students.

Conclusion

Prior to presenting the portraits of the four focal participants, a few points are worth mentioning for they help illustrate some of the context of Pond University. Overall, domestic students demonstrated an awareness that international-domestic student interaction was not a naturally-occurring experience. Yet, despite this recognition and that of the importance they supposedly ascribed to inter-group contact, they expected *the university* to remedy this issue.

As for faculty, their voices raised a general concern with respect to the level of linguistic preparedness for academic studies on the part of multilingual international students. This suggests that more support may be needed in the community in that regard. Indeed, support staff commented on the need for more adequate support for the international student population on campus, thus suggesting that the institution may need to focus more on the enhancement of its support system. Lastly, while all groups reported valuing multiculturalism and multilingualism on campus, it remains unclear to

what extent these two features extended meaningfully beyond the surface and included

experiences beyond simply seeing and hearing the *other*.

Chapter 6

Claire: "It's very lonely here"

Introduction: Languages coming and going

Claire Champs was an international student from France studying at the University of Montreal, one of Canada's largest French-medium universities. At the time of this study, she was in the second year of her four-year Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree program in international studies. Claire came to Pond University to complete the second year of her program officially as an exchange student from the University of Montreal, with which Pond held an exchange agreement. She was taking five courses in both fall and winter terms at Crandall, Pond's bilingual campus located in the northeast of Toronto: nine courses in English, and one in French. She was nineteen years old and originally from a small town near Bordeaux, in southwest France.

Claire moved to Canada shortly after finishing high school. She settled in Montreal in the summer of 2017, at seventeen years old, in preparation for the upcoming fall term at her host university. She was an ardent enthusiast of world affairs, especially in relation to environmental sustainability. Her concern about globally-relevant environmental issues—climate change, pollution and waste, and animal welfare—was expressed in public conversation with like-minded students on campus, and through shared participation in community-wide events. Such active, passionate engagement often resulted in feelings of frustration, but evoked a growing inspiration in her to work toward change for a better future.
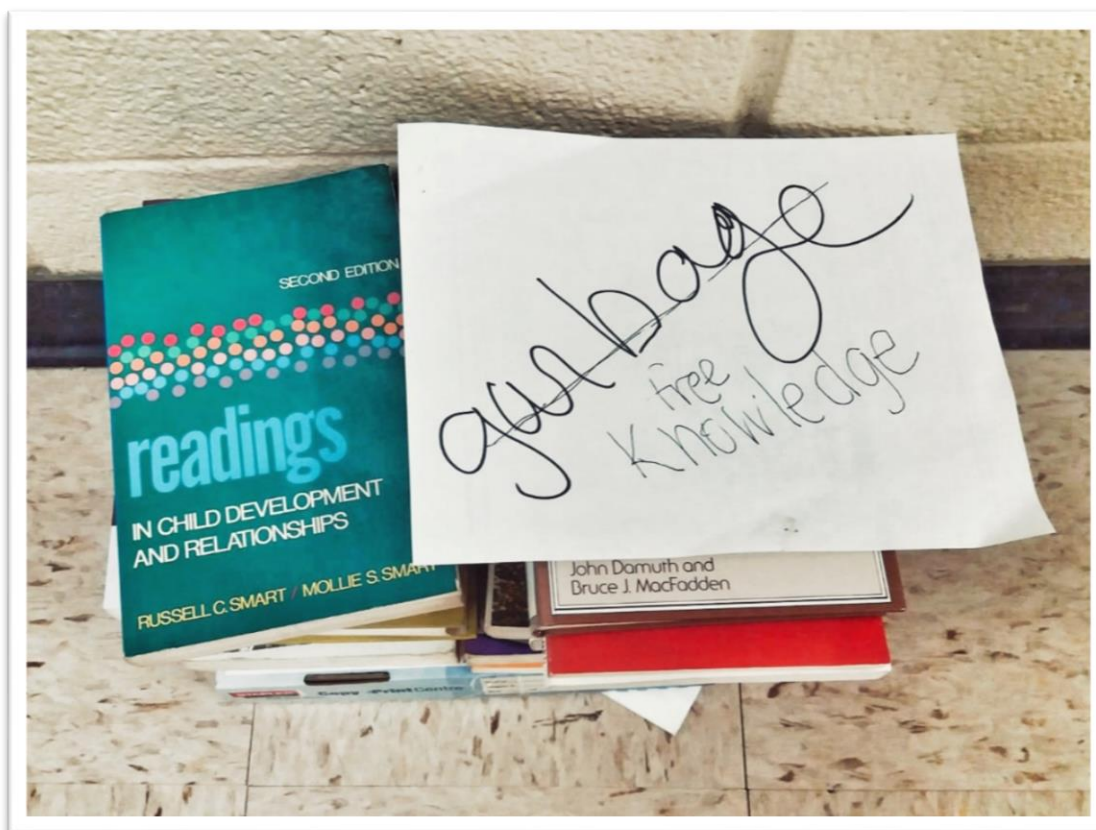
Figure 6.1: Redefining. On her way to class, Claire encountered a pile of books labelled "garbage." Disappointed, she scratched the word off and wrote "free knowledge" instead.

It was at the age of seven, while in *école élémentaire*, the equivalent of primary school in Canada, that Claire began learning English. In France, like in many European countries, English is a mandatory subject in school, but once students reach *collège*, or middle school, they may choose a third language to learn. Accordingly, Claire chose German as her third language, studying it for a total of seven years until the last year of *lycée*, or high school. "In *collège*, we can choose generally between German or Spanish, and sometimes Italian or Portuguese. But mostly it's German and Spanish: German in the north of France, and Spanish in the south." Although her school was located in a southwestern town, Claire opted for German rather than Spanish.

Yet, while for many students three languages were more than enough, Claire ventured into a fourth. Thanks to her school's multilingual profile, she had the opportunity to learn one more language in addition to German. "In some schools, we have the option to study a fourth language, normally a classical language, like Latin or Greek. So I chose Latin." She took Latin for three years; however, because she was not going to be tested on her knowledge of the language in the *baccalauréat* test at the end of high school, she invested her time and energy into studying English and German instead, the two languages she did have to know for the test. Consequently, she considered herself to possess much deeper knowledge of English and German, although like Latin, she never used German outside the language classroom in France. Yet, Claire's multilingual proficiency does not sequentially result from this formal and ordered language learning experience. She considered herself stronger in Spanish than German, for instance, although she reported not learning the former in school.

In the present time, however, whether Claire used English or French depended on place and task. She used French primarily to communicate with her parents over *WhatsApp*, who lived in Gabon. But when in Quebec or France, she used it in conversation with friends, classmates, and instructors, since French was the official language at her host university. At Pond, however, English was the dominant language instead, although as a student living in residence, she had met other Francophone students from France and Senegal with whom she sporadically spoke French with. Moreover, English was the language she used to do research online and read books she borrowed from Crandall's library in her pastime.

Part I: La cartographie d'un voyage

From France to Canada

As early as in the first year of high school, Claire already aspired to study and later embark on a career in international politics. Her motivation for politics flowed from a deep desire to not only critically understand society, but also contribute to its development in a practical, ethical, and sensible manner. The archetypal politician as a popular public figure was not the character she wished to write herself into by studying politics. Conversely, she hoped to make a difference by being a part of an international organisation focused on social and environmental sustainability, whether working from the office or in the field. To embark on this professional journey, Claire instinctively gravitated toward *Sciences Po.*

Sciences Po, a national nickname for the Paris Institute of Political Studies, was founded in the early 1870s shortly after France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian war (Brizard, 2013). Today, the institution is recognised as one of the most prestigious in Europe for political and administrative post-secondary studies, having a highly selective admission process in place. The institution is the *alma mater* of several notable alumni, including Emmanuel Macron and the previous six presidents of France, in addition to dozens of presidents at well-known international organisations such as the United Nations and UNESCO. In 2018, Times Higher Education ranked *Science Po* as the best social sciences institution of higher education in France (Times Higher Education, 2018).

In light of its reputation, many high school students in France and abroad who are interested in a career in politics hope to join the institution. However, with an

admission rate of as low as 10% and arguably a clearly (pre-)defined alumni profile, the institution has been continuously criticised by some as elitist and exclusive (Koh, 2016). Unfortunately, because Claire lacked a solid foundation in the social sciences by the end of high school, she could not pass *Sciences Po's* entrance exam since it tested students primarily in that subject. During high school, Claire had focused mostly on the natural sciences, which she did not identify with, and today, a few years later, she regrettably wished she had taken a different academic path in high school, one more closely invested in the social sciences instead.

Subsequently, Claire resorted to her back-up plan. Still firmly interested in studying international politics, she researched similar degree programs offered at other schools throughout France. She was determined to pursue her dream, even if not at *Sciences Po*, the place where she believed she could have gained the most from, both academically and professionally. But the kind of politics program she could see herself in—consisting of a multidisciplinary, critical, and international curriculum—was only offered at private French schools. Besides the considerably high tuition fees associated with these programs, she felt these private schools could pose a certain level of risk to her future career as not all of them were of an established credibility in France, thus compromising the validity of her future degree and, potentially, her professional career. She summarised the experience as follows:

> In France, there are some schools for political studies and I wanted to [study] this, but there is like a big test to select the people and it's very famous in France, *Science Po*, and I knew that… I was very stupid—I did in high school a program which was mostly about science, like human science, like biology, mathematics, physics, and I hated this program! I'm not a scientific person, like in that area. So I just wanted to go somewhere else and I didn't, I never took a class of political science because we can't in high school in France. But I wanted to try and to do the test to get into this school [Science Po] and I had to have another plan, a plan B. And so I searched

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the study which was similar to the one in France. But in France it was only at private schools, and it costs a lot. And it's not recognised by all the other [government] areas and it depends on the reputation of the school. (Interview 1)

When a panoramic examination of a national scale revealed an unpromising prospect, Claire began considering academic possibilities in the international context. She explored other academic possibilities in Europe, the United States, and Canada. But to her surprise, she did not have to look very hard—the right opportunity came to her, exactly at her high school, when recruiters from the University of Montreal travelled to her district to promote the university to French students at several local high schools. In discussion with one of the recruiters, Claire learned about the wide spectrum of academic opportunities offered by the university, and took a brochure home to reflect and study upon, at which time she realised that the University of Montreal's international studies program was structured precisely as she wanted.

As a potential international student coming to Canada, Claire was likely to encounter double- to triple-cost tuition fees. Except that the government of Quebec had a unique partnership with the French and Belgian governments which levelled international tuition to students from these countries down to the rate non-Quebec Canadian students pay when they study at a Quebecois university. The international partnership's stance on more affordable tuition fees significantly impacted her consideration of Canada and the University of Montreal as a potential destination in which to pursue her academic dream. She knew it was the right decision when her parents also fully encouraged her to embrace the opportunity.

There was some event for high school students where they can meet the school and meet the personnel of the school and it was the University of Montreal. They come to France to do some

advertising and speak about studying in Canada. And they explained me all the programs they had, and I so searched and found the international studies, it was the same, multidisciplinary. I like this, because it's like history, language, politics, law, economics, and political studies. It's really wide and diverse. And also the one big part of the explanation is that as a French [citizen], we don't pay the studies as an international student. There is an agreement between France and Quebec, only Quebec, not the rest of Canada. So if I went here [Pond] to study, it would cost a lot, quite a lot! Like CAD $30,000. It's a lot! And with the agreement with Quebec, we pay like a Canadian, not like a Quebecer. But it's the same course so [as] if I went to private school somewhere else in France, so thanks to this agreement I started to do all this here. (Interview 1)

From Montreal to Toronto

Though Claire was an international student at the University of Montreal, in some ways she sought to have more of a "local student" experience. A common practice among domestic students in the international studies program was that of going on an academic exchange. Many would seek to gain experience abroad by studying in one out of dozens of possible partner destinations, normally in their second or third year, after completing the program's foundational courses. Claire followed the same trajectory as she saw the opportunity advantageous for her future, though her decision was a late-coming one. However, since she had lived in France for 17 years, she considered it redundant to study somewhere in Europe again—the most desirable destination among her classmates. Alternatively, she then hoped to go to the United States where she could attain the one goal she had set for her second year of university through an exchange: to improve her proficiency in English.

Most students in her program envisioned the academic exchange as an opportunity to experience something refreshingly different, something both culturally and linguistically novel. In fact, Claire was among the very few students who considered studying in the United States, since the country shared one of the same official

languages of Canada and was in some ways not considered a sufficiently distinct destination given the close proximity to Canada. Nonetheless, as a Francophone speaker, Claire was expected by the target university of her choice in the United States to complete the TOEFL test prior to the exchange. But she lacked enough time to write the test and get the results in time for the beginning of the upcoming fall term. Facing this obstacle, she found her journey diverting again: this time to completing an exchange at a university within Canada.

Pond University was not Claire's first choice, but it would have been the most convenient, while still affording her the prospect of speaking English. The bureaucratic process involved in arranging an exchange with another Canadian university was considerably faster and easier for Claire's home university, which meant she received her confirmation in less than two months from the day she submitted her exchange application. Most importantly, she was exempted from writing the TOEFL test exclusively for the purpose of the exchange at Pond as it was not a requirement on the exchange agreement between the two universities. A move from Montreal to Toronto resulted in lower stress and cost as well, since in the end Claire was able to transport all of her belongings in a single car trip between the two cities. She explained:

> We could go everywhere we wanted for an exchange. Like a lot of people in my program, when they want to do an exchange, usually they don't stay in Canada, they are Quebecers or Canadian already, so they don't want to study in Canada again. So they go to Europe, or China, some in Lebanon, even in the United States, not a lot, but they just want to go to another place that is different. But I thought it was stupid for me to go back to Europe and I wanted to improve my English, and it was easier with the administration and the papers too. And it was also easier to move my stuff from Montreal to Toronto. So my main goal was to speak English. I wanted go in the United States, but the university needed the TOEFL test and I didn't have enough time to do it to get the results before my term would begin. (Interview 1)

In spite of all the convenience afforded by a move within the same country, Claire still felt initially apprehensive. She was concerned about the extent to which she would be realistically practicing her English during her time as an exchange student. She was joining Crandall, an officially bilingual campus of Pond University where, although classes were available in English and French, the majority of these were offered in French, and the campus was recognised for its Francophone student population and identity. The first year of her academic studies in Montreal had consisted entirely of classes taught in French—an experience she hoped to avoid in order to prioritise her English, but which she could not be certain of considering the bilingual status of Crandall.

Though Claire feared the possibility of an unfulfilled goal, her pertinacious desire to embrace the unfamiliar, yet potentially rewarding, opportunity was much greater. Perseverance was naturally one of her most prominent qualities, spanning from her leaving home at seventeen to now moving, at nineteen, to a city and a university where she knew nobody and had never been to before. Five months into her exchange, precisely when we met for the first time, Claire had reported feeling happy about this aspect of her exchange as her goals for language improvement had been met up until that point. Her academic experience was constructed primarily in English, as in interacting with instructors as well as classmates, and in reading articles and writing essays in English, akin to what she had hoped for.

Yet, deep inside, the very French Claire aimed to avoid, when occasionally overheard down the hallways at Crandall, awakened a visceral experience internally. Even when spoken by strangers, the sound of the language translated into a heartfelt,

accentuated familiarity and ease within her. After all, Crandall's small campus size,

along with its seemingly impenetrable culture, had made it challenging for her, as an

international exchange student, to socialise and make connections with other students

at a meaningful human level. In her experience, domestic students were not

constructively invested in campus life because most of them lived off campus, some

with their families, thus spending little substantial time around after classes were over

for any given day. However, Claire's socio-academic needs and expectations were

clearly different, since she studied *and* lived on campus. In the absence of interactions

in English, the French echoed at a distance around campus sometimes filled this

growing void, albeit temporarily.

> I was really scared because Crandall was bilingual. But it was the only exchange that didn't require the TOEFL and that I could still speak English. So I tried it, and now I'm happy because I speak a lot of English here. I think, like, sometimes it's good to just hear some French and to speak my native language because there is a cultural barrier, a language barrier. And also in Crandall, we cannot meet a lot of people. Like the students, they just go in the class, and they don't live on campus so they just go back to their family after. So sometimes it's good to hear French. (Interview 2)

Part II: L'anglais en contexte

The beauty and the ugliness

My first interview with Claire took place at Crandall on a frosty Saturday morning in early

January. The commute to campus took nearly two hours, but the long distance was

compensated by the comfortable heat on the train against the -15°C weather outside.

Despite the cold of what felt like a typical Canadian winter's day, the morning was

decorated unobstructedly by the bright sunshine, together with the clear, cloudless blue

sky, imparting a vivid radiance to the snow accumulated on the ground. As I arrived on

campus, I walked down the one path which all students, faculty, and staff had to take to reach the main entrance. On the right, dozens of leafless trees populated the area immediately contouring the narrow, slippery path; while on the left, a vehicle moved slowly into the long, empty driveway.

Pond's Crandall campus was praised for its organic, unsophisticated beauty. Nature surrounded the buildings with strong, long-branched, deciduous trees; tall but regularly trimmed bushes; and an adjacent river which delineated the boundary encircling the campus within the local neighbourhood. Crandall's architectural style was often characterised as resembling old-fashioned European exposed-brick buildings, although more recently the campus architecture juxtaposed past and present with its new, modern, but charmless square-shaped glass entrance building. Regardless of the contrasting addition, every single alumnus or alumna of Pond I had met in the past who completed their degree at Crandall would proudly promulgate their intimate affiliation to this small campus, reinforcing a collective identity constructed around the campus' close-knit culture and natural beauty.

Once inside, I made my way to Tim Horton's, only to discover it was closed on the weekends. I waited outside its entrance as that was my meeting point with Claire. A group of four students stood fairly close to me, animatedly speaking a loud French and guffawing at themselves after every humorous remark. A few minutes later, I spotted someone on the other end of the long hallway, and while walking down toward her, we both seemed to timidly but instinctively recognise each other. I had felt rather comfortable with the obvious awkwardness of first-time meetings since in that January I had been very frequently meeting with participants I had never met in person before. I

quickly introduced myself to Claire, and we agreed to walk toward the campus cafeteria located in the next building.

As we walked over to the cafeteria, we passed by several empty classrooms, hallways, and open spaces. There was absolutely no activity taking place around us— the only thing surrounding us was silence. Even the enthusiasm I had previously heard in the students' lively conversation could not camouflage the fierce, quickly-felt feeling of campus as a space profoundly devoid of life. Was the extended silence a Saturday thing? To my disappointment, it was no different in the cafeteria, except for a student who seemed lost, but recognised Claire from a class, and approached her to ask for directions to a room he could not locate on campus. Politely, Claire answered his request. Their brief conversation unfolded in French, and later that day, once home and reflecting on the whole experience, I wondered whether one could really practice their English in what seemed like a predominantly French-language environment.

Claire was dressed in a thick, black winter coat, which she kept on during the course of the interview, like a heavy shield she carried around to protect herself with. She appeared to have a quiet, shy, and reserved personality, but I was not convinced since first-time interviews can feel intimidating and intrusive to the participant. She spoke calmly, softly, and sometimes so quietly to the extent I could not hear her voice. From our first interview, I learned equally about her experience as a multilingual international exchange student as I learned about herself as a person: someone genuine, caring, respectful, and intelligent who had a sincere and deep connection to her immediate family. The conversations we had following that interview afforded me an opportunity to develop a more holistic and accurate understanding of her social,

academic, and linguistic experiences, which at times differed from what she had

cautiously shared in the first interview.

Figure 6.2: Distance. The lonely bench facing the main campus building from afar, like Claire's

relationship to Crandall: darkened, distanced, and desired.

Acquiring new language

After receiving confirmation of her exchange by the international office at the University

of Montreal, Claire began excitedly exploring her course options for the fall and winter

terms. She was expected to take ten courses, in total, whose credits could be

transferred over to her original degree. But surprisingly, Clare encountered two

obstacles. First, she learned that she could only enroll in first- or second-year-level

courses. Most of the courses she found interesting, however, were upper-level courses

which were either not open to exchange students or required a foundational course taken exclusively at Pond. Second, although the range of courses was diverse, most of these were offered in French. There was less flexibility when considering courses in English.

Claire had never previously taken courses in English at the academic level. At her home university in Montreal, all instruction occurred in French, and as an incoming international student to the University of Montreal, she was required to write a pre-admission French-language test. Without any knowledge or experience in taking post-secondary courses in English, she opted to take one course in French as a precaution in case her other courses turned out to be overly linguistically challenging: "Last term, I took four English classes and one in French because I didn't know when I came here if it was going to be difficult or not," she explained. Her disquiet in relation to her performance in English was such that she decided to write the TOEFL test to ensure her language proficiency was adequate, even though it was not a requirement for the exchange—it was instead an act of self-reassurance.

Contrary to what she had anticipated, studying in English was not essentially an all-around difficult experience. Her fear of being unable to understand her instructors in lectures proved unsubstantiated when, in fact, she could process the language effortlessly in her mind. The times when she spoke to her instructors in private were for the purpose of clarification of course content, and never language itself. Gradually, the supposedly inauspicious academic classroom she had anticipated to find became a safe and productive space for improving her language skills, particularly in terms of the acquisition of academic vocabulary. Her courses covered a number of different

subjects, and she found that the classroom was the best place to learn specialised language in English in relation to any subject matter presented in her social sciences-oriented courses.

Atkinson (2011) considered second language acquisition to be an ecological process. He argued that learning was the default state of affairs for human beings—in this case, language learners—and that it was not most effective through rule-like instruction in the language classroom, which he actually proposed to be a rather "exotic" location for learning. Rather, he argued that humans learned from *being, living,* and *being a part of* their natural environment, which presented continuous naturalistic opportunities for second language acquisition. In the context of Claire's experiences, she felt as though she best learned specialised language related to international studies *in the classroom* because it was the only environment in which very specific theories, concepts, and readings—curated carefully by her instructors for the purpose of higher level learning—were ever discussed. In her case, such specialised language of theory was naturalistically unavailable elsewhere, except for when she sought it out on her own in other "exotic" locations, such as the campus library.

Yet, Claire experienced naturalistic learning of new, everyday English uniquely outside the academic classroom. Any sociocultural space she was in—visiting intentionally or passing through on her daily commutes—afforded her the chance of learning language in context: "When I go to the museum, suddenly I will discover new words, new expressions. Or if I go to the cinema or the theatre, or when I look at the posters in the hallways in Crandall," she exemplified. She even found it frustrating that most of the posters at Crandall were written exclusively in French. After all, her ultimate

goal was to develop in English the same kind of non-academic vocabulary she encountered on the French-language posters around campus. Going to the cinema, for instance, exposed her to a register of the English language more closely aligned to that of her quotidian, dynamic experiences, something she already knew in French, but hoped to develop comparably in the English language. In short, she reported learning the register of English she aspired to know when she least expected to.

The "four skills"

As a multilingual student, Claire's proficiency in each of the four traditional skills in the English language did not necessarily develop uniformly. These skills were developed relationally to the sociolinguistic contexts in which they were most often used over time. Thus, she considered herself to be significantly more proficient in reading as she had spent years reading in English for pleasure, beginning in middle school, and more recently also for academics, after she joined the University of Montreal. She particularly enjoyed reading non-fiction of a critical perspective in English, regularly spending her free time reading books she borrowed from the Crandall library. Whenever she came across an unfamiliar English word in her course readings or borrowed books, she would resort to an online translator to understand its meaning.
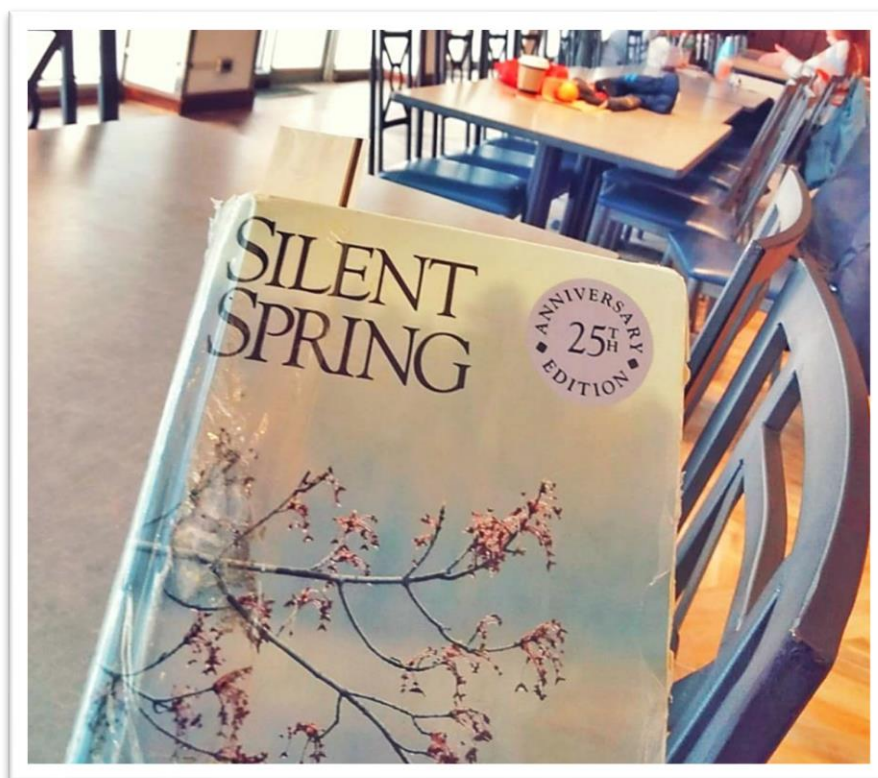
Figure 6.3: Language and content. Claire reading about the effects of pesticides on the environment in English through Carson's (1962) *Silent Spring*, by herself in the cafeteria.

On her exchange at Crandall, Claire prioritised the improvement of her oral skills in English. She felt the least confident toward speaking, and as mentioned earlier, envisioned the academic experience as the suitable opportunity in which to gain such linguistic improvement. As I observed from my visits to campus as well as from Claire's own accounts, daily life at Crandall seemed to transpire overwhelmingly in French, thus directly thwarting her original plan. Moreover, although her classes were in English, they were conducted in conventional lecture style, where the instructor did most of the talking, and her classmates—either Anglophone or bilingual Canadians whose English did not need any "practicing"—were largely socially and linguistically unavailable to her experiences.

Swiftly, the hope for oral skills improvement not only sounded mythic, but also affected other aspects of her academic experience. The absence of meaningful and regular opportunities to speak English contributed to feelings of unpreparedness and nervousness when Claire had to deliver an oral presentation in front of the class later in the fall. Surrounded by native speakers, she felt stressed, intimated, and frustrated that she could not draw on her conversational experiences to help naturalise her language during the presentation. "I think, really, the most challenging thing is the presentation because I am not good to speak in English. I'm better to write or to understand [listening]. And when I did a presentation in front of class, I feel very stressed in English, it's very hard," she told me in disappointment.

In situations analogous to these, Claire tried to look at the bright side. She highlighted her usual experience at the University of Montreal, wherein her classes consisted of a considerably larger number of students, lacking therefore a strong feeling of community and affinity among her classmates. At Crandall, on the other hand, the classes felt more cordial and relaxed, owing to their small size. Consequently, in moments of stress caused by language-related challenges, she at least felt less judged by her peers, even though in Montreal she could still present in the language she considered herself strongest in. Because delivering oral presentations occurred rather infrequently, Claire saw little value in seeking academic language support for this matter.

The skill Claire did seek assistance with, albeit only once, was writing. At the end of the fall term, she was expected to submit a final research paper to one of her courses. Concerned with the weight of that assignment, she made an appointment at

Crandall's small career centre office to ensure her written English was correct. During

her appointment, she felt surprised to learn that her writing style was coming across as

flowery, which she later attributed to being the result of including direct translation of

French expressions into English and of following French writing conventions. The staff

member who worked with her characterised the language as more literary- than

academic-sounding. In response, Claire made changes to not only the language itself,

but also the structure of the paper, such as in moving the thesis statement to appear

early on in the essay. From this singular experience, she gained knowledge concerning

cross-linguistic writing conventions:

> For English speaking, I don't ask [for help]. But for my assignments, for my research paper, at the end of the term, during the last term, I went to *Centre Carrière*, it's in Crandall and I just asked them to read my essay, and if there are some big errors or for the vocabulary and grammar. And mostly it was okay, but they didn't like my expressions, my translation from French expressions into English. They said it was like old English, like "why do you use beautiful words and sentences?" Because in France, like, we don't write an essay like it's just an essay, we try to do some beautiful, sophisticated way. And I think it's more direct in English, so it's different. Like in French, "na-na-na-na" [says it in rising intonation], and the idea comes after all the discussion. In English you present the idea quickly. (Interview 2)

Part III: Solitude, isolement et désir: Les expériences émotionnelles et sociales

The community, or the lack thereof

A founding methodological principle of this research was to understand experience in

context. Portraitists and case study researchers seek to explore the complexity of

human experience as a situated phenomenon permeated by currents from the contexts

under consideration, be they sociocultural, political, linguistic, or academic. In studying

multilingual international student experience, the context—encompassing diverse

dimensions of experience—plays a critical role in enabling students to act, adapt, and

achieve their individual goals (Lewthwaite, 1996; Rienties & Tempelaar, 2013; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). In addition to my own observations of the research sites where students studied and lived, I was better able to understand the relationship and the influence of the context to Claire's experiences through other key instruments of experience-focused data collection, such as interviews, photography, and documents.

During the months of February and March, concerns relating to the social and cultural dimensions of the student experience at Crandall surfaced on the campus community newspaper. More specifically, a long, disapproving letter written by a student in the *Le Mot* openly criticised the campus for being overwhelmingly white and exclusive to outsiders. The student-author compared Crandall's campus community to the one at Pond's main campus, stating that the celebrated cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity of Toronto could be clearly seen reflected in Pond's main campus' student, faculty, and staff body, but that the same was not true for Crandall's small, seemingly traditional community. The letter also included paroxysms of frustration toward the position of international students as an inferior group at Crandall.

Observing, feeling, and inquiring in this vehement environment were essential for my understanding first of the sociocultural context in which Claire's experiences occurred, and second of her individual experiences alone. A critically elaborated response to the letter, penned by another student, unhesitatingly confirmed some of the original author's perceptions in order to advance the counter-thesis: that Crandall was "by default exclusive," the response read, attributing such natural exclusion to the French language, and indicating that most students attending Crandall were Franco-Ontarians and francophone international students. The former, the student explained,

faced their own challenges in trying to maintain their cultural heritage and identity in Anglophone Toronto, hence the "us-vs-them" cultural boundary. The response also attacked the "extremely high tuition" international students paid at Pond, and proposed that lower tuition costs might help diversify the campus population by widening the range of international students' backgrounds who could afford to attend the university.

My primary concern in the midst of all this was to try to understand the implications of this issue for international students broadly, and specifically for Claire. Over the course of this research, I grew increasingly and genuinely worried about Claire's social experiences because the recurring theme in our interviews was the lack of meaningful and fulfilling human interaction for her. She spent a significant amount of time by herself, and while this was not necessarily concerning in itself, it was *clearly* not what she had desired. At some point, she also began blaming herself for the lack of friendships, seeing something so complex entirely as her own responsibility—or fault— when she could not succeed. For a long time, I strongly resisted seeing this for what it really was: ongoing solitude for Claire and likely loneliness as well. However, I did not want to mischaracterise her experience with my own impressions, and paint a picture of her that might not have been adequate. Over time, however, this issue became gradually more evident as I understood the influence of the sociocultural context of Crandall to Claire's experiences.

In fact, loneliness and isolation have been commonly documented as adjustment challenges of international students in general. Loneliness is understood to be an emotional experience characterised by distress from feeling estranged from others and lacking satisfying social relationships, which are vital to one's well-being, but whose

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absence may potentially lead to other negative, serious psychological conditions as well, such as depression and anxiety (Heinrich & Gullone, 2006; Jones, 1981; Karhe & Kaunonen, 2015). For Sherry, Thomas, and Chui (2010), loneliness in international students is also multifaceted and may originate from a lack of friendships, social networks, and familiar cultural and linguistic environments. Like Claire, international students resort to different strategies to cope with this unpleasant experience, though such attempts may not always result in successful outcomes.

Attempts

As an agentive individual, Claire engaged in a number of strategies to support the development of her desired social networks at Crandall. Being an incoming student completely unfamiliar with campus and its social and cultural traditions, she began searching out for networking opportunities within the academic community as early as in the first week of the fall term, immediately following her arrival. For example, she searched, both online and in person around campus, for student associations and clubs that she could join, meet fellow students, and speak English in. Essentially, she hoped speaking English would be an organic experience, and one not restricted only to the classroom. However, such social events were only available later in September, which meant for a while the campus felt even smaller and quieter than it already was by nature.

The new-student orientations were fundamentally no different. Claire attended a mandatory orientation as well as an optional one designed exclusively for international students. At the latter, she learned all of her fellow incoming international and exchange

students were francophone speakers, who had no interest in speaking English except for in a class or two for which they had signed up when their first choices were full. In contrast to Claire's profile, they had chosen Crandall *specifically* because they could take content courses in French, thus alleviating them from the effort of having to study in English. The orientation also covered topics which Claire was already familiar with from being an international student in Montreal, such as guidelines on how to obtain a health insurance card, on the Canadian weather, and some superficial sociocultural norms.

Claire's last attempt at socialising in English was rather unorthodox. She decided to volunteer as a participant in research studies taking place at Pond. As an international student, she occasionally received emails from the international student office aimed at recruiting multilingual participants. In one psychology study for which she volunteered, the researcher was conducting interviews in both French and English. While Claire knew that French would have facilitated the task, that was precisely not the purpose under which she had decided to participate in the study. So, she eagerly asked to complete the interviews in English instead. As one of the very few realistic opportunities she had encountered to speak with a native speaker of English, she embraced it as challenge and participated in the study fully in English. Nevertheless, the interviews occurred very infrequently, similarly to Crandall's open house activities, in which she had previously been a volunteer once in the hope of practicing her English. She explained in detail:

> It's really hard. Like at the beginning of the year in September, there was no association, no student clubs, because it's very lonely here, to start. So I was very bored. It was hard. And then it began and now I'm involved in some associations on campus because that's the only way to

meet people and speak English. And also I did 'open door Crandall.' I volunteered for this and I will volunteer for the next one. Because it's a time when I meet Canadians, real Canadians, real Anglophone speakers and some people who were here and they wanted to make some other friends. Not just go to the course and go back home. The 'open door' is for the high school students, if they want to study here, they come to see the campus. So it's a presentation where we explain and answer questions. It was during the weekend, one day, it was like just helping with organisation, volunteer to help and set up. (Interview 3)

Outcomes

Despite continuous attempts directed at linguistic improvement, fueled by desire, expectation, and exhaustion, the results systematically fell short of meeting Claire's needs. Overall, the consequences of an absence of communicative opportunity pervaded from the linguistic into other dimensions of experience, and resembled each day more vividly the same experience she had gone through as an international student in first year in Montreal, an experience delineated by a social and cultural distance to local students which she could not abbreviate. In her first year, she had had little contact with local Quebecois students in university due to the "natural" international-domestic student divide.

Claire's experience in Montreal was somewhat surprising, however. Although language proficiency has been the primary factor reported to interfere with the development of meaningful relationships between international and domestic students, profoundly so in academic contexts of English-speaking environments, Claire was a French speaker studying *in French*, thus not in a second language. The obstacle in making new friends was then virtually unrelated to proficiency in a second language. Her unfortunate experience in Montreal and Toronto only amplified the need for a more holistic investigation into international students' experiences wherein all dimensions of

experience are examined in conjunction. An investigation stemming purely from a

linguistic orientation would have been not only insufficient, but also inadequate, to

understand her experiences as a whole individual navigating sociocultural norms in

Quebec. In her own words, she said:

> In Quebec, I met a lot of French students from France. Also from Europe, European countries, and other international students but not a lot of Quebecers, like *real* Quebecer. Like we stay with internationals and Quebecers stay with Quebecers. Maybe I don't think it's reflective of all the students but for my case it was like this during the first year, but maybe it would be different if I were from Montreal, and also it was the first year, it was new for everyone, so... And here [at Crandall] I think the Canadians are very welcoming with the international students, they are very "nice to meet you", they repeat your name, and they are willing to speak with you. Yes, they're happy but it's not friendship. They are courteous, it's okay to exchange, it's good, but not to stay friends. It's not something meaningful or profound. It's not relationship, it's casual. (Interview 3)

Claire's encounters with Canadian students at Crandall were packaged in a

superficial politeness that never extended beyond formality. She never felt as though

she had been treated impolitely, but her hope was that these interactions would

transcend first-time-like acknowledgement and spontaneously flow into genuine

friendships. She never explicitly critiqued Canadian students. Cautiously, she would

characterise these outcomes as part of human nature by referring to one's tendency to

remain within their comfort zone. Yet, contradictorily, she embodied the very exception,

as she searched, hoped, and recognised the importance of support for social and

cultural adaptation and integration into the target academic community. She offered a

cautiously balanced conclusion by saying:

> They [Canadian students] don't need [new friends]. They have already all their roots here. They are not new in this place, so yes. I think it's the same everywhere, like it's when you have your friends, you stay with your friends. It's sad. (Interview 3)

Part IV: Une opportunité d'auto-reconstruction

To tell the truth…

"Do you know if this takes student cards?" was what I had heard, in English with a French accent, as I stood next to a window facing the snowy outside in the open lounge at Crandall. The day was a Friday, and I was waiting for Claire to finish her course at 3pm so we could record another interview. When I turned around in response, I had to decipher what the student had meant by the demonstrative *this.* I quickly realised that what he was referring to was a machine that at first looked like a traditional vending machine to me, but which actually allowed students to charge their mobile phones for a certain fee. Since I had never seen such thing before, I did not know what to reply. I tried to be helpful by pressing some of the buttons on the screen, and after some brief fiddling, we learned that Pond University student cards were fortunately an acceptable form of payment for the student.

Each visit to Crandall only gradually augmented my underlying concern about Claire's negative social and emotional experiences. Once her class ended that Friday afternoon, all her classmates I saw cheerfully stepping out of the classroom seemed to have vanished from sight in the span of a minute. Where did they go? I felt as though I had been able to very viscerally understand what Claire had been painfully experiencing the last few months in terms of life on campus. She and I were then the only people occupying this large, open lounge, haphazardly furnished with empty chairs and tables. Even the student whose mobile phone battery had died earlier had left. With nobody else around, feelings of boredom, segregation, and despondency powerfully paralysed the atmosphere. While I anticipated that Claire would be looking forward to a socially

eventful weekend on campus, I realised this was nearly impossible to experience in this lugubrious space.

At that point, I felt I needed to demonstrate support by acknowledging and validating her experiences through mine, even if mine were not nearly as bad as what she had been experiencing alone all those months. After I explained my concern, Claire finally opened up, admitting in relief, though with a heavy heart, that she continuously supressed the experience from emerging in our interviews because she did not want to skew the results of my research. In our interviews, she had aimed to convey an account of her experience as an international student as "objective" as possible, and did not regard her subjective experiences as adequate enough to be representative of the "conventional" international student experience—an idea I had to laboriously deconstruct for her, met initially with much resistance on her part. She considered any negative aspect of her experience to be *her fault*, and thus consistently disqualified it from being "objective experience." Needless to say, such misconception had a detrimental impact on her.

Furthermore, as an exchange student, Claire was required to buy a mandatory meal plan. Yet, the campus cafeteria served largely junk food—pizza, hamburgers, and hot dogs. This was nothing but demoralising for her. The only other food option on campus was a Tim Horton's—but closed on the weekends—and Claire could not afford to travel by bus to the closest grocery store to regularly buy her own food once she had already paid for the expensive mandatory meal plan. Claire was also a vegetarian, and the food prepared at the cafeteria was meat-based, with a vegetarian option being served infrequently in the week, which posed an ongoing moral conflict within her in

relation to a political cause she felt so passionate about. The following was a part of our

dialogue, in which Claire revealed the truth:

> **Claire**: Honestly… yes. But I didn't want to falsify your study results by saying that. I am so ashamed to say that but some days I missed so much my life in Montreal, but I know that I was among the lucky one[s] who could do a university exchange. I feel like it's unfair to complain about my year here because I was actually lucky to come here, I have had what I wished. But I wasn't prepared to such feeling of loneliness.
>
> **Vander**: You don't have to feel ashamed or guilty. It's not your fault the campus is like this.
>
> **Claire**: But I wanted so much to come here and maybe I took the place of someone else who would have come here. And imagine yourself having to eat the same food during one year. And on Fridays and Saturdays the cafeteria closes so early, at 7pm. At the beginning it's nice because you don't have to cook, but then it's really boring. (Interview 3)

Figure 6.4: Solitude. The view from Claire's room in the residence. Socially and emotionally confined to a dark place, she stared out in desire.

Claire coped with the experience by continuously invalidating it. She often resorted to an imagined reality wherein she was not allowed to complain, wherein complaints could not possibly stem from a place of factuality and legitimacy. Her coping narrative was constructed to position herself as someone privileged and "lucky to be at Crandall," even to the extent of usurping the position of potential students who, in her

mind, might have been somehow more worthy of studying at Crandall than herself. She took upon herself the blame for cultural and academic issues of a systemic and institutional scale, exemplified at various levels of her discourse. For instance, she also considered herself privileged as a student at the University of Montreal for she could join the university at an earlier age than Quebecois students, a condition resulting clearly from province-wide governmental regulation, however, which she saw instead as an individually-earned advantage.

On other occasions, she also expressed that "we"—international students— would take "their"—Canadian domestic students—places in university if tuition were the same for both groups. Such kind of "us-vs-them" view of the world presented a similar discursive structure to the narrow, prevailing narrative in North America concerning immigrants "taking Americans' and Canadians' jobs, housing, and healthcare," which uncritically neglects the wide range of possible challenges foreigners—whether as international students, permanent residents, or undocumented migrants—might face in the new sociocultural space (Chomsky, 2018; Gemignani & Hernandez-Albujar, 2015; Simon & Lynch, 1999; Suárez-Orozco, 2001). When it came to being an international student, Claire had expected herself to fit into an idealised, but rigid, mould of experience with little to no room for individuality. She believed that international students should not complain about their negative experiences because, "like foreigners," they should feel lucky to be in Canada in the first place—in other words, *c'est à prendre ou à laisser*.

Awareness of, and relief from, a French identity

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With the exception of the institutionalised identity of being an international student, which she saw as pre-defined, the life in Canada was in itself a site of opportunity for identity reconstruction for Claire. Informed directly by her personal cross-cultural experiences growing up, particularly more recent ones in connection with her parents' residency in Gabon, she gradually developed a heightened (self-)awareness of what it meant to be French, whether abroad or in France, culturally performed intentionally or unconsciously. On one special occasion, I had asked her to identify the major aspects constituting her identity. Curious from not finding any reference to France in her response, I inquired into the subject by asking whether she considered "being French" a part of how she saw herself. She refused a national association to it by assertively replying "I don't want to be part of a specific structure." She experienced "structures"— another word for culture—as limiting of one's personal agency and freedom.

The first act of identity reconstruction consisted of a divorce from French cultural standards and expectations around beauty and the body. As Martin (2009) has demonstrated, for at least the past 400 years, France has been recognised as a major cultural influencer in prescribing fashion and luxury trends: "historians looking for the roots of high fashion have found key starting points during Louis XIV's reign in the seventeenth century and in Marie Antoinette's personal proclivities at the end of the eighteenth" (p. 1). Past French trends of beauty relied on cosmetics and dress code for both women and men, and exceptionally in the case of a decline in the production of wigs for men, all other trends have only intensified since, as they now drive a huge sector of the French economy (Martin, 2009). Therefore, while in France, Claire found

herself embedded into a sociocultural context where broader trends could directly impact individual choice.

In Canada, however, Claire's experience was different. She felt freed from having to wear make-up and style her hair every day. She noticed that make-up was not a predominant trend among her female classmates in Montreal and Toronto to the same far-reaching extent it was in France. Over in France, she felt as though the choice of not using cosmetics would only subject her to judgment and criticism within her social circle. She felt patrolled by a helicoptering societal expectation toward the culturally acceptable ways in which she should construct her physical look. By contrast, the experience of living in Canada as an international student afforded her the opportunity to, as the idiom goes, "wipe the slate clean" and reconstruct this part of her identity in ways that more authentically reflected her perspectives on physical beauty.

In addition to appearance, Claire considered a French identity to be constructed, reinforced, and reflected in the country's education system. As a high school student, she fantasised about studying at France's most prestigious social sciences school: *Science Po.* She was attracted by the belief that the school's curricula included comprehensive multidisciplinary and international perspectives on political science, consequently equipping students for higher-level international opportunities unlike any other institution in the country. Yet, her long-cherished belief was disappointingly contradicted once she learned of the experiences of students from *Science Po* on exchange at the University of Montreal, whose accounts did not differ in any significant manner from those by exchange French students studying at other universities in France. She characterised French universities to be under "one French vision." This

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meant that, differently from her personal experiences at the University of Montreal and Crandall, intellectual and cultural diversity was a lesser visible and respected component of the French exchange students' academic experiences at their home universities, whether at *Science Po* or elsewhere. During one interview, she shared:

> There are some French students there [at the University of Montreal], also there on exchange from France and from *Science Po*, the school I wanted to go. And they all say that there it's only one vision, one French vision, and they asked me what was my program like, if it was the same as *Science Po*, because it's only one strict view [there]. They don't like *Science Po*. (Interview 4)

Language, unlike anything else, was at the centre of this continuous process of self-reconstruction. Claire approached language in two interconnected ways: as a tool for re-shaping the self, and as identity *in itself*. Concerning the latter, she illustrated the unstoppable existence and permeation of a French identity into cross-cultural exchanges by drawing on her personal experience when speaking English. Her French identity was signalled phonetically, through her accent in English, which she felt judged for by her compatriots when they heard her speak. On the other hand, in her experience in Canada, Anglophone listeners were always able to unambiguously identify her as a French speaker not only because of the accent, but also the "bad reputation" she considered Francophones from France to have in terms of general knowledge of English grammar. Nevertheless, she never felt such identification by Canadians on the basis of her accent was interwoven in judgment when she spoke English to them. She explained:

> I know that Canadians don't judge. Like in France, they do. They judge when you speak in English because we have an accent... French have a very bad reputation when they speak English and it's true. When I hear my father, especially, when my father tries to speak English, it's funny [laughs]. (Interview 4)

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Claire did not want to fully perform what she envisioned to be a French identity. But such enactment was ineluctable since the French language inherently performed it for her—for that, she needed only speak. Claire felt as though the linguistic aspect supporting the existence of her French identity had already been crystallised, therefore disenabling her of any possibility to modify it at the present time. Unlike her appearance, which she could more effortlessly and individually manipulate, the French language had become a mechanised part of her national identity. Yet, if she could not disassociate herself from a collective French identity because of the shared language, she could still reinvent her *individual* identity in a new light. Viewing language as a signal of group identity, she engaged in individual self-reconstruction first by distancing herself from French-speaking groups whose values, attitudes, and behaviour she disapproved of.

At times when the French language could divulge an identity she did not appreciate, she resisted it by withholding the language from social use. As Kelly (2002) has explained, language is intrinsically tied to identity: "individuals use language to both index and construct their everyday worlds and, in particular, their own social roles and cultural identities" (p. 42). However, Claire's process of self re-invention involved a deconstruction of her culturally imposed identity through a monitored, calculated use of French. From her perspective, being French, to a large extent, equated to receiving and replicating one way of being and seeing the world. In turn, she considered this identity to deflect many important possibilities in life, especially those of learning through cultural and intellectual diversity, of seeing the world as if through a kaleidoscope, which she had pleasantly experienced in Canada.

The University of Montreal is multicultural in teaching and learning and meeting people from all over the world. Like, in France, they don't have a lot of international students. And even the French here from *Science Po*, I don't really, I didn't want to stay with them because they just stayed between themselves and don't speak English, they just speak French. (Interview 4)

While French was a tool for cultural identity deconstruction and dissimilation, English emerged for professional identity construction. In Montreal, Claire was deliberate in applying for part-time work in which she would be speaking primarily English. She did not want to be offered a job solely on the basis of her ability to speak French. One of her goals was to find employment in community-based and non-for-profit organisations in Montreal throughout the school year, where she could practice her English and gain transferable administrative skills. At Crandall, she aimed for similar opportunities by assisting in the organisation and execution of campus events, such as Crandall Open House. Lastly, as a student in an international studies program, hoping to later embark on an international career in politics, Claire considered English to be a critical tool for the attainment of all career-related goals. Professionally speaking, English was for her more empowering than French.

Ultimately, Claire's journey of identity reconstruction followed what seemed like a unique path. Generally speaking, she sought to dissimilate herself from a collective French identity. For that, she withheld the French language—her central national identity marker—from unnecessary use in public. However, she never sought to assimilate to a "Canadian identity," even though Canada had become her new home. In her own words, she did not want to be enveloped by a specific cultural identity—"a specific structure"—which could facilely conglomerate her with superficially similar others, and essentialise her individual identity on the basis of group characteristics she

did not necessarily consider beneficial to and reflective of her vision of the world. In this complex process, French and English were tools of both identity construction and deconstruction for Claire.

Learning about the world through others

The few, but more meaningful cross-cultural interactions which Claire experienced in Canada contributed to her overall experience in very positive ways. Even when she considered these exchanges, whether with classmates or strangers in the community, to only minimally promote improvement in the English language, their substance—the ideas, values, and sentiments behind them—was nevertheless important in challenging and expanding not only her knowledge of herself, but also of the world. One particular area which she came to learn more deeply about through conversational interactions was religion and spirituality. Although she had been raised Catholic, she never developed an affinity with the religion. Despite her present disaffiliation, she was still very interested in learning about religion and spirituality from the perspective of others.

Claire regarded going to mass in France more like a pre-scheduled event for spending time with family on Sundays. In Canada, however, she discontinued the habit as a result of being away from family. With no personal identification with religion of her own, she found no substantial reason to keep attending church services by herself. Regardless, from living in two very culturally and ethnically diverse cities in Canada, she was presented with various opportunities to learn about the role religion and spirituality played in the lives of others—an experience she now characterised as "definitely enriching and interesting," but that nonetheless she had never previously had access to

as a consequence of her personal experience with French society's attitudes toward

discussing religion in public. She explained the value behind these unprecedented

experiences by highlighting two interactions she had:

> With my family I used to go to the mass once or twice a month, so it was often. And when I moved here, I don't go, I don't practice because it was more like family time. And with the other religions, [here] I met a lot of different people with different beliefs and I think it's very interesting, especially international students. This year I met a girl who is a Jew, and I have never before really spoken with someone who is involved in the Jew community. So she taught me a lot and she's very open and also speaks about more extremist Jews, and also last year I met someone who was a Jehovah Witness, so yes, it was also very different to speak with people [of different religions]. (Interview 4)

In comparison to her experience in France, Claire found that people in Canada

were more open to discussions that she considered complex and sensitive. Such

difficult conversations consisted primarily of topics related both to individual identity,

such as one's ethnicity and religion, and to a collective one, like politics and society,

which she never saw as the essence of any conversation she had had with fellow

French citizens while living in France. She explained that for her, French society was

tolerant so long as individual differences were not brought to the surface. Whenever

they were foregrounded, they would cause "problem." She made this perspective

evident in our dialogue about religion and spirituality. After she mentioned never having

spoken to a Jew in France before, I felt visibly surprised, considering the large size of

the Jewish population in France (DellaPergola, 2019). In her response, she could not

pinpoint a reason other than covert discrimination toward religious groups, something

she experienced differently in Canada, however:

> I never see Jews there [in France] because… I don't know why. It's so strange, in France it's very controversial, religion, nobody… it's like, in France we say that we are open and we don't discriminate against religions, but it's like, nobody wants to talk about this because it's, like,

problem. So don't tell your religion! Like in Canada it's different, people are willing to speak about their history, their religion, their practice. (Interview 4)

Imagining the future, imagining possibilities

Although Claire was only nineteen years old, her critical knowledge and untypical maturity often struck me as characteristic of someone much older because of the depth of insight associated with them. For the first two months of the study, I had mistakenly recorded her age in my notebook as 22, which I never thought to contest given our stimulating and complex discussions during and after each interview. Claire spent much time engaged in learning: reading books, watching documentaries, visiting museums, and going to plays, among other forms of acquiring new knowledge. For instance, during her time at Crandall, she had been teaching herself the ukulele—her second goal for that year, after the improvement of her English. Some of the things she liked learning about were of interest to me as well, thus making conversations flow naturally most of the time.

The vaster the knowledge, the wider the possibilities she saw for her future. Claire explained that her initial professional plan was to become a diplomat, an idea generally shared among many of the first-year students in her program. But since the first day of classes, every learning opportunity she encountered has contributed to an evolving vision of the future by expanding possibilities and cultivating new curiosities within her. One of these possibilities entailed becoming a researcher, for which she then considered undertaking graduate studies after graduation. Furthermore, two decisive moments have been the choice of a specialisation within the international studies

curriculum, and an exciting upcoming internship with UNICEF in Gabon, where her parents had been living for some time now. She had anticipated the internship to afford her the chance to apply her existing knowledge, gain new one, and help refine her choices for the future.

> When I graduate I think I want to continue my studies. I don't really know, like when we enter the program, the common, the general idea is "I want to be in diplomacy." It's the big idea, but there are lots of other jobs in the area of politics or law or peace and security. And I specialise in peace and security. We could specialise in peace and security, or environment, or international rights and institutions, so I choose peace and security. So mostly I think it will be in politics and then I don't know because I like research so maybe political research. I know that we can advise some [organisations] or [work] in the NGO too. I will do an internship this summer in the UNICEF, in Gabon. They speak French there too. Gabon is a former colony of France. (Interview 4)

By the end of this study, the winter season was already over. And like the longer, sunnier, and more refreshing days of spring, Claire seemed more open, animated, and excited about the freedom interlaced in the upcoming summer break, a time when she would begin her carefully-planned internship, while also spending time with family. The last time Claire and I met, lectures were finished at Crandall for the term, though she was still living in residence as she studied for her final exams and prepared her final essays. Soon, she was to leave behind the dark and lifeless campus in exchange for brighter and more active days in tropical Libreville, Gabon's capital.

At the end of our last interview, I expressed to Claire that I would like to hear from her in the summer in regards to her internship. A few weeks following this last conversation, Claire had sent me a set of colourful pictures of Libreville's beaches. Each picture clearly communicated her singular passion for the environment. Within the collection, a picture of one beach whose shore was visibly polluted with garbage caught

my attention. Instinctually, I knew Claire would be already actively participating in socio-environmental initiatives in the local community as she hoped to change the world, one place at a time. Though she had been enjoying her internship, she was looking forward to returning to Montreal in August in preparation for her third year of university, a time when many new experiences awaited her.

Chapter 7

Seth: "I wanna go back"

Introduction: Past sunsets, regrets, and the English language

Originally from Macau, Seth Wang was still a teenager when his life as an international student began. He left "home" on his own in 2010, at the age of 15, on a flight destined to New York, the place where he would spend the next three years as a high school student. Fast-forwarding another three years, as Seth finished high school, he also felt ready to part ways with New York and its cold, gray, and snowy winters, leaving behind the rushed pace of life. His new destination would be Santa Monica, where the sun shone brightly on the picturesque beaches almost all year long, whose warm, sunny, and sometimes foggy weather contrasted sharply with New York's distinguishable seasonal variation.

During his years as a college student in California, Seth really found himself. Even after three years in New York, neither the city nor the east coast had developed in him a genuine happiness in the same way living in California did. The west coast, by comparison, was inextricably connected to his identity development because it was the sociocultural space where his experience of maturation from being a teenager to an adult in college took place. Life in California, and Santa Monica in particular, deeply influenced his experience of self-discovery and of seeing the world: fascinated both by the local sports culture—surfing, skateboarding, soccer, and beach volleyball, as depicted in dozens of Hollywood movies—and by the seemingly deaccelerated passing

of time, he felt relaxed, satisfied, and like he belonged. Santa Monica had quickly

become his new home, and its culture the framework through which he understood life.
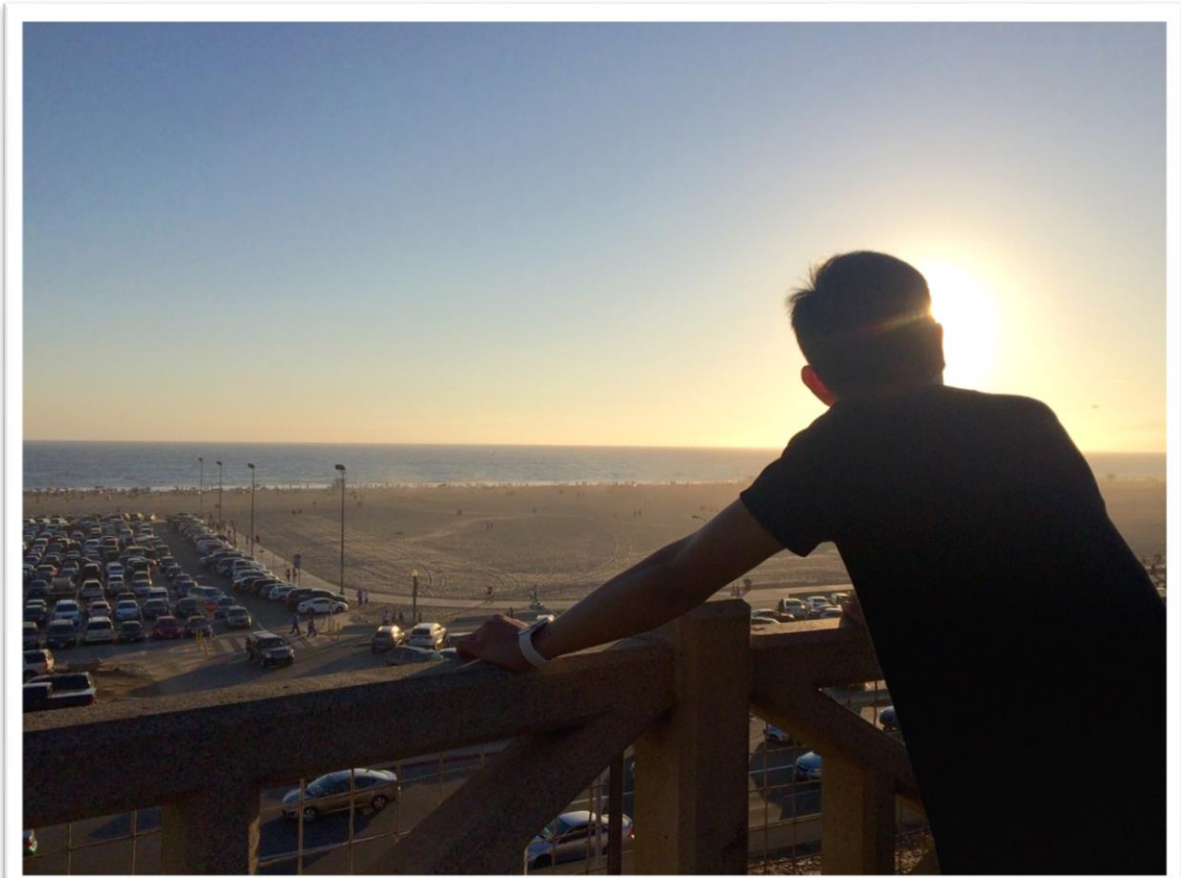
Figure 7.1: The past. Seth watching the sun set over the shore in Santa Monica.

Gradually, like Seth's time in college, his student visa was nearing the end.

Without a subsequent plan, he decided to follow his best friend to Canada, who also

lived in Santa Monica, but was headed to Kingston for university. In the summer of

2018, Seth had discovered Pond University through an online search for programs in

linguistics in Toronto. He had graduated from a computer science program in Santa

Monica, but his latest plan was to diversify his knowledge of computer science by

bringing in perspectives from linguistics. Following the transfer of credits from the

college in Santa Monica to Pond University, he was offered admission to start his studies at Pond in September. He accepted the offer, declared a major in Linguistics, and in early August, he moved to Toronto:

> Which was a mistake [laughs]. Like, because of lots of stories and stuff. I just kind of like west coast better. I'm kind of more like a[n] outgoing person. And Toronto, more like east coast, people are more... conservative. I think of the east coast like that. When I was in New York, people were more like, sort of checked out, just not as open as like, in the west coast. You can easy make friends [on the west coast], very easily. Yeah, and people just less judge [you]. That's why. The weather is always so nice. Actually, I miss it so much. (Interview 1)

For Seth, Toronto felt like New York. Unlike Santa Monica, where he felt socialising and making new friends happened more effortlessly and spontaneously, in Toronto he faced challenges in that very same regard. His perspective on social life, a product of his previous acculturation in Santa Monica, collided with what he experienced as the "busy lifestyle" of Toronto, where activities with people too frequently required scheduling in advance, akin to his overall experience as an international high school student in New York. He was eager to make new friends, but Torontonians, like New Yorkers, were less "approachable." Consequently, fewer social interactions resulted in fewer opportunities to continue to speak and learn the English language.

Seth characterised *speaking* English as "real" language learning. Opportunities to speak English with Canadians were important because they afforded him a chance to use the language in a way that seemed completely foreign when juxtaposed with his language learning experience as a young student in China. His English teachers asymmetrically emphasised the development of reading and writing skills, thus neglecting speaking and listening, as these were rarely part of any examination in the school. Yet, despite the heavy focus placed on reading and writing, Seth still felt

academically unprepared when he was expected to write essays in high school in New York. He found the teaching methods employed by his teachers in China antiquated, automated, and boring, which prevented the gradual development of the linguistic skills he would later need, however, to succeed in high school.

In addition to English, Seth's multilingual repertoire included Cantonese, Mandarin, and Japanese. He considered Cantonese his strongest language, while Japanese the least strong. In California, he worked part-time as a cook in a Japanese restaurant. Accordingly, his knowledge of Japanese consisted primarily of vocabulary related to gastronomy and business, although he had a personal interest in Japanese culture and language, often learning about both on his own time. As for English, while I was very impressed by his ability in the language—especially considering his early learning experience seemed to neglect speaking, and that when in high school in New York, he had not taken any ESL classes—Seth himself felt insecure about his ability in the language, classifying "English grammar" as the source for such insecurity. Nonetheless, he never let the feeling inhibit him from speaking: "if you really want to learn a second language, you just have to talk to people."

Part I: 旅行

A multidimensional journey through English

Seth began learning English at the age of seven, in the first grade of school. At that time, he reported English had only recently become a mandatory subject in his school in Macau. He characterised the kind of English taught then as "very basic" since it focused on simple sentence structure and on reading and writing through a translation method.

In his opinion, international students from China, including himself, were unevenly more proficient in these two skills, but faced more challenges with speaking as a direct result of the traditional foreign language education model in China. Although he progressed through school in Macau linearly, when it came to the English language, he felt his oral proficiency had never evolved, remaining rudimentary up until his arrival in New York.

His early days as a high school student in New York were arduous. Academically and linguistically, he was unprepared. His high school did not offer any support for multilingual students for whom English was an additional language. Moreover, he was not required to complete any English language proficiency test prior to commencing his studies, which meant that he was placed in grade 10 completely on the basis of continuation from grade 9 in Macau, while his proficiency in the English language was never attended to in the placement process. As a consequence, he struggled to keep up with the academic demands of the school. His social and linguistic experiences were interwoven. His attempts to make friends were anchored in insufficient oral language, unfamiliarity with the local culture, and the absence of a support network. "It was a difficult time for me—'cause that was when I had first moved to the States," he explained.

As he grew older, he prioritised the improvement of his oral proficiency in English, and worried less about reading and writing. Based on his continuous attempts and observations of people around him, especially his native-speaker classmates who socialised naturally in the language, he approached oral proficiency as indispensable for interpersonal success. However, without a steadily available social network with which he could regularly practice the language, he resorted to modern-day music and film as

sources for the acquisition of spoken English, mimicking sentences sang or recited by artists, while paying close attention to the pronunciation of the words and the intonation of the sentences within which these words appeared. Learning by imitation, which he reported to continue to do in the present day, informed Seth's belief on how a second language may be acquired:

> I didn't talk much in high school. I learned to speak, like, mostly actually in movie and songs. That helps a lot. To learn a language, like... if you want to learn Japanese or French, for example, you kind of just watch their movie or TV shows and songs and you learn *a lot* actually. (Interview 1)

Despite all trial, Seth never considered giving up. The three long and trying years of high school were "suddenly" over—they became the past in his personal timeline. But he still needed to reinvent the present, to experiment with new possibilities that could challenge his abilities in the language and help him grow as a person. Santa Monica emerged as a destination, where the long summer could be comfort, and the pace was less like the "race" of life in New York. He found a potential college and a program he liked, and the next step was passing the TOEFL test. "I thought I had failed, but I passed [laughs]." With a suitcase and a backpack, all was in order. From the plane, he could sight the iconic Santa Monica pier, and once he landed, California became *Cali.*

The social life Seth could not have in New York he lived and seized in Santa Monica. Two short weeks into his computer science program sprang out new friendships, and later equated to exciting social experiences that he wished had similarly been part of his experience in New York. The expansion of the social dimension—coffee shops, summer sports, and beer—afforded Seth a continuous, naturalistic exposure to the everyday language and socialisation into the local culture.

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On the other hand, his academic English followed a much slower rhythm of improvement. As a computer science student at the college, he was learning a new language: the language of coding and programming. In this context, only infrequently was his academic English explored in the program. Therefore, while his spoken English saw an accelerated improvement as a product of his new social life, his academic English was only minimally developed.

Among many of his new college friends was Lu, another international student from China. Over time, Lu became one of Seth's best friends. In conversation, they would translanguage between English and Cantonese, rarely speaking in only one or the other. When their Anglophone or international friends were present, Seth and Lu used English, but between the two, it felt natural to mix both, as they simultaneously created and navigated the continuum of their individual identities. Once in Canada, however, Seth's academic experiences were much more intensive in academic English than they were at the college in Santa Monica. At Pond, he was required to complete a number of general education courses in the social sciences for which he had to read academic articles and write essays in response. He summarised his engagement with academic English as follows:

> Actually my English is not that good, I don't think. It's sometimes… especially when writing. My writing is really bad. My spelling is... it's worse. Mine is very bad. I just got an essay back in social science class. I got an F 'cause my writing. 'Cause my writing is SO bad. It's just bad. And we're talking about "angles" and Karl Marx, communism, capitalism. Those stuff. Like, it's very difficult language to read. (Interview 1)

It was equally interesting as it was puzzling to hear Seth's English, so well-spoken in conversation, but to learn of his difficulties in the other skills. He felt at ease

communicating orally—he liked using idioms, slang, and had a very good command of English phonetics, he could pronounce the phonemes perfectly—but he struggled with the syntax as he could not easily form grammatical sentences, from a perspective of prescriptive linguistics. On one occasion, after losing points in an essay for incorrect subject-verb agreement, he asked me why the suffix –s had to be attached to verbs in the third person in the singular in the present tense: "why does *speak* take –s for he, she, it?" He was genuinely curious about this aspect of English grammar. He elaborated:

> The [English] grammar is so… first of all, the grammar is different. It's like, it's totally different 'cause Chinese are a character-based language. It's just a lot of words, prepositions, those little things in English that always confuse. We don't have "tense" so we use—we just talk all the verb as going, it's happening right now. We gave the idea of time at the end, like, if you want to know. Instead of "this will happen tomorrow," just "this happen tomorrow." I would just add [the tomorrow]. (Interview 1)

Seth could not identify the ways by which his uncertainties in the language developed. Whether some of his challenges resulted from syntactic features brought into English from Cantonese, from the translation method through which he learned the language, or from any other experience, in all my time working with multilingual international students from China, he was the only one I had ever met who presented such profile in the language. Nonetheless, since his courses at Pond consisted of large, lecture-style, reading-intensive classes, with few to no peer discussion activities, except in some of his tutorial sessions, he found the experience increasingly difficult to deal with as he was unfamiliar with the conventional academic essay style, the specialised language of his readings, and the advanced level of English syntax that he was

expected to use in his essays. In spite of all obstacles, he enjoyed the content of his lectures as it challenged his assumptions about the world.

When faced with a linguistic challenge, Seth turned to the internet for help. He explained that first he would try to find the solution on his own, by searching the web or using an online translator, and then, if still unclear, he would ask his teaching assistants. He preferred resorting to the latter for it afforded him the chance to probe further and to interact with an actual person, but felt his teaching assistants, one in particular, were annoyed by his "frequent" language-related questions during tutorials because they tended to interrupt the delivery of content. Indeed, Seth was very inquisitive also during the interviews, asking me several, and often unrelated, questions that he had been eagerly waiting to ask a "local" person, but had not yet found an adequate opportunity to do so. Our interviews felt like conversations, but when they did not, he had become the interviewer.

> I think the most helpful will be a person that I can ask, sometimes the teacher, or professor or… the TA isn't that patient. Because I ask *a lot* of questions. I asked her *a lot* of questions, she's got annoyed about that. 'Cause some teacher or TA, they go, like, very fast. (Interview 2)

Although Seth had been studying in English for almost 10 years at this point, he refused to envision a finish line to his journey in the language. "I'm learning English all the time, it happens all the time," he affirmed. His learning was not confined to a specific place or experience; rather, he viewed it as a continuous, organic, and interconnected experience that spanned from the classroom out into the hallway, over to the coffee shop and onward to *YouTube*. He was a careful observer and listener, paying attention to the verbal and non-verbal language Torontonians used, and then comparing it to that

which he had acquired in California. Overall, he considered his language learning to occur primarily outside the academic classroom, especially from watching movies and engaging in dynamic, although brief, conversations with local people.

In fact, Seth loved interacting with people, especially strangers. He was gregarious and engaging in conversation, and never hesitated to make small talk with others. For instance, every time we met at a coffee shop on campus to record an interview, while setting up at the table, I would spot him, from a distance, initiating conversation with another student in line as he waited for his turn to place the order. He enjoyed speaking in and showing off his English, sometimes experimenting courageously with new expressions he had found on the internet. He maximised every opportunity by never letting fear of embarrassment or error stop him—"you just have to do it," he said with a genuine smile—and so as the weeks passed, I learned that there was a warm and colourful personality behind the person who would only wear black.

Perhaps predictably then, Seth was enthusiastic about giving in-class oral presentations in English. Although modest in his disclosure, he felt proud of his ability to present in front of others, a performance-like act for which he had both verbal and non-verbal skills. His first presentation in high school in New York was a critical moment for him, for he felt linguistically unqualified, yet never terrified to stand in front of his classmates, most of whom were native speakers. His first presentation in college in Santa Monica evoked equivalent feelings, but by that time he had developed greater self-confidence and dominance in the language, both of which have only continued to grow since then. For these and other reasons, Seth has considered speaking his *forte* in the language.

> When I give a speech or presentation in high school when I first came here, I was kind of proud. Because I always loved presentations and public speaking. [Also] When I gave my first presentation in school in California. Yeah, I can say that's something I'm proud of. Not the first time only, but all of the time, I've done a pretty good job. (Interview 1)

For Seth, his feelings of nervousness when speaking in public were unrelated to his English. Instead, he argued his oral language skills were the very means through which he could overcome such feelings of apprehension. After reading an academic article for one of his linguistics classes, he believed feeling nervous was a natural response in humans to public speaking in unfamiliar environments, but recognised some speakers were skillful in concealing the feeling. While discussing his writing skills produced in him feelings of insecurity and inferiority, conversely he felt not only confident about, but also proud of his speaking, to the extent that he could draw on his ability to make any presentation flow positively.

> I speak well but I feel nervous. Even the best speakers, they will tell you that they feel nervous, everybody. It's kind of innate. I read an article that it's in our DNA, that when you do public speaking, you will feel nervous inside, it depends on how you hold it, like... show it. How is your skill to contain... to hide it!? Yeah, something like that. I do feel nervous but the presentation goes well so I'm proud of it. The speaking is the reason. I speak well in English, I'll say. (Interview 1)

Part II: 适应

Adaptation: A glimpse of the space

For much of February, the exterior scenery of Pond's campus looked like still life photography. The snow looked lifeless, motionless, and locked into the scene, as if campus and the precipitated ice crystals had become a single, unchangeable entity. The lighting was almost always monochromic: it varied from gray, during the day, to

dark, during the night. Exceptionally, the sun would appear, clear the gray skies, and energise campus life like a much needed full charge to a previously low battery. On the cold and gray days, crossing the short path from the subway station into the adjacent building felt more like running a long marathon, squinting against the winter squalls.

As I stepped into the building, I carefully walked down the slippery hallway where the white snow from the outside was turned into brown slush over time. Behind me, a student spoke emphatically to her friend over the phone, vocalising adamantly that her instructor should have given her a higher grade on her chemistry midterm exam. The wind was blowing the thick snow outside and, despite a weather warning in place for a coming storm, the university was still open. It was on this day, with this kind of weather, that Seth chose to have our interview. I hesitated to agree, but since this was our third attempt to meet, I accepted his suggestion, and so we met in the Moss building.

Seth was a natural conversationalist, but his body language often seemed to communicate a certain distance during the interviews. As we sat down in the meeting room I had reserved, overlooking an empty field covered by snow, the first thing Seth did was to move his chair farther away from me to a distance where I was not even sure the recorder would be able to clearly capture his responses. He was easily distracted by the storm forming outside, visible through the window behind me. At times, he appeared uninterested in and disengaged from the interview experience through his unfocused body, unanimated intonation, and laconic responses, even responding with a sharp "*you've already asked this question before*" early in the interview.

My instinctual mode of response led me to take Seth's bodily communication *personally*. As I sat on the subway headed home after the interview, a handful of possible scenarios ran through my head as justifications for the seemingly apathetic earlier experience: first, I was probably a boring interviewer; second, Seth might not have been interested in the study to begin with; and third, I was being intrusive and repetitive in interviews. However, through my analysis of the interview later on that day, which I juxtaposed with other analysed material, particularly the photos he had supplied, I came to identify Seth's bodily behaviour as another indicator of the psychological state of his overall experience toward *living in Toronto*, rather than toward me.

I needed to understand Seth's body as conveying relevant information—as a source of data—instead of as purely non-verbal communication in response to the interview. And so, I regarded the body as *material lived experience*. My attention to the body as data was influenced by Engelsrud's (2005) philosophical and epistemological re-conceptualisation of the act of interviewing, who concluded that "both the expressed and unarticulated bodily experience of the other can be perceived as relevant material for the researcher" (p. 277). The material body had to be understood in the context of his experience as an international student, rather than as an interviewee. Seth communicated the impact of his negative experiences also materially, through the body.

Figure 7.2: The present. Seth's visual representation of his relationship to Pond.

Navigating the local culture

In spite of challenges related to the development of and familiarisation with academic language, Seth's greatest obstacle laid in adjusting to the local culture. Needless to say, moving from Santa Monica to Toronto revealed striking differences whose impact he had not been sufficiently prepared for. The most easily palpable differences were climatic in nature: the mild Californian winter became the "harsh" one of Ontario, with its gray skies and icy roads. In turn, Seth believed the Canadian weather shaped the social and cultural dimensions of life among locals. Hypothesising a connection to the

weather, he characterised Canadians as solemn, uninterested, and aloof. "Canadians are very boring," he told me on multiple occasions.

Figure 7.3: Companion. Seth brought his dog, *Puggy*, from Santa Monica to Toronto. He argued that *Puggy* was the only other who could "understand" the difference between the two cities.

But the object of his dissatisfaction was not just Canadians. For Seth, Toronto was also "dull and depressing." The city was just not "fun" for him: people were always rushing in a space which he argued to lack a friendly and inviting identity. After watching the movie *Enemy*, he considered it emblematic of the atmosphere of Toronto, where the city had been depicted as a gray and gloomy place. Young (2013), a movie critic for the Hollywood Reporter, said of Toronto's "personality" in the movie: "The atmosphere is established from the opening pan over the Toronto skyline, an anemic, smog-shrouded city that could be inhabited by vampires" (para. 3), echoing Seth's own sentiments:

The whole of Toronto is gray. I was talking about with a friend. The architecture design in Toronto is very dull and depressing, yeah. Have you ever seen movie called *Enemy*? It portrayed the city as depressed. That's what I found it is. How the director see about the city, it's very similar to what I see about the city. (Interview 2)

Adapting to the broader, local culture also meant adapting to the academic culture of Pond, a kind of specialised subculture. In terms of interpersonal interactions, domestic students were for him no different than the image he held of the weather, the city, and the general population in it. They were "closed off" and uninterested in forming new friendships. Seth exemplified this by discussing his experience during the first two weeks of class, where an attempt to socialise with domestic students sitting next to him in class evoked in them a feeling of awkwardness and intrusiveness. Even when this kind of disapproval toward what seemed like an "abrupt" attempt at socialising was not communicated verbally, he could still sense it through the look of discomfort on the students' faces in response to his trivial, but friendly questions—"are you also in first year?," he chanced on multiple occasions.

Such "resistance" felt from domestic students was deeply disappointing, but not unparalleled. Seth found the cultural attitude comparable to that of New York, where approaching a stranger in a coffee shop or on the bus stop rarely resulted in a fruitful, spontaneous conversation for him, ending in a pronounced awkwardness instead. On the other side of the social spectrum resided his experiences in California, where locals, including domestic students, seemed "more risk-taking" in this regard, thus allowing interactions to occur with less maneuvering through the local cultural politics, and to even transform into genuine friendships over time. He believed the weather, whether in

California or Ontario, had an undeniable part in fostering a sense of openness in locals toward new social experiences.

> That's right, I found in here... like in the east coast. People are more closed to stuff. In general... people [in California] just more open. Like, here if you just kind of talk to stranger, even in class or if you talk too much, too. Like, first day in class, they're [domestic students] fairly strict. I can see their face that maybe they're not saying something. 'You're asking too much questions,' something like that. But in Cali... you would just like, we can hang out right after this class, even the first day we met. (Interview 2)

However, Seth understood the lack of interest by domestic students in forming new friendships to be the product of one's growing up in a multicultural society. In other words, for domestic students, an international student might not be "anything new" to their cultural and social repertoires, since Toronto and Pond University were already linguistically and ethnically diverse places by nature. Such distance was then not rooted in discrimination. Furthermore, from his own observations, he argued that the "reserved" cultural attitude of Canadian students applied also toward interactions with other domestic students—it occurred intragroup—therefore not being characteristic of interactions between international and domestic students in particular. Ultimately, domestic students treated everyone like "normal" and this normal for him felt like reticence.

> I met some [Canadian students]. They're... open. I think they seen it [multiculturalism]. They get used to it because they grow up with international people. Not just student I mean, in their high school there must be some international students or even middle school. And a whole environment makes international, [there are] foreigner things in Toronto, yeah. They just treat us as normal. Like, just the same as local. That's what I see. I don't think that's about, like, me as international student. It's me as well, as the student in general. It's cultural. Even I would say, even, it's like [if] a local student ask local student [questions] in the first day of class. It will happen the same thing. (Interview 2)

Views on teaching and learning

Seth's perspectives on teaching and learning were sculpted by his experiences in two institutional positions. First, and more broadly, those experiences he partook in as a university student, and second, and more specifically, those in the position of a university student who was international as well as multilingual with varied proficiency in English. On the basis of the first, Seth regarded good teaching to depend on an instructor's preparedness in relation to the lecture content, and the use of simple, understandable language. He had often encountered instructors who did not seem to have thought the content through before teaching it, thus approaching the classroom as a dynamic experiment through which to make sense of the content to themselves. Whenever this was the case, Seth argued that ideas were presented to students in a dispersed and disconnected pattern.

As a multilingual international student, Seth considered the language adopted by the instructor to deliver the content to be significant in creating a positive learning experience. Rather than a specialised and circumlocutory style of language, which negatively affected his ability to follow lectures, he preferred a clear and simple kind of language that could be understood by all students, regardless of their (multi)linguistic profile. In terms of complexity, he expected the language used by the instructor to be aligned to the language of students instead of to that of the discipline, particularly so in the context of large, first-year lectures where there might be fewer opportunities for a student to ask for clarification. He summarised:

> A good instructor is someone who knows their content well. And explains it in a way that it's easiest form that most people will understand. Yeah, simple language. 'Cause I, I've been a student for so many years that some instructors, they don't construct their language before they go teach the class. And it becomes, the whole class becomes his thinking process. Kind of like that. They just speak out whatever comes to their mind in that moment. I think you could do that

in public speaking but not when you're teaching something about a material, you should be, you know, explain the material more clearly. (Interview 2)

From his perspective as a multilingual international student, Seth identified the language of instruction as a central element to multilingual international students' achievement of academic success. For him, the more specialised the language, the more challenging the learning experience for those students. He discerned an inconsistency among instructors at Pond in their accommodation to this aspect of the student experience in their classes, despite Pond's visible, well-known, and large international and multilingual student body. He understood it as ethical practice not only that more deliberate attention should be paid to the linguistic needs of multilingual international students, but also that more inclusive teaching methods should be implemented so that domestic and native-speaker students were not implicitly favoured.

He contextualised such concern by comparing his experience in two different courses within the very same program. In a phonetics class, he sensed that instruction had been planned with the native-speaker student in mind. This was because the instructor did not take the time to orally present the associations between the symbols on the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and their respective sounds in English in the first month of class. Therefore, if a native-speaker student came across an English word and its respective phonetic transcription on an assignment, they might have been able to naturally establish a connection between the word and the phonetic symbols, drawing on this gradual acquisition of linguistic knowledge to make future phonetic judgments. Conversely, Seth, as a multilingual student whose English vocabulary was

still expanding, found it challenging to establish such connection when the word provided was completely unfamiliar.

For instance, during one of our interviews, Seth asked me what the word *gibberish* meant and how it was pronounced. After I explained it, he frustratingly said that he could not determine whether its transcription provided on the test was correct because he had never seen or heard the word before. When guessing the answer on the test, he could not determine whether the /g/ in *gibberish* was pronounced as a velar (i.e. as in *get*), as a postalveolar affricate (i.e. as in *gel*), or yet, as a palato-alveolar fricative (i.e. as in *genre*). As a result, unlike a native speaker, he could not resort to previous knowledge of the language to answer the question. As Wells (2005) has argued, English linguistics may present significant challenges for multilingual learners, since "its orthography is notoriously inconsistent and irregular." He also added: "You cannot safely predict the pronunciation from the spelling. Nor, given the pronunciation, can you reliably infer the spelling. Its phonetics is idiosyncratic, including various characteristics that are unusual from the point of view of universals" (p. 3). Essentially, all instruction flowed from this teaching method as a point of departure, thus placing Seth at what he felt to be a disadvantage in the course.

In another linguistics class, however, his experience was the opposite. In this introductory class, Seth felt as though linguistic knowledge had been introduced as "if new" to all students, even though his classmates might have been both native and non-native speakers of English. Part of this teaching method entailed the instructor drawing on the teaching assistant as support for the phonetics content of the class. Seth reported that at the end of each tutorial session and in preparation for the following

week's assignment, the teaching assistant would read aloud the English words under consideration in order to prepare students. Additionally, on the phonetics quiz, administered to all students in lecture, the teaching assistant read the words aloud again. With this kind of support in place, he felt the course was both more supportive and inclusive. He elaborated on his experience by saying:

> I mean, it's something that depends on the school. If the school has very less amount of international students, then I think the teacher doesn't have to do too much to accommodate them. But if the school is like Pond, that there's so many international students in the school, then I do think that the professor should consider them. Like for example, when I was in my linguistics course, I was saying my professor, she assumes everyone speaks perfect English. 'Cause she was teaching phonetics and she used a lot of English phonetic examples and, for example, like the IPA things, she didn't even do that—the auditory impression. She didn't even say it, she just wanted you to look at the word and know the transcription. So that's it. That's like, what I dislike. In my other linguistics course, the TA pronounces them [the English words] and I can see then how he pronounce, then it probably helps international students. (Interview 2)

Although the support in the introductory course improved his experience, Seth could not find such mechanism in place in any other course. In fact, he felt that the teaching in his classes generally privileged domestic, native-speaker students, in spite of the fact multilingual international students were not a small group in any of his classes. As an example, he found it surprising that most, if not all, examples provided by his instructors in the social sciences courses were based on content already familiar to Canadian or Anglophone speakers, even though the courses had an international focus and did not examine topics related exclusively to Canada. In short, the course curricula lacked cross-cultural perspectives. When I asked him how he envisioned that a theoretical linguistics curriculum could be internationalised, he replied:

> Well, like, she should teach in a way that doesn't have to be, it's not sided to the local students. It's more fair in general, as in linguistics, she can use examples from other languages, not

English, not Chinese, [but] African languages! Or whatever. Then it will be more fair. (Interview 2)

Seth's proposition that "then it will be more fair" mirrored Haigh's (2002) toward the essence behind internationalising the academic curriculum: "ultimately, the process is about fair play" (p. 52). The internationalisation of higher education has taken many distinct shapes in colleges and universities around the world; however, Sanderson (2011) has argued that the concept has been explored primarily at the broader institutional level, with significantly less attention directed at what it means for *teaching* to be internationalised. In the context of Seth's experiences, he had always framed Pond as an international university—in fact, he was "amazed" by the visibility of the international student population. Yet, as a multilingual international student, he felt institutionally disadvantaged and excluded within the classroom. Haigh (2002) spoke of the ethical role of internationalisation by explaining:

> The ideal international curriculum provides equably for the learning ambitions of all students, irrespective of their national, ethnic, cultural, social class – caste or gender identities. It values social inclusion, cultural pluralism and 'world citizenship' ahead of partisan links with any smaller geographical, cultural or social unit... It contains the belief that a university should grant an equal opportunity for success to every student that it enrols and not prejudice the advancement of any individual by granting an innate competitive advantage to students from any particular social group or tradition. Hence, at a deep level, internationalisation is about universal suffrage. (p. 52)

Views on intergroup relations

As a new student at Pond, Seth was most impressed by the university's vibrant and celebrated international student population. As of 2018, 178 countries had been represented on campus through the international student body, contributing to Pond's long-standing multicultural and multilingual institutional visibility. In Santa Monica, Seth

had been a part of the international student community at his college. However, the international student body was noticeably small, and the international-domestic student distinction was blurred as both groups intermixed freely in student-focused social events. As he put it, "everyone just hung out," while in comparison to Pond, he sensed a well-defined boundary around group identity on the basis of nationality.

Although Seth identified as being Chinese, he never sought association to the Chinese student community at Pond. Chinese students held a number of different events on and off campus through the associations they had created over the years. These associations centered on themes and opportunities they considered important for Chinese students in Toronto, such as religion, culture, language, and internships, to cite a few, all of which they promoted continuously on posters around campus, and once monthly, through individual tables set up in the hallways and open areas. For Seth, the overall Chinese community in Toronto, including Pond's, was "enormous," thereby allowing Chinese students to maintain their traditional linguistic, cultural, and social practices in Canada, which contrarily, he viewed as a barrier to improving one's English and to forming international friendships. He argued:

> Here in Canada, it's just a lot of Chinese students. Outside of class, they use Chinese, too. It would just stop me from learning English. I would just say people like to do that because they're not very confident in their English. And the whole Asian vibe here is so enormous. So he [a student from China] feel very comfortable, he doesn't have to change or do anything about... I mean, in the west coast, there's not many Chinese so you just kind of go out [of your comfort zone], it's totally different. I mean here is the biggest Chinese environment that I've ever seen outside of China. 'Cause it's *SO* many Chinese students at Chinese restaurants. (Interview 2)

Seth's personal philosophy of intergroup relations for multilingual international students was different. For him, staying predominantly within one's cultural and

linguistic group could easily become an obstacle to linguistic improvement in English and the acquisition of intercultural knowledge on the part of international students. He believed that studying in a western country was an important opportunity for Asian students to "widen" their cultural perspectives, and that even a superficial exchange with a classmate in English could be linguistically beneficial. Yet, in a general sense, he praised the Chinese students at Pond for being "open" and for socialising with ethnically and linguistically different students. In our interview, he considered it disadvantageous for Chinese students to remain mostly intragroup.

> I think is no. Definitely not [helpful]. Because you should really make friends with people [from] all over the world. Especially when you're in a western country, of course you need to make friends, like a Canadian friend. Because it helps your English, it helps you widen your perspective. (Interview 2)

However, despite several years of arguably accumulated intercultural experience from living in North America, making friends with Canadians was still challenging for Seth. He did not attribute such difficulty to language, but to cultural differences instead. The social "conservativism" of Toronto, like that of New York, was for him the greatest obstacle to making new friends. The "ease" with which he befriended local and international students in Santa Monica was not transferable to Toronto. Nonetheless, he believed that approaching someone different, whether a student from Canada or from abroad, could only be linguistically and socially constructive for an international student, even if such attempt did not result in a meaningful, long-lasting friendship:

> It is very hard, though. *Even for me*. Especially because we still have cultural differences. But you should still make friends, you don't need to be very close, but you need to go out and make friends, and talk to them, just talk to them, that helps a lot. Even just in class, like, you talk to your classmates, who is Canadian. Or from all over the world. Instead of just talking to Chinese. But I think they do a pretty good job here, I see all the Chinese students talking to the Canadian,

white people, brown people, a lot of people. Everyone. A lot of Chinese here, they do a pretty good job at Pond I would say. (Interview 2)

The body, responding

The social experiences Seth had experienced in Toronto—embodied, viscerally—did not affect him only emotionally. He considered himself an "outgoing" person, whose avidity to socialise and bond with people—his thirst for human interaction—was left largely unfulfilled in light of his interactional attempts with and perceptions of Canadian students and city locals as socially distant. Unlike California, where this need seemed more easily met and sustained, in Toronto he experienced feelings of social isolation, dissatisfaction, and later, regret, altogether in response to the lack of meaningful socialisation. When the long winter came, he felt strongly as though the season was the major cause behind such complex issue: gray and gloomy weather turned local people away. But during the non-winter seasons, when the sun did shine, Toronto's multiculturalism played its part: it arguably divested international students of eliciting local students' interest through languages and cultures which were arguably not novel to them.

Beyond the affective, he communicated (about) this unpropitious experience through the body. After all, his emotional experiences were processed in the mind, but the mind did not function out of the embodied self, being one inseparable from the other (Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2015). As research has demonstrated, the material body responds to—it *feels*—the lack of essential psychosocial experiences related to humans' well-being (Zhong & Leonardelli, 2008). Additionally, *corporeal* sensations, such as physical coldness on the skin, can influence individuals' psychosocial

experiences (e.g. a cold environment, or a warm drink, and one's perceptions of the depth of a given interpersonal interaction [e.g. Fetterman, Wilkowski, & Robinson, 2018; IJzerman et al., 2018; Tavares, 2019a; Williams & Bargh, 2008]). Consequently, the body cannot be understood outside of its surrounding sociocultural and material contexts.

The absence of meaningful psychosocial experiences has implications for one's behaviour. A negative experience characterised by the lack of something that would otherwise be considered important for one's well-being may lead the individual to physically or psychologically gravitate toward an experience through which such lack may be compensated for (Bargh & Shalev, 2012). Seth's coping mechanism to ongoing feelings of social isolation, and discontent—to this social coldness—was to return to an emotional warmth, which was originally experienced in California in the past, through body (e.g. feeling the sunshine) and affect (e.g. feeling socially included) together, but that now in Toronto was relived only in the mind.

Seth's body and mind then responded differently to this challenging experience. Though his mind could nostalgically evoke the pleasure and comfort afforded by the warmth experienced in California, his physical body could not reproduce the physical dimension of the same experience. Seth could not attend to this need for social inclusion by material means, that is, by travelling back to California instantly. Nonetheless, his body could still communicate such need, whether or not he was conscious of this. The body *spoke* a language resulting from and reflective of his own lived experience in the sociocultural and material contexts of Toronto. Such approach to understanding the body in context—as meaningful "data" or as unspoken language—

was only possible through a holistic exploration of Seth's identity-related experiences, attentive to both lived and imagined past, present, and future events.

Part III: 身分

Nostalgia

The impact of Seth's lived experiences in California firmly cemented the foundation of his identity. Every eulogistic or reproachful remark he made with reference to the present state of his identity was anchored in a past that was brought to life not long ago, but left behind, longingly, on the west coast. "Because when I was in Cali…" had been the front of every comparison he lamented, revealing an immeasurable nostalgia to life before Canada. The Seth he was in California had felt more authentic, energetic, and free, while now in Toronto, these feelings could not be revived, rendering his current version of himself incomplete and nostalgic in his eyes. Sedikides and colleagues (2008) have argued that nostalgia may help an individual develop a sense of continuity in life, but that the feeling "may erode a sense of meaning in the present… if the individual is fixated on better days gone by" (p. 306). For Seth, California was the good, and Toronto, the bad.

California left such a profound impact on Seth's identity that his cultural construal was challenged. Markus and Kitayama (1991, 1998) have proposed that one's sense of identity is developed partially in relation to the cultural orientations of the society which the individual is connected to. This internal, intrinsic, and individual framework includes, but is not limited to, experiences and activities at the emotional and cognitive dimensions of life. After years in North America, Seth experienced a shift to his ways of

seeing himself, the other, and the relationship between the two: he resided somewhere in the middle of this continuum of cultural construals of the self, with the independent self characterising one end, and the interdependent the other. He referred to the "pre-western" version of himself—before but also during his early days in New York as a recently-arrived grade-ten student—as formed over the absence of cross-cultural exposure: it reflected solely "eastern" value orientations, which only became evident to him through interactions with individuals who differed in that regard.

Based on his own experience, Seth considered that this culturally-influenced "eastern" orientation impacted Chinese students' experiences in significant ways. He defined this cultural influence as rigid, and thus difficult to change, but observable through Chinese students' "strong opinions" about life in general when they first arrive in Canada, potentially determining the course of their experiences in return. Differently, Seth presented himself as more open, as being in-flux without any attachment to a particular cultural view of the world. He was explicit in saying this interblended orientation resulted from living in North America for "too long." Although he did not elaborate, he explained that his experiences as an international student in the United States had even led him to abandon the belief that a personal cultural affiliation was necessary:

> Well, I've been living in a western society for too long, I'm kind of like a mix, so I don't have strong, like, east opinions, east perspectives, more west perspectives. But people, when like, Asian students come here, they have very strong opinions. Their culture is still very strong. Like, that will impact [them] more. Me, I just go with the flow. Personally I don't believe in any culture. I will just… well, we should have culture, but well, that's another topic for another day. (Interview 3)

Seth believed that his "framework" for seeing and interacting with the world had been already solidified by the time he moved to Toronto. Presently at the age of 25, he felt as though he had already experienced a sufficient number of meaningful life events and experiences that could have had the potential to influence and even consolidate the development of his identity. As a result, he viewed the current version of himself as the final achievable point on the continuum of his intrapersonal development. Moreover, his belief of having reached complete self-development by the age of 25 meant that his discontent for Toronto was at this point irreparable, since the city could not afford him access to specific experiences that could meet the well-defined needs he had considered essential for himself. Because his identity was now "fixed," so were his needs.

And so, he classified any place as better than Toronto. However, he had never spent a considerable, and thus comparable, amount of time in any other city in Canada. Seth had visited his best friend Lu in Kingston twice since August, although he had explicitly expressed in a previous interview that Kingston was too small and quiet for him, and had spent a weekend visiting Montreal during the winter. His unconscious defence mechanism consisted of a kind of individual rationalisation (D'Cruz, 2015) by which he "asserted" Toronto could not bring him fulfillment, but that such experience was uniquely localised to Toronto, a city which he actually happened to dislike *anyway*, since the beginning, but now even more. He tolerated Canada—he had nothing "against that"—and drew on the excitement associated with first-time, short-term tourism to a new place as "evidence" that Toronto was the problem:

Since I came here I didn't change 'cause I am already 25, so there's not much to be changed... I do dislike Canada more! The more I stay... I would say Toronto. Because I have only been [to] Montreal and Kingston. Those are the only two cities I've been in Canada. So I kind of like that, I have nothing against that [Canada], I really love Montreal, it's way more beautiful. I would just say I dislike Toronto more. (Interview 3)

Despite his conclusive take on Toronto, Seth spoke of having become generally more "open" to alternate points of view over time. He was a deep thinker by nature, constantly cogitating about life and how to live it better, especially in response to his unfulfilling experiences in New York. At that time, he tended to oppose seeing the world through different perspectives other than his own. He ascribed such resistance to the "stubborn" part of his personality. After some time in Santa Monica, however, he began to admire the lifestyle of local residents—he described Santa Monicans as living a healthy and gratifying life—and sought to explore ways through which he could attain a similar experience for himself. To experience self-growth, though, he needed to become more flexible in his thinking. He stated that he became more open to advice from others on how to live better:

I think, actually, *a lot*. But it's too much, it's hard to even describe it. I'd say [now] I'm more open to opinions, different opinions, to advice. Just more open to advice, I would say that is the most. Before I was more stubborn... I'm a stubborn person. Well, still [am], kind of. I'm a persistent person, but you can call me *stubborn*! I'm more open to, like advice. Like, how do you live as a person? Something like, the good and bad things to do. (Interview 3)

The future is in the past

The flow of Seth's identity development process in the present time had been powerfully controlled by the psychological imprint of his past experiences in California. The present had never organically evolved into a time wherein novelty and creativity could be experienced, analogous to the period when, while in college in Santa Monica, he could

embrace that present as a unique time of self-discovery. In Toronto, Seth resisted

experiencing the events of the present as *distinct* experiences with potential value in

their own right. Rather, their potential value had to be constantly, though unconsciously,

assessed against what the past and California had afforded him. Certainly, the past is a

natural part of one's life continuum, but in times of uncertainty and dissatisfaction, the

past—or carefully selected and idealised moments constructing "the past"—can be

dichotomously juxtaposed with the present, and the latter then continuously viewed as

negative (Pickering & Keightley, 2006).

If on one hand, nostalgia darkened the present, on the other, it could brighten the

future. The recollection of a positive past can foster a sense of optimism projected

toward the future (Cheung et al., 2013), a time which, unlike the present, Seth saw wide

open for possibilities. He imagined a different future back in the same past: he

fantasised about going back to California; this time to complete a graduate degree at

UCLA. He emphasised the "really good" experiences he had had as a visiting student

taking extension classes at the institution, which he rated as "a nine out of ten."

However, the high cost of tuition for him as an international student undeniably required

careful consideration on his part before the plan could become reality. Nevertheless, a

return to his "authentic" self was only made possible through a connection between past

and future, in which he skipped the present. His plans for the future remained vague, as

he explained:

> I don't know. I don't have any idea for now. Just probably go back China or go back to... what I
> really want is to have—to pursue my master back in Cali, back in LA. But it seems hard. I'm not
> sure I can do that, so… I as international student, you got to pay a lot for tuitions. As you go,
> yeah. We'll see. That's my dream. To kinda... go to UCLA. UCLA is *really* good school. That's

the school. I would rate a 9 out of 10. 'Cause I've been there. I've been to some extension class there, which was really good, the school, the teachers, the students. (Interview 3)

Navigating multiple identities

In addition to identities he adopted, Seth also lived through the identity he inherited. While living in Santa Monica, Seth came into contact with local cultural behaviour that embodied a set of values and attitudes which he came to enthusiastically identify with, and gradually, adopt as part of his own. He appreciated how local residents lived life: their physical and sociocultural interactions with the world seemed more "open" and "relaxed," especially in comparison to his experience in New York. However, some aspects of his recently acquired "Santa-Monican" identity conflicted with cultural behaviour of local Torontonians, which Seth mainly disapproved of. He could connect with Santa Monicans in numerous and meaningful ways, but not with Torontonians.

In Toronto, Seth had to navigate yet another culture: that of the local Chinese community. Toronto's Chinese community was the largest he had ever encountered outside China. The number of Chinese students at Pond greatly surprised him, contrasting visibly to his experience at the college in Santa Monica. Seth did identify as Chinese. Nevertheless, he had changed in ways he now considered unalterable. Postulating this irreversible transformation to be the result of his years-long residence in the United States, he considered himself not only more experienced, but also more enlightened than his Chinese co-nationals at Pond. As his intragroup interactions began to grow, he was compelled to attend to his inherited cultural identity.

Seth needed to find ways to effectively communicate the individual progress which he believed differentiated him from other Chinese students. He would praise Chinese students at Pond for "talking to everyone;" however, he was critical of Chinese students' lifestyle in Toronto: he argued that Chinese students could not distinguish their home culture from the local one due to the prominence of the Chinese community in Toronto. In turn, he believed that the existence of such familiar community incomparably altered the "essence" of the experience of living abroad because by improving the experiences of incoming students through local support, the extended community also removed some of the barriers that he considered fundamental to the international student experience. He maintained that the only way to experience true individual growth was through challenge.

In short, Seth felt threatened by the sociocultural progress currently available to his co-nationals. While I understood and trusted that Seth had had a difficult time in New York, especially considering his very young age and rudimentary proficiency in English, I sensed that he felt the legitimacy of his own experience came under question once he accepted that the incoming Chinese students at Pond had been exposed to better English language education and technology in China, thus arguably being more adequately prepared for their adjustment abroad. He resorted to a kind of nostalgic discourse in which he positioned himself, and wanted to be recognised, as a trailblazer, a courageous pioneer who faced "real" difficulty abroad in a time when technology and teaching methods were not as advanced in certain parts of China as they are today. Based on this argument, he believed the current Chinese students at Pond "had it easy."

I see Chinese students and they talk to everyone. Because I think here is so many Chinese, in Toronto. You can see there's a lot of Chinese restaurants all over the place, that's probably why. And for Chinese students, particularly, they don't feel like they went to another country, they don't have that same experience that we did when I first went to LA, New York, or my friend, he first went to Kingston, which, there's no Chinese community there, very small, I mean it's *very* small. So most of the Chinese student, I have been kind of asking a lot, just like you ask me, I ask them. They all, the answer is all the same, they just, when they came to Toronto, they think it's just another city in China. You don't even need to speak English, but still, a lot of their English is perfect, they speak English perfectly. The Chinese students here speak better English than the ones I've seen in LA, they spoke English very poorly there. But still, here, they think that they just went to another city in China or... they just moved places. They don't feel the dramatic impact as we did when we first came to LA or Kingston eight years ago. Like, it's totally different. (Interview 4)

Apart from the influence of the community, Seth argued that the purportedly adamant attitude of Chinese students obstructed their own individual growth while living abroad. On multiple occasions, he proposed that Chinese students should approach the experience abroad as an opportunity to "broaden their horizons." By this, he believed Chinese students should be more receptive to diverse or contrasting cultural perspectives that varied from their own. He intransigently wanted his co-nationals to not only socialise with Canadians and other international students, which he admired them for already doing in the context of Pond, but also learn about new perspectives on how to live life, a kind of cultural "open-mindedness" resembling his own while living in Santa Monica.

However, despite acknowledging their cross-cultural interactions, Seth questioned whether Chinese students would realistically come to *embrace* new perspectives. Such reluctance was sustained by his opinion that Chinese students at Pond were surrounded by an "enormous" Chinese community that, is his view, could only undermine the students' understanding of the significance of embracing new perspectives for individual growth. He expressed admiration for experimentation and

risk-taking, but did not believe his Chinese peers at Pond were willing to go as far in that respect as he did while in Santa Monica. In terms of individual transformation, research has strongly suggested that the cross-cultural dimension of studying abroad may lead international students to develop a revised understanding of self and of the world, but that these new perspectives can conflict directly with those held by fellow nationals upon intragroup reconnection (Brown, L., 2009; Brown & Brown, 2013; Szkudlarek, 2010).

Seth sought to differentiate his cultural identity within the Chinese community by re-positioning himself. Within the hierarchical composition of the community he imagined in Toronto, he drew on his past experiences to envision the existence of a group of higher status whose members were more experienced and internationalised, the group which he decisively positioned himself in. The basis for entry into the "higher group" revolved around the legitimacy of one's journey, a fabricated category whose essence focused on the rawness of one's experience: to become only by overcoming difficulty, as if "alone and out in the wilderness." He believed that a legitimate journey had to be characterised by an overcome hardship and open-mindedness. By romanticising the past—"the old days"—Seth could create for himself a new cultural identity within the local Chinese community.

Closure

My last meet with Seth occurred early in the spring. On that sunny day in April, everything looked different. The snow no longer covered the ground, the cold temperature no longer infiltrated the air, and the city seemed to have gained its vitality

back. The rushed pace of campus, on the other hand, had slowed down and fewer students were now around. The new season had come to bring temporary closure to the winter season and to Seth's time at Pond, for as long as a summer could last. With all final exams written, he felt relieved, though not because the pressure accompanying sleepless nights of studying for finals had disappeared. Rather, the prospect of a clean-slate summer refreshed his spirits.

Besides the natural, gradual change of weather that defines summer, the season was going to feel conspicuously different by one important event. Seth had purchased a plane ticket to see his family in Macau for two weeks in June. He was overcome with excitement for he had not seen his parents and two older siblings face-to-face for almost two years. The visit to the place where he once called home for so many years was also going to be an opportunity for reflection—Seth would be returning to Pond for only one more academic term before his graduation followed. Consequently, the upcoming trip to Macau also had a kind of decisive feel to it in relation to the yet-uncertain future. Although Seth wished to pursue a graduate degree in California, he felt strongly that financial obstacles might divert him to Macau after graduation.

Seth had been in motion for nine years now. Over this period of time, he had gone through an intense experience of self-discovery and transformation. There was conflict, but there was also growth. New York, California, Ontario: these three destinations had afforded him unique opportunities to continue to develop his identity, all while improving his English and growing academically. For the near future, he had taken on full-time hours at his previously part-time job downtown, and planned a trip to visit his best friend Lu in Kingston. As I packed my computer after concluding the final

interview, I wondered, in hope, if the energising weather of spring might help change

Seth's overall negative perceptions of Toronto. As we walked through the door, he

shared: "you know, in Toronto, nine times out of ten when I hold the door, people don't

say thank you. It's the opposite of Cali." And so my question had been answered.

Chapter 8

Pablo: "English is my real life"

Introduction: Growing a multilingual repertoire

Pablo Ferrera was an international student from Bogotá, Colombia. He was in his fourth and final year of a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree program with honours in criminology at Pond University. He began his Canadian journey at the age of seventeen, in the year of 2014, when he moved to a small city north of Toronto known for its ski resorts in the winter and sandy beaches in the summer. The first leg of this international journey consisted of Pablo studying English in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program at a private college. Although the EAP program was structured into four levels, he was placed directly in the third based on the results of his language placement test. He began the third level in January and graduated from the fourth in August. In addition to improving his linguistic skills, the eight-month-long student experience afforded him the fruitful opportunity to meet other international students and Anglophone locals with whom he could further practice the language and enhance his intercultural knowledge.

Prior to Canada, Pablo had studied English intermittently in Bogotá. When he turned seven, his mother enrolled him into English language classes at a local private language school. The classes took place on Saturday mornings and lasted four hours, involving primarily the repetition of sentences spoken by the teacher. "I hated it so much," Pablo disclosed, but mentioned loving the English-language super-hero movies his mother purchased for him to watch after school. Pablo's early personal connection to English was characterised by distance and disinterest. Though he could see

instrumental value in knowing a foreign language, he could not yet anticipate the transformative potential for self-discovery embedded in learning a new language. A few years later, when in high school, Pablo began studying English more formally and frequently. It was in high school that Pablo began contemplating the pursuit of a university degree in an English-speaking country—the experience of living in a different culture had always fascinated him.

However, Pablo's high school English classes focused on everyday conversational skills. He realised that prior to setting his plan in motion, he would need to acquire skills in academic English. He felt confident to converse in English, but completely inexperienced to write an academic essay in the language. That being the case, he searched for English language programs through which he could cultivate his linguistic skills. His aunt, who lived in Sandytown[14] at the time, encouraged him to consider the academic language program at Sandytown's local college, and offered to accommodate him in her spare bedroom. Following her advice, Pablo came across positive online reviews of the college, which quickly sparked his interest. Since this would be Pablo's first time living away from home, his parents expected him to stay with somebody they could trust. In the end, the availability of emotional and familial support became the final pillar to the far-reaching bridge that connected Colombia to Canada.

The experience as an international student in Sandytown both broadened and narrowed Pablo's view of the near future. By the end of his eighth month in the city, social life was feeling monotonous and engineered for it relied continually on the social and cultural activities developed by the private college specifically for international

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[14] Pseudonym for the town north of Toronto.

students. While Pablo had enjoyed membership in the close-knit culture of the language school, on another level he had hoped for more diversity and spontaneity of experience. Nevertheless, for Pablo, the eight months in the EAP program passed like eight weeks instead. And by the end of it, the near future still remained unknown, though he felt convinced that he could no longer stay in Sandytown. Without a definitive plan in sight, he decided to return to Colombia.

Figure 8.1: Early days: A vision of the future obstructed by blurriness.

The vague interest for languages Pablo once held in childhood gradually became the prolific force behind his outlook on the future in adulthood. Two weeks after landing in Bogotá, Pablo found himself sitting in the beginner's French class at *Alliance Française*. Although he paced back and forth entertaining academic possibilities for the future, languages were now for whole growth, rather than exclusively for the prospect of an intellectually fulfilling professional career. The immersive English-language experience in Sandytown had tapped into a part of his identity he had never connected with before. He had experienced, albeit momentarily, the electrifying power of language for creating, expanding, and understanding the self. Learning French was now the means by which he kept this recently-discovered energy alive and growing.

When the eight months of studying French came to a closing, Pablo re-opened the door to English. He was ready and excited to return to Canada, the country he settled on for his post-secondary education. Moving forward, however, he envisioned a lifestyle that would bring forth a sense of independence and authenticity. "I wanted to start living my own life," he affirmed. As part of his former student experience in the EAP program in 2014, Pablo had visited Toronto on multiple weekend excursions with his classmates, experiencing the rich multicultural and multilingual synergy of the "big city," much unlike the formulaic social scene he had encountered in Sandytown. He witnessed languages and cultures in Toronto that had up until then stood unknown to him. So when the time to leave Bogotá approached, picking a new destination was an effortless task: Sandytown was out, Toronto was in. With this mind set, he began exploring possibilities at three major universities in Ontario, including Pond, which

eventually, was the only one to accept him on the basis of his high school record from Colombia, where he reported grade 12 does not exist.

Pablo began his criminology program at Pond in the fall of 2015. His academic and social experiences over the course of three and half years at the university played a critical role in the diversification and maximisation of his multilingual repertoire. He met other international students with whom he spoke primarily English, and occasionally Spanish. In his second year, he enrolled into a full-year beginner's Portuguese course. He first considered German, but felt concerned about how this "complicated" Germanic language might later affect his grade average point (GPA). In the summer of the second year, he moved to Montreal to attend French school at McGill University. In his third year, he moved on to intermediate Portuguese, and in his fourth, to advanced, in addition to beginning American Sign Language (ASL). In all of his years at Pond, Pablo lived in residence, surrounded by other international students who contributed daily to his first-hand multicultural and multilingual experiences.

Part I: La multidimensionalidad de la vida estudiantil

Delineating experience through time

From the four students who participated in this research study, Pablo had been the one with the longest time spent at Pond University. Unlike the other three students, who had studied at Pond for less than six months by the time the study began, Pablo had studied *and* lived on campus for three and a half consecutive years. I never considered that one out of the four students participating in the study had had a more unique collection of lived experiences at Pond than another. However, Pablo's more extensive time meant

that he had not only gained wider access to opportunities on campus, but also experienced a "full" cycle of life as a multilingual international student, progressively from first to fourth year.

Indeed, Pablo's vast experiential repertoire included living through some critical events in Pond's recent history. For instance, I was surprised to learn he had lived through the last two strikes which had a seismic impact on Pond's community. His lived experience had developed in him a keen insight into the overall undergraduate student experience at Pond, particularly from a multilingual international student perspective. After all, he had joined the university at 18 years old, and was getting ready to leave it now at 22. I always thought of Pablo as a "veteran" multilingual international student precisely for that reason—he seemed to know *everything*. He could flawlessly tell you where to go to get what and how on this campus.

From having been around for some time, Pablo was well-established in the international student community on campus. By that, I do not mean to imply that a formal community organisation existed. Rather, I speak of the community—or better yet, the feeling of community—which formed organically over the years, the one Pablo also helped sustain for almost four years in many eclectic ways. Through volunteering at events organised by Pond's international office, and organising and leading his own events for international students, such as trips to downtown Toronto on the weekends or dinner potlucks on holidays, Pablo actively contributed to fostering a sense of community for many international students on campus. And despite all his valuable and rich subjective student experience, he acknowledged never wanting to prescribe a formalistic socio-academic trajectory to any newly-arrived international student that he

met in *res*. He resolutely believed that the multilingual international student experience was for each incoming international student a blank canvas to which only the student alone could give colour, and thus, meaning.

The week in which we met for our first interview had been remarkably eventful on campus. Therefore, a number of recent campus events presented themselves as possible discussion topics. Pond's student newspaper covered the one incident which had notoriously become the subject of many students' chatter: that of a student being removed from a lecture hall by the police. Other more predictable topics included the university's decision to resume classes a day after January's heaviest snow storm, and the university's men's and women's hockey teams losing, again, to rival teams. Yet, nothing from the present genuinely interested me. For this interview, I was instead decisively interested in holistically learning about Pablo's academic experiences at Pond starting from first year. As I mentioned earlier, Pablo was the only student-participant who had been on campus for a full degree's time.

The academic, social, cultural, and linguistic come together

For Pablo, first year at Pond was "overwhelming." He shared, in retrospect: "I left one class in panic and thought *I'm not gonna be able to do this*." Even though the academic dimension was the clear nucleus which all other dimensions of experience orbited around, Pablo's challenges connected to being a first-year student did not result exclusively from *academic* experiences. The next four years of his life were going to revolve around his evolving and exploratory experience of being an international student at Pond. Still, such novel experience, especially so throughout the intimidating first year,

was interweaved in other multifaceted experiences and events stemming from various dimensions of experience, such as the social, cultural, psychological, and the linguistic.

Pablo's early experiences were characterised by a kind of unpreparedness around linguistic and academic skills. As a student going to university for the first time, he was unfamiliar with the teaching and learning practices typical of North American academe, and with the linguistic register characteristic of academic discourse. Consequently, he did not know how to prepare or what to expect as a student trying to meet the manifold demands of his courses. In his very first lecture, for example, he considered the instructor's speech to be much faster than that of an average speaker, so much so that he could only understand the instructor's language if he effortfully focused his attention uninterruptedly on following the instructor's speech, word by word. A brief moment of distraction would result in an elaborate attempt to re-gain concentration.

But language was not the only learning curve. For example, he knew that the content of that very first lecture would be later tested in the upcoming quiz. For each slide the instructor projected, he also complemented the content with additional information which he only shared orally with the class. However, without any prior academic preparation, such as in note-taking or time-management, Pablo felt lost as he attempted to simultaneously manage both linguistic and academic demands of this new experience. The unpreparedness experienced inside the classroom translated to further obstacles outside, as in when he tried to make sense of his scattered notes, and relate them to the lecture slides in preparation for the fast-approaching quiz. In first year, Pablo's linguistic challenges stemmed primarily from insufficient listening skills. At the

same time he needed to be able to understand the "fast" and specialised language of

his instructors, he also needed to develop effective learning skills. He summarised:

> I remember that first lecture like it was yesterday. I was overwhelmed, the instructor spoke so fast that I didn't know whether I should type the notes or listen to him speaking. (Interview 1)

From the large lecture hall to the small tutorial session, challenges shifted from

listening to speaking. "I was scared of talking in tutorials. It was my first time with native

speakers," Pablo told me in our first interview. At the language school in Sandytown, all

of Pablo's classmates were multilingual international students who had learned English

as an additional language. Though they were of diverse (multi)linguistic profiles, their

level of proficiency in English was relatively equivalent. This commonality, in turn,

created a kind of learning environment which Pablo considered more relaxed. In

tutorials, however, his fear of speaking in front of native-speaker students was

accompanied viscerally by a heightened stress. He feared possibly mispronouncing a

word, thus sounding stupid in a small space where first impressions could be difficult to

change. He explained:

> I was scared more about my pronunciation. That was the only thing that scared me, I wasn't scared to speak up, like in terms of content. I would say if I had to talk in class about the readings, I wouldn't be scared. It was just pronunciation, and like vocabulary. And maybe sometimes I would have a fear that what I'm sharing is not what they're talking about! But it was always a fear. I mean sometimes of course I mispronounce things, but it was just okay. (Interview 1)

Over the forthcoming three years, Pablo's classes became smaller as he

progressed through his program. The considerable change in size marked his departure

from the cold and impersonal first-year lecture halls, but concurrently required a new

kind of learning adjustment: understanding the politics of oral language to embody

active participation in seminars. Pablo felt uncertain about what to share and how to prepare for the dynamic and fast-paced conversations flowing around the classroom. The chance to finally be able to speak in class was important for him as he advanced from the crowded and instructor-centred first-year lectures, but he still could not figure out how to prepare himself to seize the opportunity.

From his observations during the first few weeks of seminar, he noticed that oral language for participation did not seem to necessarily involve following any specific pre-set criteria. His peers often spoke erratically, and their individual contributions seemed disconnected and unrelated to one another. Moreover, he considered contributions from his classmates to derive excessively from personal experience or opinion, rather than from an analytical or careful engagement with the material. Despite his confusion, he found himself mechanically conflating the silence employed by some of his other peers with a negative inactivity and passivity toward participation, a style of participation which he could not afford to be emblematic of his own behaviour in class after months of paralysing silence in the first-year lectures. The opportunity to speak was now.

As a result, Pablo began to voice out his opinions as well. However, he still felt uncomfortable by the level of informality and subjectivity from which his contributions extended. He questioned the relevance of his contributions to his peers' individual learning and to the deepening of the understanding of the academic matter under consideration. The guidelines in regards to classroom participation provided on the course syllabi outlined the instructors' expectations concisely in point-format. Nevertheless, Pablo gathered that oral contributions differed substantially in their depth and relevance from student to student. Gradually, he worried less about what to say,

and concluded that "just saying anything" would suffice for attaining a good participation mark.

Pablo felt most confident in academic writing, despite gradual opportunities to fine-tune all linguistic skills. The EAP program in Sandytown had placed great emphasis on academic writing, focusing on essay structure, vocabulary, and argumentation. Hence Pablo's higher level of comfort in writing. The pronounced frequency and intensity with which he practiced writing in English during the eight months at the college even culminated in his present feeling of no longer being able to produce an academic essay in Spanish, even though he still considered Spanish his strongest language. On the other hand, the material he read in university was much more complex than that supplied in the EAP program. For his courses at Pond, he read a diverse collection of academic articles that followed discipline-specific discursive conventions, varying in terms of language, length, structure, and orientation, as in theoretical, empirical, and reflective. Though his confidence in academic writing remained stable, confidence in academic reading for comprehension took longer to emerge.

Peer interaction

In the EAP program, Pablo's relationships with his peers developed more deeply, and extended beyond the classroom. Three contextual factors contributed meaningfully to this outcome. First, Pablo and his peers engaged in learning jointly and daily, in the same physical space for an extended period of time. Second, they shared a mutual level of proficiency in English, making conversations more effortlessly comprehensible.

Lastly, when classes were finished for the day, students normally socialised outside school, through activities programmed by the college that helped strengthen bonds between them in a less structured environment. Likewise, in Colombia, interactions with peers followed a similar pattern of deeper social proximity, at the higher education level or otherwise. Pablo recalled that ongoing interaction between two classmates in a Colombian school would tend to evolve organically into friendship, in light of a socialisation that was influenced by the educational and cultural dynamics in place.

At Pond, however, an analogous experience never materialised. Pablo regarded social interactions with domestic peers as superficial and unproductive. After three and a half years in university, he quantified the number of friendships stemming from classroom interactions to a low two. Yet, he could still not categorise these two classmates as "real" friends for their interactions were restricted to Pond's campus, and only on the days when they met for class. There was never any genuine effort by either party invested toward extending interaction beyond campus. Therefore, Pablo positioned these two classmates as "school" friends rather than "real" friends. In his experience, the social distance between two classmates of different national backgrounds—one domestic and one international—was irreparably widened by the fact many domestic students did not live on campus:

> I never lived the university experience back home, which I wish I did. I feel like back home, your classmates are more like your friends, *real* friends, but here the classmates are like "school" friends, I would never go out with them. But I feel like I have two friends that I met in class, they're not my real, real friends but we talk a lot about our lives on the breaks, for example, outside class. They have become my friends, but still not super deep. But it's also because they just go home after class, right? Or on the weekends. They just come to class and then they leave. (Interview 2)

Indeed, the academic campus held a multifaceted meaning for Pablo as an international student. After all, he not only studied, but also resided on campus for nearly four years now. Pond's campus was for him a synergetic space where all dimensions of experience met in significant ways. The campus had become his *home*—it was the place where he did life. However, he argued that domestic students, on the other hand, expected predominantly academic gain from frequenting campus. In turn, he believed such an overwhelmingly scholarly view of campus might influence the extent to which domestic students invest in non-academic activities on campus. He proposed that the multidimensional potential of campus was available equally to all students, but that in general, it was maximised differently by domestic and international students.

This dissimilitude was one factor compromising the development of meaningful friendships between Pablo and his domestic peers. He believed that domestic students' brief, pre-scheduled, and uninterested presence on campus weakened international students' opportunities to get to know them systematically and naturalistically. "To be honest, I think that's, like, maybe 85% of it," he explained when identifying reasons for his lack of friendships with local students. Pablo had been developing his social circle since first year. However, he believed domestic students already had an established social life by the time they joined the university. He also emphasised the role of collective cultural behaviour by suggesting:

> Honestly, people here, I don't know if they're shy, can I answer they're kind of like, shy? Because back home everyone is speaking to everyone in class, when the professor is away, you're just talking to whoever is sitting next to you, but here everyone is reserved and they don't talk to you, they're on their phones all the time. (Interview 2)

Language acquisition through extra-curricular activities

Two major experiences continuously enhanced Pablo's proficiency in English. On one hand, the academic experience at Pond was behind his improved academic English. On the other, volunteering played a pivotal role in the development of his vernacular language. For three years, Pablo volunteered as a peer mentor in a low-income community program east of Pond University. He had been selected to work with teenaged youth by assisting in the development of their social and academic skills through one-on-one mentorship. Teenagers in this program came from households where one parent was in prison. Pablo was invested in this experience since it afforded him field experience in matters connected to his major in criminology.

Pablo characterised the register he was exposed to through volunteering as "straight" English. By this, he meant the kind of dynamic, unselfconscious, and relaxed everyday language he heard normally outside the walls of the academy. This vernacular register differed conspicuously from the academic as it expressively included slang, humorous, idiomatic, and offensive content, besides phonological and phonetic articulation not conventionally found in academic discourse. Initially, there was a period of adaptation on Pablo's part. He was unaccustomed to the register because his language learning journey until then had consisted of the acquisition of academic English through classroom-based instruction, both in Sandytown and Toronto. Pablo spoke of his volunteering experience:

> Volunteering with the kids of parents [who are] in prison has helped me a lot with English, like, straight English, slang. That was a very hard thing for me 'cause being in front of people who speak like, I don't want to call it trash English, but that's what people in Sandytown called it, trash English. Because, for example, when I talk to my friends in Sandytown, like I have a Canadian friend whom I still talk to, and I use like 'yo' and she's like "you've been in Toronto too

much." I feel like I've learned that from the volunteering. Because my friends, they don't use slangs, right? They don't use 'yo' or so... (Interview 2)

Volunteering was a gateway to a new linguistic dimension. Frequent interaction with the tutees contributed to the improvement of Pablo's English proficiency, but most uniquely, to the diversification of his vocabulary. Pablo gained first-hand contact with words and expressions he had never formerly heard. Some of these were even neologisms to the language itself. The significance of this experience laid in the learning of new linguistic material *in context*. From there, he was able to relate the new vocabulary particularly to songs he would later come to hear on the playlists of his music streaming application. Furthermore, he engaged in cultural learning as some of the tutees would privately share days-old music that they had access to, but that had not yet been released on the radio or streamed online. He summarised:

> It has helped with vocabulary and also like, music. Because I know, like, a rap person, seems like it's a thing, all these kids used to come up with the songs, and then next week those songs are on the radio and every club. I heard that song before from the kids in the volunteering. (Interview 2)

Nevertheless, the interactions also posed a certain degree of interpersonal tension. The dissimilarity between Pablo and the tutees' sociocultural, educational, and linguistic backgrounds made it frequently challenging for Pablo to establish an interpersonal connection with them during the mentorship sessions. Pablo felt his structured, "proper-sounding" language clashed with the one used by the tutees, thus widening the interactional gap between them, one which he had already quickly sensed, though first on the basis of the age difference. Although the volunteer opportunity had opened a window into an original experience of language use, and given him practical

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experience in his academic field, the very same vernacular language he was learning,

when coupled with other factors, created in Pablo a feeling that others did not accept

him as "one" of the local community on the basis of the different social positioning

between him and the tutees, evidentiated by their language. As a result, Pablo doubted

the impact he was making on the lives of the teenagers. He said of this social distance:

> I feel like these children, they're like teenagers, thirteen to eighteen—something like that—they're really hard to talk to. I don't know how to explain it, they were cursing a lot. They were using slang a lot, sentences from songs that I was, like, I don't know what that [expression] means. (Interview 2)

Pablo applied discipline-specific knowledge into volunteering. Rarely, however,

did he communicate this knowledge using discipline-specific language. Being a

criminology student, he was knowledgeable about how to respond to a number of legal

concerns raised by the tutees, ranging from housing and financial support to education

and community development. However, he continuously attempted to adjust his

language to meet the social and linguistic contexts in which these interactions took

place. The occasions when he did use academic language were connected to staff

meetings when volunteers would debrief about their mentorship sessions. Ultimately,

the volunteer experience afforded Pablo an authentic chance to apply specialised

knowledge, manipulate language, and acquire more of the vernacular register.

> I use my academic knowledge, but I think it's because of my major. We talk to kids about legal stuff and maybe when we have volunteers meeting we talk about legal stuff, kind of thing, or criminological stuff. But with the kids it was never… I actually don't think with the kids it was ever like that [academic]. I mean, I don't think I ever used or thought about when I was using academic language... what I'm saying when we used to have the debriefs with the volunteers, I used to use the terminology and vocabulary from my major. But that's pretty much it. (Interview 1)

Part II: Experiencias fuera de la universidad

Leaving the campus planet

When I picked a copy of the weekly student newspaper on my way to meet Pablo, the question on the front page immediately caught my attention. This title, in the form of a question, asked whether life existed beyond Earth. Understandably, only recently have scientists systematically begun to explore such possibility, or perhaps yet, this reality, which has left many questions unanswered still. Though the question intrigued me, it was not the first time I had encountered it. In this title, however, I saw an analogy to what I had set out to investigate in my February interview with Pablo: was there (student) life beyond campus? Never for a second had I doubted this reality, but now I wanted to explore it. I believed the physical boundaries of campus could be advantageous to understanding the student experience *in context*; nevertheless, the students were whole people before they were students, and so remaining within fixed boundaries could also compromise my ontological and holistic understanding of what it meant to be a multilingual international student.

In this research, I positioned multilingual international students as members of the *broader community* in which their university was embedded. Pond University was the means through which they gained membership to the surrounding community—it was their community of practice from which they worked toward broader integration—but it was not the site where the students, as human beings, could attend to all their needs. Simultaneously, I also believed that Pablo, like the other multilingual international students I came to know through this research, agentively defined the

boundaries of, and thus created, their own communities. Because the students were members of Pond University, they were by extension members of the surrounding community, although the community might at times have opted to see them exclusively as "international students" rather than international *members*.

Yet, there was only so much campus-transcending experience I could explore. Limitations of time and availability prevented me from immersing in the opportunity to understand many of Pablo's lived experiences outside campus. Of course, despite the valuable contribution of such understanding to the holistic mission of this project, there was also the fact that some of Pablo's experiences were, by nature, difficult to access. For instance, gender and sexuality do affect the experiences of international students (Anya, 2016), but remain cultural taboos for both researcher and participant in some societies. Consequently, a knowledge gap persists. When Kinginger (2013) defined the state-of-the-art in relation to research exploring the lived experiences of international students in study abroad contexts, she argued that "another problem in the literature has been the inattention to social class, race, and sexuality" (p. 354). Although the nature of study abroad research differs, in some ways it converges with this one, and together they reveal uniformity of concern.

In this interview, religion and spirituality emerged as a thematic framework through which to discuss off-campus experience. The pieces penned by different students in that week's student newspaper likewise suggested that reality beyond the humanly perceptible was an important topic to students' lives. Discussions which spanned through several pages included references to life beyond Earth, astrology, and

religion. Undergraduate student Fred Field[15] proposed that humans could understand themselves and the world through spirituality and religion, and that in times of harsh difficulty, a belief system could provide emotional support. In a similar vein, I hoped to tap into off-campus experience by understanding Pablo's religious-spiritual experiences from his perspective as a multilingual international student.

In search of community through religion, or religion through community

In terms of religion, Pablo grew up under a Catholic tradition. He attended a Catholic school throughout middle and high school where a religious service was held every Friday of the month. On those days, part of the school time was devoted to a mass-like service where both students and staff gathered together first thing in the morning to study, learn, and congregate together through singing and recitation. Besides frequenting a Catholic school, Pablo went along with his mother to mass on Sundays, a time when, in addition to religion, a strong sense of community was felt and sustained. Today, Pablo identified as Catholic. However, he no longer engaged in any specific religious traditions, such as attending church, participating in Catholic traditions, or praying. He explained:

> To be honest, I'm religious, like, I'm Catholic, but it doesn't really affect anything for me. When I was in school, because my school was catholic in Colombia, I was kind of forced to go to church, it was like on Friday every month, but then after, I mean, living with my mom, she goes to church, so I would go with her, like on a Sunday or something, but here I never go to church. (Interview 2)

One religious tradition Pablo followed consistently while in Bogotá was *Ash Wednesday.* On the first day of Lent, Christians who observe the holy day tend to

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[15] Pseudonym.

engage in prayer and fasting in preparation for Easter. The tradition is also observed in mass, where a priest ceremonially draws a cross of ashes on the individual's forehead. This historic, community-wide tradition had a memorable influence on Pablo since it occurred between two important events within the Catholic tradition: Lent and Easter. Consequently, upon moving to Canada, Pablo sought to continue to partake in the tradition. In 2016, the first year when he spent Easter in Canada, he had found a Catholic church online that he seemed to identify with, and figured out when it would hold a service specifically to celebrate Ash Wednesday.

Yet, the same experience in Toronto unfolded discordantly to what Pablo had expected. The ceremonial, spiritual, and emotional aspects through which Pablo had characteristically experienced Ash Wednesday in Bogotá over the years could not be reproduced in Toronto, both at the individual and collective levels. Spiritually, he felt "disconnected" from the experience while following the delivery of the service, and humanly, he felt "distant" from fellow worshippers, even though he sat close to them in church. Initially, Pablo identified the English language as the source for such experiential inconsistency. He characterised the language of the service as unenthusiastic and flat, lacking the "vitality" and "musicality" of the prosody associated with Spanish. Because the religion and the holy day were still the same to what he had practiced in Colombia—that is, still Catholicism and Ash Wednesday, regardless of country—he anticipated that there would not exist any significant difference:

> I went to one church here, I don't know what's the name in English for the ceremony like, when you have it in March. They put something on your forehead, like… Ash Wednesday. Which is like a thing at home that we have, every Catholic has an ash cross on his forehead. And that's something that I've always done, so I wanted to keep doing it here. And the first time I went, I don't know, I feel like the mass in English, like I wasn't feeling connected or anything. To be

honest, I think it's because of the language. It just felt like, dry and boring, to be honest. I feel like if it was in Spanish, it could have been different. But I don't think it's because of the language alone, it's the culture as well. (Interview 2)

In Pablo's further hypothesis, culture was also a factor. The "Canadian culture" enveloping the ritualistic construction of the religious service rendered the experience excessively formal, which he then viewed as "impersonal." He felt human interaction was too methodical and aloof in contrast to that of his conventional experience in Bogotá, where physical interaction with one another was more affectionate, typically embodied by hugging following the service's conclusion, while in Toronto such physical closeness was signalled through bowing. He felt uncomfortable and out of place for he could not experience the feeling of community he was seeking in the first place, and although he had stayed until the closing of the service, he never felt drawn to try reliving the event again at another church. Nonetheless, he still appreciated the time for self-reflection Ash Wednesday afforded him.

Also, like, the culture, the mass is so different. Because back home, there's like a moment of "peace," we hug each other, like the person sitting next to you. And here people just, like, lean forward, it's so formal. So it was very different for me. And I was like uncomfortable to be honest. I was like, ah [signalling awkwardness]. 'Cause I was saying like, back home when you go to church you see everyone walking on the street together toward the church for an hour, and everyone knows each other, it's more like a community gathering, while here everyone is so alone, it's very impersonal. (Interview 2)

Religious institutions may be multipurpose for international students. First, they can contribute to the continuity of an international student's previous institutionalised religious practices. Those who attended services as part of their religious life in their home countries may resort to a local religious institution, such as a church, mosque, or synagogue, in order to maintain regular attendance (Gautam, Lowery, Mays, & Durant,

2016). Second, religious institutions can become sites where social networks are built or enhanced (Sawir et al., 2007). Third, these institutions can play a supportive role for international students who encounter psychological or social adjustment challenges. Thus, attendance to regular services may be viewed additionally as a coping mechanism (Chai, 2009; Gebhard, 2012).

The first two purposes above closely reflect Pablo's contextual reasons for seeking out a Catholic church. He ascribed a certain spiritual value to Ash Wednesday: he would be receiving a kind of blessing from the priest through the symbolic act, since the holy day is connected to spiritual cleansing and renewal. Moreover, he expected to find a familiar sense of community and friendship in the church he carefully researched and later visited, potentially leading to a genuine, ongoing investment into attendance on his part. Sawir and colleagues (2007) have suggested that religious institutions, like other sites focused on collective experiences, may offer international students diverse opportunities to enhance their social connections, particularly so in cases of loneliness. The researchers have therefore argued that universities and local students play a critical role in "bridging" international students to local institutions that might be unfamiliar, yet important to them.

Part III: Identidad en múltiples dimensiones: institucional, lingüística y cultural

The self through others

The multidimensionality of Pablo's identity came to the surface through social interaction. Pablo embraced, challenged, and refuted many roles, positions, and "labels" during his time as a multilingual international student at Pond as he engaged with

domestic and international students, faculty, and staff. Each of these conversational

exchanges afforded him the chance to become more familiar with himself in an

interactive process of self-discovery and negotiation in which he would gain exposure to

a projection of his identity first through the voices of others—the ways others

constructed his identity for him, favourably or otherwise, often based on preconceived

institutional, linguistic, and cultural images *others believed* were adequate to impose

over Pablo—and second through his own voice, externalised into words or sometimes

internalised into silence, when, in his own words, "they [interlocutors] were stupid" to

understand his perspectives. Identity was then normally processed through social

interaction, and periodically the end-product was valuable.

Three and a half years at Pond offered Pablo the opportunity to connect with

various aspects of his identity. Although interactions with people were central, course

readings, especially those from sociology and criminology courses, also presented

critical ideas regarding individual and collective identities that he came to interact with in

unspoken ways. Yet, there were three dimensions of identity experience which he

skilfully navigated. The first was the institutionally constructed position of "international

student," which he stepped in and out of in response to his evolving needs. The second

was the (dormant) identity he "liberated" thanks to an expanded multilingual repertoire.

The third was the national identity he inherited, which at times brought him conflict.

Enacting identities

In the large first-year lectures, Pablo felt his individual linguistic profile was

homogenised and neglected. The inability to easily distinguish himself from native

speakers to his instructors—to be seen as different, as an individual rather than another

"student in the crowd"—evoked feelings of insecurity, fear, and self-doubt for most of

first year. He wanted his instructors to know that his performance in the class, if

unsatisfactory, was tied to his unique language learning journey, unfamiliarity with

Canadian higher education, and unpreparedness around academic skills. His coping

strategy, consequently, was to present himself explicitly as an international student to

others whenever he had the chance to. He cloaked himself in this identity with the aim

of lowering others' expectations of himself for he noticed from the local institutional

culture that "international" typically also meant "ESL," and that, for its part, signalled a

kind of excused linguistic and academic deficiency.

> Actually, I wanted my instructors to know that I'm not from Canada. In first year, especially,
> because I wasn't sure that I was gonna do well in writing and reading. I don't want to call it fear
> but I guess I just wanted them to know [that I'm not from here] because I was like, scared. I was
> scared that I would not be able to keep up with the reading comprehension compared to
> Canadian students. And writing as well. (Interview 3)

The decision to explicitly self-categorise as a multilingual international student

transpired from a place of precaution. While the experience at the language school in

Sandytown was low-key, the one at Pond was high-stakes. Among several new inherent

complexities was the much higher cost of tuition, the cumulative GPA based on four

years of study, and the development of effective academic English skills. However,

language had the most consequential, comprehensive implications. For one, it

influenced his ability to correctly understand and produce academic work, which

correspondingly influenced each individual grade feeding into his final GPA. For some

time, then, Pablo espoused the multilingual—or more accurately yet, ESL—international

student identity to keep potential problems at bay.

Over time, Pablo began to feel that such identity presented a barrier to social integration. He felt as though he was always "a foreigner" in the eyes of the community. He regarded this particular image as reflective of traditional, fixed, and sometimes incorrect notions associated with being an international student. One of these being that he was only in Canada temporarily, likely returning to Colombia immediately after graduation. Many locals he interacted with were unaware of the potential further contributions international students could make to Canadian society through government-facilitated post-graduation programs. He believed the lack of knowledge, along with the widely-unchallenged perception of ESL students as less intelligent people, impacted the level of depth with which locals might have wished to socially and emotionally invest in interactions with him. In his experience, only other international students could truly understand the limitations of this *othered* institutional identity.

> As an international student, I feel like, still in fourth year, that I am not from here. Because people always think that I just moved here not long ago. (Interview 3)

The passing of time veered the flow of some of Pablo's identity experiences. As the years went by, his classes became smaller as they were modelled in seminar style. In this new scenario, he found liberating, albeit infrequent, opportunities to more accurately present himself in the way he wished to be seen. The class size shrank so he himself could expand. Interaction with instructors was no longer channeled through the TA, and the stationary chairs of the lecture halls finally showed movability, enabling more social visibility and physical proximity to his peers and instructors. Nevertheless, this multidimensional progress was slow. Even in his upper years, he was still feeling

the effects of the traditional first-year experience. When I asked him if he had felt more like his envisioned self in fourth year, he explained:

> Yes, only in these courses because they're small courses. First year, like, I just had the prof and the TA but the prof will never interact with me. Like [recently] I met my prof from first year, and for a letter of recommendation, and he was like, I don't know you that well, I don't know you. But I'm just gonna write a letter based on your marks and everything. (Interview 3)

In this sense, Pablo wanted to be remembered as an individual, rather than as a final letter grade. Despite some tension, time continued to produce more self-confidence in Pablo. In addition to confidence in his identity, he discovered a parallel feeling in relation to his academic English skills. He gradually felt more proficient in the language, but noticed a substantial transformation of his writing skills in particular. From his conversations with Canadian Anglophone classmates, he learned he was doing better than most of them. His grades on these assignments were higher than those of his classmates, and the amount of feedback was lower. Proudly, he presented himself to me as a proficient writer. The increased confidence was critical to Pablo's identity re-alignment—he no longer needed to "hide" behind the ESL international student label to feel safe. Being multilingual and international now held a different meaning:

> But I feel like as years passed, I got to see I'm actually a much better writer than my Canadian friends from what I can see from the essays, so that, like, made me, like, more relaxed. I was, like, I don't need to tell everyone that I'm an international student *just for that*. (Interview 3)

From English for academic purposes to English for all purposes

Through English, Pablo gained access to his always-envisioned self. Spanish constrained his identity because it was inextricable to sociocultural norms of Colombia. Therefore, he felt it was impossible to be himself in Spanish without performing also

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inherent cultural behaviour he alone could not question against the weight of collective culture, but that regardless, did not reflect his ways of seeing himself and the world around him. English, inversely, was tied to a "Canadian identity"—an identity often discussed as less fixed, thus in flux, and more open to critique. Sumara, Davis, and Laidlaw (2001) have spoken of the fluidity in being Canadian in that "the experience of Canadian identity shifts with changes in geography and language" (p. 151).

In this sense, there may be a stronger sentiment of identity in being Albertan, Quebecer, or Maritimer, for example, than in being Canadian. Sumara and colleagues (2011) have emphasised the aspect of regionality, rather than nationality, in a Canadian identity: "we might not be able to say much about what it means to be a Canadian, but we can, and often do, make clear distinctions among ourselves in terms of region, language, history, and culture" (p. 151). This national-scale vagueness, extended across the country through mostly the English language, was the prevailing sociocultural context in which Pablo was able to easily and subtly disassociate himself from previous Spanish language-Colombian identity markers, and embrace new ones that he classified as being linked to a Canadian identity and the English language.

However, Pablo could not detach himself from all Spanish language-Colombian identity-related aspects. The most experiential for him was that of kinship. His relationship with his parents was mediated by the Spanish language, as well as cultural behaviours and expectations specific to Colombia. Nevertheless, Pablo considered this to be "just a side" of his multifaceted identity. This part of his identity inherited through kinship was only called upon in very specific contexts, such as a family vacation, and for specific purposes, such as communication with family. This part of his identity was

irrelevant otherwise. Having uncovered his envisioned self through English, Pablo

distanced himself from life experiences constructed through or around the Spanish

language.

> English is like, I feel like English is my life. When I'm in English, I feel like it's *my real life*. And when I'm speaking Spanish, it's just like, a side. Like, my family and vacation and that's it. But like, my friends, like, everything to me now is English. So I don't even think about making Spanish friends anymore or trying to find Spanish clubs. (Interview 3)

Pablo's characterisation of when he is "*in English*" brings to light the multiple

language-based realities of multilingual international students. Because of family, he

cannot leave the Spanish language-Colombian culture completely—the Spanish-

language "world." When he is in Spanish, for family exactly, he is incomplete.

Conversely, when he is in English, he feels whole and authentic. Why does Pablo

naturally prefer an English language-mediated, Canadian-based identity? In short, he

could not personally identify with Colombia's intransigent cultural views, particularly so

with respect to cultural expectations around gender roles. "Colombian society is very

judgmental," was Pablo's concluding perspective based on his own lived experience.

As a result, Pablo no longer thought of investing in friendships with Colombians

in Toronto. In his former intracultural interactions with Colombians he had met at Pond,

he generally detected in his fellow nationals' *modi operandi* of seeing the world the very

cultural orientations he sought to abandon. These culturally-influenced value

orientations conflicted with his, and part of re-discovering and enacting what he

considered his true identity required cultural and interactional distance. Not only was

such an intracultural alignment with other Colombians conflicting, but also unnecessary

at this point in his journey of identity reconstruction and enactment. The re-positioning of

Pablo's cultural identity began in Sandytown, when he was still an EAP student. He frequented Spanish-speaking places with other international students occasionally, but found limited gain in the experience after some time. Despite the availability of a similar opportunity at Pond, he differentiated himself from others by refusing formal membership in the group.

> When I was Sandytown, we [international students] used to go to, like, a Hispanic, a Spanish club at night. And I had Spanish friends as well, from Colombia but when I got to Pond, I was never like, "oh I need to find Spanish friends." I know there is OLAS—The Organisation of Latin American Students—but I never felt like I needed to go to that. But I think it's interesting: there's a lot of [Colombian] students, they usually get engaged into OLAS in first year. So if they just came to Canada, and they want to find a group quickly, they go to it. But *I never felt that way, probably because I was here before starting school.* (Interview 3)

Almost four years at Pond have led Pablo to think more intently also about a professional identity. Once more, Pablo could not envision such an identity existing away from the English language: "I want to stay here in Canada, and I want to work here, so English is a must." He completed a number of language courses at Pond to expand his multilingual repertoire, and hence his employability. Yet, English was always at the centre. His hope was directed at finding a job in Canada in which the additional languages could complement English, but never replace it. He feared that dislocating the English language might reshuffle the linguistic-cultural order wherein he had strategically reconstructed and re-organised his new identity.
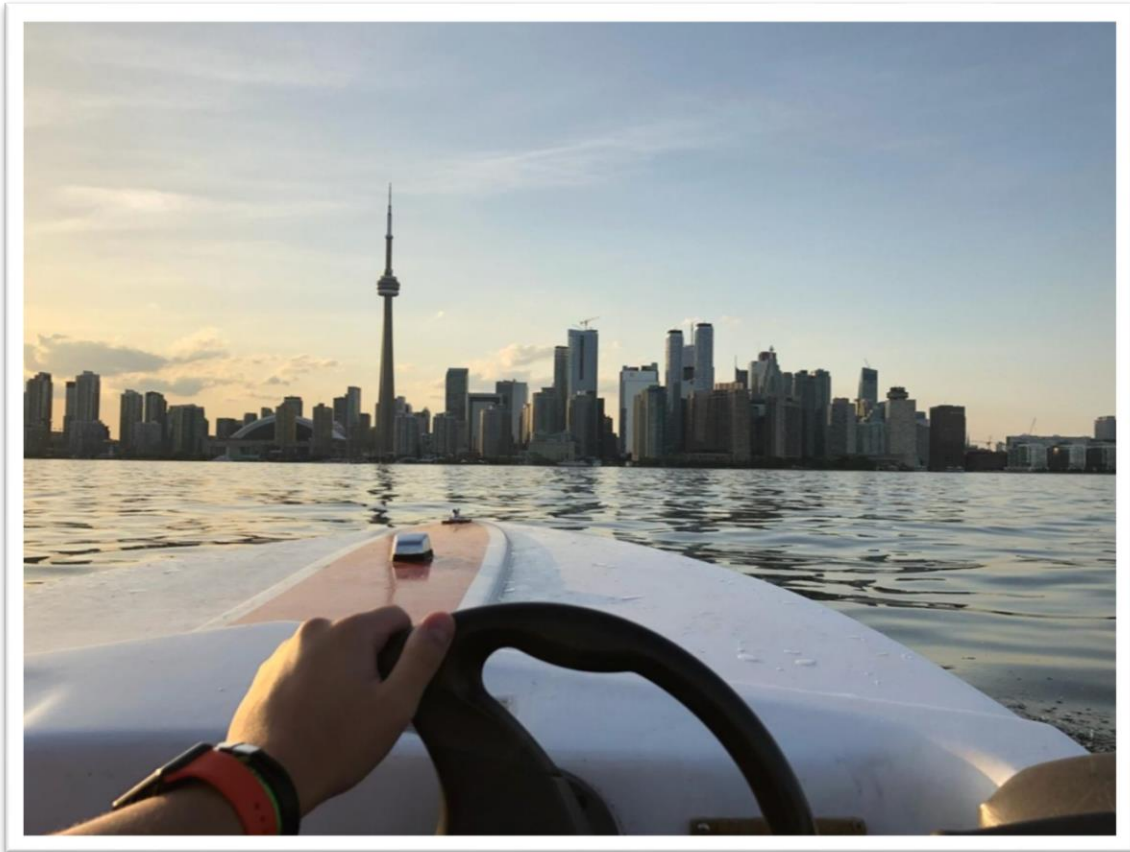
Figure 8.2: Familiar waters. Pablo in control of his journey of identity reconstruction.

Inherited national identity

In Canada, Pablo encountered unfavourable cultural stereotypes of a Colombian identity propagated by the media. He started his studies at Pond in the fall of 2015, the same season when Netflix's influential crime drama *Narcos* was released. The series was set and filmed in Colombia, and focused on the investigation into the life of a Colombian drug lord who coordinated major illegal drug trafficking. The impact of the series was such that classmates would approach Pablo for friendly confirmation and clarification of fictitious issues highlighted by the series, which included excessive poverty, normalised violence, drug traffic, and corruption. Confronting these stereotypes

was an upsetting experience for Pablo for they only revealed uncritical images of Colombia, which unavoidably also affected his sense of identity. He found the series' focus on negative issues to be damaging:

> I hate it. I hate it when everyone talks to me about *Narcos*. 'Cause they're like: where are you from? And I'm like: Colombia, and they're like: oh, Narcos. I'm like, yeah, sure. I hate it, I hate it. When I came here in first year, that was the boom: Narcos. And my neighbours, 'cause the residence walls are so bad, you can hear everything. I could hear they're playing Narcos on Netflix and I'm like, oh... sigh. It's just everywhere. (Interview 3)

Pablo objected to uncritical stereotypes of Colombia by emphasising the country's recent socioeconomic progress. The exchanges with classmates around the issues suggested continuously by the series often led him to discover predominantly negative and incorrect cultural images held by his peers, such as those of Colombia as a backward, undeveloped, and dangerous society. Nevertheless, correcting this kind of perspective in interaction was important for Pablo not only because he had the chance to, but also because, analogous to family, being Colombian was not an aspect of his identity he could leave behind. Therefore, this kind of corrective mechanism was an act of individual identity. He summarised:

> I feel like it's [negative portrayal of Colombia] getting better to be honest, but that's definitely, like, a stereotype that we have. And also like, people think that's how Colombia looks like. That is how we all live, we don't have any cities or cars, I don't know. So… but, yeah. I have a friend who she just went to Colombia in December, and she was like, in love, and she wanted to go back again, so she is going back for volunteering there. So I'm like, well, it's not just trees and coke. (Interview 3)

Despite any correction, Pablo never tried to present Colombia as something it was not. He was aware of and concerned with the major social, political, economic, and cultural challenges troubling Colombian society at the present time. In fact, he

occasionally discussed them from a critical and lived-experience perspective in some criminology seminars at Pond. For instance, when referring to life in Bogotá, he explained the city faced common issues characteristic of large cities, such as traffic congestion and social inequality. However, the media-generated stereotypes only escalated these issues to an unrealistic degree that complicated his identity-negotiation experience—it became more laborious. He felt surprised and frustrated on multiple occasions when people he had met for the first time projected an image of Colombia as a major socioculturally undeveloped nation, questioning him whether "fancy malls" even existed in Colombia.

> I feel Medellin is more developed 'cause Bogotá is the capital, so there's a lot of mess, traffic. But we have malls, like, fancy malls, but people just don't... people *never* imagine that we have a mall! (Interview 3)

National stereotypes prevailed also away from the influence of the media. The most aggravating experience for Pablo was being characterised as Spanish, as in Spaniard. This conflict resulted from a mislabelling by others of his first language for his nationality and ethnicity. In relation to language, he referred to himself as Hispanic or a Spanish speaker, but often clarified to others that he was Colombian, since the term "Hispanic" has a strong historical connection to Spain and its influence imprinted on the former colonies. Similarly to the correction process he employed when discussing Colombia under the influence of the media, specifically that of *Narcos*, Pablo felt he needed to be explicit in presenting himself as a Spanish speaker from *Colombia* in order to avoid misidentification.

Pablo's national and ethnic identity negotiation unfolded at two levels. First, he differentiated himself from Spaniards. A reference to his first language was sometimes confused with Spanish nationality and ethnicity by his interlocutors. Second, if conducive and feasible, he would then differentiate himself from stereotypical images of Colombians. The second process of identity re-alignment, however, was a much more complex and time-consuming undertaking. It depended on the level of social intimacy and the amount of time available between him and his interlocutors. In the introductory class to his seminars, for example, he had limited time to engage in this process. Therefore, identity construction was a contextually-influenced effort. Plus, it was rare that casual interactions with classmates would really develop into a deep and meaningful friendship over time, when only then personal values would be brought to the surface in response to an increased mutual trust. For these reasons, it was not worthwhile for Pablo to invest in negotiating, constructing, and aligning his identity in much detail when there was no envisioned immediate or long-term return.

> You know what annoys me, to be honest? Like the Spanish and Hispanic thing. Because I know it's because of the language, but it's also referring to Spain, right? Like *Spanish*. And we really don't want to be called Spanish people from Spain. To be honest, there is, like, a big confusion 'cause Hispanic could be just, like, anyone who speaks Spanish, right? And Spanish is whoever is from Spain. But people just say like, "oh he's Spanish," but, I *speak* Spanish, I'm not Spanish. In the intro to every class, like the first day of class, the prof will say, say your name and something interesting about yourself, I'm always "I'm Pablo, I'm from *Colombia*." (Interview 3)

Part IV: Adios, Pond

Leaving home

The last time we met, Pablo spoke of his experiences with mixed feelings. The week before, he had attended his final class and submitted his final paper, not only for the

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term, but also for his entire undergraduate degree. The act symbolised the end of his transformative four-year-long journey. Upon returning to his dormitory room from that class, however, the feeling of relief associated with passing in the eighteen-page-long research paper had quickly morphed into a melancholy as he sat down in his chair, facing the window through which he had seen fifteen seasons go by. His mind tried to focus on reliving many of his pleasant experiences, but was easily distracted by the noise travelling from his neighbour's room, who packed boxes while listening to the familiar 90s hip-hop that religiously kept Pablo awake until three in the morning every Friday night for that semester.

Leaving campus was leaving the place that had singularly supported the existence of his new life. For Pablo, the campus was primarily a social, rather than academic, space. It was the place where he met his best friends—other multilingual international students—and experienced multilingualism and multiculturalism first-hand, two dimensions of social life he now considered inseparable from the future he sought for himself. Moreover, living on campus had directly sustained Pablo's personal autonomy. The experience of being on his own was essential to his self-development, which led him to conclude that moving forward, he could no longer live with his parents in Bogotá or his aunt in Sandytown—"I've changed so much," he explained. A return to a life in Spanish felt like a regressive step in his journey of self-discovery.

Ultimately, learning about Pablo's unmatched experiences of living on campus challenged my own beliefs in constructive ways. First, the experience made me reflect on my own personal interaction with the campuses of the institutions I attended as a student. Prior to embarking on this research, I had firmly believed that a university was

nothing more than an academic space. This belief had centrally informed my own involvement with any campus as a domestic student over the years, one focused primarily on academics. When Pablo spoke of domestic students as being largely absent from social and cultural life on campus, I could directly relate to his experience after re-evaluating my own (minimal) investment in and contribution to enhancing non-academic campus experiences at former institutions I considered myself a member of.

Additionally, exploring Pablo's experiences broadened my ways of thinking about campus as a *community*. When I asked Pablo about the best part of being a student at Pond, he unhesitatingly responded that it was the experience of *living* on campus. The accounts he so enthusiastically shared regarding socialising with friends and finding excitement in very creative ways challenged my beliefs of life on campus as a boring and limiting experience. Pablo demonstrated that international students can productively maximise opportunities on campus in ways that I, as a domestic student, had been socialised to believe were impossible or unbeneficial. However, Pablo's experiences also reinforced my foundational belief that multilingual international students are agentive individuals, despite the prevailing discourse centred on deficiency and disruption. He elaborated:

> I'm grateful for living the campus experience. Like, I live here on campus and I've lived here since first year. And I remember people used to tell me, like, in second year you're gonna move out, blah, blah, blah, and I said yeah, we'll see. But I actually love it. I love the experience of living on campus. I feel like, I don't know if that counts as an experience but my friends, like, the fact all my friends are from everywhere in the world that I got to meet them here, that's like, I'm really grateful for that, I'm happy about that. (Interview 4)

Indeed, over the course of his time at Pond, Pablo had become friends with many other multilingual international students. While he had become "school" friends

with a couple of domestic students, his "real" friendship circle included students from every single continent. None of his other multilingual international friends were in the same program he was; nevertheless, they would spend time together daily on campus in the evenings. Pablo was outgoing and expressive, and often emerged naturally as the leader of his social group, planning and leading events on the weekends and on holidays. His favourite time of the week was Friday night, when students met in the large dormitory lounge to party and socialise. Being in the company of friends was the best part of living on campus for him:

> I feel like you make friends, you feel like you are *always* with someone. Because everyone, like, my classmates, I think I told you, all of my classmates they don't make any friends, they just come to school and they go back home. That's it. So... it's really fun, the campus at night, it's really fun. (Interview 4)

Figure 8.3: Here to stay. The wall of Pablo's dormitory room.

Pablo's journey at Pond was nearly over by now, but his journey as a multilingual international student still had more destinations to cover. A few months earlier, Pablo had submitted applications to a master's degree program in criminology to three universities in Canada. Following the conclusion of each interview we had, he would quickly resort to his cell phone to check his inbox for any notifications of acceptance. He was expecting to hear back from all three programs by the end of April. And because Pablo loved Toronto, all three universities he applied to were in the city. And because

he loved Pond, he applied to its criminology program as well. "I might come back to Pond—you never know," he said with a big smile on his face after we said our final good-bye.

Chapter 9

Sabrina: "The world is yours"

Introduction: A multilingual profile

Sabrina Franco was a student in the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program at Pond University. She was in the second term of her first year in this two-year graduate program. Her program was course-intensive and as a full-time student, Sabrina was taking five courses per term, except in the summer, when she was expected to complete a mandatory internship. She was thirty-one years old and originally from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She was the only one in her family living in Canada—her parents were still living in Brazil's most famous city.

Sabrina came to Canada in the summer of 2010. In the preceding year, she had graduated from an undergraduate program in journalism at Rio's largest federal university. She had an evident passion for discovery of things big and small—from exploring the newly-open coffee shop next to her building on Toronto's trendy Queen Street West to adventuring to a completely unfamiliar place, like the ruins in the Urubamba Valley near Cusco, Peru, where she spent the past December holidays. A yet greater interest of hers was people—she enjoyed listening, helping, documenting, and showing their lives to the world, like a charismatic and enthusiastic reporter on the most popular news program on TV.

Being a graduate of journalism, Sabrina loved language and communication. Back in Rio, she was an undergraduate student in two concurrent programs: journalism and letters. Both programs emphasised communication, but from different perspectives.

Her specialisation in letters was Portuguese-French, which she loved to study. "Journalism was what I loved to do, but not study. French was what I loved to study, but not do!," she compared. Although she had completed all courses focused on French linguistics, she chose to not finish the undergraduate program in letters because studying journalism had become gradually more demanding over the years, and so Sabrina decided to set French aside until she could first conclude the journalism program.

Before coming to Canada, Sabrina had always considered French her second language. Her personal relationship with the language—the values, interests, and images she ascribed to it (Cardoso & Pereira, 2015)—began years prior to her studying letters in university, a fondness which first led her to enroll herself in beginner's French at a private language school in Rio. For Sabrina, French and Portuguese, being Romance languages, had an intrinsically charming character—a kind of linguistic personality with which she identified on the emotional side. However, years later, with the French language classes completed, both at university and the private school, Sabrina detected a flimsy, but slowly growing, distance to French as she was no longer in daily contact with the language.

With several years of studying French under her belt, Sabrina's next adventure was learning Italian. "I love languages. So once I finished French, I asked myself: what should be my next challenge? And then I began studying Italian. It's very rusty now, but it's a language that I did study," she explained. I also asked Sabrina about her knowledge of Spanish—the classic question probably asked to all Portuguese speakers. She studied Spanish in high school, but only at the beginner's level, she responded. All

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these language-focused events, experiences, and experiments were additional to those lived already in Portuguese, the language Sabrina grew up speaking and used in her daily life as a student in Rio. Yet, none of these languages would hold the same significance for her future self the same way English was going to.

Part I: Re-organizando o repertório multilíngue

Moving to Canada

Sabrina's story of moving to Canada resembled that of many other international students I had met over the years. As her journalism program was nearing the end, Sabrina began thinking more intently about the next steps involved in establishing a professional career for herself in the field. From this reflective process, Sabrina realised it would be advantageous if she could gain work experience abroad. With a great many students graduating in journalism in the country every year, she needed to have something that could set her apart from at least most of them. She then carefully researched potential destinations, but her mind could only think of one place: France. After all, she not only loved the French language, but was also already proficient in it.

Days after her decision to move to France, however, Sabrina met two Canadians who were travelling through Brazil. Robert and Marcel were fighters and trainers of jiu-jitsu—the Brazilian martial arts adapted from Japan's *judo*. Robert and Marcel would train a group of novice fighters in Canada and then take them to Brazil, once a year, to learn from professional fighters. Once the weeks-long training was over, Robert and Marcel would lead the group on a cultural excursion through Brazil, and it was on a visit to Rio that Sabrina and her friends met the two Canadians at a local restaurant.

Canada, however, had never been on her radar. "At that moment for me, it was like, I didn't even know Canada existed? It was something more or less along those lines!," she confessed while holding back a smile.

Nevertheless, Robert and Marcel convinced Sabrina that Canada would be a perfect place for her international experience. They offered to provide her support and guidance in Toronto, which eased her feelings of insecurity and anxiety implicated in moving to a completely new place. And this was how Canada came to be her final destination: "it was this support—in having someone show me around, help me find a place to live, having all this available—that made me choose Canada." Such support led Sabrina to plan to study and work in Canada for six months; however, like many international students, her stay lasted much longer. Six months have turned into eight years in Toronto, the place which she now calls home.

One of the central principles of multilingualism is concerned with the notion of situated language proficiency. Multilingualism approaches proficiency as intimately and dynamically tied to interaction in social contexts (Cenoz, 2013). From this point of view, language proficiency is considered to change over time to reflect the degree to which the target language is used socially. This context-sensitive approach is particularly applicatory in today's era of intense globalisation, immigration, and transmission of information, wherein social interaction is not only increasingly more multimodal and cross-spatial, but also translinguistic (Gorter & Cenoz, 2015; Pennycook, 2017; Shohamy, 2015).

The move to Canada gradually altered Sabrina's relationships with both English and French. Moving to a predominantly Anglophone environment impacted the frequency with which she used her French, even though Canada was an officially bilingual country. "French was my second language, but I found myself in a city where it's never spoken. So my French was gradually put aside. When I came, my English was very weak. At some point, English and French switched positions for me," she summarised. While Sabrina's relationship with French was born out of genuine interest, her relationship with English began out of necessity instead: in Brazil, all high school students planning to continue on to college or university must write an entrance exam called *vestibular* by the end of grade 12, which covers all subjects learned in high school, including English. She explained her relationship with English by saying:

> I studied English on a part-time basis. I went to a private language school twice a week, so I did study it, but to be honest, I never liked English. I studied it because I had to—I had to pass the *vestibular* exam. But as soon as I could, I switched to French. I worked on my French instead because the English language never attracted me, it has no charm whatsoever. Like, it's so simplistic in ways of expressing yourself. It's an objective language, which is easier to learn, but not something I like personally. (Interview 1)

This was the linguistic context from which Sabrina's transformative journey with Portuguese, English, and French departed.

Relationships with language evolving

Initially, Sabrina saw English as an instrument. Unlike French, which she loved, she needed English to be admitted into the journalism program at the university in Rio. She studied it regularly, from prepositions of place to irregular verbs, but never came to develop the same kind of genuine interest for it like the way she felt about French. For

her, English was colourless and bromidic, while French embodied a prismatic identity that more meaningfully aligned with her own. Once in Toronto, Sabrina was hired by a Brazilian newspaper to write news stories in Portuguese for the Luso-Brazilian community. She travelled within and across the city for the job, using English to interview and participate in community events, but later returning to Portuguese as she meticulously translated her daily reports.

Despite the frequent use of English, Sabrina felt that her proficiency in the language was not improving. Throughout her career as a journalist in Toronto, she travelled to a number of English-speaking events in the city, like the Blue Jay's game or the Christmas parade downtown, but would spend much longer hours working in Portuguese in her small, lonely cubicle. After all her coworkers would leave for home, Sabrina would still be there, at her desk, translating her extensive notes and creating stories for the Brazilian newspaper. Besides work, Portuguese was also the language used at home: "my roommates were Brazilian, so after work I would find myself speaking Portuguese again. I went to Brazilian events with friends on the weekends. My boyfriend was Brazilian. I basically lived in a little Brazil here. Until I said, this can't go on anymore." The absence of opportunities to speak French and to meaningfully improve her English influenced Sabrina to critically reconsider her relationships with all languages, especially Portuguese, the language she initially expected to use the least in Toronto.

What started as a tool for the coverage of local events in Toronto gradually turned into a tool for identity construction. The decision to leave her Portuguese-language job and embrace English emerged from the necessity for linguistic

improvement. However, and most importantly, leaving her job was an act of resistance

to work conditions that for Sabrina were undervaluing and unfavourable. For four years,

Sabrina worked as a journalist for the Brazilian newspaper. Yet, never did she feel as

though she had made any significant progress in several dimensions of life: she felt

professionally stagnated, linguistically outdated, and personally restrained by an

immigrant identity she wished to separate herself from. She desired growth, especially

in her professional career, but to make this a reality, she needed higher proficiency in

English. She described her experience in the following manner:

> I noticed at the newspaper company I was working at that several people were immigrants because the company needed people who could speak other languages, but they didn't want to invest in us, they paid us minimum wage because they knew that immigrants would take it. I would take on extra tasks for myself, but they would never acknowledge this aspect of my performance, you know? And I used to work SO hard. I'm not the type of person to talk much about what I do, but I know that I gave myself to the job completely, beyond what was expected, that I did the work very well, but I wasn't moving forward anywhere. I couldn't spot any opportunities for growth. And it was a pattern, because the Brazilian woman who worked there in the same position before me was there for 8 years, doing the same thing. I'm not sure how she could stand it. I was there for four, but I had to leave. And now there's someone new whom I met, and she said "I can't do this for more than one year" and I said, I know what you mean. As newcomers, we have to stop this pattern of accepting underpaid work. (Interview 1)
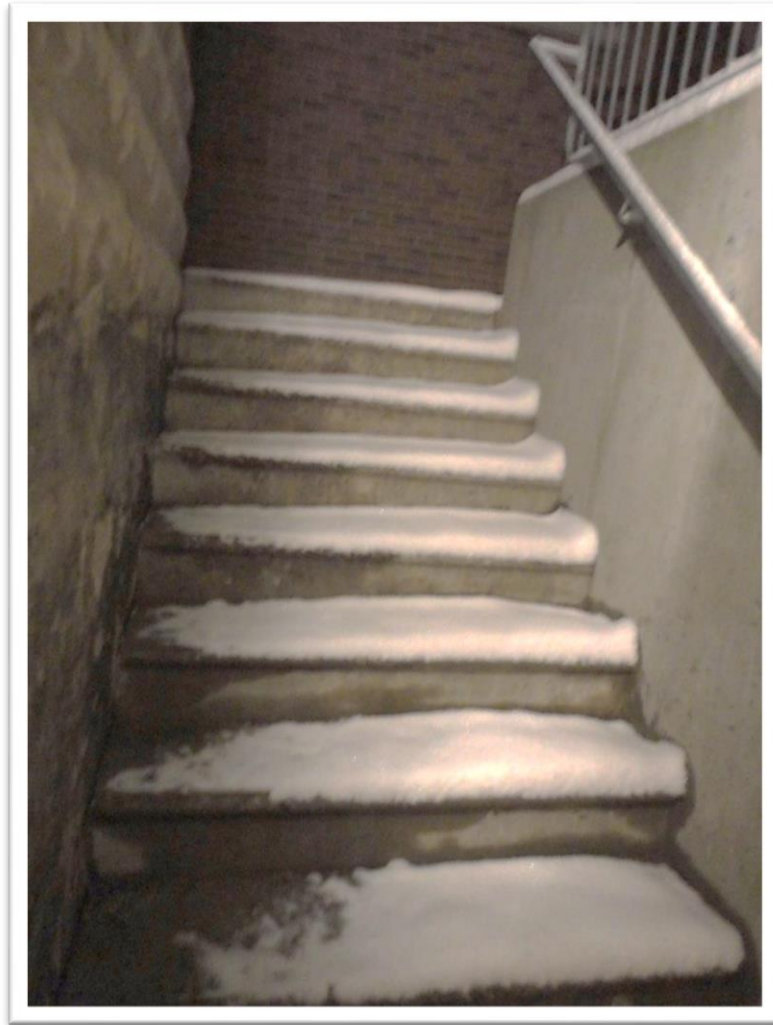
Figure 9.1: Looking up. Early days of identity confinement, a slippery path ahead, and an

obscure place in sight.

Resigning from her job meant more than simply giving notice only to find other

work later. The act signified the end of the old Sabrina. It was freedom: her old self had

been left at the door, in the past, as she walked out of the office. By leaving the job

behind, she discovered an in-between space that afforded her the chance to start a

radical process of self-reconstruction. She could not envision the end result quite clearly

yet, but one thing she knew for certain: she no longer wanted to be offered a job solely

on the basis of her ability to speak Portuguese. She desired to be valued for her

professional skills, experience, and potential, not for the language she spoke. With this goal fixed, Sabrina sought out ways to improve her English.

During her first few months in Toronto, Sabrina had taken ESL classes at a private language school in addition to working part-time as a journalist. However, at that time, she approached English exclusively as a tool for communication, thus progressing through her language program under a limited and limiting vision of the language. Once she left the ESL school, she turned her free time into full-time hours at the newspaper job. And by the time she left her job, she had already begun to see English as more than a communicative tool in response to her experiences in the workplace—English could now be *identity*. The first step of this long-term process of self-discovery was to enroll herself in language classes again. The prolonged time apart from daily and structured contact with English resulted in feelings of insecurity in Sabrina toward her proficiency in the language. This time, however, she signed up for free English classes offered by the city as a start, but rather than improving her language, the classes improved her confidence:

> The classes weren't very useful, but they helped me realise that I was already at a good level of proficiency, you know? What held me back then and still does sometimes when it comes to speaking is because I don't feel totally confident that I'm speaking well, that I'm speaking correctly. So, I think the classes played this role of confirming that I was on the right path with the language. I was ready to move forward to the next step, whatever it was going to be. (Interview 1)

Months following her departure from the newspaper company, Sabrina was able to find a new job as a counsellor. She was hired to provide mentorship to international students who came to Canada to partially or fully complete high school. She picked them up at the airport, took them to their homestays, conducted home visits, and video-

conferenced with the students to check on them—all this in English. Although she had struggled to find any work for some time, this singular opportunity became a paramount experience behind her enhanced linguistic proficiency. "It was totally from working in English that I achieved fluency in the language, from working with people in the real world," she affirmed.

Every opportunity to use English was a building block not only for her communicative fluency, but also her personal relationship with the language. Once she fully realised the potential of English to her future self, Sabrina began engaging more purposefully and intentionally with activities in the language in all ways possible. She borrowed English-language books from the public library, turned off the Portuguese subtitles from every movie she watched, and spoke more confidently in the language in the meetings over Skype with her colleagues from the counselling office. Gradually, embracing a new, though slowly-forming, identity in English shifted the ways she lived, which had been formerly traditionalised by a life solely in Portuguese. And today, she lives through much of this self-transformation that continues to be energised by a new relationship with English:

> Portuguese has a connection to my culture. There's also the fact that it feels comfortable. My boyfriend is also Brazilian—we met here, but he's also Brazilian. So at home, it ends up being all Portuguese. But everything outside the home is in English, like running errands, going to school, all in English. From all the time that I've been here I *now* feel more comfortable in the language. There's one or two Brazilians in my current program, but we don't really talk much, which is good because what I wanted actually happened: I didn't have to automatically get into a group simply because of a mutual culture or language, this didn't happen. Which I think is good because it forces me to diversify. (Interview 1)

In contrast with her initial experience, eight years have produced profound change to Sabrina's life in Toronto. In the early stages, Portuguese was the force

directing the course of her social and professional experiences. Eight years of linguistic

growth, however, have gradually backgrounded Portuguese to be the language of the

home. English gave Sabrina agency in the form of choice. Even now in her MBA

program, the language enabled her to cross linguistic and cultural boundaries which

previously confined her to grow only within interactions in the Portuguese language or

within Brazilian-culture experiences. She "diversified" her growth through English, the

language behind her new re-invented identity. She spoke of the importance of

continuing to enhance her English as follows:

> Now English is completely important, basically the number-one factor for my future. Because we study in Business that everyone has a bias, a prejudice, that even though you may not see it, it exists within you. Like you see someone and think "she's going to be brilliant" but then she starts speaking and so she won't be that brilliant anymore because she doesn't have a well-developed level in the language, she's not that fluent, you know? So the English language is totally important for my life now. (Interview 1)

Sabrina's growth in English also broadened her perspective on French. In her

former job as a counsellor, she used French on her travels to conduct home-visits on

international high school students studying in Montréal. She would commute to the city

often enough that she was able to maintain a certain level of communicative proficiency

in the language, especially by dialoguing in French with the homestay parents of

students placed in Francophone homes. While French was a language which she

initially identified with only emotionally, her positive experiences in English have led her

to contemplate the existence of a similar professional potential in French: "as soon as I

finish my MBA, I want to get back to French because I want to have this language back.

Having the language can open doors."

Part II: Explorando identidades

First encounter

I first met Sabrina on a cold, snowy Monday morning in January. We had never previously met—up until then, our communication had consisted entirely of texting. We arranged to meet outside one of the main coffee shops on campus as a point of reference, and to find a quiet place for the first interview from there. I arrived early and stood in a corner, watching the frenetic pace of students' journey to class. I was attentively scanning the space, looking out for someone who could have been her. I knew Sabrina would be coming from class, but I did not know which direction she would be coming from.

When I noticed someone approaching, we both knew immediately who we were. Sabrina was wearing a long, voluminous black winter coat that contrasted sharply with her expressive and enthusiastic manner of self-expression. She smiled as she spoke, and as I listened, all I could think, in a mixture of jealousy and surprise, was about how someone could be so energised on a Monday morning. As we walked over to the kosher restaurant, I made conversation by inquiring informally about her program of study. "How do you like your program?"—I asked, casually and innocently. Sabrina's quick response instantly revealed valuable information that led me to speed up the pace so we could arrive at the restaurant faster. We crossed a busy parking lot to get to the small brick building where the faculty of education was housed. "This building has so many doors," Sabrina commented as we navigated the long corridors toward our destination. While at the time "opening doors" seemed like nothing more than a mere physical movement, it would later evidently epitomise a continual theme in Sabrina's case concerning her relationship with the English language.

When we arrived, only two other students were present in the restaurant, sitting together at a distant table in a corner. The unusually quiet environment for a Monday at lunch time helped produce a clear recording of the interview. I had prepared a number of questions to guide the interview, but I was unsure of how much we would be able to cover since Sabrina was fighting a cold. To my surprise, however, she responded energetically to each of my questions, with both verbal and gestural language. By the end of the interview, Sabrina had taken me through her personal journey of growth in Toronto.

Early ESL days, first impressions, and cross-cultural interactions

In her first six months in Toronto, Sabrina worked as a journalist and attended an ESL school. Although everything about this new experience felt different, the multiculturalism of the city helped her feel, at some level, like she belonged. Seeing others who appeared racially or ethnically similar—or different—on Toronto's busy streets challenged her views of herself as an outsider. Despite the exposure to city's cultural diversity, however, Sabrina's immediate social life consisted primarily of her circle of Brazilian friends. Yet, as an ESL student, she met other international students in her school with whom she could speak English and occasionally explore the city after the ESL classes. Sabrina characterised this nostalgic experience as "the little international student world," a kind of comfortable and friendly experience wherein she was not judged by her peers on the basis of her proficiency in English.

> I think that the city, being so multicultural, doesn't make you feel like a fish out of water. So many people are living the same experience that you are... When I was taking English classes here, like when I arrived, I had my Korean friends, you know, so class would end, and sometimes we would do something together. I think at that time I didn't interact much with Canadians. There is also that factor: the social transition. In the beginning, I was always in my

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own little international student world, then there was a transition... and English was the thread tying all these things together. But it was actually nice being a student with other internationals, because everyone was at the same language level, like nobody spoke completely correct but it was that feeling of not being judged. Because Canadians, even today, always diffuse that kind of "intimidation" because they speak so well, natives speak so well, so automatically that intimidates you and you get stuck. You think twice before you start speaking. (Interview 1)

The English language was always a critical factor in Sabrina's early social experiences. Her rudimentary proficiency in the language had set boundaries as to how far she could go and how much she could risk. Even though she felt comfortable with her level of English among her ESL peers, she considered it insufficient for conversations with native speakers. She was very aware of her profile as an ESL international student in Toronto, a kind of position that for her was comprised of an undesirable withdrawal from participating actively in Canadian society primarily on the basis of low language proficiency. However, before she could make the "social transition" out of being an ESL student into the local community, she would need to improve her proficiency in English. At that language level, she was unable to have "deep" conversations with native speakers, despite her critical knowledge of the world gained through journalism.

Cross-cultural interactions with Canadians were often constructed around the ESL student and native speaker difference. Though Sabrina appreciated the politeness of Canadians, she felt disheartened when their gentle but seemingly overprotective approach revealed an uncritical view of her as someone fragile or in need. The inability to express herself "like a native speaker" often unintentionally signalised an identity incongruent with whom she really was. From these repeated experiences of frustration and misidentification, Sabrina decided she needed to reconstruct her identity by

modifying behaviours and "labels" she considered symptomatic of a deficient ESL student identity.

Leaving the ESL school was Sabrina's first act of withdrawal. Her affiliation to the language school was the primary channel through which her ESL student identity was officialised. For this reason, after completing the intermediate level within the ESL program, Sabrina decided to not move forward to the next one. The unfavourable impact of perpetuating the ESL identity was, at that time, greater than the potential for linguistic gain afforded by remaining in the language program. Additionally, Sabrina began spending less time socialising with her fellow international ESL peers outside the school. Though she benefited linguistically, socially, and emotionally from their friendships, she needed to prioritise her long-term needs. Lastly, she participated less in cultural events facilitated by the Brazilian community. She loved being Brazilian, but had to synchronise being Brazilian with her emerging identity so that one did not overshadow the other. Such difficult decisions affected her immediate experiences, but contributed to her growth in the long-run.

From language school to college and university

Following the departure from her job as a journalist in 2014, but prior to working as a counsellor, Sabrina could not land a job anywhere. She applied for several jobs, went for a few interviews, but was never offered a position in return. Despite having work experience in Canada, her job as a journalist had been carried out primarily in Portuguese, a linguistic experience incompatible with the language demands of the new positions she had considered. As a result, she decided to enroll in journalism courses at

Larson University, located in Toronto. She hoped to gain the linguistic and academic skills she lacked by taking continuing education courses in journalism at the university, thereby improving her chances of subsequently finding more relevant employment. However, as an international student, Sabrina would be required to pay nearly triple tuition fees, even though the courses were non-credit continuing education courses. This financial obstacle diverted her to studying business communication at McIntosh College[16] instead:

> I was going to study at Larson, but what I didn't know about Larson was that, even for continuing education courses, students would have to pay two and a half times more. Especially at that time, it wasn't a thing in Brazil to come to Canada, Canada wasn't well known, so I didn't know about this difference. When I saw that tuition was two and half times more, and considering the course I was going for, I said, it's not worth it. So I never went to Larson. My objective was to study at Larson since they offered courses in journalism, but I never did go. Later I studied at McIntosh—I completed a certificate in business communication—and then I went to Ontario's University[17] for another course. (Interview 2)

The diverse collection of continuing education courses Sabrina completed supported her academic and linguistic growth. For a year, she attended evening classes at McIntosh College and Ontario's University, learning English in context. Though the experience helped improve her résumé, her greatest gain was linguistic in nature, for the classes afforded her the acquisition of specialised business language while practicing her English. When Sabrina finally felt qualified for the positions she aspired, she had to overcome yet another obstacle. She explained: "this whole new experience had been really difficult so far, first because of my [low] confidence in the language, I felt I wasn't capable. But once I overcame that feeling and felt capable, I realised I didn't have connections. I lacked contacts that could lead me into the field in Toronto."

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[16] Pseudonym.
[17] Pseudonym.

In Brazil, Sabrina had worked for *Globo,* the largest national corporation for media and journalism. From this experience, she learned about the importance of networking opportunities for career development in journalism. Such mediation was no different in Toronto, although unlike in Brazil, she was unfamiliar with ways of accessing these opportunities in Canada. In the meantime, however, Sabrina continued to apply for jobs on her own. She was ecstatic when the twentieth application she had so discouragingly submitted, following many other similar attempts, actually resulted in an offer for a part-time position as an administrator of an IELTS testing centre downtown, an opportunity which she believed materialised principally in response to an improved proficiency in English and a certificate in business from a Canadian institution.

What Sabrina aimed to do next involved great risk and investment on her part. Still firmly determined to expand her professional circle in the field of media and journalism, she contemplated returning to school for a graduate program, but one which would include structured networking opportunities in its curriculum. Her attempts at networking, when operationalised under her own efforts, were frustratingly unsuccessful. She envisioned that a professional graduate program could open doors to acquiring new knowledge and enhancing her communication skills, in addition to presenting networking opportunities throughout the process. Her research led her to settle on an MBA program, and later on Pond University. She explained her decision-making process was based on a comparison between Pond's and Ontario's University MBA programs:

> Pond's MBA had a broader focus, while Ontario's University's was very traditional, like for banking and finances. However, my background was in media, journalism, it didn't fit into their traditional frame. And I didn't want to work in banks or anything related to this. Pond had this

different offer—they had a specialisation in arts and media, entertainment management, which was exactly what I wanted. The other aspect was that Pond had more flexibility like if I wanted to switch to part-time or full-time, I could do that at any time. Whereas Ontario's University's wouldn't let me, if I started part-time, they wouldn't let me switch, and their part-time MBA takes 8 years. Like, 8 years as a student! What if I'm let go of my job? So they lost me right from the beginning, even though they have huge prestige, it wasn't for me. And then came Pond… though it took me a long time to get in. (Interview 2)

Sabrina's admission into Pond's MBA program took two years to materialise. The process consisted of a long and taxing journey; however, she never gave up. Her first challenge was passing the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT), a computer-based exam designed to evaluate candidates' analytical, verbal, writing, and reading skills. Her second challenge was passing the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). On her third attempt, Sabrina greatly exceeded Pond's minimum requirement for the GMAT, thereby resulting in an offer to begin the MBA program in 2018. With the last piece of the puzzle in, she could now see the big picture emerging before her eyes.

Part III: Experiências como estudante

A few weeks later...

In February, Sabrina and I met for an interview at a coffee shop in Toronto's south. The interview questions I had formulated were intended to explore Sabrina's cross-cultural experiences. The cultural contrast between Toronto and Sabrina's hometown, Rio de Janeiro, in the month of February became the inspiration for our conversation: Toronto was gray, cold, and pale, with its anachronistic street cars passing slowly on the Queensway, while Rio was living through the *Carnaval* parades marched in vivid colours and hot temperatures on Ipanema Beach. My principal objective for this

interview was to learn about how much of this cross-cultural distinction extended to Sabrina's student experiences.

When we arrived, the coffee shop was busy and only one table remained available. We set our backpacks on the empty chairs next to the table and walked over to the counter to place our orders. Back at our table with our food and coffee, Sabrina realised she needed a napkin. When she got up and turned around toward the small cutlery station by the back wall, capital letters in bold and black on the back of her sweater immediately caught my attention. Together they read: **THE WORLD IS YOURS**. That sentence fit perfectly with my inflexible image of Sabrina as someone fearless, agentive, and indefatigable.

The coffee shop's pleasant and relaxed atmosphere differed strikingly from the environment of campus. Since late January, feelings of apprehension and hypertension had been swirling over Pond's campus as a result of the provincial government's announcement of significant changes to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP), a long-standing program designed to support Ontario's university and college students by issuing student loans and grants for those in financial need. The changes proposed were expected to begin in the fall semester of 2019, and quantitatively impact student loans, ancillary fees, and tuition costs. One of the primary concerns voiced by students sought to confront a change which would determine students' access to financial assistance based on their parents' income, regardless of whether their parents actually did contribute toward their education.

Concerns were manifested on campus through several methodologies. Emotional letters, loud protests, and interviews provided to newspapers and radio programs by Pond's students conveyed a unified, growing frustration exhaled by students occupying socially and financially diverse positions within the university. For those on the low income side of the spectrum, the structural changes were taken as yet another obstacle to getting an education. This was because the proposed changes were also expected to reduce the amount of loanable funds, the interest-free period extended post-graduation before loan repayment, and ancillary fees related to health and safety services. For the majority of students at Pond, this was a time of undesirable anxiety and uncertainty over the future of their education.

Resisting and reconstructing the student role

As a new student in Pond's MBA program, Sabrina had embarked onto an intensive two-year-long learning experience. The program curriculum covered a wide range of foundational courses ranging from management and leadership to accounting and organisational behaviour. Additionally, students were expected to complete a summer internship in the very first year. Despite all the novel, yet equally intimidating experiences, Sabrina's steepest learning curve was unrelated to learning the content. Rather, she needed to learn how to be a student again, and this time in a professional graduate program.

Adapting to the new experience required that Sabrina confront and deconstruct her own ideologies regarding learning. In the past, as a university student in Rio, Sabrina would hardly ask for help. She believed that asking for help would project

weakness and incapability from her part. Consequently, she approached learning and

succeeding in and outside the classroom as a completely individual endeavour. Her

early experiences in the MBA were no different. She avoided and resisted asking for

help, and insisted on approaching her new learning experience in the exact same

manner she had in the past. She only became open to change when her strictly

individual efforts resulted in falling grades on her returned assignments:

> One thing that I noticed in the MBA program—that during the first few weeks I hadn't yet grasped—was that I needed to ask for help. First because, I was always a good student back in Brazil, but I changed positions here: I am no longer the best in the class who's the reference for everybody, and that's totally because of the language. So I had to accept this fact that I do need help. I had to learn to accept this and then I had to ask for help from others because before people would always come to me to work together, but now I myself have to go to people and ask to work together. So my first few weeks in the MBA program, I was still resisting it, banging my head against the wall, thinking that I had to do and know everything by myself, reading and studying alone, and then came a point when I said to myself: *this is wrong*. I began noticing this was wrong from the grades I was getting. (Interview 2)

To succeed, Sabrina also had to understand the cultural dimension of learning. In

other words, she needed to learn how to be a university student again, but *in Canada*.

Initially, Sabrina lacked the academic language expected in her program, which limited

the extent to which she could actively contribute to classroom discussions and exercise

a prominent presence as a knowledgeable and invested student, analogous to her

position at the university in Rio. In addition to dealing with a lack of academic language

proficiency, Sabrina had to observe and adopt the learning behaviour of her classmates,

especially of those of a Canadian background who had completed their undergraduate

studies in Canada. Recognising the student role as a culturally-situated performance led

to an unprecedented willingness on her part to ask for help in learning both language

and content in a more collaborative learning style. She summarised:

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I saw that even [native-speaker] Canadians were getting together to study, and I thought: "look, they're doing this! I think I will do that too. I think I will ask for help" and that's when I began asking for help to the people who had more knowledge in any given subject, whether it was accounting or whatever. Even with writing, this was also completely the case. (Interview 2)
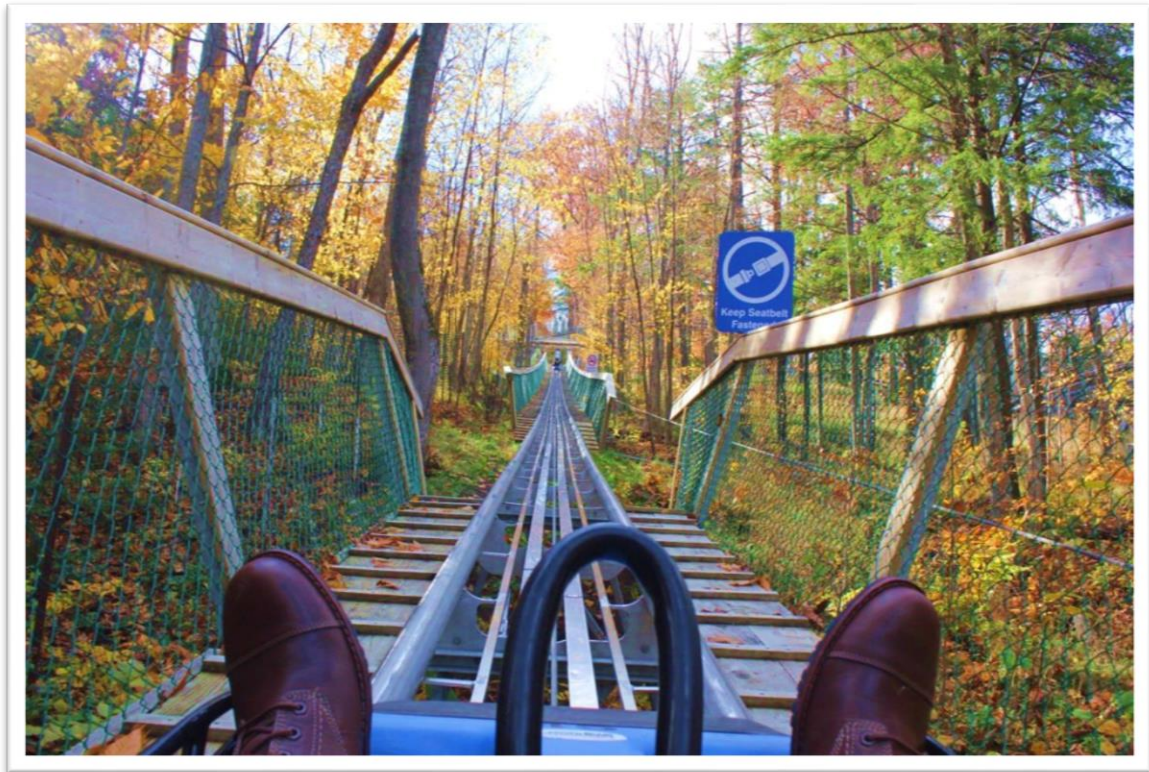
Figure 9.2: The academic journey depicted differently.

Familiarisation with Pond's support service structure was yet another learning curve. While Sabrina's initial challenge stemmed from a resistance to asking for help, later on into her first term, when she did decide to seek out support, her challenge laid in deciphering the support structure of the university in terms of the function and range of support covered by each service unit. She illustrated the evolution of her familiarity with Pond's support structure by referring to her positive experience seeking out and receiving support with academic writing. Nevertheless, she felt this support structure

could be better explained for students who, like her, had not only been out of university for years, but also completed their undergraduate degree at a foreign institution:

> In the beginning I felt totally lost with all the support structure that Pond offers that I didn't know what place I should go to for help with writing. Slowly, as I became more comfortable, I realised okay, I can get help specifically with writing. So I made an appointment, it went really smooth, the girl who was there helped me and instructed me to write this like this and this like that, change this over here, and she helped me write out my ideas, let's just put it that way. I saw that the support structure is there, it's huge, I was just so lost and overwhelmed with so much that I couldn't understand what service was for what, but I see now that this support structure is really incredible. (Interview 2)

Encounters with academic language

As a non-native speaker of English, Sabrina was required to pass the IELTS test before an offer of admission could be officially extended to her. However, she never studied for the test with the same rigorous systematicity she did for the GMAT—on a daily basis, and by following modules on a textbook and watching online lessons. Despite her minimal formal preparation, she wrote and passed the language test at once. To her surprise, however, the level of proficiency in English expected to pass the test was incongruent with the academic language she later encountered in her program. In particular, the test's expectations of proficiency around reading and writing were not on par with those in her program. Readings for the MBA courses generally employed a more specialised genre of the language. As for writing, her essays were expected to consist of long, complex, and articulate content:

> I think, mainly, that listening was the kind of everyday listening, it wasn't something academic. Reading was academic, because you have the texts there. Some of it [the test] does reflect academic English, but some of it doesn't. Because listening was very easy, I understood everything, but I think what the MBA requires is much more than what IELTS was at in terms of proficiency. Even writing, nowadays I write pages and pages while IELTS requires an essay that's like, I don't know, 250 words, like something that short. (Interview 3)

Such linguistic discrepancy between test and classroom has been widely reported by multilingual international graduate students. Consequently, multilingual international graduate students have been known to encounter significant challenges fueled by insufficient pre-exposure to and proficiency in academic language, specifically with respect to understanding instructors, classmates, and participating orally in classroom discussions (Brown, 2008; Lee, 2009; Liu, 2011; Tavares, 2019b). Yet, these challenges have been known to also affect multilingual international students at the undergraduate level (Li, 2004). While Sabrina exceeded the minimum score on the IELTS test, the results did not accurately predict her academic and linguistic success.

Writing

As a journalist, Sabrina was well-versed in identifying and supplying key points to a good news story. However, she always needed extra time when it came to writing one. Likewise, she always had the content in mind for a good academic essay, but needed support to write out her thoughts and find her own academic voice. Without the academic writing skills she needed, starting and finishing assignments in all of her five courses turned into nothing but a laborious and vexatious task. Her difficulties related primarily to conveying ideas in a logical and argumentative manner. Other peripheral challenges laid in employing academic vocabulary and structuring her ideas to follow the conventional essay style of North-American universities:

> I see that it takes me such a long time to write any essay, though some people say, "you are a journalist, it must be easy for you to write!" But it's actually not like that. In fact it has never been like that. Not even in Portuguese, I was never that person that could just sit down and write right away. I reflect, I worry about how and what to say. It takes me longer. I do have this difficulty, I've noticed this, it's one of the things that I need to work on, on my writing, and I try to read and

everything but it's to the point now where I don't know what else to do because there is that difficulty to put on paper everything that I'm thinking. It's related to the production, the creation of something. (Interview 3)

However, Sabrina came across a new initiative that more closely met her individual linguistic needs. This initiative in the form of in-house writing support was offered by the graduate business program exclusively to its students. On her first visit, Sabrina sought support for adjusting her ideas into concise sentences. Although she knew what to say, she was dissatisfied with how it sounded—she characterised her writing then as informal and wordy. Based on this and other similar experiences, Sabrina came to understand the importance of revision in academic writing. She began writing several drafts of the same assignment, progressively integrating feedback from tutors, instructors, and her own into each new draft. She argued that her initially rudimentary proficiency in the language prevented her from being able to develop her ideas from beginning to end:

> Pond does offer help with writing. But for the first time, there's support for Pond's MBA program's students specifically, and there's also someone in general at the university. I found out that this MBA-specific service existed, so I went there, and she [the tutor] looked at my writing and she edited things to which I said: yes, that's exactly what I wanted to say in my writing, it was like *that* that I wanted to say it. But I couldn't, I couldn't have that kind of vision in the language. (Interview 3)

Speaking

Although writing had been a considerable challenge for Sabrina, she still considered oral language to be her greatest difficulty. Yet, such difficulty was unrelated to the level of complexity of the content discussed by either her classmates or instructors in class. In fact, she felt surprised to find classroom discussions to be

conducted in "rather informal" language. Her difficulty in speaking actually originated from her own perception of her pronunciation in English. She felt insecure about pronouncing particular sounds of the language and, as a consequence, purposefully avoided using words with those sounds in them. In response to this stagnating fear, she made a series of appointments with a speech therapist downtown in order to learn to better manipulate her phonetic articulation in the language.

Sabrina ascribed much higher value to speaking because it more directly impacted the indexation of the identity she aspired for herself. As difficult as she found academic writing to be, such challenges were restricted to the classroom, and more specifically, to essay and report writing. Speaking, or speaking eloquently, conversely, was a skill which for Sabrina transcended the academic classroom. Oral language was the means through which she constructed and projected her new identity when in interaction with others. However, Sabrina's own insecurities in her oral language caused her internal conflict because "incorrect oral language" could produce deviations from the specific persona she sought to project for herself in English.

Sabrina believed that her accent, for example, would lead her interlocutors to see her differently from how she saw herself—they would see her as someone inferior. She did not want to be perceived as less intelligent because of her pronunciation, and expected herself to demonstrate her intellectual capability exclusively through (perfect) oral language. As a multilingual speaker for whom English was acquired later in life, Sabrina had an acute awareness of the constraints in being viewed as a "non-native speaker" or as an "ESL" speaker. The identity she had been diligently constructing and protecting for herself was an arduous effort to detach herself from the identity of a non-

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native speaker which she had unpleasantly experienced in the past as an ESL student through the private language school. The past, negative experiences resulting from her early insufficient oral proficiency likely significantly impacted her views of herself in the English language. From my perspective as an English language instructor, Sabrina's accent was so minimal that one would have to concentrate on it to be able to detect its uniqueness.

Sabrina's other, older self in Portuguese—more developed and articulate—fueled her ambition for a similar identity in English. However, it was also a source of identity conflict. Sabrina often contrasted her in-progress identity in English to the more established one she held in Portuguese, constructed through another linguistic code, however, and situated in an environment wherein different sociocultural values existed. Still, she hoped to achieve the same native proficiency in English like that she had in Portuguese in order to erase her accent, and therefore, the accompanying feeling of a deficient identity she had formerly internalised as an ESL student. While instances of discrimination and socioeconomic disadvantage based on accents can affect many multilingual speakers (Derwing, Fraser, Kang, & Thomson, 2014), Sabrina reported she had never been subjected to these experiences in Toronto. She explained that her beliefs regarding the multiple ways the English language might impact how others perceive her were yet "another thing" in her head stemming from the complex "high expectations" she held herself against:

> **Sabrina**: Despite writing being a challenge, I would say speaking is the most challenging for me. Because I still have—and I will actually begin speech therapy, I've decided to do it because I know that it's something *in me*—I have that stigma. Everybody tells me "no, you don't have any issues," but I know I have an accent, people always recognise it. I don't think it's bad having an accent, but I've noticed that there are certain things I deliberately avoid speaking, like certain

words, because I know that I am not speaking them correctly, so I will avoid speaking those words altogether. So, for me, speaking comes before writing in terms of being more difficult, even though speaking is quite informal in class.

Vander: So you think people may develop an image of you based on their perception of your accent?

Sabrina: A little… actually, a lot, because what I see in all this is that *I* am very picky with myself. I know a lot of people who just don't care, they have thick accents, and I think that's great, but I still can't get myself to feel that way about my speaking, so it's another thing in my head that I'm working on. Many people say that they don't think more or less of me because of my accent. But I know that I don't have the same ability to express myself as I would be able to in Portuguese.

Vander: Are you speaking of expressing yourself better in terms of pronunciation or vocabulary? Because speech therapy would be focused on pronunciation.

Sabrina: A little bit of each. But I think one thing will lead to another, like improving that overall confidence in speaking. Because I don't have any difficulties with grammar, but I think it's that speed of speaking, since I still think much faster in Portuguese, while in English, even though English is more natural for me now, it's not as I would like it to be yet because I have these high expectations, you know? (Interview 3)

Classroom participation

The dynamics orienting classroom participation in the MBA program came as another surprise for Sabrina. She was expected to participate in class by sharing insights which she did not consider constructive, or even necessary, to the discussions taking place. Nevertheless, she realised soon enough that it was the very act of "saying something" in class that not only characterised, but also counted toward, her participation mark in her courses. Her inference was that the content of oral contributions could consist of "anything" as long as contributions were voiced frequently enough. In this sense, Sabrina's experiences in relation to oral participation mirrored those had by some international multilingual students in English-medium universities who equated oral participation to the erratic sharing of personal ideas which were often incomplete and dispersed (Beykont & Daiute, 2002; Lee, 2009; Tatar, 2005). She explained:

I don't know if this is something only in business, like how much they want you to participate in class. But sometimes I feel like I just don't have or want to say anything about the topic we're discussing. But they [instructors] speak of how important it is for us to participate and try to force us to do it. It feels a little superficial, because everyone has to say something, or anything, but it doesn't always add anything significant to the discussion. The contributions are mostly based on personal experience. You aren't evaluated for what you say, but just for saying something. (Interview 4)

Instructor-student relations

Sabrina's interactions with and expectations of her instructors in Canada were in many ways the opposite of those she had had with instructors in Brazil. Her past experience as a university student in the journalism program in Rio was contextualised by an incontrovertible culturally- and institutionally-mediated distance between instructors and students in the classroom. The power difference in place defined the impenetrable boundary between them, and ensured that the voice of the instructor was the first and last to be heard. Essentially, Sabrina had been socialised to never contest the theories and opinions disseminated by her instructors, and anticipated that student and instructor positions would follow the same dichotomous construction in Canada.

However, Sabrina's beliefs were challenged when she noticed that her classmates were engaged critically and actively in discussions with instructors in the MBA program. Her previous socialisation prevented her from participating naturally in this dialectic like her classmates did, although she strongly wished she could. Her growing frustration inspired her to dispute the validity of her long-held belief that mechanically positioned instructors as unapproachable and all-knowing figures in the classroom. Accordingly, she made a series of individual appointments with her instructors to clarify the lingering uncertainty that obstructed her participation. In these

meetings, she presented both language and culture as obstacles to her classroom involvement. One by one, these face-to-face conversations completely transformed her perspectives on student-instructor relationships.

In one particular meeting, the professor challenged Sabrina's misconceptions about the value of her contributions to classroom discussions and the intelligibility of her English. Based on her early experiences as a university student, she believed her contributions could not be nearly as insightful as those presented by instructors. To make matters worse, even when she did fantasise about voicing her point of view in class, her insecurity in the English language only caused her to further supress her desire to participate. Her professor, however, encouraged her to contribute by affirming that he was able to understand her English clearly, and that if "even students with thicker accents" were speaking freely in class, she should then only feel more confident to do so as well. Ultimately, in relation to her linguistic skills, Sabrina realised that what prevented her from participating in class was her own self-doubt.

Similarly, in an economics class, Sabrina felt intimidated to contribute to oral discussions because she had not previously studied the subject. She feared that an attempt at participating could make her sound "stupid" in front of her peers. Despite her silence in class, however, she still felt strongly that her instructor needed to know she was a diligent and capable student, and that her amorphous knowledge in economics— the factor behind her silence—should not be seen as a reflection of disinterest or unintelligence on her part. These meetings helped not only extricate Sabrina from her own insecurity and silent involvement, but also repaint her traditional image of university instructors.

The outcomes of these constructive meetings even went beyond what Sabrina had initially desired. She not only began to feel more confident and comfortable to participate, even when she deemed her contribution irrelevant, but later also embraced a change to her participation style. In one course, for example, she expected the instructor to call upon her openly in front of her peers to respond to questions on the spot. She concluded that it would be more beneficial for her to be invited to participate rather than to initiate participation on her own, in spite of her growing feeling of confidence and comfort. This expectation re-defined her view of classroom participation to being one co-constructed between student and instructor. She illustrated the complex evolution of her approach to classroom participation in the dialogue below:

> **Sabrina**: I hardly ever spoke to professors in Brazil, but here I scheduled a time and went to speak to the each professor in their offices. Because first I thought I needed to de-mystify that image of the professor for myself, so that I could feel comfortable and be able to participate in classroom discussions.

> **Vander**: You had to have something individually first.

> **Sabrina**: Exactly. For me to understand and validate that we're equal. That "I'm not better than you," and that "I do want you to talk." There was a prof to whom I said: "I don't participate in class because everything that I think about saying isn't meaningful enough *in my head*." And he said: "Who said that's true?" So it was definitely something personal, something *in me*. I felt much more comfortable afterwards.

> **Vander**: And you did this with every prof?

> **Sabrina**: I did this with several! Because I think there were three courses that required a lot of participation. And the first class was one in which the professor would just call on people. There's different kinds of professors, and this one was the "cold call" kind of professor. Out of nowhere he would say, Sabrina, answer this. That was in an economics class. He was very intimidating. So I needed, first, to tell him who I was, which I couldn't show in class because I was very quiet. And second, to de-mystify this thing about professors in general. And then he could call on me as much as he wanted, you know? Because after that talk... First also because I shared my difficulties with him, that economics, like, I had never studied economics before.

> **Vander**: So do you think that your experience in the classroom, especially in terms of participation, would have been affected had you not gone speak to the prof in person?

Sabrina: Absolutely and totally. I would have felt less confident and less comfortable. Because after that talk, I felt comfortable to speak. Of course everyone gets nervous when speaking before an audience, that didn't change, but I felt more confident that even if I said something irrelevant, he valued my participation and involvement.

Vander: Like validating that your experience does matter in the classroom

Sabrina: Exactly. Everything began with this professor that I thought I wasn't doing well with. Then I went to speak with him and there was also this perception of intimidation, but it changed. And another professor sent me an evaluation of my participation and I was given a low score. So I went to speak to him and ask what could be done, like "I'm here telling you what my challenges are, what can I do?" And so we talked and it helped me a lot. He even asked me: "to participate, do you prefer that I call on you in front of everybody?" And I said: "you know what? I think I do. Because if you call on me, I will have no choice but to talk. But if I had to raise my hand, I would not do it. I won't raise my hand and say something." And so he started to call on me in class.

Part IV: Presente e Futuro

Perseverance and growth

Sabrina and I decided to record our last interview in the business department building. The business department had its own building, detached from the rest of campus, and located a short walk from the campus subway station. Although the outside looked gray and outdated, the inside felt modern, lively, and cultivated. Inside, business students had access to a well-equipped business library, a Starbuck's, and multiple study rooms on every floor. As I waited for Sabrina by the information desk on the first floor, dozens of students walked by, decorating the space with the sound of the various languages they spoke. Once we met, Sabrina took me on a tour of the building, which helped me better visualise the space where she spent a considerable amount of her student time every week.

My focus in this interview was on learning about Sabrina's life experiences which were unrelated to being a student. When I met Sabrina for the first time, I hesitated

asking her age, even though the question was on my interview sheet. A month later, when we felt more comfortable with each other, I learned she was 31. I was immediately taken by surprise as I had not expected to hear only 31 from someone who had such extensive and diverse personal and professional life experience. Every time we talked, Sabrina would casually reveal some of the many non-student experiences she had had in the past, to which I would often listen in perplexity given their significance, but that she, contrarily, enjoyed trivialising. Needless to say, there was much to learn from and about the non-student Sabrina. Her wealth of professional experience, for example, included positions as an IELTS test centre administrator, student counsellor, journalist, and language volunteer. She embraced every new challenge as an opportunity for growth.

Sabrina considered her ability to adapt to new experiences and overcome challenges with a smile on her face to be the product of her growing up in Brazil. "If you can live in Brazil, you can live anywhere," she stated. Indeed, the fifth largest and most populous country in the world enjoyed the eighth place on the 2019 world ranking for gross domestic product at 3.5 trillion dollars annually (International Monetary Fund, 2019), but lacked a fair distribution of funds to the population, rendering reality harsh for economically and socially unprivileged Brazilians. Although this was not Sabrina's case directly, she knew many for whom it was, especially in Rio, where the clear-cut economic disparity had even become the central subject of many international documentaries, movies, and best-selling books.

Finding balance through spirituality

The intense demands of the MBA program have impacted every dimension of Sabrina's life. Since the beginning of the term, her routine had changed dramatically as she handled a five-course workload, attended regular networking events, and prepared for an internship for the upcoming summer semester, all in addition to managing her eventful non-student personal life. She even contemplated quitting her administrator job at the IELTS centre downtown since she needed more time for her studies, but her contractual obligation prevented her from doing so. Despite the hectic routine, Sabrina still prioritised her mental health. Attending to her faith, or to her spiritual side, was one of the primary means by which she achieved a mental health balance. She followed a practice called Spiritism, which consisted of regular group meetings, meditation, and a specific religious doctrine, all of which she engaged in episodically due to her busy schedule.

Spiritism, however, is not a religion per se. It is a spiritual philosophy concerned with the holistic study of the human spirit and its relationship to the material world, being first developed in France in the 19th century. According to spiritist philosophy, human spirits are immortal, and incarnate material bodies in different lifetimes as part of a long-term process of moral and intellectual self-improvement (Lucchetti, Daher, Iandoli, Gonçalves, & Lucchetti, 2013). Each spiritist centre holds regular meetings in which adherents attend lectures and study foundational texts together. Other meetings are developed with the aim of fostering healing or paranormal communication, normally through psycography—or spirit writing, where one is believed to write subconsciously by channelling communication from other spirits (Kardec, 1975). Despite the set of well-

defined practices, Spiritism is not mutually exclusive—a follower may practice it in conjunction with any other religious doctrine.

Considering her schedule, Sabrina approached the spiritual philosophy not by the book, but instead as a set of umbrella practices that could support her achievement and continuance of a healthy state of mind. The demands by the MBA program had left her with considerably less time to engage in non-student personal activities, including participating fully in spiritist practices like she had been able to in Brazil. Nevertheless, she valued the structured opportunity for personal reflection afforded even by only partially following the doctrine. In a sense, the MBA program had "become" her life as she was completely focused on developing the very professional career that led her to consider the program in the first place. Still, she could not divert the mental and physical impact of the academic experience, describing herself as "totally out of balance" as a result of her immersion in the program:

> The way I see it is that the student life puts so much pressure on you that you need some kind of support from elsewhere. The support from religion or from believing in certain things helps with the student's mental health, at least definitely in my case. The MBA has become my life priority and so I have put the spiritual experience aside. I'm a spiritist and I'm used to going to the meetings on Sundays. And yes, this helps me, it feels like it puts me—because I am totally out of balance, for sure, because the MBA being the priority puts everything aside, but it's a choice I made myself. But because I know the program goes quickly, I prefer to go on like this [without regularly attending the meetings]. But I think the spiritual experience gives me a chance to stop and think about myself, think about mental health, and think about what the MBA is doing to me, like the impact it's having. It's a time for me to reflect, because at the end of the day, the student Sabrina is nothing if the whole Sabrina is not complete from all her other parts. (Interview 4)

Looking forward to the future

The experience as an MBA student had become inextricable from Sabrina's identity. The program was the lens through which she began to define herself, the world, and the possibilities for the future. Every response Sabrina provided to my interview questions was in some way or another woven into the MBA program. From our interactions over several weeks, I witnessed that the MBA program had been the most intense, challenging—but equally the most fulfilling and defining—personal undertaking in her life up until now, exactly yet as she had hoped it would be. However, analogous to the English language, the academic program was foremost a site of identity reconstruction. It was not the end goal, but an instrument to it.

The ongoing personal and professional transformation afforded by the MBA program has only continued to empower Sabrina. It equipped her with the knowledge and skills she desired to have in order to act upon the altruistic values she had always held intimately within: a passion for helping others, and for learning about as well as from them. The heartfelt curiosity of understanding human experience through life events, which culminated in a degree in journalism, had never dried out as a consequence of her commitment to the MBA program. On the contrary, it had only continued to branch far out. Hence her genuine interest in participating in this strange and time-consuming research project. Moving forward, Sabrina hoped to be in a position of leadership in which her personal values would be aligned with that of her future workplace. The knowledge and skills she had been developing expanded her repertoire of possibilities for the future. She explained:

> The MBA makes me think a lot about these things. One thing I know is that the MBA alone won't be sufficient to take me where I want to be. So maybe the first job will still have to be a stepping stone to get to where I really hope to be. But ideally, I would want to be in a position of

leadership in an organisation. But I still worry so much about the objective, the mission of any organisation. For example, I can't get myself to agree with the mission of banks. It's something about my motivation—I have to really feel that I'm contributing to the company, that I'm personally aligned with their mission. So, in the past, like 10-11 years ago, I was more like "I'll do whatever comes my way," but today I have a different vision of what I'd like to do. Maybe something related to the work of artists. I would like to somehow help make it easier for them because I know how difficult it is for artists to become successful. And now I have my knowledge of business, which I didn't have before, because the journalism program didn't give me that. So I think I could combine both to contribute to companies focused on communication and arts, or similar perspectives. So the way I see myself is in a position of leadership, making a difference in relation to, maybe, arts projects, or something related to visual arts, which would include even digital media. (Interview 4)

Sabrina believed in a promising and exciting future. For eight years, she has continued to call Toronto *home*. She grew emotionally attached to the city where she experienced the most impactful personal and professional kind of maturation. The augmented self-confidence led her to keep "the doors open" as she believed she could transcend any boundaries, and perhaps once more, she would leave "home" like once she left Brazil. The concluding response in the last interview also illustrated the adaptive and evolving essence behind her identity: "I know that it can change."

For now, all this is happening in Toronto, but I know that it can change. I'm keeping the doors open. And I don't know if this is something that I can share, but I *know* I'm capable of succeeding here [in Canada]. Having Brazil as my country means I can live anywhere. Because I see now how much we adapt to everything there and how we deal with challenges, and I like that. So, for now I see myself here, but it could be different... (Interview 4)

Figure 9.3: Blooming. Identities developed or in development.

Chapter 10

Discussion

This chapter concludes this study by revisiting and addressing the questions guiding this inquiry. Questions one to three focus on the individual experiences of the four multilingual international students at Pond University around the key themes and concerns of this study: lived experience, identity, language, and language learning. Question four summarises the findings from the community investigation in order to better understand some contextual aspects of the academic environment in which the four multilingual international students studied and lived, and their possible influence on the students' experiences. Then, the findings are synthesised, and their theoretical, pedagogical, and institutional implications discussed.

Question one: Experience

How do multilingual international students experience life at Pond University?

The findings from this study suggest that the lived experiences of the four focus participants were complex. Generally speaking, prolonged time in the academic environment of Pond University gradually afforded the students critical knowledge as well as skills in relation to their individual experiences of integration into and navigation through the sociocultural set-up of Pond's community—often as a product of the diverse and novel experiences the students encountered first-hand. However, being a multilingual international student at Pond University held a subjectively unique meaning for each student. For this reason, despite the tendency in the literature to essentialise and generalise multilingual international students' academic experiences, often on the

basis of language difference, it may be inadequate to consider the experience of being a multilingual international student *at Pond University* a predictable, linear, or generalisable phenomenon from a qualitative perspective.

Some common themes characterised the overall experiences of all four students. However, the experiences sustaining the emergence of this commonality were unequal at various levels: they were experiences experienced to different degrees, at different times in the journey, and with different individuals, thus impacting each student's overall experience as multilingual international students at Pond in distinct ways. Prior to discussing common and individual themes, it is indispensable to revisit Pond University as the common environment in which all these experiences transpired. Pond University was a site of complexity: its unique sociocultural and physical set-ups influenced students' experiences dynamically. Yet, the contextual influence of Pond to the students' experiences as a multifaceted environment may be better understood relationally to the students' previous experiences. In other words: Pond was a complex site *in itself*, but also in its organic continuity to and transition from students' previous lived experiences. Both aspects are addressed below.

The site

In itself, Pond was a multifaceted site where multiple dimensions of experience could be experienced, often simultaneously. Firstly, in terms of Pond's physical set-up, it is important to recognise that the specific campus on which the four multilingual international students studied, and sometimes even lived, presented different experiential opportunities for each of them. On one hand, we had Claire studying and

living on Crandall—Pond University's smaller campus—while, on the other, Seth, Pablo, and Sabrina studying on Pond's main campus, with Pablo also residing on it.

Claire found herself studying in and living on a relatively small campus in comparison to Pond's main campus. Consequently, the student community which she had access to was significantly smaller in size, being often experienced as unavailable. However, Claire's main objective as an exchange student at Pond was the improvement of her English language skills. Accordingly, she expected to attain her goal *in community*, in interaction with native-speaker Anglophone domestic students in particular. Yet, Crandall campus' smaller class sizes and location in a primarily sub-urban residential neighbourhood with seemingly fewer students consistently present on site implicated in her hopes for linguistic improvement remaining largely unmet. A smaller campus also meant less social activity in general, which seriously impacted the potential for social interaction and language use in Claire's experiences.

Conversely, Pond's main campus, with its established and large physical terrain, signified a wider and more diverse spectrum of possibilities for the other students. Relative to Crandall, Pond's main campus may be then considered much more student-friendly. For instance, with its numerous restaurants and coffee shops, larger class sizes, better equipped library, several student residences, and convenient subway access, among other factors, the main campus more naturally fostered a sense of community. Opportunities to engage in social interaction were considered important by all multilingual international students; however, this dimension of experience was more meaningfully available at Pond's main campus given its size and the kind of community this aspect allowed it to build. In short, in strict consideration of the physical site and its

potential for experience, being a multilingual international student at Pond's main campus and at Crandall may be viewed arguably as two distinct experiences in the context of this study.

Similarly to the physical, Pond's sociocultural set-up may also be considered unique. Pond's unique sociocultural context influenced the students' experiences discretely not only because it might have differed from the contexts of other academic institutions, though this was not the concern of this study, but also because it differed from the sociocultural contexts which each student progressed from—the "stages" in their individual life journeys as adult human beings which they found themselves in at the time of this study. Therefore, viewing the influence of Pond's sociocultural context in continuity, rather than in isolation, means both viewing it holistically and rejecting the notion that the four multilingual international students arrived at Pond as empty vessels. The holistic approach employed in this study was intended to more intentionally consider the previous experiences, skills, and knowledge of the four multilingual international students and the interaction of all these to the sociocultural context of Pond and the experiences available therein.

Claire may be considered the student for whom Crandall's sociocultural context had the most impact on their experiences. Despite being a French speaker—one of the official bilingual languages of the campus—and coming to Crandall as an exchange student from another Canadian university, which meant that at least at one level she was not completely unfamiliar with Canada and its post-secondary education system, Claire found herself in a physical and sociocultural space in which the French language she spoke was tied primarily to another community's identity: the Franco-Ontarian.

Consequently, the identity-related concerns and experiences of Franco-Ontarian students, as discussed in Crandall's student newspaper, for instance, seemed notoriously different.

The impact of these cultural "boundaries" to Claire's overall experiences may be observed specifically in her social experiences. In being different for Claire, but likely more common for Franco-Ontarian students, the specific identity-related concerns and experiences of this community, brought into Crandall's campus over the years, might have contributed to the development of the (inflexible) sociocultural environment which Claire eagerly sought participation in as an outsider. Additionally, although she had hoped to avoid using French in order to prioritise her English, when she did use French as a final course of action, she found it generally easier to connect culturally with other non-Canadian francophone speakers, such as classmates and floor mates from international francophone communities, than with local francophone students, some of which might have identified as belonging culturally or linguistically to the Franco-Ontarian community.

In contrast, Pablo, Sabrina, and Seth were affected differently by the "culture" of Pond's main campus. The rich multiculturalism and multilingualism that defined the diverse sociocultural environment of the main campus, in comparison to Crandall, seemed to have contributed to these students' feelings of personal identification—or even of long-term belonging, as in the case of Pablo—to Pond's academic community more naturalistically. In fact, the embodied representation of other ethnic groups on campus was even experienced as overly prominent, as in the case of Seth and his interaction with the Chinese community at Pond. Even so, however, Pablo, Sabrina, and

Seth never reported feeling culturally and linguistically restricted when intergroup contact was beyond or below what they had wished for, thanks to the main campus' diverse international and domestic student community.

The experiences

The multilingual international student experience at Pond may be considered a unique experience for each student in this study. Nevertheless, some commonalities can still be identified. These commonalities converged notably at two particular dimensions: the linguistic and the social. Generally speaking, in terms of language, all four students encountered some incongruence between their expectations for language proficiency and the language actually used at Pond, which may be characterised here as the "academic register" of English (Cummins, 1979). For Sabrina and Seth, this incongruence resulted in significant and relatively long-term challenges to their academic progress. For Claire and Pablo, however, such incongruence translated into less significant challenges. Regardless of the depth with which these challenges impacted the students' academic progress, the challenges related to both understanding and employing an academic level of language.

However, all four students critically and quickly realised the importance of this language for the achievement of academic success. Additionally, they also recognised the need on their parts to develop such linguistic skills accordingly, despite having or feeling prepared for it through language courses and proficiency tests. While Seth resisted seeking formal help at the university, for personal reasons, Sabrina, Pablo, and Claire sought out support promptly. The four students recognised the need to develop

strategies for the acquisition of an "academic" vocabulary, academic writing skills—particularly in relation to the construction and presentation of arguments in academic essays—and oral language skills for communication with peers and instructors in their seminar-style classes.

As for the social dimension of experience, all four students, continuously or at least initially, hoped for meaningful social interaction with domestic students. However, domestic students were generally considered uninterested and unavailable for such experiences by the four multilingual international students, primarily because domestic students' social networks were seen as already firmly established and impenetrable as a result of years-long local socialisation. Interactions with domestic students were then commonly experienced as structured, brief exchanges expected at specific points of contact, such as in the classroom or the hallway, and specifically for educational purposes, such as in collaborative work designed by the instructor. These interactions rarely extended off campus as an organic product of mutual interest and stronger bonds. Because of this, it was not uncommon that the four multilingual international students remained more socially connected to other international students.

As stated earlier, the overall experience of each multilingual international student at Pond University was complex. A holistic analysis in which all dimensions were considered simultaneously helped not only substantiate the case for complexity, but also evidentiate the inextricability of all dimensions of lived experience—no dimension of experience was examined and understood in isolation from the others. The overall multilingual international student experience of each student is discussed individually in the next paragraphs.

Claire joined Pond University as an exchange student from a French-medium university in order to improve her English language skills. Yet, with insufficient knowledge concerning the prevalence of French on Pond's Crandall campus, her language-related goals remained largely unfulfilled. Although she had opted for English-medium classes, her potential for improvement was contingent on the availability of her classmates for naturalistic social interaction, since classroom discussions were controlled and brief. However, she quickly realised that not only did her classmates not share the same language-related goals, since they were already either Anglophones or bilinguals, but that their presence and participation in campus life was restricted to a minimum, often equalling attendance to classes only. Coupled with Crandall's location and size, Claire's social experiences were also unsatisfactory. Socially and psychologically, she experienced ongoing feelings of loneliness, isolation, and frustration. In the end, Claire identified other mechanisms through which to improve her English, such as attending local community events and volunteering in research studies, although these experiences did not fulfill her long-term social needs.

Seth came to Pond University as an international transfer student from California. This decision, however, was made in accordance with his best friend's plans to re-locate to Canada, though to Kingston rather than Toronto. As a multilingual international student at Pond, Seth remained generally dissatisfied with Canadian students, Canadians in general, and with the culture of Toronto, which he considered to encompass the culture of Pond University by extension. His social experiences were not as fulfilling as those he had experienced in California. For him, Torontonians were socially conservative and less open to spontaneity. These perceptions, emotions, and

experiences clashed intensely with his sociable, expressive, and gregarious personality, especially since he envisioned naturalistic socialisation with native speakers as the "locus" for linguistic improvement. He communicated such dissatisfaction behaviourally through the affective and material body. Yet, the greatest factor influencing Seth's experiences seemed to be the Canadian weather, in comparison to that of California.

Pablo experienced a socially, academically, culturally, and linguistically active life as a multilingual international student at Pond. Although Claire and Seth were also undergraduate students, Pablo was a full-degree international student, and as such, had broader exposure to social, academic, cultural, and linguistic experiences and opportunities. His initial academic challenges may be seen as being associated with the transition into university for the first time, as in adjusting to large lectures and to the demands of academic studies. However, some of his academic challenges may be seen as being relative to his multilingual profile in which English, at the beginning of his studies, occupied a different position in terms of proficiency. Over time, however, Pablo not only overcame all of his difficulties, but also succeeded in ways that may be often uncritically considered "exclusive" to native-speaker domestic students, such as in receiving high grades on assignments and mentoring other students. Pablo's positive experiences fostered in him a powerful sense of identity to Pond's community.

Sabrina's decision to join Pond's MBA program was fueled overwhelmingly by her desire to grow professionally. Sabrina had been in transit since her arrival in Toronto, having been a multilingual international student in an English as a second language program as well as in continuing education courses, and a multilingual worker. As far as she could envision, Pond was the last stop in her academic journey as her

more extensive life experience in Toronto had gradually afforded her the knowledge needed in order to more clearly define her professional goals for herself. Consequently, in comparison to the other students, Sabrina being both more experienced and in a professional graduate program resulted in more structured experiences for her. She joined Pond's MBA program with set expectations and needs which, in turn, led her to focus entirely on the professional dimension of the MBA student experience. As a result, other dimensions of experience, such as the social and cultural, were of less importance for her multilingual international student experience.

Question two: Identity

How do the experiences of multilingual international students throughout the course of their studies impact the development and enactment of their identities?

Identity in this study was conceptualised as a socially and psychologically dynamic, complex, continuous, and at times, collaborative process. This far-reaching approach to conceptualising identity and to analysing identity-related experiences suggests that each student's identity development and enactment experience followed a unique trajectory, consistent with a post-structuralist view of human experience. This uniqueness of experience may be seen as occurring at two different, but interconnected levels. At the contextual level, identity development and enactment were phenomena *situated* uniquely within the context of Pond, as a result of the novel (situated) experiences the students encountered individually as multilingual international students *at Pond.* At the individual level, the identity-related experiences were unique not

because of the context only, but also because these experiences were in synergy with the students' individual traits, goals, motivations, and desires.

However, despite all uniqueness, it is important to highlight the one dimension in which all four students' identity-related experiences converged. Social and cultural intragroup association signified identity *conflict* for all four students. That is because all four students' views of themselves were significantly different from those they believed were generally expected of them by their cultural groups. For the four students, the cultural identities associated with their cultures of origin were inflexible. Therefore, once the students began experiencing freedom and growth as a result of their journeys of self-discovery, a by-product of their broader multilingual international student experience at Pond, direct identification with their cultural groups was then experienced as limiting, and in some instances, harmful. Considering this, intragroup contact was avoided whenever possible because it interfered directly with the enactment of the students' new identities. For Claire and Pablo, however, these new versions of themselves had never been new, but were rather suppressed by cultural norms around social behaviour which had been imposed on them.

For Claire, the academic experience in Canada was an ongoing opportunity for self-reconstruction too. More specifically, Claire's identity journey may be seen as a search for relief from the rigid social and cultural expectations around identity which she had previously experienced in France. In Canada, however, she found herself in a more receptive space in which her envisioned self could be more freely explored and expressed. As a critical thinker, she was able to engage more meaningfully in social and academic experiences in Montreal and Toronto that fueled and sustained this important

analytical part of her identity. The very act of being able to challenge and learn about issues which she considered closed for discussion in the French sociocultural context, such as those in relation to religion, politics, beauty, and animal welfare, but now in conversation with others in Canada, was an enactment of her identity. She strongly desired to maintain a distance to behaviours and attitudes she considered typical, yet negative, of French people. The multicultural landscape of Toronto and Montreal afforded her diverse opportunities to develop and enact her hoped-for identity.

The move from Santa Monica to Toronto seriously impacted the continuity of Seth's identity enactment. Seth believed that California had afforded him complete self-development by the time he left it. In this sense, he came to Toronto with a fixed and conclusive understanding of who he was. However, the "culture" of Toronto, which he considered socially mechanic, tedious, and conservative, restricted the range of available opportunities in which he could enact his new identity. As a result, he experienced psychological challenges in response to this growing disconnection from his envisioned identity. He resisted direct contact with fellow Chinese international students whose identities he believed had not "progressed" in a similar fashion to his. His academic experiences at Pond led him to view Chinese international students as better linguistically and socially prepared for international education than he was. Yet, he argued that while Chinese students were open to new experiences, they were not open to changes in behaviour and thought, which he considered himself to fully and proudly embrace. In the end, the identity Seth developed and enacted in Santa Monica was not easily transferable to his new student experience in Toronto for a number of unexpected reasons on his part.

By learning English, Pablo discovered and enacted what he considered to be his true self. English, and English in the sociocultural and political context of Canada, was for Pablo not tied to cultural and social norms which he did not experience as limiting or interfering with the enactment of his envisioned self. Unlike his former identity-related experiences in Colombia, where the Spanish language and the Colombian culture had been experienced as an imposed, inseparable act of identity, the very same language-culture interaction was experienced with much more flexibility in Canada, especially among his fellow international students, with whom English was used as a language of global status rather than as a language tied to or expressive of a specific culture. By extension, English powerfully energised his social life by plugging him into the international student community at Pond. His active social identity—as a global, transnational, and multilingual individual—was so inextricably connected to the physical and sociocultural space of Pond that he considered returning to Colombia following his graduation a threat to this very carefully constructed identity.

Beginning graduate studies in a professional program at Pond challenged Sabrina's identity from the very beginning. Sabrina was accustomed to the student identity she had developed and succeeded in while attending university in Rio de Janeiro. In the new academic environment of Pond, Sabrina attempted to re-enact the same student identity from before. However, the unfamiliar teaching, learning, and classroom dynamics, along with an expected level of English she did not yet possess, meant that her attempts were unsuccessful, causing her to feel dissatisfied not only with her academic performance, but also with the impact her undesired performance could have on the ways others would see her. In response to this continuous experience of

dissatisfaction, Sabrina sought help. First, she drew on academic writing support, second, on individual meetings with her instructors, and some time later, on her newly-developed voice in classroom interactions. Yet, all these were attempts to carefully protect the identity she envisioned for herself. By also attending speech therapy sessions, Sabrina hoped to gain better manipulation of her pronunciation, and in the end enact a less accented identity. Because Sabrina was focused on the development and enactment of her professional identity, she also minimised other aspects of her identity, such as the religious-spiritual, which were important but not her focus as a graduate student.

In this study, the *ESL student* label, often ascribed to participants by others, was also a source of identity conflict for some. Pablo's and Sabrina's experiences reveal some of the possible ways in which this identity category can materialise the notion of deficit commonly associated with being a learner of English as an additional language. Pablo exploited this identity option strategically when he considered his academic performance to be unsatisfactory, but gradually discarded it as he progressed through his studies. Sabrina resisted the deficit projected over herself by this identity category by quitting her ESL class. Lastly, although from a different position, Bret—a member of the support staff group—also critiqued the fact that Pond continues to use ESL as a brand for its services, when in fact, this very label "reflects certain assumptions." These experiences suggest that a more critical attention should be placed on the tension caused by this label and the significant impact it can have on multilingual international students' identities.

Question three: Language

How do multilingual international students perceive their language learning and development during their time as students at Pond University?

Language and language learning in this study were viewed through the lens of multilingualism and socio-cognitivism, respectively. Both approaches emphasise the complex and dynamic role of the environment in influencing language acquisition and use (Atkinson, 2011; Cenoz, 2013). From a perspective of multilingualism, the multilingual repertoires of the four students underwent gradual changes as a result of their extended time at Pond. Since Pond was primarily an English-medium university, the students felt their proficiencies in English improved significantly over time in light of their daily experiences in English. Moreover, the multifaceted experience at Pond afforded the students contact with new languages on campus other than those they already spoke. For instance, Pablo's multilingual repertoire grew as he took Portuguese, French, and ASL classes at Pond. These perceptions and experiences help challenge traditional notions of language proficiency as static.

A socio-cognitive approach argues that language acquisition occurs largely in natural, uncontrolled, and unstructured settings (Atkinson, 2011). Indeed, the students' perceptions of their language learning align with this view. Generally speaking, the concerns of the four multilingual international students with respect to their language learning may be categorised as concerns around the acquisition of everyday language and of academic language. For the former, all students felt that interactions with native speakers, particularly domestic students, were the best means by which to further acquire everyday language. However, since all students considered domestic students uninterested in socialising beyond the classroom, the available conversational contact

the four multilingual international students did have with domestic native-speaker students was often brief and infrequent, and primarily confined to the classroom. Therefore, although the students felt their English proficiency had improved, it may be argued that this proficiency might have improved more fully if opportunities for conversational interactions with native-speaker students had been more meaningfully and consistently available.

It is important to note that the four multilingual international students had sufficient knowledge of English for the kinds of interactions they engaged in. They reported being able to *understand* native speakers as well as everyday written language effortlessly. Yet, they also hoped to be able to *speak* this very language they understood. In other words, they hoped to be able to use the kind of vocabulary, such as slang and idiomatic expressions, and to also speak with improved oral language skills, because their English language proficiency had developed mostly as the result of long-term instructed language learning in the past, which they considered to yield a very "formal," book-like register of the language. For this reason, the four students considered naturalistic interactions with native speakers the most effective way to not only gain exposure to, but also "put into practice," the everyday language they aspired to speak.

As for academic language, the students felt the academic setting of Pond, especially the academic classroom, afforded them the best experience of acquisition. This was because the academic classroom was, by default, the (only) place where this language was found in the context of their experiences as students. The ongoing experience of listening to lectures and doing collaborative work with peers, such as in

group presentations and discussions, exposed students to opportunities to acquire and use oral academic language. Likewise, reading academic content translated into a growing familiarisation with conventions and styles of academic writing. Considering these perceptions in light of sociocognitive theory, academic language was then learned in its "natural" environment for long-term "survival;" that is, for the purpose of succeeding as university students at Pond.

Question four: Community

How might the perceptions and experiences of other members of Pond's community help shape the context in which the multilingual international students experience life?

In this study, three broad institutional "groups" characterised the academic community of Pond University, in addition to multilingual international students: faculty, staff, and domestic students. These groups' perceptions of and experiences with Pond's multilingual international students were sought in order to gain some understanding of the local context. This exploration focused on aspects of the local academic context that may relate particularly to the multilingual international student experience at Pond. Therefore, the contextual aspects under consideration may be categorised as the following: broader aspects in relation to Pond, such as the ways in which multilingualism and multiculturalism were both conceived of and experienced by the non-focal participants on campus; and additionally, specific aspects in relation to intergroup contact.

In terms of language and culture, all three groups considered Pond to be a linguistically and culturally diverse community. Such diversity was generally regarded

not only positively, but also as essential to fostering intellectual diversity and cultivating Pond's institutional identity. Perceptions and experiences around multilingualism and multiculturalism were important to explore because the four international students were multilingual and multicultural individuals themselves. Consequently, understanding, albeit briefly, the ways in which these two aspects of the community were viewed may help us gain some access to the perspectives and attitudes of the community toward multilingual international students and these important facets of their identities by extension. The findings suggest that the non-focal participants, through their positive perceptions of the importance of multilingualism and multiculturalism, may contribute to building and maintaining a diverse community which multilingual international students could be a part of.

Indeed, faculty, staff, and domestic students considered multilingual international students to be a valuable group to Pond's community. Participants within these three institutional groups argued that Pond's community was enriched by multilingual international students, and their ways of being and seeing the world, such as their life experiences, languages, cultural traditions, and religions. However, despite generally positive perceptions toward multilingualism, multiculturalism, and international students, when it came to intergroup contact, much variance could be identified between each group and their actual interactional experiences with multilingual international students. This may be related to the fact that the interactions of faculty, staff, and domestic students with multilingual international students generally vary significantly in nature, frequency, and expectations.

Faculty's experiences illustrate that multilingual international students' contributions to Pond may be compromised by their insufficient linguistic skills in English. This experience was most prevalent in the classroom context, in which multilingual international students were considered linguistically unprepared for active oral participation, and for expressing ideas in writing. Consequently, despite the pedagogical modifications reportedly made by some faculty members in order to support multilingual international students' achievement of academic success, these findings suggest that either more support around academic language may be needed at Pond, or that the students' perceptions of and experiences with the support structure available need to be better examined. Additionally, faculty generally expressed concern with respect to the extent to which multilingual international students may be invested in the English-medium, western-style-based academic culture of Pond. Some faculty considered multilingual international students who remained in their ethnolinguistic groups to be (self-)excluded from Pond's academic community.

The experiences of support staff generally suggest that Pond's environment may benefit more from multilingual international students if more adequate support is provided. Support staff argued that the transition into Pond's academic environment was a complex experience for many of the incoming multilingual international students with whom they had interacted. Accordingly, they believed mechanisms for support in relation to social, cultural, linguistic, and academic adjustment, integration, and success should be enhanced to more closely reflect the challenges these students tend to face. In some instances, support staff also questioned whether the university's current support structure could realistically support Pond's rapidly growing multilingual

international student population. These context-specific concerns also suggest that multilingual international students' experiences might be enhanced with the improvement of support services.

The perceptions and experiences of domestic students suggest that the social context of Pond may be characterised by an interactional distance between domestic and international students. These findings are consistent with the four multilingual international students' perspectives of their own attempts to socialise and form meaningful friendships with domestic students. The findings also suggest that domestic students were aware of this aspect within the social dimension of Pond's community, and some even saw it as problematic. Yet, domestic students also generally expected the university to remedy this lack of meaningful intergroup contact. Despite domestic students' acknowledgement of the important contributions international students make to Pond, they argued that intergroup social experiences were often segregated around linguistic, ethnic, and cultural identities.

Theoretical, pedagogical, and institutional implications

Theories of multilingualism in applied linguistics generally propose that the multilingual individual is a more accurate representation of the world's reality in terms of language use. This is because multilingualism views language in a broader sense, and language proficiency as intimately tied to the (multiple) social contexts of multilinguals (Cenoz, 2013; Grosjean, 2010). Therefore, as the specific needs and expectations of the diverse social interactions in which multilinguals engage change across time and space, so does their language use. In this study, the English language proficiency of the four

multilingual international students gradually augmented in response to the naturalistic

social experiences they encountered as students at Pond University. Additionally, the

frequency in which they used their other languages also changed as they joined new

sociolinguistic spaces and worked to construct new identities in and through English.

These findings help strengthen core theoretical conceptualisations within

multilingualism which challenge traditional views of language. For instance, Cenoz

(2013) argues that language proficiency cannot be or remain static across the life-span.

The students' experiences support this argument by illustrating the dynamic nature of

the development of their language proficiency and, in turn, their multilingual repertoire.

The findings of this study also support the theoretical perspective of multicompetence.

As Franceschini (2011) has argued, multicompetent speakers have knowledge from "an

extended and integrated linguistic repertoire" and the ability to "use the appropriate

linguistic variety for the appropriate occasion" (p. 351). As the multilingual international

students navigated life at Pond, they continuously learned and used the English

language, along with their individual cultural resources, in order to appropriately meet

their socio-academic needs, which differed from those of their everyday social

interactions.

Yet, given that multilingualism considers languages in the broadest possible

sense, we may position the academic "register" of English as a kind of linguistic variety

here. Consequently, since multilingualism regards language proficiency qualitatively and

as a single competence, rather than as discrete proficiencies in the mind of the

multilingual speaker (Cenoz, 2013; Cenoz & Gorter, 2011), the students' proficiency in

English may be seen as more complex and far-reaching because their knowledge of

English included varieties that, despite all being English in the traditional sense, were tied to specific interactions, tasks, and needs—the academic register being the most prominent one. While on one hand the theoretical perspective of multicompetence helps contextualise this aspect of the students' experiences, on the other the students' experiences contribute to strengthening multicompetence's theoretical view of language proficiency.

At another level, the findings of this study also support post-structuralist, social, and cultural theories of identity. As Duff (2012) has explained, early theories of identity constructed multilinguals' identities on the basis of essentialist sociological criteria, often around ethnicity and language. These identity "labels" were often assigned onto multilingual learners by the host community, rarely reflecting an emic perspective of the self in interaction with the host community (Duff, 2012; Pavlenko, 2002). However, identity is a complex subjective experience that is influenced by numerous individual and contextual factors (Norton, 2010; Norton Pierce, 1995). The identity-related experiences of the four students illustrate the dynamic and multifaceted nature of identity development and enactment, as the students interacted with and within new contexts of lived experience.

Social psychology (Tajfel, 1978; Turner, 1999) and cultural psychology perspectives (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) argue for the role of social organisation and cultural influence, respectively, in one's identity-related experiences. Although research focused on identity in applied linguistics seems to have moved away from psychology-oriented views of identity, the findings of the study reinforce the relevance of such perspectives for research concerned with identity at least in the context of international

students in higher education. As this study demonstrated, students are grouped by their institutions differently, and enjoy different social positioning according to this group identity. Lastly, cultural psychology proposes that changes in cultural contexts can shift how one sees themselves, the other, and the relationship between the two. Seth's case strengthens this theoretical assumption by illustrating one way whereby the role of culture can lead to identity conflict at the intra- and interpersonal levels.

Students' perceptions of their language learning in this study were approached theoretically from a sociocognitive approach. As Atkinson (2011) has discussed, the sociocognitivist approach conceptualises language learning as a phenomenon which occurs naturalistically, in response to the need to survive, and in alignment with one's environment. In this study, the four students were initially linguistically unprepared to meet the expectations of their new academic experiences. In order to "survive," however, they sought out support for the development of academic language skills, while learning it in its natural environment, and with the assistance of others. The students' perceptions of their own language learning-related experiences help strengthen core theoretical concepts within the sociocognitive approach by fore-fronting the importance of collaboration and the natural sociolinguistic environment for meaningful language acquisition (see also Tanous, 2014).

The findings of this study also hold implications for pedagogy and institutional policy and practice. While situating in multilingual international student experience at Pond University they are relevant to the broader context beyond the specific institution.

To begin with, the linguistic experiences of the four multilingual international students, specifically around academic language, reveal that, despite previous preparation and experience with the English language, the students' proficiencies were not on par with that which their courses at Pond University expected. However, this finding is not new—a lack of proficiency in academic English on the part of multilingual international students continues to be identified broadly in the research literature (Kim, 2011; Lee, 2009; Li, 2004; Safipour, Wenneberg, & Hadziabdic, 2017; Sawir, 2005; Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010). Therefore, this study confirms current concerns in relation to multilingual international students' proficiencies in the English language and the potential impact of this discrepancy to their academic success, and ultimately suggests that more comprehensive language support and a new approach to admission testing, especially in the case of standardized tests such as IELTS, may be needed.

Indeed, the findings of this study demonstrate that in spite of the availability of an academic language support program at Pond University, such support mechanism, as well as awareness of it, may need improvement. From the perspective of Pond's writing centre, for instance, Bret[18] explained the unit still requires significantly more material and financial resources in order to adequately meet the language needs of the multilingual international student population at Pond. As for language support in the classroom, there is some evidence that Pond's instructors do make modifications to their teaching as an attempt to support multilingual international students. However, it remains unclear whether the kinds of support implemented are really adequate for the specific needs of multilingual international students. From Seth's perspective, for

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[18] Bret's experiences are shared in chapter 5.

example, additional learning support provided by instructors and TAs was not effective if teaching continued to be conceptualised for the domestic, native-speaker student.

Further research can examine the practices faculty implement to access multilingual international students' language-related needs. It is unclear whether the pedagogical modifications reportedly made by the instructors in this study were adequate and reflective of multilingual international students' emic perspectives on their own challenges and needs. It may be possible that some of the support offered, despite originating intuitively from a place of support, may be incongruent with the students' real needs. Research has often explored multilingual students' own perceptions of pedagogical adjustments and modifications that may support their learning (Andrade, 2006; Ravichandran, Kretovics, Kirby, & Ghosh, 2017; Tatar, 2005). However, it remains unclear whether and how these insights are systematically communicated to and accessed by faculty in their own classrooms. As Professor Campbell noted in chapter 5, in her own context this seems to be the case. She explained:

> I think what would be great, is *if there is a way for us as professors to hear these students' voices*. Maybe a page that has quotes from these students of their challenges. Or a list of 5 things that they would like us to do to support them. It is easy to just teach and forget about all the ways that students need support – which are constantly changing. (Faculty survey)

Furthermore, findings also add to the literature concerned with the challenges around internationalisation of higher education, particularly in the context of classroom curricula. In their study exploring the socio-academic experiences of multilingual international students in light of internationalisation policy at a university in western Canada, Guo and Guo (2017) concluded that significant gaps existed, and one of these related to the lack of an internationalised teaching and learning experience. The four

multilingual international students' experiences in this regard also suggest that more attention should be placed on the systematisation of curriculum internationalisation so that the curriculum is not simply superficially globalised in content, but that it is educationally inclusive and ethical (Haigh, 2002). As Seth's experiences in most of his winter courses showed, it is not ethical to simply consider multilingual international students' needs without critically considering also teaching in general—an important place from where ethics in education may originate. Without this critical attention, teaching may only continue to favour native speakers and domestic students. Further research can continue to critically explore the ways in which internationalisation of pedagogy may also welcome international practices and perspectives on ways of learning in order to enhance the multilingual international student classroom experience.

Another important consideration concerns housing. Some studies in Canada have begun to more critically examine the relationship between housing and the international student experience in terms of a sense of satisfaction; however, a significant gap still exists (Calder, Richter, Mao, Kovacs Burns, Mogale, & Danko, 2016). Based on the socio-academic experiences of Claire in particular, this study suggests that housing and campus location may play a major role in fostering a sense of connection and belonging for an international student, and in facilitating access to frequent and satisfying experiential opportunities (see also Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). Therefore, the issue of housing should not only be considered more critically, but also investigated further. In general, however, researchers continue to emphasise that international students may often be insufficiently prepared for the culture of their host institution and society prior to arrival (Amaechi et al., 2013; Bartram, 2009; Roberts,

Dunworth, & Boldy, 2018). Considering this, more awareness of the kind of campus (e.g. size and location) and the available embedded social integration supports for international students may be critical for their overall success.

In alignment with findings from previous research, this study also suggests that international and domestic students seem to remain socially disconnected throughout the course of their academic experiences. The four multilingual international students in the study began their experiences with strong expectations of developing meaningful connections with domestic students. These expectations stemmed from desires in various dimensions of experience: social, cultural, emotional, and linguistic. However, these expectations never materialised for the students. Consequently, we may argue that the host academic community—whether Pond or any other university—may still need to engage more meaningfully with international students at the intercultural level (Ammigan, 2019; Arthur, 2017). Arthur (2017) has argued that meaningful engagement with international students is vital to their academic performance and well-being in general. Ammigan (2019) has proposed that institutions need to promote continuous engagement opportunities for the two groups, and that "these initiatives must accompany both curricular and extracurricular programs and occur in social settings inside and outside of the classroom" (p. 277). Indeed, the voices of domestic students in this study draw attention to the expectation that Pond University should lead inter-group activities for students because, when left to their own effort, domestic students might not understand the significance of this interaction for multilingual international students or for themselves.

Building on this issue, the categorical division of university students into two superficially distinct groups, as domestic and international, is worth revisiting. In alignment with findings of previous studies, this construction seems unfruitful and divisive, and is experienced as such more significantly by multilingual international students, who often expect the host community to meaningfully participate in welcoming and integrating them into the institution. Although it may be important to consider international and domestic students as separate groups for the purposes of admission and administration matters, the ways in which this structural organisation extends beyond administration can deeply impact the multilingual international student life and daily experiences. Rather than viewing multilingual international students as temporary members of their communities, universities in Canada should consider multilingual international students more purposefully from the founding ethical and humanistic goal of higher education, which seeks to promote higher learning as a tool for human development and cross-cultural exchange (de Wit, 2020). When the primary purpose of internationalisation of higher education rests on revenue generation, multilingual international students' experiences will continue to be neglected and represented through lifeless numbers.

I conclude this study by drawing on the very implications identified above to illustrate some of the inherent complexity and multidimensionality of the international student experience. Although adequate language proficiency continues to be indispensable for academic success, the diverse experiences of international students examined in this study not only naturally interblended, but also transcended the linguistic dimension of lived experience. This quality of the international student

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experience characterised by hybridity and complexity becomes even more evident when international students are purposefully seen as whole people; yet, it may remain subject to oversight if multilingual international students and their experiences are understood inflexibly through the traditional constructions of "ESL" and "international student." In a field wherein notions of deficit have generally prevailed, I emphasise that a holistic approach can contribute with more ethical and humanistic portraits of multilingual international students.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Consent Form

Informed Consent Form for Focal Participants

Date:

Study Name:

Portraits of Five Multilingual International Students at a University in Toronto: Toward a Holistic Understanding of their Experiences

Researcher name:

Vander Tavares, student in the Linguistics and Applied Linguistics doctoral program, York University. I am the Principal Investigator of this study. You may contact me anytime at: vander1@yorku.ca.

Purpose of the Research:

I am conducting this research for my PhD dissertation. This research study seeks to explore the experiences of multilingual international students studying at Pond University. This research study will employ a multiple case-study approach of an ethnographic nature. Its findings will be reported in a dissertation, and may be presented in conference presentations and journal articles.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research:

As a participant in this project, you will be asked to share your experience as a multilingual international student at Pond University. I am interested in understanding your experience from a holistic perspective. Accordingly, you will be asked to discuss various aspects of your experience, including, but not limited to, your linguistic, cultural, social, educational, and academic experiences.

Specifically, you will be asked to:

- Meet with me once a month, over the period of five months, for approximately one-hour-long audio-recorded interviews.
- Meet with me once a month, over the period of five months, for approximately 45 minutes for an informal, non-audio-recorded social activity decided by the two of us, so I can better understand your *social experiences with you* on the Pond University campus and/or Toronto.
- Send me at least one photograph of your choice, which you are **not** present in, by email every month for a period of five months for a visual representation of your personal experience and perspective as a multilingual international student.
- Write two responses in paragraph-length format to general questions related to your experience. Each response should take you approximately 20 minutes to compose.
- You will be offered a Pond University bookstore gift-card in the amount of $50 for your participation, even if you do not/cannot complete the study.

Risks and Discomforts:

During the research process, you may feel some emotional discomfort while discussing some of your previous and current experiences as a multilingual international student.

Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You:

It is expected that this research study will help further improve our understanding of how multilingual international students experience life at an English-medium Canadian university, and accordingly, inform policy related to the multilingual international student experience and international education at the post-secondary level in Canada and elsewhere, if applicable. Additionally, this study will provide you an opportunity to share and reflect on information concerning *your experience* as a multilingual international student at Pond University through text and imagery.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer, to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions will not influence the nature of the ongoing relationship you may have with the researchers or study staff, or the nature of your relationship with Pond University either now, or in the future.

If you decide to stop participating, you may withdraw without penalty, financial or otherwise.

Should you wish to withdraw after the study, you will have the option to also withdraw your data up until the analysis is complete.

Confidentiality:

Any interviewing and/or recording of you as a participant will not be associated with any identifying information. Accordingly, all information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research.

Information you share will be collected through handwritten notes and recorded through a mobile phone. Your data will be safely stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's residence and on a password-protected USB drive. Only the researcher will have access to this information. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law. The data you share will be stored until December 1, 2022, after which it will be destroyed.

The researcher(s) acknowledge that the host of the online survey (e.g., Qualtrix, Survey Monkey, etc.) may automatically collect participant data without their knowledge (i.e., IP addresses). Although this information may be provided or made accessible to the researchers, it will not be used or saved without participant's consent on the researchers system. Further, because this project employs e-based collection techniques, data may be subject to access by third parties as a result of various security legislation now in place in many countries and thus *the confidentiality and privacy of data cannot be guaranteed during web-based transmission.*

Questions about the Research?

If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact me at vander1@yorku.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Antonella Valeo, at antvaleo@yorku.ca. You may also contact the Graduate Program in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics at 416-650-8046.

This research has received ethics review and approval by the Delegated Ethics Review Committee, which is delegated authority to review research ethics protocols by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, Kaneff Tower, York University (telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca).

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I_____consent to participate in *Portraits of Five Multilingual International Students at a University in Toronto: Toward a Holistic Understanding of their Experiences*, conducted by Vander Tavares. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature_____   **Date**_____

Participant

Signature_____   **Date**_____

Principal Investigator

Additional consent (where applicable)

1. **Audio recording**

☐   I consent to the audio-recording of my interview(s).

2. **Video recording or use of photographs**

I _____ consent to the use of images (including photographs, video and other moving images), of my environment and property in the following ways (please check all that apply):

In academic articles   [ ] Yes   [ ] No

In print, digital and slide form   [ ] Yes   [ ] No

In academic presentations   [ ] Yes   [ ] No

In media   [ ] Yes   [ ] No

In thesis materials   [ ] Yes   [ ] No

Signature: Date:

_____   _____

Participant: (name)

Informed Consent Form for Non-Focal Participants

Date:

Study Name:

Portraits of Five Multilingual International Students at a University in Toronto: Toward a Holistic Understanding of their Experiences

Researcher name:

Vander Tavares, student in the Linguistics and Applied Linguistics doctoral program, York University. I am the Principal Investigator of this study. You may contact me anytime at: vander1@yorku.ca.

Purpose of the Research:

I am conducting this research for my PhD dissertation. This research study seeks to explore the experiences of multilingual international students studying at Pond University. This research study will employ a multiple case-study approach of an ethnographic nature. Its findings will be reported in a dissertation, and may be presented in conference presentations and journal articles.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research:

As a participant in this project, you will be asked to share your experience and perspective in relation to interacting and working with multilingual international students at Pond University.

Specifically, you will be asked to:

- Answer questions on a web-based survey.

Risks and Discomforts:

During the research process, you may feel some emotional discomfort while discussing some of your previous and current experiences with multilingual international students.

Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You:

It is expected that this research study will help further improve our understanding of how multilingual international students experience life at an English-medium Canadian university, and accordingly, inform policy related to the multilingual international student experience and international education at the post-secondary level in Canada and elsewhere, if applicable. Additionally, this study will provide you an opportunity to share and reflect on information concerning *your experience* interacting and working with multilingual international students at Pond University.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer, to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions will not influence the nature of the ongoing relationship you may have with the researchers or study staff, or the nature of your relationship with Pond University either now, or in the future.

If you decide to stop participating, you may withdraw without penalty, financial or otherwise.

Should you wish to withdraw after the study, you will have the option to also withdraw your data up until the analysis is complete.

Confidentiality:

Any web-based surveying of you as a participant will not be associated with any identifying information. Accordingly, all information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research.

Your data will be safely stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's residence and on a password-protected USB drive. Only the researcher will have access to this information. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law. The data you share will be stored until December 1, 2022, after which it will be destroyed.

The researcher(s) acknowledge that the host of the online survey (e.g., Qualtrix, Survey Monkey, etc.) may automatically collect participant data without their knowledge (i.e., IP addresses). Although this information may be provided or made accessible to the researchers, it will not be used or saved without participant's consent on the researchers system. Further, because this project employs e-based collection techniques, data may be subject to access by third parties as a result of various security legislation now in place in many countries and thus *the confidentiality and privacy of data cannot be guaranteed during web-based transmission.*

Questions about the Research?

If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact me at vander1@yorku.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Antonella Valeo, at antvaleo@yorku.ca. You may also contact the Graduate Program in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics at 416-650-8046.

This research has received ethics review and approval by the Delegated Ethics Review Committee, which is delegated authority to review research ethics protocols by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, Kaneff Tower, York University (telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca).

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I _____ consent to participate in *Portraits of Five Multilingual International Students at a University in Toronto: Toward a Holistic Understanding of their Experiences*, conducted by Vander Tavares. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. **My e-signature on the web survey indicates my consent.**

Signature_____   **Date**_____

Participant

Signature_____   **Date**_____

Principal Investigator

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Appendix B: Email Invitation

Subject: Survey on Multilingual International Students at Pond University

Hello,

My name is Vander Tavares and I am a PhD candidate in the Linguistics and Applied Linguistics program at York University. In my doctoral research, I explore the academic and sociocultural experiences of multilingual international students for whom English is not a first language at Pond University. In this investigation, I seek to include the perspectives of members from different groups with whom multilingual international students regularly interact with (e.g. faculty, support staff, other students) in order to develop a more holistic and multifaceted understanding of this topic.

I am contacting you because you are listed as faculty/staff on your department's web page. I would kindly ask that you complete this short and anonymous survey concerning your experience working with multilingual international students at Pond University, at your earliest convenience:

https://goo.gl/forms/uCbOai0ovqDtohvG2

Sincere thanks for your time and help.

Vander

Vander Laubach Tavares
PhD Candidate
vander1@yorku.ca
Linguistics and Applied Linguistics Program
York University

Appendix C: Online Survey Questions for Faculty

Sample questions:[19]

1. What is your faculty?

- ▪ [List of faculties at Pond University]

1. Are you currently:

- • A full-time faculty member

- • A contract faculty member

2. What percentage would generally characterise the number of multilingual international students in the undergraduate courses that you teach?

- • 0%

- • 10%

- • 20%

- • 30%

- • 40%

- • 50%

- • 60%

- • 70%

- • 80%

- • 90%

- • 100%

3. Teaching level:

- • Undergraduate

- • Graduate

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[19] Some of the information on the original form has been excluded from this sample in order to help protect the identity of the institution.

- Both

- N/A

4. Program (optional):

5. In what ways do you believe that multilingual international students contribute to the Pond University community?

6. What challenges do you believe multilingual international students may face at Pond University? For example: social, cultural, linguistic, academic, psychological, professional, financial, etc. Please identify and contextualise which one(s).

7. Are there any adjustments or modifications that you make to your teaching so that it may meet the specific needs (if any) of multilingual international students for whom English is not a first language in your courses? If so, please explain which ones.

8. How could the culture(s) of multilingual international students be (more) represented on the Pond University campus?

9. Do you believe that multilingual international students have sufficient knowledge of Canadian academic culture? Please explain your answer.

10. Please share any other comments you may have concerning this topic.

Appendix D: Online Survey Questions for Support Staff

Sample questions:

Indicate your department, program, and/or program, or centre:

- Do you consider Pond University's campus to be multicultural and multilingual? Why or why not? Please explain.
- In what ways do you believe that multilingual international students contribute to the Pond University community?
- What challenges do you believe multilingual international students may face at Pond University? For example: social, cultural, linguistic, academic, psychological, professional, financial, etc. Please identify and explain which one(s).
- How can Pond University support multilingual international students' transition into Canadian culture and society?
- How could the culture(s) of multilingual international students be more/better represented on the Pond University campus?
- How could stronger connections be built between domestic and international students?

Appendix E: Online Survey Questions for Domestic Students

1. Are you a part-time (i.e. taking fewer than 3 courses per term) or full-time student (i.e. taking 3 or more courses per term)?
2. Are you an undergraduate or graduate student?
3. What is your major? (Write "undeclared" if you don't have one.)
4. What academic year are you in?
   a. First year
   b. Second year
   c. Third year
   d. Fourth year
   e. N/A
5. What is your faculty?
   a. [List of faculties at Pond]
6. Have you ever worked on an assignment or group project with a multilingual international student at York University?
7. In your experience, do you believe there are enough opportunities to meet and socialise with international students on campus?
8. Do you believe York University's community is inclusive of international students for whom English is not a first language?
9. Have you ever studied abroad?
10. What languages do you speak? Include English.
11. Do you consider Pond University's campus to be multicultural and multilingual? Why or why not? Please explain.
12. In what ways do you believe that multilingual international students contribute to the Pond University community?
13. How could the culture(s) of multilingual international students be (more) represented on the Pond University campus?
14. How could stronger connections be built between domestic and international students?

Appendix F: Online Survey Questions for International Students

1. What country are you from?
2. What languages do you speak?
3. Are you a part-time (i.e. taking fewer than 3 courses per term) or full-time student (i.e. taking 3 or more courses per term)?
4. Are you an undergraduate or graduate student?
5. What is your major? (Write "undeclared" if you don't have one.)
6. What academic year are you in?
   a. First year
   b. Second year
   c. Third year
   d. Fourth year
   e. N/A
7. What is your faculty?
   a. [List of faculties at Pond]
8. Have you ever worked on an assignment or group project with a domestic student at Pond University?
9. In your experience, do you believe there are enough opportunities to meet and socialise with international students on campus?
10. Do you believe Pond University's community is inclusive of international students for whom English is not a first language?
11. Do you consider York University's campus to be multicultural and multilingual? Why or why not? Please explain.
12. How could stronger connections be built between domestic and international students?
13. Would you like to participate in this study? If yes, please provide your email address.

Appendix G: Interview Schedule

Sample guiding questions:

1. Where are you from?

2. When did you come to Canada?

3. What languages do you know?

4. What do you consider your strongest language?

5. When would you use the different languages you know?

6. How did you learn English?

7. Did you take any international proficiency exam?

8. What's your program of study, and your major?

9. What year are you in? How many courses are you taking?

10. Why did you choose Canada? Pond University?

11. Did you complete any other academic studies prior to Pond?

12. What do you hope to do in the future in terms of a professional career?

13. How important is the English language for the plans you have for yourself?

14. Describe a typical week day for you.

15. In terms of academic language, what are some of the challenges you have found while studying at Pond?

16. In what ways is the English used in the university context different from than one you learned?

17. What were your first impressions when you came to Toronto? What stood out to you?

18. Do you have international friends at Pond? How did you meet them?

19. How have your interactions with Canadian students been?

20. How would you describe the Pond campus to a friend over the telephone?

Appendix H: Observation Schedule

Sample observation schedule:

Observation #_____   Date: _____

Location:

Focus	My notes
The physical environment: observing and documenting the surrounding context, and later providing a description of it.	
The activities and interactions in the physical environment: "the frequency and duration of those activities/interactions and other subtle factors, such as informal, unplanned activities, symbolic meanings, nonverbal communication, physical clues, and what should happen that has not happened" (as cited in Kawulich, 2005, para. 43).	