"If you want to communicate . . ."
The Place of Language in International Students' Transition to University: Insights from a Language Exchange

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By: **Andrea Rosenfield**

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Signed by the final examining committee:

_____Examiner
Dr. Eva Pomeroy

_____Examiner
Dr. David Waddington

_____Thesis Supervisor
Dr. Ailie Cleghorn

Approved_____
Dr. Sarita Kennedy, Chair of Department

April 29, 2020

_____
Dr. Andre Roy, Dean of Arts and Science

ABSTRACT

"If you want to communicate . . ."

The Place of Language in International Students' Transition to University:

Insights from a Language Exchange

Andrea Rosenfield

This study of plurilingual students in a language exchange explores how English and French language learners transition to university in Canada. The study gives voice to diverse international students, framing their experiences and perspectives in the context of the internationalization of higher education. By examining the links between learners' linguistic and cultural affiliations, language learning and use, and their sense of agency, identity and belonging, I identify unique challenges, resources and potential for language and intercultural learning in creating community. Ethnographic description and thematic analysis drawn from interviews and group discussion combine to describe how learners experience the language exchange and the linguistic and cultural landscape of Montreal, and how they adapt their language use to navigate their transition. Despite experiencing the constraints of linguistic hierarchies in place at the university and in the wider community, these learners are reflexive agents who reorient to their languages flexibly. They engage in multiple autonomous language-learning practices and connect with other students within and across traditional boundaries of culture and language. Although they recognize formal differences of linguistic proficiency and cultural background, in practice, the students often reframe these potential barriers to move across them fluidly. Through their home languages, using English as a lingua franca, and by engaging in informal language learning, they develop and maintain social relationships and explore intercultural learning opportunities. These shared experiences offer new insights into international students' agency in transition, identity in transformation and sense of belonging. The study ends with recommendations for how programs can include international students in the university community by promoting a multilingual habitus within intercultural and language-learning activities.

DEDICATION

To my family: first and forever, my teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

International students in Quebec: A precarious status

International students in Quebec and Canada maintain a precarious status, balanced between their desirability as funders for public universities and potential immigrants, and their limited access to the same systems that draw them in. These university students' status depends to some extent on their province of study because of the wide range of immigration policies and institutional regulations in Canada. Amidst a recent wave of new immigration policies in Quebec, where this study takes place, the governing Coalition Avenir Quebec (CAQ) party announced a surprising change with a high impact on the province's international students. Since 2010, international graduates with any Quebec university degree and an intermediate-level knowledge of French have been eligible for a fast-track immigration stream, the Quebec Experience Program, or Programme de l'expérience québécoise (PEQ) (Programme de l'expérience québécoise, 2019). The PEQ program accepted over 10,000 candidates last year, over half of them post-secondary graduates (Hinkson, 2019). Earlier this year, the government of Quebec temporarily stopped accepting applications with the comment that the program was too successful. On November 1, the CAQ government announced major changes to the PEQ program, cutting the number of admissible degrees by about 300, leaving only about 150 fields eligible and affecting thousands of international students in the province with plans to remain in Quebec after graduation (Hinkson, 2019; "Quebec announces significant changes to Quebec Experience Program", 2019). Not surprisingly, students and educational institutions reacted with shock. International students protested at schools and in front of Quebec's National Assembly, stating they felt depressed and abandoned by the government (Hinkson, 2019; Shingler, 2019). Many of my friends and acquaintances were among them, with the support of an activist group I belong to. Official responses of opposition from Quebec universities and the Bureau de cooperation interuniversitaire [BCI] noted that educational institutions were not consulted in the government's decision and were seriously concerned (Programme de l'expérience québécoise (PEQ), 2019). This message from one

university's president expresses several reasons for concern, commenting that over 1,000 students at the university will be affected:

> Close to 60 per cent of [this university's] international students stay in Quebec after they graduate, contributing greatly to innovation and economic wellbeing…. It is not clear why the government has chosen to protect some areas of study over others given that there is a serious skilled labour shortage across the province, that society benefits from the retention of talented individuals regardless of their program of formation, and that it is extremely difficult to accurately predict which new skills will be required for jobs of the future in Quebec….We are equally concerned that the new policy will negatively affect future international student recruitment. (Anon., November 5, 2019)

The government announced just days later that it had temporarily suspended the changes to the Quebec Experience Program, largely because of public outcry. The changes will not affect current students but the program may yet be redesigned (Immigration, francisation et intégration Québec, 2019; Hinkson, 2019).

The CAQ government's move to restrict immigration in general and the university's response to the CAQ government's move to limit access to the PEQ program, express in a nutshell a growing tension in how international students are regarded and treated, particularly in Quebec. These recent events signal a potential shift in status for international students and graduates and indicate the precarious position of these students in relation to the state and therefore within educational institutions. However, international students are typically seen as highly desirable university students and potential permanent residents. Attracting and retaining international students has become a key strategy for universities, with economic benefits for the institutions, the country, and the province they settle in. The existence of the Quebec Experience Program as a special immigration stream and

the universities' advocacy for the program and its international student population demonstrate just how important they are to the province and its postsecondary institutions. The Canadian government has also underlined how international students can contribute to Canadian society as students and workers, as well as sources of revenue for Canadian universities and as potential immigrants**.** This report by Statistics Canada highlights the growing number of international graduates and their high status as economic immigrants:

> International students are increasingly regarded as an important group of young and well-educated individuals from which to select permanent residents. In December 2015 there were 353,000 international students with a valid study permit in Canada, up from 84,000 in December 1995. Of the international students admitted to Canada in the early 2000s, 25% became permanent residents over the 10 years that followed. Of these, nearly one-half applied as principal applicants in the economic class (International students, immigration and earnings growth, 2017).

Over 20 years, the total number of international students in Canada more than quadrupled. In an overlapping period, not only did a quarter remain as immigrants after study, but, almost half of those immigrants were granted a preferred status. Not counting recent events, Canadian and Quebec government policy has trended towards encouraging and supporting these international students to remain after graduation. The growing number of international students recruited and attending Canadian and Quebec schools and the economic benefits to the institutions, province and country represent one aspect of the internationalization of education. Yet policies and attitudes towards inbound students in Quebec have shifted towards exclusion, as one international student and protest organizer says: "We understand, with this latest law, that the Legault government is showing us that we are not welcome in Quebec" (Goldberg, 2019).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Internationalization of higher education: Institutional and student perspectives

How universities view inbound students

The internationalization of higher education includes the increased mobility of people, funds and knowledge as part of globalization. One definition describes internationalization as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and the delivery of higher education" (Knight, 2003, p.2, as cited in Knight, 2004, p. 11). To add to that definition, we should be aware of how local and global forces interact and the consequences that result. This interaction can create tensions, such as the tension between universities' and countries' economic need for international students and, for example, the Quebec government's attempt to restrict their mobility after graduation. To explore the sources of this tension further, as the statement from the above-mentioned university president indicates, universities view international students as a growing source of potential resources. Not only will these students make up a skilled labour force, contribute to the economy and to cultural diversity, but as publicly-funded educational institutions, universities also rely increasingly on international recruitment as an important revenue stream to meet their financing needs (Kenyon, Frohard-Dourlent & Roth, 2012; Knight, 2004). At Canadian universities, international student enrolment is on the rise due in part to active recruitment for students in this category. According to a Universities Canada report, almost 90,000 full-time undergraduate students and 45,000 graduate students enrolled in Canadian universities were international students in 2014 (Quick facts: Internationalization at Canadian universities, 2014). In the total university student population, international students represented about 9% of enrolment in Canadian universities and 12.5% in Quebec universities in 2016-2017 (Statistics Canada, 2019). At the university in Montreal where this study takes place, the percentage of international students is even higher: 18.4% of all students, and nearly 50% of students in certain faculties and degree programs ("Fast facts", 2019). Like other groups of international students, these numbers are rising. In an economic sense,

then, increasing international connections and content is not a choice for universities, but a necessity. However, internationalization of higher education is not neutral; it has been argued that internationalization of education is a competitive, neoliberal policy to fund institutions by charging higher fees to international students (Gu, Schweisfurth & Day, 2010; Guo & Chase, 2011). Increasing numbers of international students not only offer a financial benefit, but also a knowledge advantage, as highly-skilled, educated students are attracted to institutions which will provide further training.

International students' perspectives

It is crucial to examine the perspectives of all stakeholders in the internationalization of education, including those of international students, and it is especially important to determine their experiences of study. From the students' perspective, success and engagement in university plays a role in determining whether international students stay in Quebec and Canada after graduation. Social engagement has proven crucial to creating a feeling of connection to the country of study, alongside promoting academic success and supporting post-graduation careers (Arthur, 2017). In Quebec specifically, before the changes to immigration policy or the election of the CAQ government, 43% of international students surveyed recently stated that they were somewhat or very likely to remain after they graduate. In addition, just over 23% responded that they felt neutral or undecided (Holley, 2017). Students need to increase their prospects for employment to be able to land a job. However, they also need to feel secure, socially supported and included. When asked to rank the importance of factors that would keep them in Quebec, international university students at English universities rated these three elements the highest: "good job opportunity", "safe place to live" and "a good network of friends". Other important factors included that "the people are very welcoming" and "cultural diversity" (Holley, 2017). Social experiences and perceptions of belonging affect international students deeply during their time at university and form a crucial part of their decision to stay in Quebec after graduation. Student experiences within the university that support integration and

inclusion will be reviewed in more detail later. For now, we can note that a recent measure of immigrant integration in Canada found that Montreal ranks low on several measures of social integration, especially feelings of inclusion in Quebec and active participation in community life (Canadian Index for Measuring Integration, 2019). In other words, community support for social inclusion would need to increase for students and recent graduates to feel at home.

International students in transition to university

Specific challenges for international students

The transition to university represents an important period of adjustment that sets up the potential for success and satisfaction during and after university. International students often describe the period of transition to university as especially challenging for them and indicate that they want more support when they first arrive (Holley, 2017). Studies repeatedly report culture shock, including feelings of frustration, homesickness and depression (Guo & Chase, 2011). Loneliness appears to be higher in international students compared to their peers from the country of study (Zhou & Cole, 2017). These issues arise because many of these students deal with social isolation, alienation, or marginalization due to cultural adjustment alongside academic challenges (Guo & Chase, 2011; Wu, Garza & Guzman, 2015). In addition, international students may have more negative cross-cultural experiences than students from the host country, decreasing their satisfaction with university life (Zhou & Cole, 2017). Adapting to university life may be that much more difficult for international students because success depends on a tangled mix of linguistic, cultural, social and academic elements. Gu, Schweizfurth and Day (2010) describe how international students adapt to university life as a non-linear process: “a complex set of shifting associations between language mastery, social interaction, personal development and academic outcomes” (Gu, Schweizfurth & Day, 2010, Conclusions para. 2).These aspects of the transition each play an important role.

Language matters

International students may need to adjust socioculturally, psychologically and linguistically to university life. However, many of these students prioritize being able to understand and use English in everyday interactions (Lee, 2016). International students' relationships with languages may be especially important in their transition because their language development and use affect academic success, social life and intercultural interactions. English language proficiency, measured by admissions tests, correlates with international students' academic success in their first year (Neumann, Padden & McDonough, 2019). Other factors also play a part, including attitudes towards and involvement with courses, and importantly, students' self-perceptions, often challenged in new environments (Neumann, Padden & McDonough, 2019). English language classes and practice activities can support students' inclusion through engagement, by broadening their social network and connecting them with other students and the local community (Niranji, Pathirage, Morrow, Walpitage & Skolits, 2014). But engaging in out-of-class experiences are also essential for English language learners in their first year to become full participants in the university community (Lee-Johnson, 2015). In turn, cultural affiliations and intercultural interactions are affected by language, and as international students often use multiple languages, they also have increased and multiple affiliations with a diversity of interactions (Doucerain, Dere & Ryder, 2013). These ideas will be explored and the relationships between language and culture, academics and social life will be elaborated throughout the following pages.

University support for international students: Recognition versus realities

Considering the importance of student retention and the potential impact of the university experience, universities should take their responsibility seriously to support international students' engagement and social inclusion, especially during the transition period. Actually, universities are beginning to recognize the need for policies, programs and services that include the diverse student population that they actively recruit. The 2019 *Report of the Advisory Group on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion* from

the university where this study takes place underlined the importance to students, faculty and staff of "services and programs that offer opportunities for different diverse groups to interact together in meaningful ways", and recommended that "the university should continue to offer more of these opportunities for all members of the community" (p. 8). More specifically, consultations found that a variety of student services appeal to students of different backgrounds. The richest opportunities "are adaptable and flexible in offerings and provide safe spaces for people to connect with each other in diverse ways" (*Report of the Advisory Group on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion*, p.8) However, recognition of a situation does not always ensure immediate, effective support. According to Guo and Chase (2011), "Despite the claim that internationalisation is now an integral part of institutional strategies at Canadian universities, there has been a gap between the rhetoric and the reality. Although there is an interest in bringing in international students to internationalise Canadian campuses, in reality there has been a lack of support to help international students successfully integrate into Canadian academic environments" (Conclusion, para. 1). Providing adequate, appropriate resources for international student engagement and success while studying presents an important challenge for educational institutions.

Specific reasons why this support for international students may not be sufficient will be explored more fully later on. At this point, it is important to mention three issues. First, international students represent an administrative category for universities which does not begin to cover the diversity of their backgrounds, experiences and identities (Kenyon, Frohard-Dourlent & Roth, 2012). As a result, gaps often arise between identified needs and lived realities. Second, just offering opportunities is not enough to include and integrate international students or to encourage and build an intercultural community. Creating community is the responsibility of the university, but must be a joint endeavour between students, faculty, staff, and administration (Guo & Chase, 2011). The ideas of integration as a two-way street (Canadian Index for Measuring Integration, 2019), or inclusion as limited to the host

country, institution and residents' actions may not extend far enough. Third, it is important to recognize individual students' positions with respect to systemic issues. Students' agency plays an important role as they navigate the challenges and experiences of university life and transformations to their identities and sense of belonging. However, status, pedagogical and cultural differences play a role in students' successful transition as much as personal factors. As a result, institutional support can limit or enable students' success (Guo & Chase, 2011).

Cultural and linguistic diversity on campus: Who identifies and who belongs?

Embracing diversity may represent a collective responsibility and effort. However, institutions often view the cultural and linguistic diversity of international students as an asset or resource. Universities describe the diversity of their campuses with pride, naming the number of countries students come from and languages spoken. For instance, a university may pride itself on hosting students from over 150 nations and 30% who speak a third language, while another 30% of students name a language other than English or French as their first one spoken (Campus services, 2019; "Fast facts", 2019). In the university president's response to the CAQ, he listed the "wealth of cultural diversity, experience and knowledge" international students bring to the university as the first reason to protest the attempted change to the PEQ (Anon., November 5, 2019). Researchers on internationalization in higher education also cite the linguistic and cultural diversity of international students when appealing to institutions to support these students. International students "enrich" universities, calling for respect for "traditions, culture and priorities" (Guo & Jamal, 2007, p. 28; Gu, Schweisfurth & Day, 2010). As Kenyon, Frohard-Doulent and Roth (2012) express, "If Canada wants to take full advantage of the foreign talent that it helps to train, universities and the government must ensure that all international students receive adequate support across a wide range of needs. Students who have their diverse needs met are more likely to make a lasting contribution to Canadian society" (pp. 16-17). These appeals to value diversity point out how important it is for institutions to embrace and

negotiate this reality, as well as underlining how challenging that can be. However, the descriptors and instructions such as "take advantage of foreign talent" also demonstrate a pragmatic approach and a particular set of assumptions at work, an ideology which frames these declarations. Often, diversity is valued and evaluated as an asset or a resource, which extends the economic valuation of international students into the cultural realm (Ellis, 2018). The cultural and linguistic ideologies of deficit, asset and resource, along with their impact, will be discussed and contrasted with others. For now, we can identify that linguistic and cultural ideologies join their economic counterparts to impact how international students are identified and valued in the university. This leads to the questions: Who identifies the cultural and linguistic diversity of international students? Who constructs these diverse identities? How do international students belong?

Identity in transformation, agency in inclusion

These questions return us to the initial tension in international students' precarious position as desirable outsiders. We have seen how Canadian and Quebec laws, policies and institutions actively encourage recruitment of international students without necessarily providing the support required for a smooth transition to university and inclusion in society. Now it is time to turn to the students themselves, their identities and agency in transition, and their resulting sense or absence of belonging. This study explores how a group of international students at an English university in Quebec experience the transition to university, and how this transition is informed by and informs their relationship to their languages. Overall, I ask how international students can draw on multiple linguistic and cultural affiliations as a form of agency in a successful transition to university. I explore how international students and allies can act as leaders in shaping an inclusive community that encourages intercultural learning.

Research Questions

1. What do international students hope to gain from participating in a language exchange during their first semester in Canada?
2. How do these students situate themselves as language users and community members?
    a. How does their orientation to language relate to their sense of agency and belonging?
    b. How does this change as they participate in the exchange and transition to university?
3. What can these students' experiences tell us about efforts to include international students in the university community?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction and search strategy

Over the past three decades, language learning has become more self-directed, often taking place outside of classrooms and other formal educational settings (Rosell-Aguilar, Beaven & Fuertes Gutiérrez, 2018). This change is consistent with the educational trends towards self-access learning and digital technologies and environments, which have been studied extensively. However, less is known about informal learning and social activities for university students who are English language learners that take place offline, and how this type of engagement impacts international students' overall learning experience (Lee-Johnson, 2015). For language exchanges specifically, while there has been an increase over the past 10 years in the number of studies on online exchanges, or e-tandems, and online language learning social networks, there have been fewer studies on language exchanges that take place offline, in person or face-to-face (Ahn, 2016). A keyword search for the terms language exchange, tandem learning or conversation exchange returned less than 15 relevant articles and dissertations from major databases in education, anthropology and sociology (ERIC, Education Source, Anthropology Plus, SocINDEX, Academic Search Complete, OpenDissertations, ProQuest Dissertations). The studies included here were published between 2000 and 2018 and were conducted at post-secondary institutions in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia.

Language exchanges: Definitions and features

In a language exchange, speakers of different languages meet to help each other improve their language skills (Ahn, 2016; Batardière & Jeanneau, 2015). Language exchange interactions may take place between one or more partners or in a group; however, many studies on face-to-face language exchanges have focused on two-person partnerships or dyads. Common features include an informal or naturalistic setting, with the idea that language practice can take place in an authentic environment, so that learning grows out of real-life situations and meaning is created from context (Ahn, 2016;

Lee, 2016). Sometimes called tandem language learning or conversation exchange, these language exchanges are characterized by open, informal and self-directed learning. This type of learning contrasts with formal classroom learning, especially when courses include predetermined curriculum and teacher-led activities (Ahn, 2016; Brammerts, 1996). However, in the university context, language exchanges may support or complement coursework. Some exchange programs may be offered by a language centre (see Batardière & Jeanneau, 2015) or integrated into a language course (see Hasegawa, 2012).

Learner perspectives and experiences

Most of the studies reviewed here evaluate a language exchange program through its communicative, social and intercultural benefits (Batardière & Jeanneau, 2015; Hasegawa, 2012; Jeanneau & O'Riordan, 2015; Lee, 2016; Morley & Truscott, 2006; Wang, 2018). Most were conducted as qualitative or mixed-methods case studies. Their methods combine interviews and observation with discourse analysis in order to examine linguistic and social aspects of exchanges within the language learning partnership (Ahn, 2016; Batardière & Jeanneau, 2015; Hasegawa, 2012; Jeanneau & O'Riordan, 2015; Lee, 2016; Morley & Truscott, 2006; Wang, 2018). These approaches often aim to incorporate the language learners' perspectives, and several include international students' experiences (Ahn, 2016; Jeanneau & O'Riordan, 2015; Lee, 2016; Lee-Johnson, 2015; Wang, 2018). Some studies also find that exchange activities may provide social support to international students (Jeanneau & O'Riordan, 2015; Morley & Truscott, 2006). However, in their review of students' international language-learning experiences from an outbound perspective, Isabelli-García, Bown, Plews and Dewey (2018) argue that international students' experiences have not been fully explored. Lee (2016) echoes this argument, calling for more detailed case studies to examine "how international students' communicative ability and English language proficiency might affect how they make friends with American students, their academic accomplishments and satisfaction levels with their studies, and their acculturation in the US" (p. 31). The current research study, carried out in Canada,

gives voice to international students by asking for their perspectives on their experiences in their languages and English within the exchange and the university.

Language learning in exchanges

The majority of the studies reviewed on in-person language exchanges are conducted within the fields of second or foreign language education or applied linguistics. Some focus more directly on language acquisition (Ahn, 2016; Lee, 2016; Hasegawa, 2012). Claims of success include increased communicative competence and confidence (Lee, 2016; Ahn, 2016); evidence of linguistic awareness or metalinguistic knowledge (Ahn, 2016; Sabbah-Taylor, 2017); and academic achievement in a language exam or course (Hasegawa, 2012). Other benefits relate to the learning environment or learner development. Language exchanges can offer a personalized learning environment, where learners can focus on their individual needs and choose their own topics based on interest (Kennedy & Furlong, 2014). They can increase motivation for learning (Lewis, 2003) and create a space that learners perceive as positive and inclusive (Lee, 2016; Jeanneau & O'Riordan, 2015). Authors typically suggest that these benefits result from the unique learning relationship of partners in an exchange, one that combines autonomy and reciprocity (Ahn, 2016; Batardière & Jeanneau, 2015; Jeanneau & O'Riordan, 2015; Morley & Truscott, 2006; Wang, 2018). The principles of autonomy and reciprocity are based on concepts of andragogy - self-directed and collaborative learning – elaborated for learning in tandem by Little (1996), Brammerts (1996, 2003) and Lewis (2003).

The principle of autonomy

Little (1996), Brammerts (1996, 2003) and Lewis (2003) identify the twin principles of autonomy and reciprocity as the joint basis for learning in a language exchange. Little (1996) defines learner autonomy as the capacity for self-directed learning, specifically, “explicit, conscious autonomy - knowing what you are learning, why, how, and with what degree of success” (p. 25). Little describes success in language learning as reaching a level of autonomy where the speaker can use the language

on their own outside of the classroom. He emphasizes that a high degree of autonomy is necessary for tandem language learning. This autonomy is characterized by the learner's ability to understand the language-learning process well enough to plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning, make good use of the opportunity to learn from their partner and support them (Little, 1996). Brammerts (1996) expands on Little's (1996) definition and applies it in an early study of tandem learning. Following Brammerts (1996), Batardière and Jeanneau (2015) define autonomy as the principle that each learner takes responsibility for their own learning to determine what and when they want to learn. Ahn (2016) echoes that learners are in charge of their own learning and need to create their own opportunities, and adds that what individuals learn and how will vary. In addition, Morley and Truscott (2006) underline the greater responsibility that comes with autonomy.

The principle of reciprocity

Brammerts (1996) outlines the concept that successful learning in a language exchange is based on reciprocity. Each partner depends on and supports the other learner, and each one owes the other an equal contribution, so they can mutually benefit to the same degree (Brammerts, 1996). In other words, "learners should be prepared and able to do as much for their partner as they . . . expect from their partner" in terms of energy, interest and support (Brammerts, 1996, p. 11). Batardière and Jeanneau (2015) follow Brammerts (1996) in defining reciprocity: Each learner helps the other to the same extent that they expect help. Moreover, Brammerts (1996) explains that the principle of reciprocity depends on learner autonomy, since learners can only expect support from their partners to the extent that they have defined and requested it. Returning to Little's (1996) definition of autonomy, the language exchange participant must be able to plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning so that they can benefit from the support their partner can offer. Ahn (2016) also explains that learners need to take responsibility for each other's learning and try to offer equal support in a collaborative relationship. These relationships become mutually beneficial over time (Ahn, 2016). So, developing learner autonomy and mutually beneficial reciprocity in an exchange rests on

collaborative social interaction, which underpins collaborative learning. Little (1996) expresses the balance between learner independence and interdependence as freedom within the constraints of social interaction, concluding, “if learning is essentially an interactive process, then the development of learner autonomy is a collaborative matter; and the support that learners can give to one another plays a crucial role in the transition” to independence (Little, 1996, p. 28).

Expectations of autonomy and issues of responsibility

An ongoing debate in the literature on learning in a language exchange centres on autonomous learning. Authors raise concerns regarding how successful self-directed learning can be and how closely to manage autonomy in order to ensure continued learner motivation and participation in exchange programs (Batardière & Jeanneau, 2015**;** Hasegawa, 2012; Jeanneau & O'Riordan, 2015; Morley & Truscott, 2006). On reciprocal relationships, authors examine whether learners interact as peers or as expert-novice pairs and whether and how they switch roles. By implication, authors question to what extent learners can have equitable and rewarding relationships (Ahn, 2011; Janssen Sanchez, 2015). In one example, Sabbah-Taylor (2017) identifies intercultural moments and participants' orientation to them. Ultimately, she finds that cultural differences which come up during an exchange contribute to participants identifying each other as expert versus novice, not as "co-member" (Sabbah-Taylor, 2017). Although findings differ on how learners relate to each other, most authors conclude that participating in a language exchange requires taking ownership and sharing responsibility for learning.

Challenges to successful participation

Several studies that take autonomous learning as a basic principle of language exchanges describe problems with the number of participants or with continued participation (Wang, 2018; Lee, 2016). However, these studies usually do not connect these issues with the learning principles at work, citing instead learner traits or situational factors such as pressure of studies, voluntary nature of the activity

or decreased motivation. This omission contrasts with the critical view that Lewis (2003) presents as a foundational issue for language exchanges: for autonomous learning to succeed, the learners must already be able to learn autonomously to a certain extent. At the same time, some studies which report strong successes with language exchange programs include a fair amount of external coordination, which reduces the autonomy expected from learners, and increases the support that might be needed for participants to take up the challenge (Batardière & Jeanneau, 2015; Jeanneau & O'Riordan, 2015). For example, in one study on peer assessment in a language exchange, support is intrinsic to the activity; the exchange takes place within a course, goals are set by the teacher and tasks are clearly structured (Morley & Truscott, 2006).

Effective program management

On the other hand, the authors of that same study, Morley and Truscott (2006), state explicitly that language exchanges require oversight to enable learners to take over some power productively. On the topic of program management, Hasegawa (2012) deals most candidly with issues that may arise from expecting learners to take responsibility for their learning. He addresses the concern that expectations of independent learning may decrease motivation, and therefore has lower expectation of learners in terms of autonomy and reciprocity, preferring external management by a teacher or program coordinator (Hasegawa, 2012). He claims that learners – especially ones with less proficiency, motivation or confidence - should not be expected to find their own language partners or structure their own tasks (Hasegawa, 2012). Although the context of the study is quite different, an exchange that is a required component of a credit course, Hasegawa's (2012) goals for program management remain true to the intentions of the principles of autonomy and reciprocity. Management should ensure equal access to the language of study and positive experiences for all learners, which will encourage continued participation. In other words, appropriate management may address challenges of sharing responsibility with learners and determine program success.

Relevant themes and concerns

The problem of authenticity: Linguistic ideologies in language exchange literature

The organizing principles of language exchanges bring up a central question in language learning: how to integrate authentic practice. But what does authenticity mean in the context of a language exchange? Lee (2016) defines authentic language practice as natural contact that takes place in a realistic environment, which can include interacting informally with "native speakers". Language learners often claim that they want this type of practice and express their belief that this is the best way to learn. Jeanneau and O'Riordan (2015) report that participants in discussion groups led by peer facilitators in their first language state that the main reason they attend is that "they particularly enjoy the authenticity of the exchanges and learning new vocabulary in context" (p. 435). In language exchanges, the principles of autonomy and reciprocity depend on a model of language learning that assumes authenticity of linguistic expression: the native speaker model. This model asserts that learning is improved or may only be possible by interacting with a native or near-native speaker in an authentic context (Lee, 2014). The basis for these claims is a monolingual ideal which positions each native speaker as an expert, and native or native-like usage as the target. Examples of the native speaker model from the literature include claims that "All tandem partners are experts in their own language and culture" (Brammerts, 1996, p. 11), so partners or group leaders can act as "ambassadors of their language and culture" (Jeanneau & O'Riordan, 2015, p. 439). However, this model positions individual learners as experts with assets to share or non-experts with deficits or needs. As discussed above, authors disagree on learner positioning; however, it is also possible to reject the model. For language learning specifically, the idea of authenticity is based on an input model of knowledge which has been criticized (Krashen, 1998; Lee-Johnson, 2015). As authenticity of language practice becomes problematic, the question arises of what can be gained from a language exchange, how it can be structured and on what premises. Moving beyond linguistic proficiency, my study begins by asking international students what they hope to gain from participating in a language exchange,

attending to how they situate themselves as language learners, how they would structure their interactions and the support they request.

Learner identity and agency

Key themes in the literature that deal with learners' experiences include learner identity and agency (see Ahn, 2016; Lee-Johnson, 2015). The concerns around learner identity and agency reflect the social turn in the area of second language learning, which emphasizes social interaction as the basis for language learning (Isabelli-García, Bown, Plews & Dewey, 2018). Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist sociocultural theory and Lantolf's (2000) sociocultural language learning theory inform these studies. The framework of sociocultural theory emphasizes the active role of learners in creating opportunities for their own learning and making meaning through social interaction, rather than inputting knowledge as passive recipients (Ahn, 2016). Framing learners as agents may thus address issues of authenticity in language exchanges. Applied to second language learning, learning is defined as participating in a social context, which involves constructing the self as a member of a community (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2000). This definition of learning draws on Lave and Wenger's (1991) idea of situated learning as a process of becoming a legitimate participant in a community. In the language exchange literature, Jeanneau and O'Riordan (2015) describe language conversation groups as communities of practice that encourage exchange between peers. Lee-Johnson (2015) explores the social experiences of international students on a university campus as moments of language and cultural learning. Through these moments, students negotiate their identities as new community members (Lee-Johnson, 2015). Speaking with host country students figures as particularly important in international students' journey of belonging. Lee-Johnson (2015) states that "Participants' conversations with native speaking peers provided opportunities for them to improve their English proficiency, deepen their understanding of local cultures and subcultures, and re-contextualize their social identities" (p. 127). Following this framing, my study uses the concepts of situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation in the cultural context of transition to university to explore the

links between how students perceive and use their languages and their experiences of identity, community and belonging.

Intercultural learning in language exchanges

It is important to examine both the cultural and linguistic ideologies that inform language exchanges because the cultural aspect has long been recognized as inseparable from language learning. The literature on language exchanges has identified cultural exchange or learning as an intrinsic part of the experience and has studied these aspects since the 1990s (Brammerts, 1996; see Batardière & Jeanneau, 2015). Over the past three decades, however, ideas about what constitutes cultural learning have changed dramatically, from acquiring cultural knowledge or competence to developing critical cultural awareness (Byram, 2014). Several studies on tandem learning recognize the intercultural aspect of engaging in language exchanges. Earlier studies express acquiring cultural knowledge or engaging in cultural exchange as a benefit to participants. A typical claim states that "Such an arrangement gives learners the opportunity: to develop oral and written skills in their partner's native language; to expand their knowledge of this language; and to learn more about their partner's country and culture" (Morley & Truscott, 2006, p. 53). However, this idea of learning about a target culture positions culture as uniform, static and requiring an authentic representative, in parallel to the way the native speaker model positions language as a set of knowledge to be acquired.

More recent studies also frame intercultural aspects of language exchanges in terms of individual benefits, although some move away from a model where culture is external and acquirable and towards exchange and fluidity. Wang (2018) finds that participants "appreciated the social value of making friends for intercultural exchange" (p. 44). Similarly, Lee (2016) describes "intercultural friendships" which were valued by both international and American students who participated in a language exchange. While the international students in Lee's (2016) study valued language practice for increased linguistic and cultural competence, American students identified the main benefit as

cultural exchange. Lee-Johnson (2015) also explores international students' social interactions with host country students and identifies meaningful moments and experiences, finding that close relationships with native speakers allow English language learners to ask questions openly about language and culture. Lee-Johnson (2015) refers to these friends as "cultural brokers", identifying their role in enabling the international students' membership in a new cultural and social group (p. 132). These studies begin to position students who take part in a language exchange as learners in transition, not only in terms of their language use, but also culturally. Most recently, a new direction has emerged in language exchange studies that aligns with the goals of intercultural education: a project of preparing learners for intercultural citizenship (Byram, 2014; see UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education, 2006). These studies define intercultural awareness, sensitivity or competence in terms of openness, curiosity, suspension of judgment and beliefs about other cultures and one's own culture (Ahn, 2016; Jeanneau & O'Riordan, 2015; Lee, 2016). The project of education for intercultural citizenship aligns with Little's (1996) discussion of learner autonomy as rooted in self-determination. This humanistic ideal in turn comes from liberal pedagogy, which values education that prepares individuals to participate in democratic society.

The emergent conception of intercultural education within a language exchange parallels two important theoretical developments in language studies. First, the idea of multilingualism has become central to language policy, planning and pedagogy. A multilingual habitus is one that promotes non-dominant languages in educational contexts (Kosonen & Benson, 2013). Second, a critical turn in the study of language learning has repositioned intercultural learning as essential to sociolinguistic competence (Isabelli-García, Bown, Plews & Dewey, 2018). Recent definitions of pluricultural and plurilingual competence have characterized intercultural interaction as intrinsic to communication. In this view, language learners are social actors who can use their complete linguistic repertoires to communicate and interact successfully in intercultural contexts (Coste, Moore & Zarate, 2009). The

concepts of multilingual habitus and plurilingual and pluricultural competence each present critical perspectives from which to study learners' orientations to their own language use for intercultural communication. This research study explores whether participants in a language exchange accept a monolingual, native speaker model or look to multilingual or plurilingual alternatives, and how this choice shapes their interactions, identities and agency.

Internationalization and intercultural learning: Intersecting concerns

The shift towards a plurilingual orientation and the emphasis on intercultural learning intersect with the internationalization of higher education and its concerns. Knight (2004) defines the internationalization of institutions of higher education as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education" (p. 11). Intercultural dimensions refer to actions that take place in a host country, such as Canada. The purpose of internationalization can be strategic, the functions usually refer to teaching or learning, and the delivery can include programs or activities for students (Knight, 2004). Some studies on language exchanges refer to intercultural or global dimensions of strategic internationalization as motivation or validation for exchange programs. For example, Batardière and Jeanneau (2015) identify language and intercultural communication skills as important to advance the university's strategic internationalization efforts. Jeanneau and O'Riordan (2015) also refer to the university's strategic plan, including preparation for global citizenship. These studies adopt deficit-based orientations towards international students, equating increasing diversity in student populations with the challenge of integrating students and proposing language exchanges as the solution (Jeanneau & O'Riordan, 2015; Morley & Truscott, 2006). In contrast, Wang (2018) contextualizes the exchange in terms of the internationalization strategy of the university, and specifically, the language centre: social and cultural enrichment. The language exchange in that study is an extracurricular program that contributes to the aim of developing global citizens through foreign language study and cultural awareness (Wang, 2018). This perspective positions international students as providing assets to the

university. The approach reverses the deficit model without addressing the inherent problem of lack of agency. My study connects the linguistic and cultural ideologies implicit in internationalization with the lived experiences of international students. These connections can help to inform efforts to build an intercultural community at the university.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation

What is situated learning?

Lave (1996) defines learning as "participation in socially situated practices" (p. 150). Learning always takes place while people are participating in specific practices within a social context. This definition of learning stands against purely cognitive and behavioural approaches that position learning as knowledge transfer and instead places learning firmly within the social realm. As a result, learning involves social interaction, here described as participation in a community of practice. A community of practice is a group of like-minded participants with common interests, goals and values who are learning from each other. In Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of legitimate peripheral participation, learners move from the boundaries of a community of practice to become accepted participants with full standing in the community. Learning requires engaging in community life over a period of time in order to negotiate and create meaning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In this view, learning requires engagement from learners and teachers, which in turn creates practices of learning. Instead of acquiring knowledge or skills, learners take on more central roles within a community as they become more engaged participants. The participants transform themselves along with their roles, and so does the community. As Lave (1996) describes, "Learning is an aspect of changing participation in changing 'communities of practice' everywhere" (p. 150). This view, which locates learners as stakeholders in community life, also foregrounds learning as a cultural practice. Engagement in the community of practice as a cultural unit is the base requirement and specific kinds of ties or relationships between members are necessary for learning to take place. Successful learning involves adoption of cultural practices, roles and values to take up community and cultural membership.

The language exchange as research site and community of practice

The idea of legitimate peripheral participation as engagement in a community of practice provides good reasons to examine the language exchange as a site of learning. More than a site of international student engagement on campus, this student-founded and led initiative has the potential for learners to participate in learning and building community together. First, the language exchange acts a site of informal learning. A situated learning framework offers the opportunity to re-evaluate this type of learning, suggesting that successful learning can take place in informal contexts and without explicit teaching. Intentional teaching is not a prerequisite for learning to take place, and learning, creating and producing new knowledge is not limited to formal educational contexts or specific processes (Lave, 1996). Informal learning can prove to be "enormously effective education" which can lead to a "strong sense of . . . worth and self-respect" on the part of the participants (Lave, 1996, p. 154). Second, learning as social practice occurs when the learning activity takes place as part of regular, ongoing practices: when people interact in similar ways for a specific purpose or around a common goal across a period of time (Lave, 1996). Situated learning involves an intersubjective relationship, since learners construct their identities in relation to each other through practice. The relationships created in a language exchange make it appropriate to apply a situated learning framework: Autonomous and reciprocal relationships are required and rewarded. Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of situated learning often involves a master-apprentice relationship. This social learning relationship can compare to the expert-novice relationship that Little (2003), Brammerts (2003; 1996) and others describe between partners in language exchanges. At the same time, we have seen that some authors identify a peer relationship in which participants share roles more equitably. Lave (1996) also describes a type of learning that takes place between "near peers" – participants in a community who have the same or similar roles, equal status and agency. For Lave, (1996), these relationships play a larger role in learning, drawing participants into a more closely-knit community.

International students in transition as legitimate peripheral participants

The definition of legitimate participation as engagement in a community with a specific culture directs attention to how international students engage as language learners as they transition to university. The cultural and social context of transition to university acts as a site and time of legitimate peripheral participation for international students because it involves transforming identity through membership in a new community**.** From the perspective of situated learning, identity is multifaceted. It is socially constructed, based on participation in social practice. Identity is active; members of a community are defined by their roles and practices. It is relational, as membership in the community is granted and refined through relationships with others. Identity is fluid; it changes as a member moves through practices, roles and relationships, just as membership in a community changes. Ultimately, identity is transformative: moving through practices, roles, relationships and membership in turn transforms the participant. Learning involves the social process of identity creation (Lave, 1996). In addition to learning roles for different aspects of life, we learn how to live. As a result, situated learning is inherently transformative, in the same way that learning is an intrinsic part of living, resulting in personal growth. Lave (1996) describes members of a community as "learning to grow old enough, and mature enough," learning to make a living and make a life (p. 151).

This social constructivist perspective on learning and identities has two important implications. First, Lave (1996) makes an ontological claim about learning: Learning does not only involve knowledge production, but requires doing. So, by engaging in learning, learners become agents. Second, if learners construct "identities in practice", then their relationship to each other and to the world is intersubjective and mutually constitutive (Lave, 1996, p. 157). In other words, learners' agencies are tied to how they practice their identities through their social and cultural worlds. When learners engage in intercultural exchange, they construct and reconstruct their identities based on their intercultural experiences. Specifically, how learners orient to and use their languages in intercultural

contexts becomes the practice of their linguistic and cultural identities. However, these intercultural contexts introduce inequitable exchanges into the social world. Language learners interact socially with others from different identity positions, some of which limit learning opportunities. As Norton and Toohey (2011) remind us, learners' identities are therefore "multiple, changing, and a site of struggle" (Section 2.i). My study explores how learners frame their identities and agencies in relation to language use as practice, both as they transition to university and look back on transitional moments. How do they perceive their roles within the exchange and the wider community? Finally, does the practice of languages and construction and reconstruction of identities enable these learners to join the university community or to create their own?

International students and intercultural learning

International students: Diverse learners in a super-diverse context

Kenyon, Frohard-Dourlent and Roth (2012) argue that the term "international students" represents a financial and administrative category at Canadian universities based on residency status and perceived needs, rather than identities. International students attend alongside permanent residents and Canadian citizens but pay according to a different fee structure. Universities target these students for specific kinds of services according to perceived needs of support, especially those related to language and culture. At the university where my study takes place, International Student Services[1] acts as the front line for support services. This service unit has a mandate of assisting students with multiple aspects of living in Canada, specifically work and study visas, immigration, health insurance and financial support. As part of its mandate, the office runs orientation sessions and social activities throughout the semester to welcome international students to the university and help them integrate into social life (Student hub, 2019). However, not all international students in Quebec come from

[1] Name changed for confidentiality

similar backgrounds or have equivalent needs or plans. While many are English language learners, others have strong academic English backgrounds (Neumann, Padden & McDonough, 2019). Some intend to stay in the province after graduation, but others plan to look for jobs in the rest of Canada, return to their countries of origin or start careers elsewhere (Holley, 2017).

As Kenyon, Frohard-Dourlent and Roth (2012) point out, the term "international students" does not reflect social constructions of student identities - how certain students view or represent themselves, or how they are seen by others - problematizing the category. Individuals identified or who self-identify as international students in Canada come from a broad range of national, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and correspondingly arrive with diverse strengths and needs in adapting to university life. These students may include several groups not usually identified by the university administration as international students. First, Americans who are not English language-learners may feel different but may not be perceived as international students or identified as needing any support during their transition. Next, "third culture kids" is a term that describes individuals who are highly experienced with cultural transitions, who have grown up or studied in multiple countries, often at international schools, and who present stronger English language skills (Kenyon, Frohard-Dourlent & Roth, 2012). Their cultural affiliations may be multiple or hybrid. A hybrid affiliation means that someone identifies with more than one heritage culture or a combination of heritage and Canadian cultures, or mix and combine them to create new forms of identification (Doucerain, Dere & Ryder, 2013). Recent immigrants represent yet another group who may be invisible international students. Their English language skills and educational backgrounds vary, as does the support they seek (Kenyon, Frohard-Dourlent & Roth, 2012). Often, these learners share needs related to language and culture with those in the "international student" category, but they are not identified, targeted or served by the same administrative unit of the university.

In Montreal, where my study takes place, the cultural makeup represents a context of 'super-diversity' (Vertovec, 2007). Defining a super-diverse context, "distinct cultural groups are numerous, and diversity arises not only in terms of countries of origin, but also according to language, religion, migration channel, immigration status, gender, age, and level of transnationalism" (Doucerain, Dere & Ryder, 2013, Section 3.1, para. 1). As a result of this super-diversity, we need to look closely at the local context when conducting research related to culture; the context is so highly specific (Vertovec, 2007). Recognizing the specific, diverse context of the city where my study takes place, I examine learners' language use in relation to this diversity in terms of their intercultural experiences. In addition, I take the view that cultural affiliations in this context are situated and context-dependent (Doucerain, Dere & Ryder, 2013), as are linguistic affiliations. Within the university, my study examines how these linguistic and cultural affiliations intersect with international students' experiences of transition, and specifically, their experiences and perceptions of language use.

Intercultural experiences of international students in transition

According to Gu, Schweisfurth and Day (2010), our interest in what culture is arises when we stay in a host culture. Globalization has increased this tendency, and the internationalization of higher education presents new opportunities for intercultural experiences. Intercultural experience can be defined as the interactions that take place when people of diverse cultures come into contact. These interactions occur on the individual level as well as the cultural level, including the boundary-making and border crossings sometimes referred to as "cross-cultural" (Gu, Schweisfurth & Day, 2010). I have chosen to focus on the transitional period of international students' experiences because, as Gu, Schweisfurth and Day (2010) explain, "the tensions caused by their attempts to manage cultural differences tend to be more overwhelming in the initial phase of these cross and intercultural experiences" (Section 3, para. 3). During this period, many factors affect how individuals respond to intercultural experiences. Coleman (2004) outlines the factors in this way:

> In each individual case, biographical, affective, cognitive and circumstantial variables come into play, with students' previous language learning and aptitude impacted upon by their motivation, attitudes, anxiety, learning style and strategies, as well as by unpredictable elements such as location, type of accommodation, and degree of contact with native speakers. (p. 583).

As a result of these different factors, individual experiences and outcomes of studying in a host country vary greatly. Previous studies in education have outlined processes to describe transitions in psychological or sociocultural terms or as transformative learning, but unfortunately, many have focused on assimilation (Kasun & Sanchez, n.d.). It is also possible that few qualitative studies relate the intercultural experiences of individual students in rich detail (Gu, Schweisfurth & Day, 2010). This absence is significant at a time when many international students are dissatisfied with the university's failure to address their intercultural needs (Kenyon, Frohard-Dourlent & Roth, 2012). Turning specifically to experiences related to language and culture, Chira (2017) and others (for example, Kenyon, Frohard-Dourlent & Roth, 2012) find that international students see language as a barrier. Racialized students may experience stereotyping (Chira, 2017). Some attribute difficulties making friends to limited English skills, sometimes to the extent of social marginalization. In one large-scale study, international students reported that they appreciate Canada's "multicultural" society, but didn't find they had much opportunity to experience it (Gu, Schweisfurth & Day, 2010). Gu, Schweisfurth and Day (2010) found that despite attempting to connect with local and international students from other countries, most students formed important friendships with people from similar cultural backgrounds. About half of the students surveyed had a sense of "powerlessness" and "lack of a sense of belonging" (Gu, Schweisfurth & Day, 2010, Theme 2). My

study evaluates these contentions based on international students' reported experiences and perceptions of barriers and connections.

Promoting intercultural exchange: What can we learn?

Enabling international students in transition requires a transformative approach that meets students' needs on multiple levels at once. Guo and Chase (2011) remind us that institutions and programs should combine students' academic, social and cultural needs. Ryan and Viete (2009) identify several elements of international student support in an English-language context. They include experiencing "feelings of belonging; being valued as a person with knowledge; and being able to communicate effectively, creatively, and with confidence" (p. 309). In relation to language, Gu, Schweisfurth and Day (2010) find that language skills and confidence in spoken and written interactions play a significant role in cultural transition. Students find it equally important to have a formal understanding of English and to get the "hidden" parts, the cultural values and social norms, including pop culture references and humour (Gu, Schweisfurth & Day, 2010). Gu, Schweisfurth and Day (2010) also note that international students see change as positive when it comes to how they perceive cultures and accept differences. International students report increased understanding of the host culture and increased appreciation of their home culture over time (Gu, Schweisfurth & Day, 2010). However, this view focuses on individual identity, agency and resilience, as students find "a locus of self" through transformation. These students define success in two ways. First, they find success in adaptability or flexibility - accepting a different set of values for different contexts. Second, they define success through self-determination, purposeful and strategic adaptation - being yourself, doing what you want to, thinking for yourself and taking responsibility for your own actions.

In contrast, a global citizenship approach takes a more communitarian stance towards transformation. In this approach, individuals who communicate across cultures first need to recognize cultural

differences. However, they must move beyond simplistic comparisons to develop a critical awareness. Critical awareness enables learners to move beyond defining cultures in terms of difference and to become aware that culture is flexible, dynamic and changing (Guo & Chase, 2011). Guo and Chase (2011) identify this approach as a transformative one because it enables a shift in the way learners understand the world. Although there is no agreement on a definition of a global citizenship approach in higher education, also referred to as intercultural or global competence, common qualities or values exist. They include knowing oneself and others; being open, understanding and valuing other cultures and worldviews; and using languages and skills to relate and interact with others (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Sfeir, 2015). In my study, I explore whether international students view their transition in terms of self-reliance, personal agency and resilience, as global citizens, or a combination. However, a global citizenship approach to intercultural learning also prompts us to recognize the power dynamics that reside within intercultural interactions. Therefore, I look to ideologies of monolingualism, multilingualism and plurilingualism to identify issues of status and power inherent in language policy and use. I examine how international students who engage in the language exchange take up these ideologies in their own perspectives on language use.

Orientation to language as a role and language use as practice

Monolingual, multilingual and plurilingual ideologies

Monolingualism, multilingualism and plurilingualism represent distinct but related ideologies that play out on individual, social and educational policy levels. As learners, educators and policymakers take up these orientations, they impact how language learning takes place in local contexts. These ideologies also provide contrasting lenses for us to see how the language exchange participants in my study engage as language learners and identify as community members. Specifically, the concepts of monolingual and multilingual habitus, plurilingualism and translanguaging identify issues of status and power inherent in language policy and use. Bourdieu's theories of habitus, capital and field or

market inform the concepts of monolingual and multilingual habitus in language policy and planning. These concepts reveal linguistic hierarchies by identifying dominant and non-dominant languages and examining how status affects teaching and learning in local contexts. Promoting a multilingual habitus involves social change through Freire's (2000) pedagogy of liberation. In contrast, plurilingualism and translanguaging emerge from the field of linguistics. Plurilingualism draws on competence-based definitions of language use to combine and validate knowledge of languages and cultures appropriate to context. In its most extreme version, translanguaging promises to reconceptualize our knowledge of named languages as a single linguistic repertoire from which we draw our languaging ability. However, this new epistemology also promises to identify and challenge social injustice, while models of plurilingual competence may not.

Cultural nationalism and the monolingual ideal

The development of the nation-state and ideologies of nationalism in the 18th and 19th centuries conflated nations and cultures in the collective imagination (Bonikowski & Gheihman, 2015). This conflation also gave rise to the myth that equates one language with one nation. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (2006) explains the origins of this myth by tracing the imposition of a single, unifying language across regions to the nation-building projects and colonization that were the results of cultural nationalism. Both of these projects continue to impact language use and status as they impose dominant, colonial languages and, in Hornberger's (2002) ecological metaphor, endanger local, indigenous and immigrant languages. Specifically, the linguistic aspect of cultural nationalism affects educational policy and pedagogy through ideologies of monolingualism and differentiated status between languages. First, Hornberger (2002) argues that the one-nation, one-language myth supports a monolingual ideal. Lee (2014) traces the links between cultural nationalism, ideologies of monolingualism and language learning:

> Ideologies of monolingualism sustain three interrelated and seemingly fundamental assumptions about language: (1) native speaker usage is authentic and thus ideal, (2) a person's birthplace correlates with proficiency, and (3) the plurality of languages and varieties results in incomprehensibility. (Introduction)

Privileging monolingualism rests on these three assumptions. Focusing on the first two, a person's country of origin determines their nationality and "authentic" culture. Combined with the one-nation, one-language myth, place of origin also stands in for linguistic proficiency. Conflating culture with language also presumes native speaker authenticity, and the ideal of the native speaker is born.

Monolingual habitus and the linguistic "market"

The third assumption that sustains and is sustained by the monolingual ideal relates to language hierarchies and learning. Devaluing plurality means that some languages hold higher status, affecting which languages are taught and how. Although local languages may lay claim to social significance, the status of languages spoken in any one context differentiates them. Hornberger (2002) refers to this phenomenon as "stratified diversity", explaining that local, indigenous and immigrant languages occupy a lower status compared to world languages (p. 10). Developing this concept, the terms dominant (DL) and non-dominant languages (NDL) usefully underline the oppressed status of certain languages and demonstrate how this relative status depends on local context (Kosonen & Benson, 2013). Looking at educational policy and practice in linguistically and culturally diverse societies, Gogolin (2002) names this status difference a monolingual habitus. The concept of habitus, drawn from Bourdieu (1991), represents a set of socially constructed dispositions or practices that we have learned and that teach us how to act in specific situations. In his theory of practice, Bourdieu (1991) defines

speech acts as if we are stuck between a rock and a hard place. The linguistic habitus predisposes or socializes us to use language appropriate to the social context while remaining within the bounds of our proficiency and class backgrounds. At the same time, the structures of the "linguistic market" create cultural and linguistic hierarchies which define how our speech acts are interpreted. As a result, we can gain social capital by successfully using high-status languages and forms in contexts where they are valued (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 38). To add to the challenge of navigating our speech acts, a language's status and potential to provide capital shifts depending on the specific context. Despite – or perhaps because of - contexts of pluralism and diversity, this can create buy-in to language hierarchies through officially-legitimated languages and devalued minority languages, especially those of immigrants (Gogolin, 2002, p. 126).

A monolingual habitus thus positions a dominant language as higher status than local or non-dominant languages. Relating it to language-learning contexts, Benson (2013) follows Gogolin (2002) in defining a monolingual habitus as a "set of assumptions built on the fundamental myth of uniformity of language and culture", reinforcing the mythical link between linguistic, cultural and national identity (p.283). When people do not question the difference in status between languages, we can see that a certain linguistic habitus or hierarchy is in place (Benson, 2013). In educational contexts, Kosonen and Benson (2013) argue that a monolingual habitus powerfully brands bilingualism or multilingualism undesirable or erases it entirely. This habitus supports the native-speaker ideal, since it can be identified through "unrealistic expectations for native-like proficiency in second or foreign languages" (Benson, 2013, p. 283). As a result, in language learning, learners of dominant languages are viewed with a deficit orientation, seen for what they lack instead of what they are capable of doing, as they would be within learner-centred, constructivist approaches (Kosonen & Benson, 2013). Therefore, if learners perceive a language-learning space as having a

monolingual orientation or ideal, they may devalue their own knowledges in that space. Learners may view their first, home or heritage languages included in their linguistic repertoires and the cultural resources that come with these languages as lower status based on the value placed on dominant languages. Since cultural and linguistic hierarchies support each other, the status of a language and its associated culture correspond. In this way, an educational system, policy or program with a monolingual habitus can not only impose a dominant language, but also a dominant culture and way of life (Kosonen & Benson, 2013). On the institutional level, these types of policies or programs follow a narrative of exclusion of linguistic and cultural minorities in education, one which has become more common due to increased immigration (Gogolin, 2002).

Multilingual contexts and policies: Redressing inequalities

Multilingualism describes both an individual's knowledge of more than one language and a sociocultural context in which people speak multiple languages. On an individual or societal level, we can define a person or context as bilingual or multilingual when more than one language is used in day-to-day life (UNESCO, 2003). On an ideological level, multilingualism breaks apart the one-nation, one-language myth. This ideology is currently being contested because of the dominance of English as a lingua franca and due to gains in authority made by non-dominant languages in local contexts (Hornberger, 2002). A perspective that privileges multilingualism also impacts how we frame cultures: as plural, non-homogeneous and dynamic. However, Gogolin (2002) cautions that ideologies of monolingualism can still exist within a pluralistic, diverse society. As a result, we should position multilingual education as an intentional policy: "the purposeful use of two or more languages in educational policy and practice (Kosonen & Benson, 2013, p.8). Multilingualism as an educational policy also overturns problematic ideologies that impact language-learners - language as deficit or problem, language as right – and reframes language as a resource (Hornberger, 2002). As we have already seen, a language-as-deficit view blames the learner for their lack of knowledge of a dominant

language and burdens them with making up the deficit. A language-rights view may identify non-dominant language-learning as a right. However, this view prioritizes the right to learn a dominant language and access the economic benefits and other privileges that may result, rather than addressing the oppressed status of non-dominant languages and related systemic social issues. Learners and other stakeholders often consider the dominant language essential for future employment and social mobility, whether or not this is true in the local context; what Bourdieu (1991) would call the "market value" of the language is manufactured (Benson, 2013). Reframing language as a resource, Hornberger (2002) argues, multilingual language policies enable us to harness pluralism for nation-building purposes through multilingual intercultural education. Such policies can "open up new worlds of possibility for oppressed indigenous and immigrant languages and their speakers, transforming former homogenizing and assimilationist policy discourse into discourses about diversity and emancipation" (p. 6). More specifically, multilingual educational policy attempts to address educational contexts where a monolingual habitus exists by introducing teaching in non-dominant languages. Benson (2013) explains, "Overall, the indicators of a monolingual habitus have to do with a failure to make NDLs visible, to assess learners' or teachers' language- and literacy-related skills, or to design materials and methods appropriate to existing language resources" (p. 293).

To recognize multilingualism as an individual and social reality, Kosonen and Benson (2013) propose instituting a multilingual habitus instead. A multilingual habitus involves making explicit the language in which learning takes place and questioning the assumptions around linguistic status, as well as challenging received methods and curricula. This move reasserts non-dominant languages and shifts their status, changing ideologies as well as practices. As Benson (2013) explains, "The NDL/DL distinction helps to remind us of the status differences between languages in society and in school, and to identify the types of languages in learners' repertoires" as well as decide on pedagogical strategies to meet learners' real needs and uses of languages (p.286). In this sense, a multilingual

habitus can guide planning and practice in the context of informal, student-led learning. A language exchange already challenges received methods of formal education because of its informal context and autonomous learning. Non-dominant languages can be recognized through a multilingual habitus. However, a language's value and status at the exchange results from whether another learner would like to practice with a partner. In this case, a language's value could be left up to chance. Higher value could be assigned to globally dominant languages, especially English, or locally dominant NDLs, like French in Quebec. Local, indigenous or immigrant languages could be presented as higher value because of the context; but this would likely require planning or intervention. Overall, in the context of a language exchange, there will likely be tensions between the status of different languages, evidenced by their desirability as participants look for partners and set intentions, and by the participants' perceptions and experiences of using their different languages. The concepts of monolingual and multilingual habitus can be useful to identify language hierarchies within an exchange and how they play out in the perceptions and lived experiences of participants. They will also help shape recommendations for informal language practice activities. Ultimately, creating a multilingual habitus at a language exchange could attempt to redress imbalances of status and promote local, indigenous and immigrant languages.

Plurilingualism: Shifting terms and concepts

The term plurilingualism has recently gained popularity in describing individuals or societies that use more than one language (see Council of Europe, 2007; Coste, Moore & Zarate, 2009). In Europe especially, plurilingualism refers to an individual's full linguistic repertoire, or their language use throughout their life, developed in non-linear ways and in super-diverse contexts (Galante, 2018; Vogel & Garcia, 2017; Kosonen & Benson, 2013). Plurilinguals are likely to have differing levels of competence and proficiency, not complete fluency (Galante, 2019). This definition and the values it represents move away from the deficit model in language proficiency; speakers develop and use

language dynamically, moving towards a standard of proficiency differences in multiple languages. Viewed as a competence, plurilingualism allows individuals to communicate and to participate in intercultural interaction (Arvanitis, 2016; Coste, Moore & Zarate, 2009; Council of Europe, 2007). Referring to the Council of Europe's (2001) standard-setting definitions, Arvanitis (2016) demonstrates how plurilingualism also connects fundamentally to ideals of participatory citizenship and community:

> Linguistic competence is a fundamental prerequisite for growth, mobility, and democratic citizenship. Similarly, individual plurilingualism is regarded as crucial to participation in democratic, economic, and social processes and in defining the sense of national and transnational belonging. (Section 1, para. 3)

In this view, language skills enable economic and democratic participation, so plurilingualism can benefit both the individual and society. However, this definition combines a language-as-asset view with a language-as-right ideology, which places the responsibility on individual learners to acquire the skills they need to succeed. From a neoliberal standpoint, this definition of plurilingualism may position individuals as gaining assets within a global market, but also as potential workers who benefit that market. In addition, this conception of plurilingualism may focus on the individual without the political implications of defying culturally or nationally imposed linguistic hierarchies or associations. Languages and cultures hold different status in local contexts. So, in practice, promoting plurilingualism without paying attention to linguistic hierarchies would allow dominant languages to continue to be valued, taught and learned at the expense of non-dominant, local, indigenous or immigrant languages (Galante, 2018).

Translanguaging: Politicizing theory and practice

At the same time, one theoretical lens associated with bi-, multi- or plurilingualism aims to address issues related to linguistic hierarchies and status differences. Translanguaging, as defined by Vogel and Garcia (2017), aims "to disrupt the hierarchies that have delegitimized the language practices of those who are minoritized" (Vogel & Garcia, 2017, para. 2). This theory proposes a paradigmatic shift in conceptualizing language. In its most extreme form, translanguaging theory removes all divisions between languages. In this view, plurilinguals do not switch between separate, autonomous systems of language. Instead, proponents of this view suggest that all speakers draw upon a single, unique linguistic repertoire, no matter which named languages and varieties we are currently using in a specific context (Vogel & Garcia, 2017). This form of translanguaging rejects the boundaries between named languages. As a result, plurilingualism and translanguaging can have important implications. On one hand, flattening distinctions between named languages runs the risk of erasing differences between lived experiences of speakers, causing us to ignore instances of oppression. Like Galante's (2018) warning about plurilingualism in practice, a depoliticized application of this perspective might endanger attempts to support local, indigenous and non-dominant languages as well as their speakers. How will we examine and redress status differences between languages and speakers, not to mention the systemic and intersecting oppressions of language, race and class, if we do not recognize them? On the other hand, a politicized version of translanguaging theory "still recognizes the material effects of socially constructed named language categories and structuralist language ideologies, especially for minoritized language speakers" (Vogel & Garcia, 2017, Section 3). Similar to Kosonen and Benson's (2013) call to awareness of non-dominant languages, this perspective recognizes that speakers of minority languages, including plurilinguals, may have different social status and restrictions imposed on them. Also similar to a multilingual habitus, this form of translanguaging theory overturns the monolingual ideal associated with the one-nation, one-language myth. Previously, bilinguals or multilinguals were expected to perform just like monolingual speakers. In claiming that plurilingual individuals have unique language repertoires and

multiple, dynamic practices (Garcia, 2009; Vogel & Garcia, 2017), translanguaging theory denaturalizes monolingualism, centering the plurilingual speaker as the new norm. Moreover, the "trans" in translanguaging implies a border crossing, where individual practices move beyond linguistic systems that are imposed by nation-states (Vogel & Garcia, 2017). With this move, Garcia and Li Wei (2014) aim to recognize and disrupt the social reality of separate languages with distinct, hierarchical status through plurilingual individuals' speech acts: Translanguaging can become "part of a moral and political act that links the production of alternative meanings to transformative social action" (p. 57).

Pedagogies of resistance

Theories of plurilingualism and translanguaging offer pedagogy specific to language learning "that affirms and leverages students' diverse and dynamic language practices" (Vogel & Garcia, 2017, para. 2). Like the concept of multilingual habitus, plurilingual pedagogy opposes the native speaker model, but from the perspective of communicative competence (see Coste, Moore & Zarate, 2009). It also claims to counter what Freire (2000) called the "banking system" of education – the idea that learners are empty and need to be filled with knowledge, similar to the deficit model. This view discounts learners' experiences, disempowering language learners (Galante, 2019). Instead, plurilingual pedagogy is inclusive, recognizing learners' own resources, so it validates experiences and identity (Galante, 2019). Plurilingual pedagogy also claims to offer a way to develop both languages in bilingual education (Vogel & Garcia, 2017). Specifically, plurilingualism recognizes and values learners' linguistic and cultural repertoires as helping to support the transfer of linguistic and social skills between languages (Galante, 2019). On an individual level, when learners use two or more languages in language-learning contexts, it enriches their engagement and understanding. This pedagogical model could be especially promising in the context of a language exchange because learners want to learn two or more languages, and they are already offering explanations in another

language. By drawing on a unified linguistic repertoire, they could enrich their learning. However, issues of linguistic status remain: the learners may be relying on a common language – or lingua franca, English - to communicate. In addition, we may not be checking or addressing the effects of these status issues on the learners' perceptions and experiences of language use. Finally, this outlook may push learners to focus on the individual level and place all responsibility for success on themselves.

Pedagogy based on a multilingual habitus makes similar claims for bilingual education. However, in practice, it focuses on the systemic level rather than the individual. In a language-learning context, the idea of multilingual habitus ties in with Freire's (2000) pedagogy of liberation, aspiring to a process of learning that can and should be liberated and liberating. As Ghosh (2011) says, "For an education system to be truly liberatory, it must deal with issues of domination, and must attempt to right some wrongs" (in Kosonen & Benson, 2013, p.1). This systemic view contrasts with most plurilingual pedagogy, which focuses more closely on individual agency. Applied to a language exchange, a multilingual habitus would identify status differences between language users, which could provide the basis for changes to programs and activities, as already discussed. In terms of intercultural learning, a multilingual habitus might introduce a perspective that emphasizes systemic transformation over individual responsibility, unlike a plurilingual perspective. This difference parallels the contrast between the two views of intercultural interaction outlined earlier: individual agency and self-reliance versus a global citizenship approach. In the latter case, Guo and Jamal (2007) also emphasize the need to address systemic oppression and bring critical awareness to difference in order for intercultural learning to take place. In the context of the language exchange and language use at the university, we can draw on the frames of plurilingualism and multilingual habitus to become attuned to how this learning space is positioned historically and politicized. We can bring learners'

awareness to this positioning. Also, by privileging learners' knowledges, we can, to some extent, challenge linguistic hierarchies.

METHODOLOGY

A critical ethnographic approach

A case for ethnography

A strong, decades-long research tradition exists for qualitative, ethnographic approaches to educational research and planning (Gordon, Holland & Lahelma, 2001). The value of these exploratory methodologies lies in their ability to help policymakers, program designers, teachers, students and other educators understand the cultural and social aspects of educational projects (Yates, 1994). In the context of language and literacies learning, these types of studies can uncover successful aspects of current, local practices before pushing through interventions. Street (2001) emphasizes the importance of descriptive analysis and its timing: "What counts as 'effective' cannot . . . be prejudged, hence the attempt to understand 'what's going on' before pronouncing on how to improve it" (p.2). The project of ethnography centres on this exploration and description of a cultural phenomenon (Anderson, 1998). An ethnographic account foregrounds the perceptions of the people who experience this phenomenon. As a basic principle, an ethnography values and validates the perspectives and experiences of people whose voices are less often heard, focusing on accounts of members of non-dominant cultures (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). Ultimately, ethnographic methods allow researchers to provide cultural explanations for problems they perceive.

In education, educators and researchers have established a practice of using ethnographic methods to examine local contexts and teaching and learning practices (Spindler & Hammond, 2000). From a practical angle, ethnographic methods can help define a problem even without describing a culture or cultural process in its entirety by allowing for multiple perspectives (Spindler & Hammond, 2000). In addition to the researcher's etic or external view, the learners' emic or internal perspectives provide a counterpoint, offering new ways of seeing situations or resolving issues, and sometimes identifying problems not noticed previously. As a result, including these multiple perspectives "can equalize

power by involving teachers and other community members in the analysis of problems and solutions" (Spindler & Hammond, 2000, p. 44). In my study, the participating international students come from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Their identifications and affiliations are complex, multiple and dynamic. Therefore the methodology must reflect the diversity of their linguistic and cultural identifications and heritages, as well as the hyper-diverse context of Montreal, where the study takes place. In addition, the research takes place at a university in Quebec, Canada, where most participants do not identify as members of a majority or high-status cultural or linguistic group. The resulting difference in privilege means that these students' voices traditionally may not have been heard in formal educational institutions. The approach taken must address this issue by giving participants the opportunity to voice experiences and interests and must share authority in forming recommendations.

Ethnographic methods within a situated learning framework

Throughout their work in *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, Lave and Wenger (1991) use ethnographic methods to situate learning as part of practice. In this way, a situated learning framework allows for an in-depth account that concentrates on how learners participate in practices, especially on learners' changing conditions and ways of participating. Combining this framework with ethnographic methods ensures an in-depth account of contexts, practices, experiences and perceptions from both the learners' and researcher's perspectives. As Lave (1996) describes:

> This perspective on learning [as social practice] has methodological implications, in the narrow sense. Ethnographic research is a good way to come to understand learning as part of practice. It is useful for trying to focus on the specifics of changing participation in changing practices, most especially on learners' changing conditions and ways of participating. At the same time it requires commitment to an inclusive

> focus on all participants equally, as each contributes to the making of differences of power, salience, influence, and value of themselves and other participants. (p.162)

In my study, I commit to looking at learning from the perspective of the "central actors": the learners, the community and the cultures they are from, as opposed to the dominant culture or cultures that attempt to teach, socialize, integrate or assimilate them (Lave, 1996). The concept of a multilingual habitus also privileges this viewpoint, as might theories of plurilingualism or translanguaging. This commitment to placing learners at the centre of my study responds to my first two research questions, since they deal directly with international students' perspectives: their expectations of the language exchange and how they situate themselves as language users and community members.

Critical and respectful research

Recognizing that research is situated, interpretive and transformative, I take a critical, reflexive approach in this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Since researchers are located in the world and interpretation rests at the heart of ethnographic methods, as researchers, we must be aware of our own positioning and biases (Tilley, 2016). These biases affect our representative practices and interpretations, reminding us that "what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions" (Geertz, 1973, p. 9). Just like learners, as researchers we are products of our personal, cultural, historical and sociopolitical contexts, with our own affiliations and identifications. These contexts and identities affect our relationships and our understandings of participants. Unlike most of the students I spoke with, I was born in Canada, English is one of my first languages and the minority groups I belong to are not typically racialized or identifiable. At the same time, I have worked and studied Spanish in Mexico City, and I have spent five years teaching English language courses to international students and recently arrived immigrants in Montreal. These experiences have contributed to my understanding of experiences of language learning, mobility and transition. While conducting this study, I maintained an awareness of my privilege as well as my multiple and

sometimes contradictory positions. I am both a student and teacher, a learner of French, Spanish and other languages and educator in English, a language exchange participant and researcher, an interviewer and confidant. I recognize that the content and analysis in this study are generated through my interaction with participants (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). Therefore I must examine my position in relation to the participants and my interactions with them. Also, this position and our relationships may change. Tilley (2016) refers to this aspect of critical research as the distance dynamic: the need to question what is an appropriate distance from participants and how it affects our research. Another important element in respectful research involves taking a second look at procedures to apply a critically reflexive lens and ensure ethical actions. One way to do this, which I tried to employ throughout, is to ask: Would I be comfortable doing what I'm requesting of my participants? (Tilley, 2016) Finally, to give back to students at the language exchange, as we developed closer relationships, I offered resources and strategies as a language teacher to help deal with any specific language practice issues they brought up. Part of my study also involved asking how International Student Services could improve the language exchange. I shared authority for these recommendations with the participants by inviting comments and expressly asking permission to include these suggestions within my conclusions. An outcome of this research will include presenting these students' recommendations.

Procedures or process?

I started on this journey with no intention of conducting formal research. In 2017, out of a desire to regain some of my rusty Spanish skills, I became a student participant in a language exchange at the university where I was taking courses towards my Master's. My identity in that context was about as far as you could get from a formal researcher. But I became friendly with the facilitator, who had founded the exchange, and got interested in his story. Why had he started this project? Who attended, and what kind of learning did they do? At that moment, my researcher-brain turned on, and although

I did not know it yet, my position would change. I had already established some rapport with the facilitator and other students, but my role was shifting from a peer group member and participant. It settled soon after, when I decided to conduct formal research with group members at the language exchange. At that point, I had to decide how to maintain my relationships and what kind of space to take. Some time passed before my proposal passed and I gained ethics approval for my study, so relationships naturally became more distant before I started data collection. I felt comfortable that I had connected with some group members but that they did not view me as a close friend, so they would not feel pressure to participate or disclose information they would not wish shared in a public context.

Key participants: International students in transition

The six main participants in my study are international students who I knew from the language exchange. They self-selected in that I invited them to participate in interviews or a group discussion after getting to know them at the exchange. I did not select students because they were in transition to university or life in Montreal. However, as data collection progressed and I analyzed the questionnaire responses, I began to notice that almost all the students who participated were in their first year of study at this university and living in this city. This common characteristic indicated the importance of this transitional period in international students' social lives and the potential role of the language exchange during this time. The second characteristic of the group of students who participated in this research is their diversity. This characteristic became clear as I made the request to meet with students from the language exchange. I did not select students with specific cultural affiliations or linguistic repertoires for several reasons. First, the initial literature review showed that international students at Canadian universities are more diverse, with more complex identification, than typically recognized (Kenyon, Frohard-Dourlent & Roth, 2012). Second, the participants' self-identified countries of origin included the countries with the highest percentages of inbound

international students at the university – India and China (39.5%) ("Fast facts", 2019). Although each individual has a unique experience to contribute, it is important to include voices from these significant-sized groups on campus. In addition, early reviews of the literature suggested that students at language exchanges value diversity for its learning potential, so including diverse voices in the study would be meaningful to the learners themselves. My study supports this finding. Finally, paying attention to the need for multiple perspectives and an inclusive focus, I included interviews with the founder of the language exchange, a facilitator, and a staff member from International Student Services who also participated in the activity. As practices changed from the time I first attended the exchange as a participant to the time I interviewed the facilitator, these views contributed to the perspectives of the students who participated in the exchange.

Data collection: Hearing what people think

After I gained permission to speak to the students at the language exchange from International Student Services, I invited learners from the group to participate in this research study. I used an oral recruitment script approved as part of my study (see Appendix 1). The script ensured that I described the project and my request clearly and consistently when I met potential participants for a group discussion or interviews. When learners expressed interest, I shared the written Information and Consent Form for them to read and sign (see Appendix 2). Participants filled out an online questionnaire to provide personal and educational background information and answer brief questions about language learning and use that acted as starting points for discussion (see Appendix 3). The questionnaire data also helped to round out my understanding and descriptions of these learners and their linguistic and cultural affiliations. My own notes on participating in the language exchange also guided my questions and acted as a starting point for analysis.

In-depth interviews and group discussion

I chose in-depth interviews to follow the anthropological tradition of "giving voice to 'the other'" by making space for participants to talk about a topic in their own words and express their own ideas (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012, p. 13). In-depth interviews use open-ended questioning, inductive probing and conversational inquiry to increase validity and credibility of research (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013). In the intimacy of one-to-one interviews, I was able to build rapport quickly, ensure confidentiality and express empathy. This format also allowed me to pay attention to nonverbal cues such as body language and gestures, which I included in my notes. Moreover, I was able to shape each interview to the participant by responding to their answers to my prepared probes (see Appendix 4 for sample questions). During the group discussion, I could also adapt questions to the group or address individuals based on their replies. With this inductive probing, I asked clarifying questions immediately and drew out responses further as well as returning to the areas of interest already identified. In this way, I created a conversational atmosphere and tone and used open-ended questions to obtain the learners' perspectives and enable them to share their experiences.

Notes on transcription

The data include transcripts from the in-depth interviews and group discussion, the open-ended questionnaire responses and my own notes. For the interviews and group discussion, I worked with free-flowing texts, since they were generated by open-ended questions or probes rather than elicited systematically (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). I used open-ended questions and probes because my research is exploratory. For most of the interviews, I chose to take notes by hand instead of recording. Since I was conducting all interviews and the group discussion in English, my first language but not that of most of the participants, I wanted to create a more equitable space for dialogue and vulnerability, where linguistic structures and usage would not be the focus. Tilley (2016) emphasizes that participants may feel they are not representing themselves well in interview settings. This may be especially problematic when conducting research in a language other than participants'

home language, since recordings capture grammatical errors, and participants are well aware of this fact. Although this may not be the only concern in interviewing across cultures, several participants in my study expressed that they were not confident about their spoken English and felt self-conscious. Because of this, I thought the interview space might become more similar to a language test, an atmosphere that can be stressful to learners, as I know from my experience working as an assessor for English speaking exams. I wanted to avoid placing these learners in that position. It was also important to me to share decisions with participants. For these reasons, I discussed recording with some participants and did not record every interview.

The decision not to record turned out to have several interesting results: two unforeseen advantages and one disadvantage. The clear disadvantage was the one I knew from the start. Choosing not to record meant that I had to rely on the speed of my shorthand to take accurate notes. Luckily, my experience as a language examiner made my attempts relatively successful. I took notes that prioritized direct quotes from participants in their own words. However, when I transcribed my notes, they were not as complete as the conversations I recorded. I was concerned about this perceived loss of data until I gained a new perspective: All transcription is a process of constructing a representation (Tilley, 2016). As we transcribe, we are already analyzing data, so there is no loss, just difference. My awareness of this bias became invaluable. In my study, this difference proved advantageous, because it prompted me to begin an email correspondence with the participants to clarify meaning. In this way, I was able to engage in a form of member checking (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). The students who responded added significantly to their accounts, enhancing "thick description" (Geertz, 1973, p. 6). The other advantage of taking notes by hand was a discovery of what happens when you go off the record. Comfort levels and vulnerability increase, and participants become more willing to share their stories. I found that participants kept talking even after I had stopped asking questions. In contrast, one interview participant who agreed to be recorded began to sweat, stammer

and speak with visible discomfort when the recorder was on. With another participant, I discussed recording, and she confirmed that it might have changed her comfort level, her answers or how she shared information. I asked if I could include this part of our conversation and she agreed (Anon., interview, April 19, 2019).

Data analysis: Frames of interpretation

Emic and etic coding

I analyzed the data in three steps. First, I organized the background information from the questionnaire to summarize participant characteristics and create a brief description of each student. Next, I coded the interview and group discussion transcripts from the students' own perspectives, grouping the linguistic and intercultural contexts and interactions that students described. I found common themes and contrasts in how students perceived their language use in those contexts and how they approached language learning and practice. As a result of this process, the six themes emerged that are discussed in Part II of the Data analysis. In this way, I engaged in emic coding, as I looked for patterns in the data from the participants' perspectives first (Peterson, 2017). My research aims to determine "individuals' perceptions, feelings, knowledge, and behavior" (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012, p. 9). Therefore, I did not use predetermined codes or categories of analysis; I drew the themes from the data. These initial themes indicated how I should approach the third step, the etic analysis.

Frames and questions

My study focuses on students' reported perceptions and experiences of language use in intercultural contexts during their transition to university. Because language does not just convey meaning, but constitutes it (Gumperz, 1982), the analysis must go beyond describing the content of the data and interpret it. As explained earlier, the use of language is socially situated and contextually dependent.

Language users draw on linguistic and cultural cues that can range from the ideologically-influenced status of a language to how they personally value or identify with it. Therefore, the analysis focuses on how these learners identify the status and value of languages in their social contexts and how this affects their language use and learning. Their agency and identification as speakers and learners will likewise be affected by context. In order to examine these issues, the data analysis looks at the context of the language exchange in Part I, and then in Part II, expands to the broader contexts of the university and the local community. Throughout this analysis, I bring to bear different "frames of interpretation": the learners' perspectives, an analysis of learning as practice and the influence of linguistic and cultural ideologies on learners' identities, agency and intercultural learning (Geertz, 1973, p. 9). To analyze learning as practice, I look closely at four points key to legitimate participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

1. Access to resources: How does access structure learning, inform content and shape learners' perspectives?
2. Organization of practice: To what extent is practice transparent and accessible, and what is the sociopolitical context?
3. Relationships: How do participants move towards fuller participation and create identities in the process?
4. Contradictions or conflicts: How do they impact the development of identities or constrain agency?

I look at the influence of linguistic and cultural ideologies associated with monolingualism, multilingualism and plurilingualism, with special attention to linguistic hierarchies and their effects on language learners' agency, identities and intercultural learning. The four points key to learning as practice provide useful questions with which to interrogate how these speakers' language learning and practices are enabled and constrained within their contexts.

Methodological limitations: Addressing validity and credibility

Besides accepting philosophically that "cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete" (Geertz, 1973, p. 29), in a practical sense, this study is bound by the permissions I received from the partner organization and ethics. I initially participated in the language exchange as a student member, so I was able to record my own experiences and reflections. I also attended other organized social activities to get to know participants better. However, I did not have permission to record participants within these contexts. As a result, I did not conduct full participant observation in a way that is considered important to traditional ethnographic research (Wilson, 2012). I realized this may raise questions of validity and credibility, so I took steps to address this issue. Instead of observing students at the language exchange, I was able to ask them about their experiences of the context of the language exchange and other social activities during the interviews and group discussions. I used ethnographic methods and ethical research principles to make these conversations as valuable and fair as possible for both the students and myself. I took notes about my experiences of language exchange sessions and conversations I had taken part in with study participants during these sessions. Though these are not data sources, as field notes are, they helped to direct my research. In interviews, I was able to refer back to events, exchanges or ideas from sessions as jumping-off points (Peterson, 2017). I analyzed multiple data sources, including open-ended answers from questionnaires, group discussions, interviews and my own notes. I also interviewed other students who had different ties to the language exchange. In this way, I was able to check sources and perspectives against each other to triangulate the data.

Creating instruments for data collection, collecting data and conducting the analysis was an iterative process that depended on triangulation from the start. The questionnaire was fixed when the online instrument was created, but interview probes continued to evolve. As I participated in the language exchange and took notes on my own experiences, I approached the interviews with a fresh

perspective. I could refer back to the activities to connect with participants and open discussion around specific topics, for example, their experience of participation or asking for recommendations. As interviews took place, students reflected on their own locations and initial themes were identified, I clarified the probes. I recorded these changes to probes with each interview I conducted. This dynamic method follows the anthropological research tradition in learning from the participants' talk and directing the inquiry in response (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) identify "this ability to ask questions that are meaningful to participants and to likewise receive responses in participants' own words and native cognitive constructs" as one of the greatest strengths of this type of research (p. 13). The iterative, flexible process also had the advantage of enriching interviews and making them flow more easily, since I did not need to maintain the same question order or structure. Later interviews provided support for themes identified earlier and made emergent themes more apparent. In this way, I was also able to identify important themes and return to the literature to validate them or realize they had not been discussed. This enabled me to adjust the research questions to better fit the literature and participants' experiences. Through this process, I was also able to reach data saturation and realize when I had reached it. Data saturation occurs when "no new information or themes are observed in the data" (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006, p. 59). According to my notes, I became aware that no new themes were appearing from the interviews after speaking with 13 students (Personal notes, March 29, 2019). I included material from six key participants in order to focus on the language exchange, intercultural learning and the transition to university and to provide rich and contrasting experiences.

To gain alternative and nuanced perspectives on the language exchange, I interviewed the founder as well as a staff member from International Student Services who also participated in the exchange. These two participants were also international students. Although each person brings their own perspective, the in-depth interview with the student founder provided a nuanced view on the appeal

and success of the exchange over time, as well as the atmosphere and relationships between students. The founder also supplied valuable background information on the group and its membership. The staff member I interviewed was responsible for coordinating some international student activities on campus. Their dual role as a participant in the exchange and a staff member was invaluable. This positioning prompted me to crosscheck their opinion of how the exchange functioned and how it supported or failed international students against the founder's and other participants' views. The coordinator provided organizational-level explanations of the changes in how the language exchange was hosted, who participated and why, in contrast with other activities they developed and promoted for international students. They also shared their experiences as an administrator with international students' adaptations during transition, including their personal experiences as an international student. Finally, I interviewed the new student facilitator of the language exchange as it transitioned to a different format, which allowed me to gain another perspective on the changes. I include the founder's, staff's and facilitator's views with descriptions of their backgrounds so that they balance the learners' perspectives. Although all participants consented that the information gathered would be identifiable, I chose to use pseudonyms since some students preferred not to be named (see Appendix 2: Information and Consent Form).

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Part I: The language exchange

A first glance

When I walked into the classroom, the exchange was already buzzing. I paused to look around, weighed down by my winter coat, laptop bag and books. About 15 students sat around three groups of desks, chatting animatedly. The facilitator was standing near the door, smiling and talking with a couple of students at the nearest table. He immediately greeted me and pointed out an area near the windows where I could stow my stuff, then invited me to take some snacks. Bowls of chips, juice boxes, cookies and chocolates were spread out on a table by the door. The facilitator asked me which language I had come to practice. I told him that I'd like to revive my rusty Spanish and would be happy to speak English or French. He told me there weren't many Spanish speakers that day, pointing out the larger French and English groups, but then quickly introduced me to a friendly student who spoke Spanish. The facilitator clearly knew the other student; actually, he seemed to know almost everyone in the room. The other student and I started up a conversation in Spanish and soon found a third speaker to join our group. We chatted about the usual things students do when meeting for the first time: our programs, how long we'd been in the city and what we thought of it. Talk soon turned to other topics that related to the exchange, and we started getting into our places of origin, our languages and how we came to know them – through family, travel and other experiences. After a while our little group broke up naturally and each of us joined another table, where we continued talking.

(Personal notes, February 2, 2018)

Expectations and experiences: Origins, setup and learners

Overall, this section of the presentation and analysis focuses on the language exchange. It addresses my first research question: What do international students hope to gain from participating in a language exchange during their first semester in Canada? It also expands on this question and contextualizes the exchange in its origins, compares learner experiences with expectations, raises challenges and changes over time, and conducts an analysis of how learning take place, both according to learners and from a research perspective. Recommendations for future language-centred activities are included in the conclusions, both coming directly from learners, facilitators and drawing on the analysis. The learners' expectations and experiences of the language exchange mostly align with the goals, benefits and challenges of tandem language learning outlined in the literature review (see pp. 12-17). The learners attended in order to practice a language while having fun and meeting new people. They identified the benefits of autonomous and reciprocal learning and socializing in a safe space. Learners also expected some form of intercultural learning, although their ideas differed about what that might look like. Finally, some learners expected or experienced new friendships and a sense of belonging. Challenges to the language exchange included different levels of competency with the languages practiced, participation by international students only and declining attendance. Over the course of the year, the structure of the activity changed to an informal French practice group and class led by a trained language facilitator. International Student Services implemented this change in response to participant feedback and student requests. However, attendance did not pick up. Instead, participants in the exchange continued to express expectations and interests related to their desires for intercultural connection, community and belonging. Looking to the future, learners, facilitators and coordinators recommend different approaches to providing a language-centred activity for international students. Suggestions include doing outreach to attract locals to the language

exchange, combining language practice with social activities or offering more formal language classes with trained teachers.

Origins and goals of the language exchange: "Build great bonds, and learn"

The language exchange started in April 2017 as a monthly activity. It runs under the social engagement program of the International Student Services unit at the university, which aims to help international students meet new people, socialize and make friends in their new city and university (Hope, interview, April 30, 2019, Montreal; Luis, interview, October 4, 2018, Montreal). Luis, a student from Brazil, founded the exchange and acted as the original facilitator. Luis moved to Canada in 2011 to study nursing and was completing his undergraduate degree when we first met in 2018. He explained that he started the language exchange because of his own experience with language meetup groups. He said, "It's initially them that inspired me to do these language exchanges, because I noticed that this kind of setup, like really informal way to practice talk to people resonates a lot with people and people really, really enjoy the experience" (Luis, interview, October 4, 2018, Montreal). Luis initially looked to language meetups because he was new to Montreal:

> I was looking for things to do, places to make friends . . . and I went there, and I loved it, and I started going every week. So, the main purpose was to make friends, to meet people, but I ended up really improving my English, really improving my French, and even my Spanish, when I went there. (Luis, interview, October 4, 2018, Montreal)

Luis wanted to meet new people and make friends, but he found that he enjoyed and benefitted from practicing languages while making those connections. When he talked about setting up the exchange at the university, he had similar aims: "The goal was really to help students practice languages but especially French, and get to know each other, . . . build great bonds, . . . get to make new friends, but

also to learn about resources, like language learning resources" (Luis, interview, October 4, 2018, Montreal). In this, the founder and coordinator of the exchange shared similar goals, expectations and experiences to the participants.

Setup of the exchange: The magic of food, people and prompts

The setup of the exchange is informal and simple. It draws on the Quebec idea of the 5 a 7 – a casual, after-work drinks hour where people can talk freely and unwind. In this alcohol-free version, students drop in to a reserved classroom between 5 and 7 pm on the first Friday of every month. They choose a place to sit and talk around tables, each labelled with the name of a different language. If they want to practice a language not indicated on the table, they can walk around and look for a partner or ask the facilitator for help. These groups are fluid and change throughout the evening. The food table makes sure no one stays hungry for long and gives people a break from talking. As Luis describes, they have some snacks "but then the purpose is to practice languages" (Luis, interview, October 4, 2018, Montreal). Talk is informal, and the facilitator makes paper and pen available so that people can write things down. He also provides prompt cards with conversation topics in case people run out of ideas. As Luis says, "We found out that if we give them things to do . . . these people actually practice a language" (Luis, interview, October 4, 2018, Montreal). Initially, the program succeeded in attracting enough students to ensure several exchange groups and pairs each time, including a core group of returning members and new people every time. Luis estimates between 15 and 25 people attend each time, with some returning and long-time participants. He says, "They've been pretty successful. . . . usually people always give good feedback, they usually always ask to have these more often" than once a month" (Luis, interview, October 4, 2018, Montreal).

Introducing the learners: Key participants in the exchange

After participating in the exchange and speaking with the founder, I spoke more closely with six international students from China, India, Peru and the United States. Three students are women and three are men, and they range in age from 18 to 24. Four students participated in a group interview in the fall semester: Janet, Pavit, Arav and Skyler. I interviewed Mariana and Hope individually in the winter semester. Apart from Hope, all of these students were in their first semester of study in Montreal and had arrived in Canada within the past three months. All came to this city in order to attend university in their program of study. All except Hope were in an early part of their transition to Montreal and Canadian university life.

Janet is an 18-year old Bachelor's student from China who speaks Mandarin, English and some French. We met during an icebreaker activity during her first time at the exchange. She had just started her four-year degree in Marketing and had been in Canada for one month when we spoke. Before that, she had been studying at an international high school in Dalian (Questionnaire; Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal).

Pavit and Arav are both 22-year-old students from India who know Telugu, Hindi and English. Arav noted that he can only read and understand Hindi. Arav had studied French and felt he could read and write, but had trouble listening, understanding and speaking, and Pavit intended to learn the language. They were both just starting their Master's degrees. Pavit was studying Applied Computer Science and Arav was doing his degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering. Before that, Arav had studied engineering at college in Tirupati. Pavit had lived and studied in Tirupati as well, and he had been in Canada for three months before joining the language exchange. Pavit and Arav arrived at the exchange together and had a friendly relationship (Questionnaire; Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal).

Skyler is a 22-year old English and Spanish and Japanese speaker originally from the United States. He had been in Canada for a month before coming to the exchange. He had completed his high school diploma in Seattle, then went to Japan to travel and study Japanese at Tokyo Metropolitan University.

He was just starting his Bachelor's in Urban Planning when he came to the exchange (Questionnaire; Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal; Personal communication, October 15, 2018).

Mariana is a 22-year-old student from Peru who speaks Spanish, English and some French and is learning Japanese. She had previously studied Architecture at university in Lima, but left that program to move to Canada. When she came to the exchange, she was pursuing her Bachelor's in Mathematics and Statistics (Questionnaire; Mariana, interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal).

Hope is a 24-year-old Master's student from China who speaks English, Mandarin and some French. She is in the final semester of her second year of a Master's in Building Engineering Management. She had previously completed a Bachelor's in Construction Project Management, studying at universities in China and the United States. She started out as a participant at the language exchange when she arrived in Canada in 2017, became a volunteer, then was hired as a coordinator at International Student Services, which runs the exchange activity. She has since continued to participate and help host the exchange. (Questionnaire; Hope, interview, April 30, 2019, Montreal).

Learners' perspectives: Expectations, goals and perceived benefits

All of the participants of the exchange arrived with the same expectation and main goal: to practice a language while having fun and meeting new people (Mariana, interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal; Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal). Based on feedback he collected, Luis comments that "people really enjoy the opportunity" (Luis, interview, October 4, 2018, Montreal). Hope, a current coordinator, adds her impression that participants appreciate the informal context and practice: "I think more people want to learn [the] language[s]. . . Not academic learning but from [a] facilitator" (Interview, April 30, 2019, Montreal). The founder of the exchange reinforces the participants' expectations about joining the exchange. Luis says, "If you're learning French, . . . you just go to a classroom, and . . . you have nobody to talk to, you don't have local friends, or French-speaking friends in general, and then [you] don't really have the opportunity to practice the language"

(Interview, October 4, 2018, Montreal). Overall, the learners and the founder frame their learning expectations and goals for the exchange and perceive the benefits in the same way: They view it as an opportunity to meet with peers for informal language practice, possibly coordinated or led by a facilitator. They do not seek out or expect a formal classroom environment, structured lessons, or the authority of a teacher. For these students, in this context, learning consists of practice with peers. When I participated in the exchange, the learners wanted to practice different languages, including French, English, Mandarin, Spanish, Japanese, and German, dominant world languages which were quite consistently popular at the exchange (Personal notes, February 2, 2018). The participants I interviewed felt they could offer Mandarin, Spanish, Hindi, Telugu, English, and to some extent, Japanese. They give several different reasons for wanting to practice the language or languages of their choice. Arav had studied French in school in India and was looking for a group to practice (Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal). Pavit had heard about the language exchange from a friend. He thought it was a good opportunity to learn a new language, and considers it necessary to speak the local language when you move to a new place (Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal). Janet was living off-campus with Chinese roommates. She reported that she only spoke [Mandarin] Chinese with them and wanted the opportunity to practice French and English (Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal). Mariana had participated in another language exchange to practice Japanese and found it fun (Mariana, interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal).

French and English: Dominant languages in focus

According to Diana, a staff member at International Student Services, understanding and communicating in French represents one of the top challenges for international students (Diana, Interview, October 11, 2018). The current coordinators of the language exchange confirm that the nature of language needs and practice at the exchange has changed over the past two years (Personal communication, October 11, 2018; Hope, interview, April 30, 2019, Montreal). Previously, multiple

languages were practiced and more people wanted to work on English, whereas now more participants want to learn French (Hope, interview, April 30, 2019, Montreal). Besides the fact that French is the locally dominant language, giving it higher status, why do so many students want to focus on French? Holley (2017) identifies learning or practicing French as one of the top two most common reasons why students come to Quebec to live and study. After their studies, about a quarter of international students (24.3%) plan to look for work in Quebec while almost a third (30.9%) will seek employment in the rest of Canada (Holley, 2017). Luis' contact with students over two years at the exchange and as an International Student Services Coordinator backs this up in the current context. He highlights immigration as a reason for learning French: "They have the . . . main interest to learn French, because everybody wants to immigrate, everybody wants to stay in Canada, especially in Québec, and they need to know French" (Luis, interview, October 4, 2018, Montreal). While all six students I interviewed plan to stay until the end of their program of study, their intentions after that time differ. Only Mariana has a definite plan "to settle down in Canada" more permanently, though Pavit is considering staying but hasn't decided yet, and Hope has graduated and is currently looking for work in Montreal (Mariana, interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal; Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal; Hope, Personal communication, March 2020). Still, the students' strong intentions to learn and practice French at the beginning of their studies resonate with Holley's (2017) findings:

> Many students come to Quebec with the intentions to learn French, study and practice it, but . . . the reality is that there is not enough time or resources to sufficiently learn and practice the language at university or in the surrounding community. Often students must choose between concentrating on academic performance (GPA) or learn the French language. (Slide 12)

Mariana's experience underlines these findings. She explains, "I would like to take classes [in French], but I cannot compromise to take a full time class" because of studies (Mariana,

interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal). Holley's (2017) remarks also identify how the transition period acts as a key time for international students in relation to French language learning, since they set their intentions as they begin their university journeys. When it comes to English, though, the students may not immediately identify it as a language they are developing. Interestingly, on the questionnaire, the participants all identified French as the only language they wanted to learn, although they indicated their interest in practicing English and other languages when they were asked again in person (Questionnaire; Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal; Interviews). As we will see later, these students maintain a complex orientation in relation to their English.

Learning at the exchange: Autonomy, reciprocity and legitimate participation

As Little (1996), Brammerts (2003) and Lewis (2003) would suggest, learners perceive the language learning they engage in at the exchange as autonomous and reciprocal. Mariana describes her learning as both autonomous and self-reinforcing, saying it "encourage [me] to try again" (Mariana, interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal). She places the expectation for organizing practice on herself and the other learners, rather than on a teacher, leader or external structure. To deal with the issue of having learners at various stages in their language development, Mariana suggests, "Maybe we can organize between ourselves for different levels" (Mariana, interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal). This suggestion highlights how the learners aim for equitable access to resources and relationships despite differences in needs. Mariana also acknowledges and owns her ability to reciprocate and help others learn, explaining, "I know I have Spanish so I have something to give back" (Mariana, interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal). By taking responsibility for organizing practice and creating peer relationships that support learning, Mariana also asserts her position as a legitimate participant in the exchange, despite being a relative newcomer. Combined with her attitude of wanting to

try again, Mariana shows how she plans to increase her participation and reinforce her position in the group through practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Similarly, Hope's description of her initial and later experiences at the exchange demonstrates how she begins as a peripheral participant but becomes a central member of the community of practice. Hope recalls her early days at the exchange: "I remember I was listening to people . . . gradually I was talking to them," and eventually, "I just became the leader of the English group" (Hope, interview, April 30, 2019, Montreal). Hope moves through three stages of practice at the exchange: Observation, peer participation and leadership. As she moves through these levels of participation to become more involved, she develops relationships that support her own learning and that of others. Like Mariana, Hope's participation motivates her to reciprocate at the language exchange: "I want to help people like I was [helped]" (Hope, interview, April 30, 2019, Montreal). Luis sums up the legitimacy conferred on practice through autonomous learning and reciprocal relationships when he gives his opinion on the two reasons language learners come to the exchange, "either to help or to practice something" (Interview, October 4, 2018, Montreal).

While learners do not create formal relationships at the exchange, we can see from the previous examples that they do form intentional ones, with reciprocity acting as a tacit contract that ensures access to learning and learner equity. However, the relationships established at the exchange may continue and become formalized in the wider community, supporting students in their transition to university. In a parallel to her increased participation in the language exchange, Hope has gradually become a central member of the community of international students who participate in social activities organized by the office. She spent her whole first year volunteering at International Student Services to advertise and promote events and assist the staff with social activities (Hope, interview, April 30, 2019, Montreal). Her dedication was formally recognized when she received an award for volunteering. This

level of participation cemented Hope's status and led to a new, official role in the community. Based on her volunteer work, she was hired to become a coordinator at International Student Services (Hope, interview, April 30, 2019, Montreal). Hope considers her transition and community membership completely transformative, explaining that she has become more confident and outgoing as a result. When I ask her how she feels when she looks back, her answer rings clear: "I grow up!" (Hope, interview, April 30, 2019, Montreal).

Social connection and intercultural learning in a community of practice

The learners in this study join the exchange to practice language, socialize and engage in intercultural learning in a safe space. All of the students I spoke with came to the activity with the desire to meet new people and make friends. This intention often takes priority over practicing a language. Pavit, Mariana and Hope express a desire to meet people and socialize, a common characteristic of the other students I interviewed (Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal; Mariana, interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal; Hope, interview, April 30, 2019, Montreal). Based on feedback he collected, Luis describes the overall importance that international students place on meeting new people:

> I think even before actually getting a chance to practice languages people enjoy bonding, talking to people, making friends. Especially international students, you know, very often they come with the same goal in mind, to meet new people, to make new friends, and then, they have somebody to practice speaking a different language. (Interview, October 4, 2018, Montreal)

Here, Luis illustrates how the desire to create community comes "even before" people practice languages. But what kind of community do these students and facilitators aim to create at the exchange? As part of making new social connections, some learners emphasize the intercultural

aspect of meeting new people at the exchange. As an example, Mariana wants to learn about the "cultural background" as she practices Japanese: "when you're speaking a language, [you] need to know values for how to communicate" (Mariana, interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal). Mariana underlines the inherent connection between linguistic and cultural aspects of communication, taking a plurilingual and pluricultural perspective of competences that cannot be separated (Coste, Moore & Zarate, 2009). In fact, she expects to learn pluricultural competences alongside Japanese, referring to gestures and other cultural differences by saying, "I think that can be included in a language exchange" (Mariana, interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal). For her, it is especially important to learn these aspects of a language in order to build relations of trust with new people: "Because if not, you can offend someone" (Mariana, interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal).

Similar to Mariana's emphasis on relations of trust in an intercultural space, facilitators Luis and Hope frame the language exchange community as a safe space for all students. In the context of intercultural learning, a safe space can be defined as "a supportive environment that encourages questioning and challenging; familiarity and trust among students, . . . and invitations to share vulnerably" (Kadatz, 2019, p. 31). In his explanation of how and why he founded the language exchange, Luis mentions his intention to create a safe space more than once (Luis, interview, October 4, 2018, Montreal). Luis explains the concept of a safe space as a welcoming place of non-judgment:

> [T]here is, by default, a safe space for people from all levels to practice languages . . . . Because it's sometimes intimidating to actually go to someone who's mastered the language and be like, Hey (...). So, when you come to this [activity], that's what the practice is there for. (Interview, October 4, 2018, Montreal)

As Luis describes it, a safe space creates a community of practice that remains accessible and equitable to all participants. Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasize the importance of this type of community with its legitimate and equitable access to resources, necessary conditions for learning as practice to take place. They also underline the primacy of peer relationships for effective learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Here, Luis ensures that "people from all levels" are welcome. He explains how relationships of mastery can be "intimidating", so the language exchange offers an alternative by connecting peers, none of whom have "mastered the language". Participants also identify the importance of a supportive environment. Hope shares, "I was nervous the first time I came to the 5 a 7 because I'm a shy person" but "Luis welcomed me, talked 'Where are you from?'" (Hope, interview, April 30, 2019, Montreal). Studies of international experiences emphasize "the centrality of safe space as an accelerator to learning, intercultural engagement, and personal transformation" (Kadatz, 2019, p. 25). Hope's experience illustrates the profound importance of feeling secure for learning to take place. She explains, "I don't want people to laugh at me . . . . I'm still afraid of speaking to native English speaker[s] [in case they] laugh at my accent", but, "Before my fear is 10. Now it's like a 5" (Hope, interview, April 30, 2019, Montreal). Hope also emphasizes the importance of forming learning relationships with peers – here, other international students - in order to gain the confidence she needs to speak with native English speakers, who she fears may judge her.

Adrienne, the new facilitator of the language activity, shares a slightly different take as a student-teacher on what it means for learners to have this kind of space dedicated to language practice. Adrienne is a 20-year-old student in the TESL program who was hired when the coordinators of the language exchange decided to prioritize informal French practice. She comes from a small town in Quebec and describes herself as "multilingual" because she knows "a few words or phrases from different languages", but explains that English and French are her "bilingual basics", with some understanding of Japanese (Adrienne, interview, April 15, 2019, Montreal). Adrienne echoes Luis

and Hope in expressing a need for an inclusive space. However, based on her own language-learning experience, she also feels that to learn, people must associate with others who speak the language in a context that can "force [people] to be out of their comfort zone" (Adrienne, interview, April 15, 2019, Montreal). This description of the language-learning context may be more in keeping with a brave space. As opposed to a safe space, a brave space offers individuals an opportunity to become aware of their tolerance for discomfort and encourages the risk-taking needed to learn (Arao & Clemens, 2013). However, a brave space is also overtly political, as it aims to empower people to see themselves and their place in a system in order to bring about social change. Overall, these international students' desire to create connections, community, and be understood highlights several aspects of their unique experiences: first, their transition to university and life in Montreal; second, their specific responses to intercultural experiences; and third, their need for inclusion. With these points in mind, creating a brave space with legitimate and equitable access to resources becomes even more important as we consider their experiences of transition, intercultural learning, and inclusion in relation to how these students perceive and use their languages outside of the exchange.

Part II: Moving into communities

Linguistic ideologies and their influence on learner identity, agency and intercultural learning

This section addresses my second research question and sub-questions:

> How do students who participate in a language exchange situate themselves as language users and community members?
>
> - How does their orientation to language relate to their sense of agency and belonging?
> - How does this change as they participate in the exchange and transition to university?

The analysis frames the learners' relationship to their languages, language use and the communities within and outside the university. This section explores whether they take up a monolingual habitus and its associated native speaker model of language learning or look to multilingual or plurilingual alternatives. I inquire into how accessible these constructs may actually be in their contexts of practice, as well as how these ideologies shape and are shaped by the learners' intercultural interactions, identities and agency. Both emic and etic perspectives inform this analysis. The emic view arises from the learners' experiences as they portray them, including common perceptions and experiences and contrasts between different learners' perspectives. The etic view comes from an analysis of learners' experiences through the lenses of situated learning and multilingual and plurilingual frameworks. I draw on situated learning to assess context and access to resources, looking at whether learners have legitimate and equitable access, and whether practice is organized transparently (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Adding to this assessment, I look at the habitus of the university and broader community as the students experience these contexts, determining their awareness of the status differences that support linguistic hierarchies (Benson, 2013). I evaluate learner relationships with peers and members of wider communities, their accessibility and quality, to determine how they influence intercultural learning and fuller participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Throughout, I listen to how learners frame their own orientations to language. I also raise awareness of constraints, conflicts, and contradictions brought about by context and linguistic orientations, evaluating how they impact practice, agency, identity and belonging. In order to explore these concerns, I present six pieces that weave together learners' perspectives and analysis. The first three pieces establish and analyze the learners' perceptions of the languages they use and their contexts, the university and the wider community of Montreal. The last three pieces deal with how the students take up language practice and intercultural learning in light of their orientations to their

contextualized language use, examining their identities, relationships, and sense of belonging, along with the agency and constraints that shape them.

"Only English!" - The university as a monolingual space

Students perceive the university as a monolingual, English-language space, even though their own descriptions of how they use their languages contradict this claim, evidencing a plurality of languages and cultures. Students initially claimed that they use only English at university. When I asked, "What languages do you use at university?" Pavit, Arav, Janet and Skyler responded, "Only English" and "Just English" (Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal). They affirmed each other's answers, saying "Umhm" and nodding their heads in agreement. The students' answers to this question suggest that the university presents a monolingual habitus that may not be shaken off so easily. They perceive the linguistic "market" as valuing English alone (Bourdieu, 1991). The students did not question the status of English as the official, primary or only language even when their own experiences using other languages contradicted its dominance. Returning to the group interview, when I redirected to ask about using languages other than English, the students began to talk about their experiences using multiple languages. I asked "When, where and how do you use [your languages]?" The students agreed that they use the language they have in common with other speakers. English may be the language everyone has in common, or what Kosonen and Benson (2013) would call the main language of wider communication. But, as we will see, these students also choose among their languages depending on the context. They prioritize and prefer the language they are most fluent or comfortable with, usually their first or home language. Arav and Pavit stated that they use English only when they are not with speakers of Telugu, their first language. Similarly, Janet speaks English with her friends from Greece and Syria, but affirmed that when she's with her Chinese friends, it would be "awkward and weird" to speak English (Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal). In other words, these students orient to and use their languages in multiple, flexible ways that require

more exploration. In addition, it will help to determine what Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to as the sociopolitical organization of practice in relation to the local context. Applied here, the organization of practice can refer to how a monolingual habitus informs how students perceive and take up language learning and use within the wider pluricultural, plurilingual context of the university and Montreal.

"A bit segregated" - Linguistic and cultural divisions

Along with perceiving the university campus as a monolingual space, the students show their awareness of linguistic and cultural divisions in local contexts. They describe the separation into linguistic groups on- and off-campus in Montreal. Diana, a staff member at International Student Services and an international student, exemplifies this view. She sees that international students "tend to stick into groups of the same nationals", someone from their country or city who they met here (Diana, interview, October 11, 2018). She has formed this opinion through her role in assisting students with academic and immigration procedures, explaining that many students seek her assistance after receiving misinformation. Because they feel more comfortable talking to other students, peer advice is the main source of information. This type of peer learning often has negative results, in Diana's words, as "a bunch of shy people get together and share some guesses" (Diana, interview, October 11, 2018, Montreal). Through Diana's eyes, it appears that the linguistic and cultural divisions on campus block or limit access to key resources, not only for language practice, but also for other aspects of the transition to university and life in Canada. Skyler also expresses the sense that the "Student population is segregated" (Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal). Although he considers himself fluent in English, his first language, he mentions the exclusion he has noticed. When I ask him to elaborate, Skyler gives me his take on Anglophone-Francophone relations in Montreal:

> I think that the English speaking universities (Concordia and McGill) are a bit segregated from the French speaking majority of Montreal. While a lot of Montrealers and Quebecois speak fluent English, I think usually there's a bit of a bubble of English speaking university students and they tend to stick with each other, and the Francophone majority Montrealers stick together as well. Obviously there are exceptions, but that's what I've observed. (Personal communication, October 15, 2018)

Skyler's comment adds a layer of awareness to the students' perception of English monolingualism at the university. In his view, English-speaking students separate themselves, which may reinforce the dominant status of English at the university. But in the province of Quebec, French remains the language of the majority. Kosonen and Benson (2013) would refer to French in this situation as the locally dominant language, indicating that it may have the effect of privileging learning in and of that language because of its local status. The change in focus of the language exchange towards learning French and away from exchanging in multiple languages, which will be explored later, may be the result of this dominance. At the same time, Skyler's awareness of this separation indicates more of a multilingual habitus, since he questions the status differential between languages by noting the social exclusion.

However, divisions between French and English speakers are not the only ones that the students report. Arav feels excluded from certain groups on campus because of language. At his work, Sikh people sit together. Arav describes how "they're playing jokes and things in Hindi" but he can't understand. Janet's reflections also complicate the issues of perceived monolingualism and linguistic and cultural divisions. Janet's initial perception that she only uses English at university is especially interesting because on second thought, she tells a different story. When I ask who she goes to for language help, she realizes that she rarely speaks English. Janet states:

> [I] asked myself how many times I used a foreign [language] in a day, and my answer was about the average of three. It is hard to imagine that I am living in Canada and I [am] only using English three times a day. I did start being afraid of forgetting English . . . . (Personal communication, October 26, 2018)

Both Arav's and Janet's experiences convey a sense of distance, but in different ways. Arav feels excluded in a context where people with the same nationality speak a different language than him. His situation gives the lie to the one-nation, one-language myth. It also demonstrates how a language of wider communication, English, may not function to connect people in a specific context. Instead, a non-dominant language can act as a strong connector between speakers, even while it isolates other people. Alternately, Janet's story introduces a problem typical of international students in transition: As a developing speaker, adapting to a new social context often includes the challenges of language learning and intercultural experience. However, for students like Janet, the main challenge appears to be balancing practice in a new language with maintaining social connections in her home language. Becoming aware of such conflicts and contradictions in learning situations can help show how they change practice and affect identity development (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The next two themes will explore how these affiliations, orientations and the conflicts that arise interact with language learning and practice by contrasting experiences of first or home language use with languages in development and learning.

"Happy" and "heart-welcoming" – Identifying and connecting through languages

When I ask the students in the group discussion how they feel when they use their first or home languages, their faces immediately brighten. Speaking in these languages – the ones students feel most comfortable in - enables a connection that these language users perceive as more expressive and affective. They feel that connections become easier and more natural. In the group discussion, all four

students express a sense of warmth and positivity when discussing how they connect with their peers at university or in the wider community through their home languages. A sense of ease permeates their descriptions. Pavit describes feeling "more comfortable", "bonding" and being able to "express [his] feelings" (Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal). Arav describes feeling "happier and heart-welcoming", while Skyler feels that his "personality changes" and he becomes "happy" when speaking Spanish (Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal). Janet echoes that "you don't have to think" about the words or grammar (Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal). These learners identify more positively and strongly with other speakers of their home languages. They feel a greater sense of connection with them, to the extent that it may be easier to develop a sense of belonging, a finding in line with previous studies (Chira, 2017; Doucerain, Dere & Ryder, 2013). Skyler expands on the perception that connecting through a common language feels natural:

> I think that if you speak the same language as another person, you will naturally congregate together. This goes especially well with languages that are not lingua francas like English or French, but more specific ones. (Personal communication, October 15, 2018)

For Skyler, it not only feels natural to communicate through a common language, but also to associate with people and create deeper, longer-lasting connections, the kind that build community. He distinguishes between connecting through languages of wider communication or "lingua francas" and non-dominant languages, showing his awareness of intracultural groups and the challenges of intercultural engagement during the transition to university.

In contrast with the other students, who associate different feelings with connections made through their first or home languages and developing languages, for Skyler, connection may feel just as natural

through a language in development. Through his third language in development, Japanese, Skyler demonstrates his ability to forge formal, intentional relationships that confer legitimacy on his status as a new community member, enabling him to move forward in his transition to life in Montreal (Lave & Wenger, 1991). He draws on his linguistic orientation and cultural identifications to achieve this result, which in turn affects his identity and sense of belonging. We see how Skyler creates this type of connection in his story of landing a job on his arrival in Montreal. As he was walking along a busy street, he saw a ramen restaurant, went inside and starting talking to the man there in Japanese. It turned out that the man was the owner. Skyler had an interview on the spot and the next thing he knew, he was hired (Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal). Although he describes his Japanese as "conversational" and says he "has to focus" and gets "tired" if people talk really fast, after living in Japan for 3 years, Skyler values developing this language so highly that he feels frustrated when he has no one to speak Japanese with. He stresses that feels more Japanese than American (Questionnaire; Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal; Skyler, personal communication, October 15, 2018). Skyler describes his linguistic and cultural identification this way:

> My hometown is a suburb of Seattle, Washington, and most of my friends [and] immediate surroundings growing up were of Mexican background. . . . I spoke at least as much Spanish as I did English, combined with the fact that my family is of Argentine extraction. So growing up, while I had much American influence, I had quite a mix of things along with many of my friends being international. I did not have many typical American friends. A half a year after I graduated high school in June 2015, I moved to Tokyo, Japan where I was pretty much the only foreigner in my newfound friend group. . . . Since then, I've spent almost all my time there and all my stuff is there along with all my friends and girlfriend. . . . So in that sense, I grew up with a mix of cultures, never truly feeling like I grew up with one major influence,

> combined with the moving to Japan thing. . . . and I'm definitely not a nationalistic person at all. After traveling a lot and seeing the vast differences between how American life is and other places, I have grown to have a kind of disdain towards America and even though I am American, I'm hesitant to say because of all the negative things that come with that when I think about it. Poverty, homelessness, obesity, suburban city planning, nationalism bordering on fascism, violence, etc. While I am not Japanese either, I feel a bit quite split and don't feel any sort of deep connection with any place or culture. (Personal communication, October 15, 2018)

Skyler's linguistic background combines English and Spanish almost equally, although he affiliates more strongly with his identity as a Spanish speaker (Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal). His identity is not tied up with his country of origin or its national language. Along with his description of growing up with "a mix of cultures", Skyler's current identifications suggest he has a hybrid affiliation, combining more than one cultural affiliation to forge a new identity (Doucerain, Dere & Ryder, 2013). After learning Japanese and spending three years in Japan, he chose to study in Canada "because [he] want[s] to eventually become a citizen of Canada or Australia" (Questionnaire). Skyler presents himself as someone who currently feels "quite split", without "any sort of deep connection with any place or culture" (Personal communication, October 15, 2018). His identity appears negatively defined – "not Japanese" and "hesitant to say" that he is American. Along with these border crossings, and because of his language development in Spanish and Japanese, his background may be seen as transnational (Doucerain, Dere & Ryder, 2013; Kenyon, Frohard-Dourlent & Roth, 2012; Schiller, Basch & Blanc, 1995). Schiller, Basch and Blanc (1995) define transnationals as ones "whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relation to more than one nation-state" (p. 48). Skyler adapts his identity to each of his contexts, feeling a sense of belonging in the

Mexican-American community where he grew up and in Japan. In this way, Skyler's transnational background and hybrid identity shape how he transitions to life in Montreal. Although he notes a separation between the Anglophone and Francophone communities, he creates his own sense of belonging by developing relationships through one of his languages, Japanese. Acting this way, Skyler may be demonstrating a plurilingual orientation, drawing on his languages in development as easily as ones that are more developed (Galante, 2019). If so, then a plurilingual orientation can enable an individual with a transnational background and hybrid identity to create a place to belong within a community. However, this ease of movement between communities and sense of belonging may not be as accessible for other international students who do not share Skyler's complex, multiple identifications. Individual speakers' identities, and therefore, their degrees of agency, are constructed in relation to the practices and resources of their specific contexts and the speaker's access to them (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Skyler's command of English as one of his first languages places him at the top of the linguistic hierarchy in this monolingual, English university. He benefits from this status and the agency it provides without the constraints of speakers who are developing their English.

"If you want to communicate, it's a tool" – Agency and constraints in language use

From the language-as-resource perspective, plurilingual speakers act as agents who draw on their linguistic repertoire as called for in a specific context (Marshall & Moore, 2013). As language users, the students interviewed view both of the dominant languages, English and French, as resources for communication in their social, academic and professional lives. Sometimes the students also take a plurilingual perspective in the way they describe how they draw on their multiple languages, switching to their advantage depending on the situation and their needs. Discussing her social life, Janet shares, "When I talk to my friends from counties other than China, I use English. It actually, to some extents, helps me making friends here" (Personal communication, October 26, 2018). As a locally dominant language, French has a high use value, and the students use their knowledge of

French to their benefit. Arav shares that "We can mingle very easily, meet people" by speaking French. Mariana takes a similar but broader plurilingual perspective, asserting that all languages provide resources: the more languages you have, the more you can connect with other people. She says, "I can't see a negative part. Language is a tool to connect." (Mariana, interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal). From her own experience, she explains that she speaks with her friends in different languages depending on which ones they have in common: "Like I met a Moroccan friend, she speaks French and Spanish, so the only way to talk to her is Spanish" (Mariana, interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal).

From an academic standpoint, Janet explains that going to international high school has helped her because she learned the English terms for mathematical and scientific concepts: "jargon used in math, science" (Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal). So, in her studies, Janet draws on her knowledge in two of her languages, Mandarin and English, to improve her understanding. She considers her educational background an advantage, especially having studied in English, because she understands more than her Chinese classmates, who often lack the technical vocabulary needed in their field (Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal). Similarly, Pavit reports that he mostly talks in English about classes and schoolwork, and Arav agrees that "English helps us more" with this aspect of university life. At the same time, Arav notes that they also discuss in Telugu about their classes, their shared first language, to help them understand (Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal). Academic English presents more of a challenge for some learners; in her first year, Hope chose to take two classes which focused on communication and spend the rest of her time volunteering in order to cope with the linguistic and academic aspects of transition (Hope, interview, April 30, 2019, Montreal). Given her position as staff member at International Student Services, and her active social life as a central member of an international student community, this strategy of prioritizing language learning and social connections seems to have earned her success.

While these students use multiple languages to socialize and for academic purposes, switching as needed, they do not always associate their actions with agency. Participants in the group discussion all express a sense of frustration when describing communication difficulties in dominant languages. They give examples of trying to understand professors and asking for assistance in English, navigating around the city and asking for assistance in French. They describe learning and using French as "tough", "hard" or "very hard", and say it "needs a lot of patience" (Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal). Mariana in particular feels that her English both helps her to connect with different students and prevents her from communicating easily (Interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal). She says, "I know my accent is hard" and "people tell me they can't understand me", explaining, "Sometimes you get frustrated – I repeated so many times" (Mariana, interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal). In these moments, Mariana takes personal responsibility for her English development, saying, "I don't know if it's my fault" (Interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal). At the same time, she accepts the challenge of developing and using English as part of the local context, saying, "It's part of being in Montreal" (Mariana, interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal).

Other students also express a tension between their agency and constraints when they are communicating in a dominant language. Janet elaborates on this tension:

> Usually, people will choose the fastest and clearest way to explain things. For example, I am Chinese, and I have a huger vocabulary in Chinese. So when I talk to other Chinese, it is easy for me to pick the exact word to express myself. However, if I talk to people from other areas, English will probably be our only common language. We have no choice but using English to express ourselves. It is a tool of communication. I will choose the language that I can express myself with the clearest word. (Janet, personal communication, October 26, 2018)

At first glance, Janet's description of using English appears contradictory. She shares her conflicting emotions, feeling constrained by the dominant language on the one hand: she has "no choice" but to use English to express herself when it's the "only common language". On the other hand, she describes her agency in using English as "a tool of communication", equal to other languages in her repertoire, as she "will choose the language" as needed for clear expression. It is important to notice these contradictions and conflicts that arise as Janet uses her languages to participate in university life, especially as they may change her practice or impact her identity (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The tension she expresses here between her agency and constraints in using English illustrates how Janet takes up linguistic ideologies and intercultural experiences. Her description demonstrates her potential agency as a plurilingual, as she chooses between the languages in her linguistic repertoire. However, she does not experience her agency in the same way when she uses different languages, since she describes speaking English as having "no choice". She views having to speak the dominant language as a constraint. In Janet's case, her intercultural communication and connections are both enabled and limited by her knowledge of English; unlike in Chinese, she cannot pick the "exact word". In addition, Janet identifies herself as responsible for explaining things and expressing herself. Like Mariana, she presents an individualistic view of intercultural learning. Her description of choosing a language therefore introduces the idea that plurilingual agency may depend on this individualistic view. Unlike Mariana, though, Janet displays a sense of the linguistic hierarchies in place, as she is forced to use English as a language of wider communication and participates unequally in social life in English. Combined with the way Janet takes responsibility her perceptions and experiences demonstrate how a plurilingual perspective may place the burden of adaptation on the speaker. While this speaker may, like Janet, see herself as highly competent and confident in one of her languages, when that language is not locally dominant, she may see herself as losing agency and status, as she is literally at a loss for words.

Sometimes, however, learners can reposition themselves and assume a new identity with increased social interaction and agency (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Hope also notes the constraints of speaking in a dominant, other language, but she presents a somewhat different perspective on her experiences while speaking English, resulting in a sense of agency. For her, too, English both prevents her from communicating and connecting with people and helps her. She asserts that "When you speak English, it helps [you] understand people" (Hope, interview, April 30, 2019, Montreal). But Hope finds that it presents a challenge at the same time because meaning is "in negotiation." She explains, "I speak English to international students. What I say is Plan A. What they say is Plan B" (Hope, interview, April 30, 2019, Montreal). "Body language also can help", she adds, doing a quick charade - which I immediately understand – to illustrate a story. Hope's understanding of communication as negotiated meaning and her intentional playfulness in communicating with gestures demonstrate how she understands her agency as a speaker. Like Janet, Hope remains highly aware of the gaps in meaning that result from communicating in a common language or lingua franca. Yet for her, speaking in English, as opposed to Mandarin, encourages agency in the form of freer self-expression. Similarly, in terms of identity, Hope believes that speaking a different language brings out a new side to your personality. She elaborates, "When you speak Mandarin, everything is straight", bringing her hand down quickly three times in a gesture of directness.

> For example - I like you, I love you [is] more casual [in English]. In Mandarin, it's really serious. It means a lot. A commitment. Also family. Here I say it to my best friend. (Hope, interview, April 30, 2019, Montreal)

Hope finds lightness and play in social interactions in her sense of the expressiveness of English that she does not experience in Mandarin. Her interactions and the new aspects of her identity that come out as she speaks English confer agency and lead to personal growth, especially through connections

with her friends. Her intercultural experiences result in close relationships that consolidate her position as a leader among international students in the university community. But can we say that Hope acts as a confident, competent plurilingual when she does not experience an equal agency in Mandarin? If, as Mignolo (2000) says, speakers "cannot avoid 'being born' in one or more language(s), to have them inscribed in your body", Hope's gestures embody the status difference between her two languages (p. 229).

From native speakers to the "comité d'accueuil" - Authenticity, relationships and intercultural learning

The same students who first viewed the university as a monolingual space also appeared to privilege the native speaker model in relation to learning at the language exchange. Several students expressed a desire for "authentic" speaking practice. Skyler really wanted to speak French with a native speaker one-to-one, while Mariana expected to meet native speakers (Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal; Mariana, interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal). These comments initially suggested that language exchange participants equate native speaker interaction with authentic practice. The setup of the language exchange may establish the expectation of authenticity and increase learners' desire to practice with native speakers. As the literature review demonstrates, language exchanges may privilege a native speaker model, where learners aim for native-like proficiency, by positioning native speakers as experts in their languages. In contrast, the students' descriptions of their speaking and language-learning practices show that outside the exchange, they do not only practice with people they consider native speakers, nor do they want to. Mariana, from Peru, explains that when she speaks with a Chilean friend, they mix English, French and Spanish. She says, "I don't know if it's a good approach but we switch languages. . . . [It] happens naturally. [It's] good to have [a] sense of flow" (Mariana, interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal). Here, Mariana appears to position herself as a translanguaging plurilingual, mixing multiple languages even when speaking with someone who is

most comfortable in the same first language as her (Vogel & Garcia, 2017). Although she questions whether this approach is formally sanctioned, she also feels it's natural and good, establishing a new norm for her speech acts that denaturalizes monolingualism (Vogel & Garcia, 2017). Mariana's depiction of her actions indicates that her informal peer relationships enable her learning and agency as a legitimate participant in the university community (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

In her attempts to participate more fully, Janet also expresses a desire to practice speaking a language that does not centre on a native speaker model. But she does not succeed in establishing the relationships necessary to do so. Janet says, "I would like to talk to people using English, because that helps me practice my English. But . . . if you speak English with my Chinese friends . . . it is meaningless" (Janet, personal communication, October 26, 2018). As Janet expresses elsewhere, she considers practicing with other Chinese people "meaningless" because they will communicate in their common language. Janet's desire to practice English with non-Chinese people is not a question of authenticity, but instead demonstrates how she has limited contact with people outside her linguistic group. Her relationships with others affect her practice, at this point, because she does not have a peer group where she can speak English. Recalling her description of using English only three times a day, Janet's situation indicates how her access to language practice is constrained, preventing her from participating fully in university life at this point in her transition. Despite coming to the language exchange, Janet has not managed to form the intercultural relationships she considers necessary to support her language learning. Her situation of limited access to authentic relationships highlights the power differential between Janet's self-identification as an English language learner and Skyler's relative position of mastery. As Norton and Toohey (2011) observe, the way "power is distributed in both formal and informal sites of language learning . . . affects learners' opportunities to negotiate relationships with target language speakers" (Section 2.iii). More than halfway through her first semester, Janet still does not feel she knows anyone to contact for support, formal or informal. She

reached out to me for assistance in our email exchange, saying, “I honestly do not know anyone that can help me with my English and I will be really appreciated if you can give me some suggestions” (Janet, personal communication, October 26, 2018). I did make some suggestions for on- and off-campus language practice, but I do not know if she took them up, or if her situation changed as time passed.

Taken together, Janet’s and Mariana’s experiences raise the problem of access to language practice opportunities and intercultural interactions during the transition to university life. In contrast with Skyler’s independence and ease in establishing connections, Janet expresses the need for some support in creating the relationships necessary for a smooth transition. This need for support with intercultural interactions brings up the question of who should take responsibility for assisting students and what form it should take. Some learners projected a cultural fair model as an ideal of intercultural exchange. Mariana exemplifies this view, asking for language and culture exchange events like “fairs with stands” that “explain part of history, part of the culture” (Mariana, interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal). When I asked what idea of culture you get from this kind of event, Mariana answered emphatically: “Traditions, values” (Interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal). However, a critical perspective on intercultural experience requires interrogating what we learn by framing culture in this way. Cultural fairs position culture as a static sets of beliefs, values and behaviours that are transmitted within a group over time. A critical view of culture acknowledges instead the dynamic conditions created through unequal power relations in a particular historical context and embodied in lived experiences and practices (Agbo, 2004). Similarly, developing a critical awareness in relation to intercultural experience requires moving beyond recognizing differences to see culture in this dynamic view (Guo & Chase, 2011). To develop this critical awareness as a foundation for intercultural learning, learners must have opportunities to interact authentically (Deardorff, 2006). Here, authenticity refers not to “authentic” culture, speech or identity, but to the quality of interaction:

"building authentic relationships . . . through observing, listening and asking" questions (Deardorff, 2006, Preface).

When Luis, the founder, talks about his desire to bring locals from the wider community to the language exchange, he describes an inclusive model of intercultural learning with this emphasis on building authentic relationships. Luis says, "Outside the university, you know, like everybody is people, . . . *c'est du monde pareil*, doesn't matter if you're [at] Concordia or not" (Interview, October 4, 2018, Montreal, italics added). The expression "C'est du monde pareil" means "They're people, too", giving value to inclusivity. Luis emphasizes the transition of international students becoming locals as they move into the community:

> Even students, once they're going to leave university, they're going to become non-students, you know. Their *comité d'accueil*, their welcoming committee, will be the neighbourhood. So why not start now and make them building bonds and links with the world outside the university. (Interview, October 4, 2018, Montreal, italics added)

In Quebec, the *comité d'accueil* is a type of organization at the local city or neighbourhood level that supports immigrant inclusion through intercultural methods (Répertoire communautaire: Aide aux immigrants; TCRI: Qui sommes nous?). Luis describes how community organizations can participate in an international student's transition to life in Montreal. In doing so, he proposes a vision of dynamic cultural identity. He emphasizes the temporary nature of the category of "student", as the transition to university represents a part of a larger transition to life in Quebec and Canada. He also underlines the importance of forging a new, local identity as a "non-student", which will lead to fuller participation in that life. The type of intercultural learning described here would enable individuals

to construct and reconstruct their identities in practice as community members and participants in the world outside the university.

"Some solutions" - Pragmatism, autonomy and imagined futures

These students not only consider languages as resources, but they also take a pragmatic, transactional view of using multiple languages. In the group interview, Arav gives the example of a security guard who would not let him in but when he spoke French, he gained access. Hearing this, Skyler agrees and underlines the idea, saying you can get "bonus points" with people by using their language (Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal). In keeping with this pragmatic perspective, students want to practice both English and French for professional reasons. Arav believes that "Everything relating to professional careers" is in English (Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal). Other students express a strong interest in learning French to get a job in Quebec and focus on the importance of this language for work. For example, Pavit describes how lack of French can stop you from getting a job. These students fully understand the place of this locally-dominant language in the linguistic "market" of the province (Bourdieu, 1991). At the moment, the students focus on learning French for practical, daily concerns: asking for directions; understanding and conducting basic transactions, for example, in a store. This focus likely results because the participants are developing their French and at an earlier point in their learner journeys. All six students rated their French as basic or beginner (Questionnaire). At this point, their participation in the community of French speakers remains peripheral, but they view mastering daily interactions as allowing them to become fuller members.

These learners use their newer languages actively and resourcefully, and they learn and practice English and French autonomously. When they describe how they practice their languages, they indicate that they use a wide range of approaches. In class, they record lectures in English and listen multiple times; outside of school, they listen to English language learning podcasts, watch talk shows and sitcoms. They use Google Translate to navigate around the city in French and speak with people

in stores, on public transit and in other aspects of daily life (Group interview, October 3, 2018, Montreal; Interviews). As learners, they take charge of their language development and make autonomous decisions. Mariana uses several strategies to work on her English independently and she feels that over time, she has definitely improved (Interview, April 16, 2019, Montreal). On Janet's part, to counteract "forgetting English", she has come up with "some solutions":

1. Learn some new words every day.
2. Read books and articles online.
3. Join activities.

She adds, "This plan has not been quantified yet, but there are actual things that I am deciding do to improve my English skill" (Janet, personal communication, October 26, 2018). In this statement, Janet presents herself as an autonomous learner who takes charge of her own language development. Some of her solutions involve self-study to learn vocabulary and work on reading skills, but she also plans to "join activities" to practice speaking in informal social contexts. While she experiences barriers to forming peer relationships, she clearly values them as opportunities to practice speaking English and intends to pursue them.

Overall, these learners' pragmatism and autonomy in language practice show a high degree of engagement towards their language learning and practice, perhaps influenced by the new identities they are forging as they join new communities at university, in Montreal and Quebec. Norton (2001) introduced the ideas of imagined communities and identities to describe the desired language community that a learner wishes to join and their imagined future and identity within that community. These ideas continue Wenger's (1998) work on communities of practice and draw on Anderson's

(1991) original concept that we base our collective identity on imagined connections. Norton and Toohey (2011) elaborate:

> For many learners, the target language community is not only a reconstruction of past communities and historically constituted relationships, but also a community of the imagination, a desired community that offers possibilities for an enhanced range of identity options in the future. An imagined community assumes an imagined identity, and a learner's investment in the target language can be understood within this context (Section 2)

Here, Norton and Toohey (2011) theorize language learner identity in relation to an imagined future community. Learners construct and modify their identifications as they imagine who they may be and the communities they will participate in. These imagined communities can include local, national and transnational affiliations, day-to-day or less frequent interactions. Norton emphasizes that language learners' imagined identities, communities and futures impact their engagement. For these learners, their constant, heartfelt connections with and through first or home languages may illustrate their reconstructions of long established identities and past communities in the present. At the same time, their commitments to language learning and daily engagements with other speakers layer on multiple new identities and affiliations, some imagined, some being realized even now.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking responsibility for language

The conclusions address my final research question: What can these students' experiences tell us about efforts to include international students in the university community? The first three themes explored the learners' perceptions and experiences of English, French and their first, home and other languages and how these influence their learning in transition to university. Their relationship to English begins with the university, which they initially perceived as a monolingual English space, despite the highly plurilingual and pluricultural context of the student population and Montreal. A deeper exploration demonstrated that a monolingual habitus may exist at the university for these learners. Next, the students' experiences demonstrated their awareness of linguistic and cultural divisions on- and off-campus. Anglophone and Francophone groups represented separate entities in the students' eyes. Turning to how these students' perceptions influenced their learning, the experience of French as a locally-dominant language appeared to increase its status, leading students to place more importance on learning French than may currently be feasible or necessary for them. Ultimately, privileging French classes may limit the potential for intercultural learning where students buy into an existing linguistic hierarchy. The students also perceived other divisions on campus between distinct national, cultural or linguistic groups, and sometimes felt isolated as a result. Finally, the learners' positive feelings about their first, home or other languages with which they felt strongly connected affected how they connected socially within their linguistic and cultural groups, as well as how they perceived these connections. Their perceptions and experiences indicate a disconnect between the learners' valuations of their first and home languages and the university's, with its monolingual habitus. Despite the students' active engagement in university social activities, language learning and practice, and the multiple ways they bring their first, home and other languages into this space, overall, the responsibility for inclusion seems to fall on them.

In terms of linguistic orientation, if a multilingual habitus were in place, learners might question the status differential between languages and potentially privilege learning non-dominant languages. If learners adopted a plurilingual orientation, they might draw on their languages in development equally and adaptively, giving them agency in new situations. They might do so intentionally, to create more equitable intercultural communication, as in a translanguaging perspective. This could lead to fuller participation and a smoother, more successful transition, potentially even transformative intercultural learning. However, barriers to legitimate participation, such as lack of access to resources, may push learners to rely on their individual abilities to develop and use their languages. In these cases, the linguistic and cultural hierarchies that constrain the learners' participation may make their transition to university much more challenging. Moreover, the learners themselves may participate in a narrative that frames them as entirely responsible for their own success. In this sense, a framework of plurilingual and pluricultural competence may not be the most appropriate or useful for these learners. A competence-based framework may be practical for formal language-learning contexts, for example, ones that require standardized evaluation, but may not be appropriate for informal language practice in social and intercultural contexts. This may be true despite the fact that the framers of plurilingual and pluricultural competence positively value different stages of individual development in multiple languages (Coste, Moore and Zarate, 2009). Unless plurilingualism and pluriculturalism are framed as a communitarian project, such as global citizenship through intercultural learning, in practice, they can impress individual speakers of non-dominant languages with the weight of their obligation and simultaneously hide that oppression. If language development and practice remain the sole responsibility of the learner, have we really moved away from an additive, language-as-asset approach?

Recommendations for transition, community-building and inclusion

Learners, facilitators and staff members I spoke to who work with international students agree on the importance of a language-centred activity and its potential to support international students' transition to university. However, their expectations, interests and recommendations for the future differ. Suggestions from learners, facilitators and coordinators follow, combined with my recommendations. These suggestions can be grouped according to issues of access to resources, legitimacy and equity in relationships, and conflicts and contradictions that arise (Lave & Wenger, 1991). For informal activities, coordinators agree that integrating language and social activities can be very successful at easing international students' transition to university when learners engage in them. Hope reinforces the finding that social activities enable English and French language practice outside the exchange (Interview, April 30, 2019, Montreal). To support more inclusive language learning or practice, we need to increase access to activities, opening them up to more learners. Equitable access to these activities could mean including Canadian students from other provinces, local students and community members, as Luis suggests (Interview, October 4, 2018, Montreal). Luis and Diana have already reached out to a community organization to collaborate on a social activity (Luis, interview, October 4, 2018, Montreal). I participated in one successful activity of this kind, a community cooking class that takes place at a local educational not-for-profit for youth in Montreal. Diana also proposes that different units at the university work together more closely, sharing responsibility to promote activities that will benefit international students (Interview, October 11, 2018). Diana's suggestions are especially learner-centred, including workshops on "How to live away from home", that exist already, but have low attendance, and a program to "talk to fellow international students who are in exactly [the] same place they are now" (Interview, October 11, 2018). Diana hopes that, with the support of units outside of International Student Services, these activities will better support international students by reaching more of them. Access, coordination of services and outreach clearly remain issues that the university needs to address.

For social activities to succeed, we need to identify what kind of peer relationships can support intercultural and language learning. This includes redefining what organizers, educators and learners consider legitimate and equitable. First, we need to move away from consumable, cultural-fair style models of intercultural experiences and the false legitimacy of the native speaker model in language learning and practice. When learners make these requests, educators and coordinators can take the opportunity to propose a critical view of culture and language learning. After these first steps towards framing equitable peer relationships, we can move towards embedded social activities that enable authentic relationship-building and critical intercultural learning. Hope gives an example of an event like this: walking tours of different neighbourhoods in Montreal that integrate language practice, practical information about the city and social history. These events become even more successful when students attend repeatedly, developing friendships (Hope, interview, April 30, 2019, Montreal).

The two issues above, access to resources and relationships, need to be addressed openly to resolve contradictions and conflicts between learner models of learning relationships, resources and activities, learners' experiences and university services. These changes would go a long way to increasing the potential for smoother transition to university for international students. However, for students who need language support, another issue remains. We need to challenge the monolingual habitus in place at the university because it hides the linguistic and cultural hierarchies that are in place. This habitus also supports ideologies of language learning that frame individuals as solely or mainly responsible for their success while placing it within constraints. Within a learning context, we can address this issue by bringing awareness to the hierarchies and enacting a multilingual habitus, valuing non-dominant languages and cultures (Benson, 2013). This approach would promote languages and cultures as resources, validating the experiences and challenges of learners. Adrienne, the new facilitator at the language exchange, illustrates how to resolve this conflict in practice, conferring

legitimacy on the learners, their process and language. As a teacher in training, Adrienne expresses what she feels the language exchange brings participating students: "Honesty". She elaborates on what this means to her when she teaches: showing the Quebecois jargon and teaching what people hear on the street as opposed to focusing on "pretty written grammar" (Adrienne, interview, April 15, 2019, Montreal). This sense of honesty includes drawing on personal experience and sharing it with learners, in turn opening them up to new experience (Adrienne, interview, April 15, 2019, Montreal). In this way, Adrienne advocates creating a multilingual habitus by teaching language as it is used and valued locally. Returning to legitimate participation, this expression of honesty would ensure content is accessible, transparent and reflect practice in the local context (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Learners would then be enabled to participate in language practice in a legitimate way, leading to identities of mastery (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Perspectives on pedagogies and program development

This study suggests that learners need time and the integration of language practice and learning activities with intercultural learning to support language development and transition, especially in highly diverse contexts. Future studies could explore the application of plurilingual pedagogies in informal, student-led language-practice activities like a language exchange. Other follow-up could examine experiences of international students looking back at their transition to university with the goal of supporting incoming students. Program development should include activities that aim to bring together local community members and international students. At the time of this study, the coordinators at International Student Services had not yet managed to bring local students or outside community members to the language exchange, despite several outreach efforts. This represents a missed opportunity to build community, both for the students who want to stay in the province after graduation and those who wish to participate more fully while studying in Montreal. Because language and intercultural learning as well as other aspects of a successful transition depend on

engagement and authentic relationships, this lost opportunity can have a ripple effect for international students. It also represents a missed chance for the university and local community to welcome and include newcomers and create new ties. If "the ways that universities develop and promote services for international students communicates whom they view as a full part of that community", it also sends a powerful message (Kenyon, Frohard-Dourlent & Roth, 2012, p. 16). However, the learners in this study also harness their languages to communicate, practice and learn and assert their place in the university community. Their multiple roles, cultural affiliations and social ties demonstrate how they participate by using their languages to push back against constraints.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Oral Recruitment Script

Hello, my name is Andrea Rosenfield. I'm a Master's student in Educational Studies here at Concordia. I'm researching language practice opportunities for international students for my thesis. I'd like to know how you practice a language you want to improve, how this benefits you, and what the university can do to support you. Are you interested in giving your opinion or sharing your experience? I'd like to invite you to do exactly that by participating in a group discussion or individual interview. If you're interested, please let me know so I can give you more details in writing and get your consent to participate.

Appendix 2: Information and Consent Form

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Study Title: International students' social integration and satisfaction with university experience: Insights from a language exchange
Researcher: Andrea Rosenfield
Researcher's Contact Information: andrea.rosenfield@gmail.com
514-618-2221
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Ailie Cleghorn
Faculty Supervisor's Contact Information: ailie.cleghorn@concordia.ca
Source of funding for the study: n/a

You are being invited to participate in the research study mentioned above. This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is to explore language practice opportunities for international students and their benefits. The researcher would like to know how you practice a language you want to improve, how this benefits you, and what the university can do to support you.

B. PROCEDURES

If you participate, you will be asked to meet with the group and researcher once, to complete a short questionnaire with background information through an online survey platform, and to participate in a focus group discussion. In total, participating in this study will take 1 hour. I will record answers with a voice recorder and by taking notes. You may also be contacted by email to clarify or add to your responses.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

There is a possibility you might face certain risks by participating in this research. These risks include: Some discomfort from sharing your personal experiences or opinion about meeting new people, learning a language, or living in Montreal as an international student.

This research may not benefit you personally, but you may find satisfaction in being able to share your opinion or personal experiences and having your voice heard about your successes and challenges in university. You may enjoy discussing ways to support your language learning and university life.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

We will gather the following information as part of this research:
Personal information: Name, age, gender, country of origin, languages spoken, years in Montreal/Canada, intention to remain in Montreal/Canada
Educational information: Educational background, current program and level of study, educational goals
Contact information: personal communication address

We will not allow anyone to access the information, except people directly involved in conducting the research. We will only use the information for the purposes of the research described in this form. We will protect the information by keeping it in a secure location: on a password-protected computer or on a USB key in a locked cabinet in the supervisor's research office or the researcher's home. The researcher and the supervisor will have access to the data.

The information gathered will be identifiable. That means it will have your name directly on it. We intend to publish the results of this research. Please indicate below whether you accept to be identified in the publications:

[ ] I accept that my name and the information I provide appear in publications of the results of the research.
[ ] Please do not publish my name as part of the results of the research.

We will destroy the information five years after the end of the study.

F. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You do not have to participate in this research. It is purely your decision. If you do participate, you can stop at any time. You can also ask that the information you provided not be used, and your choice will be respected. If you decide that you don't want us to use your information, you must tell the researcher or faculty supervisor before May 1, 2019. You can contact the researcher or faculty supervisor by email. Our email addresses are at the top of this form.

There are no negative consequences for not participating, stopping in the middle, asking us not to publish your name or asking us not to use your information.

G. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researcher. Their contact information is on page 1. You may also contact their faculty supervisor.

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

Appendix 3: Questionnaire

1. personal communication address *(required on survey platform)*
2. What are your first and last names? Your name will not be shared.
3. What is your age?
4. What is your gender?
5. What is your country of origin?
6. When did you arrive in Montreal? In Canada?
7. Why did you come to Montreal? To Canada? Please describe in 1 - 2 sentences.
8. How long do you plan to stay in Montreal? In Canada?
9. Why do you have this plan? Please describe in 1 - 2 sentences.
10. What is your current program of study?
11. What degree or diploma are you working towards?
12. What year of your program are you in?
13. What do you plan to do after you complete your program? Please describe in 1 - 2 sentences.
14. What did you study before this, and did you complete this program or degree?
15. Where did you study before this? Please write the city, country and type of school.
16. Which languages can you understand, speak, read, and/or write? Please describe your skills and level in each language.
17. Which language(s) are you learning?

18. How are you studying and practicing the languages you are learning? Please describe in 1 - 2 sentences.

Appendix 4: Sample interview and discussion questions

Questions in italics were sometimes added in response to participants' answers. Other questions were also added to follow up on responses. Questions in square brackets [ ] may have been omitted. Wording may have been changed.

1. Why did you come to the language exchange today?

2. What languages do you know?

Are you learning any other languages? Which ones?

How would you describe your feelings about learning this language?

3. What languages do you use at university?

When, where and how do you use them?

4. How do you feel when you are using your home languages / other languages?

How do you feel when you use English at school here?

5. How do you think your languages help you succeed with your classes?

How do you think language stops you from succeeding?

[Which language helps you most?]

6. How do you feel your languages help you connect with people at school?

With other students? Professors? How about outside of school, in Montreal?

7. Do you feel language ever stops you from connecting? How?

8. How do you approach professors about language? Student services?

Who or what supports you? How?

[9. If your professors asked how they can support you best, what advice would you give?]

10. How can activities and student services support your success in school?

How can they help you connect with people?

What kinds of student activities, programs or services would help you most?

11. Would you like me to give your feedback to the university unit responsible for the language exchange?

Appendix 5: Certification of Ethical Acceptability for Research

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant:	Andrea Rosenfield
Department:	Faculty of Arts and Science\Education
Agency:	N/A
Title of Project:	International students' social integration and satisfaction with university experience: Insights from a language exchange
Certification Number:	30010090

Valid From: October 01, 2018 To: September 30, 2019

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Dr. James Pfaus, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant:	Andrea Rosenfield
Department:	Faculty of Arts and Science\Education
Agency:	N/A
Title of Project:	International students' social integration and satisfaction with university experience: Insights from a language exchange
Certification Number:	30010090

Valid From: August 19, 2019 To: August 18, 2020

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Richard DeMont

Dr. Richard DeMont, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee

Appendix 6: Letter of Approval

Letter of approval

To whom it may concern,

I authorize Andrea Rosenfield to approach students at the Multilingual 5 à 7 language exchange meetup organized by the Concordia International Students' Office in order to offer these students the opportunity to participate in her M.A. thesis in Educational Studies research. Participation will require that the students give informed consent. I understand that the International Students' Office will not obtain knowledge of the names or other personal information of participants in the study. The study has been described to me by the researcher as follows.

International students who are non-native English speakers may need support to improve their English skills and integrate into university life. Social integration may increase their academic success, persistence, and satisfaction with their university experience. This study will look at a group of 5 - 10 international students at Concordia who participate in a language exchange consisting of an informal meetup group. The research will describe how these students rate their social and language-practice experience in this group, with the aim of suggesting how universities might support international student engagement in language-practice activities that encourage social integration and satisfaction.

This research is supervised by Dr. Ailie Cleghorn, Department of Education, Concordia University. I have been informed that the researcher or supervisor can be contacted at any time with questions.

Andrea Rosenfield: andrea.rosenfield@gmail.com
514-618-2221
Dr. Ailie Cleghorn: ailie.cleghorn@concordia.ca

Date: Sept 11, 2018

Name: Kelly Collins

Title: Manager

Signature: