FIRST LANGUAGES AND IDENTITY: MULTILINGUAL
LEARNERS IN THE MULTILINGUAL LEARNING CONTEXT

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Cynthia Penner, candidate for the degree of Master of Education in Curriculum & Instruction, has presented a thesis titled, *First Languages and Identity: Multilingual Learners in the Multilingual Learning Context*, in an oral examination held on April 15, 2013. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores the relationship between multilingual learners’ identities (Norton, 2000; 2010) and their first languages. In this study, an examination of urban Saskatchewan students’ use of first languages in a multilingual classroom was investigated. In addition, the ways in which notions of identity and investment (Norton, 2000) impacted the students’ use of first languages in the classroom was explored. Data were collected from nine multilingual learners, in grades seven and eight, using a questionnaire, interviews and my research journal. The interviews asked about student awareness, attitudes and use of first languages in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011). The findings indicated that multilingual learners view first languages in a way that impacts their identities. Multilingual learners also invest (Norton, 2000) in first languages in the multilingual learning context and create a community of learners (Denos, Toohey, Neilson, & Waterstone, 2009; Rogoff, Goodman Turkanis, & Bartlett, 2001), where a variety of first languages is used. Some implications for provincial education policy and classroom planning are mentioned.
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DEDICATION

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Data from Statistics Canada (2012) reveals the population of Canada increased by 5.9% between 2006 and 2011. During that same period, the population of Saskatchewan grew by 6.7% (Statistics Canada, 2012). One of the main reasons for the increase in population in Saskatchewan is “higher immigration levels” (Statistics Canada, 2012). Although this increase in the population of Saskatchewan has taken place over the last six years, provincial educational policies are only beginning to acknowledge the need to support immigrant and refugee students in schools (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2012). These recent policies have not addressed the immediate need for support in the classroom when students arrive, or the relationships of identities (Norton, 2000; 2010) and first languages for immigrant and refugee students in provincial education policies of Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2012). Historically, immigrant and refugee students who are new to Canada, residing in Anglo-dominant provinces have not been allowed to use languages, other than English, in the classroom, leading to the devaluing of first languages and cultures within schools (Cummins & Early, 2011). As Sterzuk (2011) asserts, white settler mythology positions white settlers and their descendants “at the top of a racial hierarchy” (p. 4) and perpetuates myths of a “multicultural” (p. 4) society. This white settler mythology plays a role in the lack of understanding of how to establish provincial education policy and planning that is capable of supporting immigrant and refugee students and will be discussed further in the literature review in Chapter 2.
In this study, I consider the current educational context in Saskatchewan, specifically the policy and planning that is needed to facilitate effective learning opportunities for immigrant and refugee students. I use theories related to multilingual learners’ identities (Norton, 2000; 2010); multilingual learning contexts (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Garcia, Skutnabb-Kangas, & Torres, 2007; Harris, 2006; Lytra & Møller, 2011; Maybin, 2006; Rampton, 2006; Wortham, 2006); and the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991) of multilingual learners. While a more in-depth discussion of the theories will occur in the literature review in Chapter 2, a brief overview of these theories will help to further the discussion here in Chapter 1. When referring to the identities of multilingual learners, I use Norton’s (2000) definition of identity which is “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (p. 5). Throughout this study, I will consider the relevance of multilingual learner’s identities and how provincial educational policy and planning is not informed by nor shows evidence of the identities of multilingual learners. When referring to the multilingual learning context, I draw upon Lytra and Møller (2011) who understand the multilingual learning context as a space where multilingual learners “transport, re-contextualise and transform a wide range of linguistic, cultural and multimodal resources, practices, aesthetic preferences and narratives” (p. 1). This study occurs in a multilingual learning context and part of this study explores the dynamic that occurs between immigrant and refugee students in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011). The final theory is cultural capital as Bourdieu (1991) presents it. Bourdieu (1991) states that access to resources such as language learning determine the “volume of cultural capital
(which)...determines the position in the social space” (p. 230). By examining the policy and planning in the provincial educational context, with the understanding of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991), I will further explore the powers that influence the lack of policy and planning for immigrant and refugee students.

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of the use of first languages on the identities (Norton, 2000, 2010) and investments (Norton, 2000) of nine individual multilingual learners when the use of first languages occurs in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011).

Now that I have provided an introduction and brief overview of the theories of immigrant and refugee identities (Norton, 2000), the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011) and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991), I will present the context and rationale for the study, followed by an outline of the entire thesis.

**Context and Rationale**

Currently I am an “English as an Additional Language” (EAL) teacher, a term used by the Ministry of Education in Saskatchewan and Manitoba in place of the term “English as a Second Language teacher,” which will be discussed further in Chapter 2. In this role as an EAL teacher, I work with immigrant and refugees students in an urban, Saskatchewan school. Throughout my tenure as an EAL teacher, I have witnessed first-hand the anxiety and frustration of learners and teachers not knowing what to do when learners first arrive in schools; I perceive these emotions to be the result of the lack of policy and planning required to facilitate effective learning opportunities for immigrant and refugee students. Instead, hastily made plans are developed by administrators and teachers in an attempt to respond to urgent desires on the part of educators and immigrant
and refugee students to communicate in English, and alleviate some of the anxiety being experienced by both students and teachers. These hastily made plans often do not consider the identities (Norton, 2000) and multi-competence (Cook, 2008) of immigrant and refugee students or the pedagogy required to provide effective learning opportunities.

In an effort to implement policy and planning, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education published a Ministry of Education Plan for 2012-13 (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2012). While the Ministry of Education Plan for 2012-13 was published by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, I assert that in fact the Government of Saskatchewan and more specifically the politicians in government are responsible for the lack of policy and planning for immigrant and refugee students. In his mandate letter to the Ministry of Education, Premier Brad Wall charges that the Ministry of Education is “accountable for carrying out a number of priority initiatives and is expected to immediately develop specific targets against which progress can be measured” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Finance, 2010, p. 2). Throughout this three page mandate letter, there is not one reference to immigrant and refugee students. There is a lack of awareness of immigrant and refugee students and therefore a lack of planning and policy that would provide effective learning opportunities for immigrant and refugee students. It is because of this omission of immigrant and refugee students in his mandate to the Minister of Education, that Premier Brad Wall holds responsibility for the lack of planning and policy for immigrant and refugee students. So despite the premier’s apparent lack of awareness of the need for educational policy and planning for immigrant and refugee students, there are three references to EAL students in the Ministry of Education Plan for 2012-13. The first reference is a key action that will: “Establish
language assessment capacity in select school divisions to help determine language ability of immigrant students and their families in order to fulfill their literacy and learning needs” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 3). This key action promises to assess the language skills of immigrant students and their families; however, it does not consider other important factors such as the identities (Norton, 2000) of immigrant and refugee students. In this statement, it is difficult to discern an understanding that students new to Saskatchewan include immigrant and refugee students, not just immigrant students. The actions stated in the government’s plan for education do not consider the diverse needs of both immigrant and refugee students, which may include settlement and transition supports. Also, students who are not new to Saskatchewan but whose first languages are other than English are not even imagined or considered in this key action. Consequently, the absence of identifying immigrant and refugee students and the focus on assessing student language skills, without providing the necessary supports required is concerning, particularly since the Government of Saskatchewan is responsible for supporting immigrant and refugee students throughout their education.

The second key action that references immigrant and refugee students in the Ministry of Education Plan for 2012-13 (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2012) is: “Implementing an identifier in the Student Data System (SDS) for students needing English/French as an Additional Language supports” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 3). This second key action positions immigrant and refugee students as lacking language skills and in need of something such as English language ‘support’. This key action does not consider the knowledge of more than one language, or the multi-
competence (Cook, 2008) of immigrant and refugee students. Cook (2008) defines multi-competence as the interconnectedness of languages that a person understands. However, the aforementioned key action described in the government document is grounded in deficit thinking (Shields, Bishop, & Mazawi, 2006) where students’ perceived struggles in school are attributed to “their cultures and specifically to how they assume those cultures deny students’ access to resources, effective parenting and early learning opportunities” (Guerra & Nelson, 2010, p. 55). This perspective views immigrant and refugees students with a deficit lens (Shields, et. al., 2006), rather than considering the wealth of experience and background knowledge or funds of knowledge students already possess.

The final policy related to immigrant and refugee students states: “An additional $0.6 million is being provided to assess the readiness of new immigrant/English as an Additional Language students” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 15). This statement reiterates the focus on assessment of students’ readiness, implying, by extension, a lack of student readiness because students are perceived as not being fluent in English. Furthermore, this summary does not allot funds towards providing resources for effective learning opportunities for immigrant and refugee students. So while there appears to be effort in creating policy and planning that would support immigrant and refugee students, the key actions outlined in the Ministry Plan for 2012-13 (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2012) are assessment tools to evaluate students’ language skills and do not consider the identities (Norton, 2000) nor multi-competence (Cook, 2008) of immigrant and refugee students. An understanding of how the incorporation of first languages and the identities of multilingual learners can impact education is required.
This knowledge will provide opportunities for student investment (Norton, 2000) and improve the access to cultural capital (Bourdieu 1991) of immigrant and refugee students in Saskatchewan.

While historically, immigrant and refugee students who are new to Canada and residing in Anglo-dominant provinces have not been allowed to use first languages in the classroom (Cook, 2008), recent pedagogical practices have “tolerated” the use of first languages to allow students to negotiate language understanding. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) state that language for language understanding was studied extensively but the connection between languages and identities (Norton, 2000) was “undertheorized” (p. 3), in the past. This tolerance of first languages to negotiate for understanding does not take into account the identities (Norton, 2000) or multi-competence (Cook, 2008) of immigrant and refugee students, factors which impact learning opportunities and access to cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991) for students. In this study, I examine the relationship between first languages and the identities of immigrant and refugee students and how understanding of the relationship between first languages and identities can influence policy and planning through multilingual learning contexts. By not only “tolerating” the use of first languages in classrooms, but by incorporating first languages in multilingual learning contexts (Lytra & Møller, 2011), there can be an impact on the identities of immigrant and refugee students and on learning the target language (Malt & Pavlenko, 2011), English, which, in the Canadian context, provides access to cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991). This study does not focus on the use of first languages to access content in the target language, but acknowledges that this is a useful aspect of using first languages in the classroom. By studying the identities of students in
the classroom through the use of first languages, my broader goal is to influence policy and planning that promotes effective learning opportunities for immigrant and refugee students. By creating effective policy and planning in provincial education, immigrant and refugee students will have greater access to cultural capital.

**Summary and Thesis Outline**

In Chapter 1, I introduced the study by presenting the Saskatchewan learning context for immigrant and refugee students. I also presented the rationale of the study. This initial chapter provided the background of this study which leads into the literature review in Chapter 2.

The outline of this thesis is as follows: In the first chapter, I introduced the study and presented the context for the study. In Chapter 2, I present the theoretical framework and literature review that informs this research. In Chapter 3, I outline the research design and methodology used for the data analysis. Also, in Chapter 3, I present the three research questions used to guide the study. In Chapter 4, I present the findings from the data analysis. In the final chapter, Chapter 5, I apply the findings of the research to the three research questions, and discuss implications for policy and planning in the Saskatchewan educational context. I also suggest possible recommendations for future research.
Chapter 2: Terms of the Study and Literature Review

Introduction

Education for multilingual learners, as it currently stands in Saskatchewan, is too often “subtractive education” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009) where the multilingual learner’s first languages are subtracted to learn the school language of English (p. 41). Not only do current educational policies and lack of planning fail to systematically and strategically incorporate multilingual learners’ first languages, they do not allow the multilingual learners’ identities (Norton, 2000) or abilities to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and multi-competence (Cook, 2008) they already possess. In the previous chapter, the Saskatchewan learning context for immigrant and refugee students was discussed, which established the context for the literature review that is related to the theories of identities (Norton, 2000) and investments (Norton, 2000) of immigrant and refugee students. In this chapter, the theories of identities and investments are used as a foundation to explore the use of first languages of immigrant and refugee students in a multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011). Furthermore, a poststructuralist view using Bourdieu’s (1991) theories on the power dynamics within society, related to immigrant and refugee students, guides my review of policy and planning in Saskatchewan schools.

By insisting that immigrant and refugee students communicate in English only, by using English only assessment tools and teaching practices, the “detrimental impact on the potential success of students” (Shields, et al., 2006) is realized. This deficit thinking on the part of policy-makers, educators and society leads to immigrant and refugee students not gaining full access to cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991). Although language learning is often seen by policy-makers, educators and society as academic and
functional, it is also a part of students’ identities (Norton, 2000). I argue the lack of understanding of how identities impact the life and learning of multilingual learners is one reason multilingual education is not a reality in Saskatchewan classrooms.

Having briefly provided the context for this study, I will define the terms, and review the literature related to identities (Norton, 2000; 2010), and investments (Norton, 2000) of immigrant and refugee students. Finally, I will bring the study to investigate how these theories could reciprocally impact policy and planning in the Saskatchewan educational context.

**Terms of the Study**

**Multilingual Learner**

When referring to immigrant and refugee students, various terms are used in research such as “bilingual” or “L2 Speaker” (Athanasopoulos, 2011) to acknowledge the language learner’s ability. However, by using “bi” or “2” the term limits the number of languages a learner may possess. The term “speaker” also does not fully realize the broad range of literacies (Pennycook, 2010) which learners are developing, and usually include much more than speaking. By using the term “multilingual learner”, the multi-competence (Cook, 2008) of learners is endorsed. Therefore, for this study, I use the term “multilingual learner” to recognize the learner as someone who has one or more first languages and is learning English as another language.

**First Languages**

The terms “L1” or “first language” (Athanasopoulos, 2011; Byrd, 2011) are used when referring to multilingual learner’s original languages: however, these terms do not credit the multilingual learner with the possibility of more than one language as the
learner’s first languages. Thus, in this study I use the term “first languages” to acknowledge the contemporary reality that multilingual learners often simultaneously learn more than one language as their first languages in the home, community and school. When multilingual learners arrive in Canada, they may be learning English as a third, fourth, or even more language. In Canada, the Ministries of Education in Saskatchewan and Manitoba now use the term “English as an Additional Language” or “EAL” rather than the term “English as a Second Language” or “ESL” in an effort to recognize the linguistic reality of many multilingual learners. The term “EAL” does recognize that multilingual learners may be learning English as a third or more language. However, because of historical practices, the term “EAL” often continues to perpetuate the notion that multilingual learners are in need of English language training and positions multilingual learners in an inferior status, rather than acknowledging that students are emergent bilinguals (Garcia, Kleifgen, Falchi, & Columbia University, 2008) or multilingual learners with diverse and sophisticated linguistic competencies (Creese, 2010). So, to acknowledge that many multilingual learners come to Saskatchewan with more than one first language and to acknowledge the linguistic competencies (Creese, 2010) of emergent bilinguals (Garcia et al., 2008), I use the term “first languages” for this study.

**Multilingual Learning Context**

While Miller (2004) uses the term “multilingual context” when referring to society, the term “multilingual learning context” (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Harris, 2006; Lytra & Møller, 2011; Maybin, 2006; Rampton, 2006; Wortham, 2006) aids in narrowing the context and purpose of this study, which is to look at the first languages
and identities (Norton, 2000) of multilingual learners in an urban Saskatchewan public school classroom. Lytra and Møller (2011) refer to the multilingual learning context as having “complex, heterogeneous, communicative spaces. In such spaces, learners transport, re-contextualise and transform a wide range of linguistic, cultural and multimodal resources, practices, aesthetic preferences and narratives” (p. 1). For the purposes of this study, I use the term “multilingual learning context” with the understanding that the multilingual learning context (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Harris, 2006; Lytra & Møller, 2011; Maybin, 2006; Rampton, 2006; Wortham, 2006) is a complex space where a “wide range of linguistic, cultural and multimodal resources” (Lytra & Møller, 2011, p. 1), including first languages, are strategically incorporated and encouraged in the instruction, learning and culture of the school.

**Target Language Peer**

The term “target language peer” refers to the student whose first language is English, the target language (Malt & Pavlenko, 2011), and who attends school alongside the multilingual learner. Intrinsically, this term assumes the target language (Malt & Pavlenko, 2011) to be English, which is reflective of the context of the current study. The term “target language speaker” (Norton Pierce, 1995, p. 12) is used in research but the word “speaker” does not acknowledge the multi-competence (Cook, 2008) of learners. The term that I use in this study is “target language peer” which builds on the terms “target language” (Malt & Pavlenko, 2011, p. 21) and “peer” as Goldstein (2008) refers to “peer social capital” (p. 209), which will be discussed further in the literature review. The term “target language peer” also places the multilingual learner and the target language peer on a more level playing field, for this study. There is a power
dynamic and a positioning in the relationship between multilingual learners and target language peers. This dynamic plays a role in the identities (Norton, 2000) of both the multilingual learner and the target language peer and will be discussed later in this study.

**Community of Learners**

The term, “community of practice” (Denos, et al., 2009, p. 51) draws attention to the places where students spend time in school and the communities that develop within that school context. The researchers go further to analyze what practices or activities occur within a community of practice (Denos, et. al, 2009). Rogoff, et al. (2001) build on this theory of community of practice and acknowledge that the community of practice includes both adults and children investing (Norton, 2000) in the students’ learning and refer to this as a “community of learners” (Rogoff, et. al, 2001, p. 6). For the purpose of this study, I consider the practices and places within the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011) but focus on the social interactions between multilingual learners and will use the term “community of learners” (Rogoff, et. al, 2001) when analyzing the data. As will be discussed further in chapter 4, a community of learners was an unexpected finding. In this study, the community of learners includes multilingual learners with the same first languages, multilingual learners with similar first languages, multilingual learners with a range of first languages and extends to the home.

**Intercultural Interactions**

Plurilingual competence (Py, 1991, p. 130) evaluates the use of two or more languages by a multilingual learner. However, in this study, I want to observe other dynamics involved in multilingual learners’ interactions that are not solely about language use. Pluricultural competence (Coste, Moore, & Zarate, 2009) is seen as a
learner’s ability to take part in interactions about several cultures. The theories of plurilingual competence (Py, 1991) and pluricultural competence (Coste, et al., 2009) are combined to create the term “intercultural interactions” (Coste, et al., 2009, p. 11). Intercultural interactions occur between multilingual learners who use several languages and experiences of several cultures in their interactions (Coste, et. al, 2009). When analyzing the data in this study, I observed intercultural interactions (Coste, et. al, 2009) between multilingual learners.

Literature Review

Identity

In her social constructivist approach to identity, Norton (2000) asserts the role of language is significant in a multilingual learner’s identities. Not only is language used to communicate, but it is “understood with reference to its social meaning” (p. 5). I want to consider not only how languages are used for complex, communicative practices (Lytra & Møller, 2011), but also query how the use of first languages impacts the identities of multilingual learners in the social context of schools. This consideration of the identities of multilingual learners extends to the relationships, interactions or perceptions about target language peers. Norton (2000) also states identity is “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how the relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (p.5). Norton’s (2000) theory of identity enriches this study by acknowledging that identities are dynamic and constructed over various times and spaces. Also, when considering “possibilities for the future” (Norton, 2000, p. 5), the acknowledgement of identities of multilingual learners in the policy and planning of education impacts the access to cultural capital (Bourdieu,
1991) for multilingual learners. Toohey (2000) contextualizes this theory of identity by specifically placing it in the classroom, stating that “…learner’s identities have definite and observable effects on what they can do in classrooms, what kinds of positions…in classrooms they can occupy, and therefore how much they can learn” (p.74). Norton (2010) goes further to challenge the field of English-language teaching to consider practices that will help multilingual learners “develop the capacity for imagining a wider range of identities across time and space” (p.1). One possibility for including the identities and first languages of multilingual learners in the educational context is the use of identity texts (Cummins & Early, 2011). Identity texts reflect back the identities of multilingual learners. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) see identity as “multidimensional and interrelated to its negotiation in different contexts” (p.18). The tools, opportunities and contexts that either allow or negate the identities of multilingual learners are significant in policy and planning for multilingual learning contexts (Lytra & Møller, 2011).

Denos, et al. (2009) build on these theories of identities and state that “identities are complex: on the one hand, they are how a person sees herself, but they are also how a person is positioned by others” (p. 30). When considering how multilingual learners are “positioned by others” (Denos, et. al., 2009, p. 30) in Saskatchewan, I look at how the lack of policy and planning by the provincial government positions multilingual learners in a way that limits the multilingual learners’ access to cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991). Furthermore, this lack of policy and planning to support multilingual learners in the school context creates a tension with teachers, administrators, target language peers and multilingual learners, that then positions (Denos, et. al., 2009) multilingual learners in a
place of want, or lacking, particularly with English language communication. By neglecting to create effective policy and planning to support multilingual learners in the school context, the provincial government is not positioning (Denos, et. al, 2009) multilingual learners in a place of greater access to cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991). In this study, I take into consideration how the identities of the multilingual learners are influenced by the use of first languages in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011) and consider the possibilities for the future. I also examine how the provincial government and target language peers influence the identities (Norton, 2000, 2010) of multilingual learners.

Through my experiences in the educational context, where there has been a lack of policy and planning to effectively support multilingual learners, consideration for the identities of multilingual learners has been omitted. Language learning is seen as academic and functional processes, and when policy is put into practice in schools, it addresses the logistics of functional and urgent target language (Malt & Pavlenko, 2011) negotiation but does not take into account the identities (Norton, 2000, 2010) of multilingual learners. The power dynamics that influence this lack of understanding of the identities of multilingual learners will be discussed later in the power, policy and planning section of this literature review.

**Investment**

Investment signals the “socially and historically constructed relationships of learners to the target language, and their often ambivalent desire to learn and practice it” (Norton, 2000, p. 10). It has been my experience that Anglo-dominant society is often quick to judge the investments (Norton, 2000) or motivation of multilingual learners
based on their perceived level of English language communication. However, as Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) purport, if multilingual learners invest in the target language “they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital” (Norton, 2000, p. 10). Norton (2010) supports this theory of investment by stating that if multilingual learners “have a sense of ownership over meaning-making, they will have enhanced identities as learners and participate more actively in literacy practices” (p.1). By facilitating opportunities for multilingual learners to invest in the learning context, multilingual learners will be able to develop stronger identities and participate more fully in the learning context whereby increasing their access to cultural capital.

In this study, I explore the investments (Norton, 2000) of multilingual learners in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011). While some effort by the Ministry of Education in Saskatchewan is put into evaluating the perceived investments or motivation of multilingual learners by evaluating English language skills (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2012), little effort is put into supporting the investments of multilingual learners through a multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011). Policy and planning for the support of identities (Norton, 2000, 2011) of multilingual learners must be in place to create effective opportunities for multilingual learners in classrooms. Government policies that consider the identities of multilingual learners, and create multilingual learning contexts (Lytra & Møller, 2011), can provide support for the investments of multilingual learners. Those government policies can also provide opportunities for greater access to cultural capital for multilingual learners.
Multilingual Learning Context

Multilingual learning contexts (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Harris, 2006; Lytra & Møller, 2011; Maybin, 2006; Rampton, 2006; Wortham, 2006) occur in schools that “exert educational effort that takes into account and builds further on the diversity of languages and literacy practices that children and youth bring to school” (Garcia, et al., 2007, p. 14). A multilingual learning context not only tolerates the use of first languages to negotiate language understanding, but promotes an environment in which multilingual learners have access to instruction, learning and a school culture that uses first languages. By implementing a multilingual learning context, not only are the identities (Norton, 2000, 2010) of multilingual learners included in the classroom, but a space is provided where the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991) of multilingual learners can be placed on a more level playing field with target language peers. By doing so, an opportunity is provided for multilingual learners to invest in schools and “have a good return on that investment” (Norton, 2000, p. 10).

A multilingual learning context (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Harris, 2006; Lytra & Møller, 2011; Maybin, 2006; Rampton, 2006; Wortham, 2006) rejects deficit thinking (Shields, et al., 2006) as a guide in developing policy and planning, and positions (Denos, et. al., 2009) multilingual learners as contributing members of the learning context who are investing (Norton, 2000) in meaningful and substantial ways. By incorporating first languages in the multilingual learning context, the multilingual learners’ identities are being acknowledged and multilingual learners are investing (Norton, 2000) with a greater return on that investment (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).
While the multilingual learner’s “linguistic capital” (Goldstein, 2008, p. 209) sees a return, it is often the multilingual learner’s “peer social capital” (Goldstein, 2008, p. 209) that will see the greatest investment (Norton, 2000) and return. Multilingual learners want to be contributing members of society and want to interact with target language peers. By reversing the effects of a monolingual society (Goldstein, 2008) through the inclusion of first languages in the instruction, learning and culture of schools, the identities and investments of multilingual learners will be realized.

Theories related to identities (Norton, 2000, 2010) and investments (Norton, 2000) of multilingual learners in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011) all appear to be well-intentioned, but as L. Brodgen (personal communication, May 2009) states, good intentions are not enough. Why is it that the multilingual learning context is seen as a fad or novel concept? The following section will consider some of the forces at play in policy and planning, which refuse to allow the multilingual learning context to become a reality in Saskatchewan.

**Power, Policy and Planning**

Bourdieu (1991) describes literacy as access to symbolic and material resources, creating an environment where social difference or inequality can be nurtured. Heller (2008) goes further to state that in regard to literacy testing, Bourdieu would likely suggest it is a “masking of the mechanisms of symbolic domination” (p. 51). Language standardization is used in “constructing the notion of the modern nation-state” (Baumann & Briggs, 2003, p. 59) and further promotes white settler mythology (Sterzuk, 2011). These notions are used to retain “control over capital and property, while being seen to champion democracy and equality” (Baumann & Briggs, 2003, p. 59). These beliefs
have been applied in Canada and while it may not be a conscious decision, the beliefs continue to be followed religiously in Saskatchewan. A discourse of pride in stating that democracy and equality are practiced freely in Saskatchewan is celebrated in government documents (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2012), and could be further demonstrated by the number of newcomers accepted into the province (Statistics Canada, 2012). Despite this public discourse of altruism, there is a lack of official policy and planning that could support multilingual learners. When policy and planning is in place to support multilingual learners, it frequently fails to contemplate, much less address the identities of multilingual learners through the multilingual learning context. Rather, policy ensures symbolic domination (Heller, 2008) and belief in an imagined nation-state (Baumann and Briggs, 2003) that continues to promote white settler mythology (Sterzuk, 2011). According to Skutnabb-Kangas (2009) the neglect of “mother tongue medium (MTM) education” (p.342) “curtails the development of the children’s capabilities and perpetuates poverty” (p. 340). By refusing to provide policy and planning that supports the identities of multilingual learners, a class system has been systematically imbedded within the educational context where multilingual learners are only able to attain a certain level of ability or cultural capital within the educational context. This lack of planning and policy perpetuates a social hierarchy that is reproduced and sustained in the educational context.

Luke (2008) challenges the faith of politicians, senior bureaucrats and public intellectuals in the good intentions of educators to ensure that the power of literacy education be realized in a “lived and material difference” (p. 348). He sees that deferring literacy education to the good intentions of educators as risky because this scenario leaves
too much to chance. While I agree that too much is left to chance in this scenario, it is more likely considered too onerous and complicated for politicians to understand the dynamics involved in the life and education of multilingual learners. It is much easier to hope that educators are doing the right thing and if this doesn’t work and is exposed as having failed, the educators can be called in to question and blamed for the inadequacies.

Parental factors also play a part in educator’s abilities to implement a multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011). The use of an “imagined” standard English or authentic English “an ideological construct of the dominant global variety of spoken English” (Shin, 2012, p. 198) is often seen as the goal of education and anything that might be perceived as thwarting this effort, such as first languages, is considered detrimental to students’ education (Siegel, 2006). However, one reason parents may have these perceptions is because of a “monolinguistic society” (Goldstein, 2008, p. 213) that insists on English only. Policies and practices in the educational context are in place to ensure the maintenance of English and the exclusion of a society where first languages are embraced.

Another factor that comes into play in the school learning context is the power dynamic in social interactions between multilingual learners and target language peers (Miller, 2004). Multilingual learners may perceive themselves as inferior or lacking in ability to communicate effectively with target language peers, especially when the teacher models are monolinguals. Multilingual learners often see target language peers as having the power or authority in the interactions. Conversely, target language peers may take for granted their power and assume that it is the job of multilingual learners to adapt to be understood.
In mainstream, Anglo-dominant educational contexts, it has been the responsibility of multilingual learners to learn the target language (Malt & Pavlenko, 2011) English, as quickly as possible so that they are able to communicate in English with target language peers and educators. Conversely, it has not been the responsibility of educators or target language peers to learn the first languages of multilingual learners. This power dynamic plays a significant role in the ways in which multilingual learners negotiate identities and language learning and demonstrates the need for a multilingual learning context.

In Saskatchewan, discussions around the needs of multilingual learners have come to the forefront of education, in part because of the sheer number of multilingual learners who continue to arrive in the province (Statistics Canada, 2012). While scrambling to gain a grasp on the situation, policy-makers are developing policy and planning that does not include the identities of multilingual learners. Policy can be developed to include the identities of multilingual learners in education through a multilingual learning context that incorporates first languages. By creating policy and planning that supports multilingual learning contexts (Lytra & Møller, 2011), the investments (Norton, 2000) and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991) of multilingual learners will increase. The reverse is also true. The suppression or exclusion of the identities of multilingual learners in the education context decreases the investments and therefore access to cultural capital of multilingual learners.

Through the use of first languages in a multilingual learning context, the identities of multilingual learners can be supported. When first languages are a part of the learning context, multilingual learner’s identities are also included. It is important that policy
makers recognize this and insist that new policy and planning be implemented to include the identities and first languages of multilingual learners. Therefore, the beliefs regarding nation-state (Baumann and Briggs, 2003) and a monolinguisic society (Goldstein, 2008) present challenges in educating politicians, policy-makers, teachers, parents and multilingual learners on the merits of multilingual learning contexts.

While there has been significant research regarding the identities and first languages of multilingual learners in the learning context, there is a gap of this research in the Saskatchewan educational context. Therefore, I have chosen to focus this research on the identities and first languages of multilingual learners in the Saskatchewan educational context.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature related to the identities (Norton, 2000, 2010) and investments (Norton, 2000) of multilingual learners as a foundation to explore the use of first languages in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011). When the identities of multilingual learners are included and encouraged in the multilingual learning context, the investments of multilingual learners will be greater. These investments will provide greater access to cultural capital for multilingual learners to. A poststructuralist lens, using Bourdieu’s (1991) research on the power dynamics within society, was used to guide the review of policy and planning in Saskatchewan schools (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2012). The following chapter presents the research design and methodology used for this study.
Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

In the previous two chapters, I provided an overview of the urban, Saskatchewan school context for multilingual learners. I also defined the terms of the study and reviewed the literature to analyze the use of first languages in facilitating effective learning opportunities for multilingual learners. In this chapter, I begin by presenting the research questions and purpose of this study. I then review the school context and introduce the nine, multilingual learner participants in the study. After that, I present the procedures and instruments used in carrying out the research in the classroom. This section includes a list of research tasks and the questions used for the pre and post interviews with multilingual learners. Finally, I explain how the data analysis took place and I include the Coding Terms and Symbols, (Table 3-2) used for coding the transcripts from the pre and post interviews.

Questions and Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of the use of first languages on the identities (Norton, 2000, 2010) and investments (Norton, 2000) of nine individual multilingual learners when the use of first languages occurs in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011). The research questions for this study are:

1. How does the use of first languages impact the identities of multilingual learners?

2. How do multilingual learners invest in the multilingual learning context where first languages are used?
3. How does the use of first languages impact the perception of target language peers by multilingual learners?

**Context**

There continues to be a significant increase in the number of multilingual learners arriving in Canada and more recently Saskatchewan (Statistics Canada, 2012). This study takes place in an urban elementary school in southern Saskatchewan where multilingual learners are attending school. The population of this school is just over 340 students and 33 staff. Specific programming includes English as an Additional Language, Pre-Kindergarten, Reading Effects, Speech and Language, School Counselor, and Learning Resource. The school is a reflection of the neighbourhood’s demographics. Within this demographic there are target language peers along with multilingual learners from Russia, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, China, Croatia, Guatemala, Honduras, the Philippines, Burma, Somalia and South Korea. Many families are connected to First Nations reserves that are located outside of the city. The self-identified Aboriginal population of the school is approximately 40% and the newcomers to Canada are approximately 21%.

**Participants**

Grade seven and eight multilingual learners at this school were invited to participate in the study. The multilingual learners in this group have been in Canada for three or fewer years, prior to the study. One of the multilingual learners has been in Canada for two months, prior to the study. The multilingual learners have one or more first languages that include; Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi, Karen, Chinese, Spanish and Croatian. For most of the multilingual learners, this school is their first exposure to Canadian
schools. One multilingual learner attended one other school in this city. I also contacted parents of the multilingual learners to receive permission for their children to participate in the study.

As a researcher and an EAL teacher at this school, I am also a participant in this study. I use a research journal where I record classroom observations and reflect on the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011).

**Procedure and Instruments**

This study took place over a five-week period. After a research application was submitted, ethics approval was received from the University of Regina and the Public School Board. The research project took place using the following tasks:

**Table 3-1: Research Tasks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Tasks:</th>
<th>Week One</th>
<th>Week Two</th>
<th>Week Three</th>
<th>Week Four</th>
<th>Week Five</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact Parents and Multilingual Learners</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present and Discuss Interview Questions</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement Language Activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Writing by Multilingual Learners</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Recording by Researcher</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once approval was received from the Research Ethics Board and the Letter of Invitation (see Appendix C) was translated into the first languages of the multilingual
learners, week one of the project began as is shown in the Research Task Table (see Table 3-1). A detailed explanation of research tasks is provided in the Timeline Table (see Appendix: F).

The first week I sent home a Letter of Invitation that was written in English and translated into first languages. I then followed up with individual meetings with parents and multilingual learners. I arranged a time with parents to visit their homes so I could explain the purpose and details of the study. During this visit, parents and multilingual learners could ask questions and choose whether or not they wanted to be a part of the study. The option to have an interpreter available for the visit was given. Any expenses incurred for the hiring of the interpreter were to be paid by me, though all families chose not to have an interpreter present. I also provided contact information for families to email or phone me with further questions. Families were notified that they could be informed and read copies of the research when it is completed. Parents and multilingual learners were also informed that they could choose to withdraw from the study at anytime. Those parents and multilingual learners who chose to give permission to participate in the research study signed the Consent Form for Parents (see Appendix D) and the Assent Form for Multilingual Learners (see Appendix E).

After the multilingual learners were informed of the research and chose whether or not they wanted to participate by signing assent forms, the interview questions were presented in the classroom, along with explanation and opportunity for discussion.

**Interview Questions**

1. What first languages do you speak? read? write? think?
2. What skills do you use to help you understand something new at school?
3. What languages do your friends at school speak?

4. Is it helpful to use first languages at school?

5. Do you think first languages will help you learn English?

The interview questions were used to guide the interviews that took place later in the week. Multilingual learners were asked to respond to each question through journal writing. The students talked with other multilingual learners in the classroom and with me to consolidate their understanding of the interview questions. Time and space was provided so that multilingual learners were able to record responses to the questions, privately, in journals. Throughout week two, the students met with me to conduct audio-recorded interviews. Multilingual learners could use the journals as the interviews took place. The use of journals in this research study is similar to research that Miller (2004) conducted with English as a Second Language (ESL) students. Miller asked ESL students to reflect on the politics that occurred in the school context in relation to target language peers. In that study, as in this study, students recorded their reflections in diaries before they met with the researcher for an interview. Miller (2004) advocates using journals or diaries because a journal …takes the heat off the speaker. There is no wait time for responses, no awkward long pauses, no pressure to respond, no agonizing search for an unknown or forgotten word. Students can formulate in their own time what they want to say, and the discourse is not overtly shaped by the researcher. (p. 298)

During each of the five weeks, I kept an anecdotal reflection journal where I recorded my observations of student comments and behaviours throughout the project. I recorded my observations on the first, third and fifth day of each week, after the daily
lessons had occurred. It is necessary to indicate that both the journals of the multilingual learners and me are private because while I am the researcher of this project, I continue to be the daily EAL teacher of the multilingual learners. I wanted to ensure that it was understood by multilingual learners that the writing that occurred in the journals would not be used for formal assessments and evaluations in the classroom, but used for the purposes of this study.

The third and fourth weeks involved the language activities. In week three, a first languages writing project took place. The project was introduced at the beginning of the week and students had daily class time as well as support from other multilingual learners and me, to work on and complete the first languages activities. Multilingual learners were encouraged to write the majority or the entire project in first languages. Multilingual learners were also asked to write their thoughts about the project in journals. At the end of the week, learners had opportunity to share the first languages activities in the multilingual learning context.

The second language activity took place in week four. Similar to the previous week, a writing project occurred. However, in week four, multilingual learners were directed to write the project in first languages and the target language (Malt & Pavlenko, 2011), English. Like the previous week, the project was introduced at the beginning of the week and multilingual learners had daily class time as well as support from other multilingual learners and me, to work on and complete the writing project. Students were asked to record their thoughts about the project, in journals. At the end of the week, multilingual learners had opportunity to share the language activities in the classroom.
For week five, the interview questions were again presented in the classroom, along with explanation and opportunity for discussion. Multilingual learners were asked to respond to each question in journals. Students could talk with other multilingual learners and me to consolidate their understanding of the interview questions, if they so chose. Time and space were provided so that multilingual learners were able to record responses to the questions in journals. Throughout week five, students met with me to participate in audio-recorded post-interviews, privately.

At the end of the fifth week, multilingual learners were informed that the research project was completed. Once again, considering the role I play as a researcher and an EAL teacher, I wanted to ensure that students were clear about when the research project had ended and the daily classroom activities continued. The data gained from the interviews and anecdotal records was used in the data analysis.

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis of this research was viewed with both a social constructivist framework (Bourdieu, 1991) where identity is seen as discursive and a poststructuralist framework (Foucault, 1982) that considers the role of power relations. I also considered the relationships between the first languages, identities (Norton, 2000, 2010) and investments (Norton, 2000) of multilingual learners. Four areas of study emerged from the data and will be discussed further at the beginning of Chapter 4. The four areas of study include: First Languages for Understanding and Pronunciation; First Languages as Identity (Norton, 2000, 2011); First Languages for Intercultural Interactions (Coste, et al., 2009); and First Languages Facilitate a Multilingual Community of Learners (Rogoff, et al., 2001). Data analysis included consideration of the three research questions:
1. How does the incorporation of first languages impact the identities of multilingual learners?

2. How do multilingual learners invest in the multilingual learning context where first languages are used?

3. How does the use of first languages impact the perception of target language peers by multilingual learners?

After I transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews, a coding system (see Table 3-2) was used in the analysis of the interviews which helped to identify and sort patterns and revelations about multilingual learner identities (Norton, 2000, 2010) and the use of first languages in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011).

**Table 3-2: Coding Terms and Symbols**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding Term</th>
<th>Coding Symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment</td>
<td>Inv.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Languages</td>
<td>FL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target Language</td>
<td>TL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target Language Peer</td>
<td>TLP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After initially reading the transcripts, I re-read the transcripts using the coding terms and symbols. I colour-coded each symbol and used different markers to write the various codes throughout the transcripts. I read through the transcripts three times,
coding each time. I made several colour copies of the coded transcripts and separated each piece of coded transcript by cutting them apart. I then assembled all the coded pieces into the same code eg: all identity pieces together, all investment pieces together, etc. I then created a word document listing all of the coded transcript pieces under the various codes. The word document and the coded pieces of data were then used in the data analysis.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the research questions and purpose of the study. I also identified the school context of the multilingual learners who participated in the study. I introduced the participants and outlined the procedures of the research in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011). Finally, I described the procedures for data analysis, which included the coding terms and symbols for the transcripts of the recorded pre and post interviews with multilingual learners. The following chapter presents the findings of the research conducted in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011).
Chapter 4: Findings of the Study

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explained the methodology of this study. In Chapter 4, I explore the data gathered from the study and relate it to the following: first languages, identities (Norton, 2000, 2010), investments (Norton, 2000), the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011), a community of learners (Rogoff, et al., 2001) and intercultural interactions (Coste, et. al., 2009).

In the analysis of the data, four ways that the use of first languages in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011) impact the multilingual learner were identified:

1) First Languages for Understanding and Pronunciation: In my experiences as a teacher, I have observed that teachers are willing to allow students to use first languages to negotiate the understanding or pronunciation of target language (Malt & Pavlenko, 2011) words. In the interviews with multilingual learners, there was mention of using first languages for understanding and pronunciation. However, as will be seen later in this chapter, these references did not dominate the interviews.

2) First Languages as Identity (Norton, 2000, 2010): Building on the theories of identities, this study connects the use of first languages in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011) to the identities of multilingual learners.

3) First Languages for Intercultural Interaction (Coste, et. al., 2009): As Coste, et al., (2009) explain, intercultural interactions occur between multilingual
learners who have a variety of first languages. The interactions between multilingual learners with a variety of first languages includes discussions about first countries and cities as well as the similarities and differences between first languages.

4) First Languages Facilitate a Multilingual Community of Learners (Rogoff, et. al., 2001): One of the unexpected observations of this study is the development of a community of learners amongst the multilingual learners. While the multilingual learners in this study mentioned the use of first languages for understanding and pronunciation, it became apparent that the use of first languages influences identities (Norton, 2000, 2010) and intercultural interactions (Coste, et. al. 2009) and facilitates a community of learners (Rogoff, et. al., 2001). In the rest of this chapter, I will use the data to discuss the impact of first languages on the identities, and intercultural interactions (Coste, et. al, 2009) of multilingual learners and how a community of learners (Rogoff, et. al., 2001) can develop.

To review, this study includes nine multilingual learners who chose to participate in this study. The research activities occurred in a classroom that usually only included multilingual learners. Pre-interviews and post-interviews as well as first languages and target language (Malt & Pavlenko, 2010) writing assignments were used in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011). The data gathered from the transcripts of the interviews as well as observations I record in my research journal are used in the data analysis. I am the researcher in this study and the EAL teacher at this urban, Saskatchewan school. The text taken from the interview transcripts and my research journal are italicized throughout this chapter.
First Languages for Understanding and Pronunciation

In the interview data, multilingual learners make references to using first languages to negotiate for understanding and for pronunciation of English words. For example, Bilal is a multilingual learner who moved to Canada from Pakistan, four months before the study. In the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Möller, 2011), Bilal denies being able to read or write first languages and does not write either of the writing assignments in his first languages. However, in the pre and post interviews, which took place in a private room away from the multilingual learning context, Bilal mentions using first languages to help with understanding and pronunciation:

...first languages will help us learn English because we can understand it...

(Bilal)

...our language and then we can say it in English. Say the stuff in English. (Bilal)

Heller (2008) states multilingual learners have “different positions and therefore different interests, with respect to the resources circulating in those spaces and connected to the concept of literacy” (p. 51). It appears Bilal does not want to publicly acknowledge his first languages in the multilingual learning context. However, he is willing to invest in first languages to help with understanding and pronunciation. Bilal also indicates that by using first languages, it helps him learn the target language (Malt & Pavlenko, 2011), English. Bilal appears to be selective and intentional in his investments in the multilingual learning context based on his interests and his position within this context as a multilingual learner.

Similarly, Jieyi is a multilingual learner who uses three Chinese languages. She moved from China to Canada three years before the study and this was the second school
she attended in Canada. While she had much to say about the impact of first languages, as we will see further in the study, she makes one reference to first languages being used for understanding:

...if they know, they can use Chinese to tell me what that means, yeah. (Jieyi)

As Lave & Winger (1991) state, when referring to the community of learners, multilingual learners may see that “to learn means to practice with others, using particular community tools” (p.51). Jieyi sees that first languages can help her with understanding. She also realizes the importance of the community of learners (Rogoff, et. al., 2001). Jieyi appreciates students in the community of learners who used the same first language of Mandarin Chinese.

Manpreet is another multilingual learner who states that he uses first languages for understanding. Manpreet is a multilingual learner who came to Canada from India, seven months prior to the study. During the interviews, Manpreet states he does not believe first languages would be helpful in school:

No its not, no it’s not helpful to use first languages at school. (Manpreet)

As Lytra and Møller (2011) state, “high levels of student agency….open up possibilities to negotiate what counts as knowledge and how knowledge is distributed in the classroom rather than being the teacher’s prerogative” (p. 1). Here it appears that Manpreet did not choose to indicate the use first languages in school or use his agency to determine what counts, rather than allowing my intentions as a teacher to set the agenda. As Manpreet answers more questions in the interview, however, the use of first languages in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011) became apparent through Manpreet’s answers:
Like some words that I don’t know how to pronounce it, first I think in my language then I think about it in English. (Manpreet)

Manpreet indicates that he uses first languages when thinking and trying to pronounce a word in the target language (Malt & Pavlenko, 2011). This section of the data transcript was from the pre-interviews, before the first languages and English writing assignments were carried out in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011). It is worth noting that in my research journal there are several entries that document discussions Manpreet has with other multilingual learners using the same first languages.

The use of first languages in this utilitarian manner, to negotiate understanding and pronunciation is seen by multilingual learners to be helpful, but by far does not dominate the interviews. I illustrate further in the analysis of the interviews, and in the observations taken from my research journal, the multilingual learners also use first languages in the multilingual learning context in a broader manner.

**First Languages and Identity**

Throughout the interviews, there is evidence that the first languages of the multilingual learners help create the multilingual learners’ identities (Norton, 2000, 2010). The discussions around first languages often evoke strong emotions from the multilingual learners that I had not previously observed in the classroom. John is a multilingual learner who moved to Canada from Croatia, seven months before the study and appears eager to learn and be a part of the study. In every interview question where his answers refer to first languages, he speaks of Croatian, which is one of his first languages, as “my language”:

*I speak Croatian, my language...* (John)
Ok, what skills do you use to help you understand something new at school?

(Cynthia)

My language. Google translate. Ask teachers. (John)

Because sometimes I think in my language in my class when I do work... (John)

My language help me a lot of times in English and I’m, and it will help me, me all times. If we can’t use our language for, in school, for me that might be hard.

(John)

Identities can be seen as “social, discursive, and narrative (whereby multilingual learners)…appeal in an attempt to self-name, to self-characterize, and to claim social spaces and social prerogatives” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p. 19). John is a multilingual learner who appears in the school as fun-loving and sometimes aloof. However, in the multilingual learning context, he speaks passionately about “my language” (John). Through first languages, John negotiates a sense of self (Heller, 1987) and self-names his first language as a part of his identities. In these transcripts of John’s responses to the interview questions, his continuous reference to “my language” indicates that John is willing to invest in the multilingual learning context to learn the target language (Malt & Pavlenko, 2011).

Likewise, Manmeet reveals how first languages are a part of her identities. Manmeet is a multilingual learner who moved to Canada from India, seven months prior to the study. Manmeet also appears eager to learn and actively invest in the study. She references first languages:

My first language Punjabi, it’s good. (Manmeet)

I can’t read Urdu because it’s not my first language... (Manmeet)
Like in my language, some of them know like Urdu. (Manmeet)

Manmeet evaluates her abilities in relation to first languages. Norton and Toohey (2011) purport that the conditions around language learning and identity are “in states of production” and multilingual learners “may be able to reframe their relationship with interlocutors, thereby changing their access to practices and resources, and claim alternative identities from which to speak, listen, read, or write” (p. 415). Through the first statement, Manmeet recognizes that her ability in her first language Punjabi is good. In the second statement, she reveals that she is not able to read in another first language Urdu, because she does not consider Urdu to be her first language. Later in the section entitled Community of Learners Extends to the Home, Manmeet explains how she wants to invest in learning Urdu with the help of her grandparents. Manmeet is able to provide a complex evaluation and understanding of first languages and identities, and reframe her identities (Norton & Toohey, 2011) to make investments that she determines will provide her access to cultural capital. The final statement in this section from Manmeet shows that one of her first languages, Punjabi, is a part of her identities, as is her conception of self as a multilingual person. She sees a connection to other peers whose first language is also Punjabi and who are likely to know Urdu. This understanding of the relationship between first languages and identities leads to further discussions about first languages for intercultural interactions (Coste, et. al. 2009).

First Languages for Intercultural Interactions

Multilingual learners also engage in intercultural interactions (Coste, et al., 2009) between first languages and first countries and cities. Intercultural interactions (Coste, et. al., 2009) take place between people with a range of first languages, first countries and
first cultures. Intercultural interactions involve awareness, on the part of multilingual learners, about the complexity of language and include discussions around identities and first languages. As an EAL teacher, I am often asked if students are only able to work with other students who have the same first languages. Through the following interview transcripts and an impromptu discussion I recorded in my research journal, I observe that intercultural interactions (Coste, et. al., 2009) occur in the multilingual learning context where a range of first languages are used. These interactions serve as key conversational events and support the production of meaning and pinpoint the emergence of the learners’ multilingual competence (Bono & Melo-Pfeifer, 2011).

Jieyi’s investments in the multilingual learning context appear to renew an interest in further developing her first languages. Jieyi’s investments also lead to intercultural interactions with Manmeet. Discussions about first languages with Jieyi include references to China and the city she grew up in before coming to Canada:

*Um, I know three, like one is my city language.* (Jieyi)

*My city’s language, I don’t know what that’s called and Mandarin and Cantonese. Yep.* (Jieyi)

Jieyi demonstrates a “cross-linguistic interaction with metalinguistic awareness (that helps to)…create a powerful linguistic toolbox” (Bono & Melo-Pfeifer, 2011, p. 292). Jieyi’s metalinguistic awareness is apparent throughout the interviews and interactions in the multilingual learning context. In my research journal, I recorded that Jieyi has lived in Canada for three years before this study and invests in learning the target language (Malt & Pavlenko, 2011), English, and being a part of the perceived Canadian culture. Jieyi has not returned to China for a visit, though she hopes to one day. Still she
identifies with the first city where she was born and it’s language. Jieyi does not remember the English name of her first language but she is able to communicate it’s relation to other first languages in China and Jieyi and has intercultural interactions (Coste, et. al., 2009) about first languages. Manmeet also makes reference to first languages and her first country, India:

...because in our country it have like 27 languages. So most I can write in three language- Hindi, Punjabi and English. (Manmeet)

Manmeet is able to “circulate and recycle prior linguistic competence and build connections between the languages in (her) repertoires” (Bono & Melo-Pfeifer, 2011, p. 292). Manmeet knew of 27 languages that are used in India. Manmeet also evaluates her ability in those first languages and determines that she could write in Hindi, Punjabi and English. It is interesting to note that Manmeet mentions her ability to write in the first language of English, which is also the target language (Malt & Pavlenko, 2011). In other discussions in the multilingual learning context, Manmeet sometimes describes her target language skills as not good (Cynthia, research journal).

In my research journal, I record an impromptu discussion between Jieyi, Manmeet and myself that took place one day, while I was working at my desk in the multilingual learning context. The conversation begins as a critique of the English language instruction the learners had received in their first countries:

... the teachers who taught English in their first countries, spoke funny English and they had a hard time not laughing at the teachers. They also said that the English that their teachers taught would not be understood in Canada. (Cynthia, Research Journal)
Jieyi and Manmeet demonstrate “attitudes of tolerance, of curiosity about things new and different, of intercultural perception and of identity awareness” (Coste, et. al., 2009, p. 25). The awareness between Jieyi and Manmeet develops about some of the similarities of their life experiences and they are amused that they both tried to hide laughing at their English teachers and saw their English teachers in China and India as lacking in language ability. Through this intercultural interaction (Coste, et. al., 2009) Jieyi, Manmeet and myself soon realize that there are more similarities between the learners’ first languages, Mandarin and Hindi, and their first countries, China and India. Each student is able to acknowledge one language as the language of their country, Mandarin and Hindi, and another as the language of the city, Cantonese and Punjabi. This discussion of first languages created a strong bond between Jieyi and Manmeet, as the learners realize that they have many things in common which they had not previously recognized. This bond helps to create a community of learners (Rogoff, et. al., 2001) which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter. This intercultural interaction (Coste, et. al., 2009) between Jieyi and Manmeet also provides information and insight for me as the researcher and educator to once again see that while first languages are used for communicating, they also provide a forum for multilingual learners to share their identities (Norton, 2000, 2010) and become aware of the power of this information. These intercultural interactions indicate these multilingual learners have an awareness of first languages and view first languages in a way that extends to first countries and cities.

**First Languages Facilitates a Community of Learners**

The multilingual learners of this study are aware of and invest (Norton, 2000) in a community of learners (Rogoff, et al., 2001). As was discussed earlier in the literature
review, a community of learners (Rogoff, et. al., 2001) occurs in the learning context where investments (Norton, 2000) occur to support learning. These investments involve practices that create communities (Denos, et al., 2009) within the school context. For example, Ali is a multilingual learner who came to Canada from Pakistan three months prior to the study. In school, Ali appears to be shy and usually does not speak in class. During the interviews, Ali’s responses to the questions are brief; sometimes one word responses and sometimes his responses are inaudible. However, when I ask about whether or not using first languages in school is helpful, Ali states that it is helpful and he identifies how important the multilingual community of learners is to him:

_Cause I have friends who understand my language._ (Ali)

Within the community of learners, Ali negotiates a sense of self (Heller, 1987) where he sometimes accesses “social networks that give learners the opportunity to speak” (Norton, 2000, p. 5). Ali appreciates the relationships he has with other multilingual learners with the same first languages, as illustrated by his response in the interview. I also record in my research journal that there is a physical closeness between Ali and Bilal. Ali and Bilal sit right beside each other in the classroom, sometimes touching elbows. This closeness is part of the mutual investment (Norton, 2000) that Ali and Bilal make in the community of learners. Bilal uses first languages to help Ali with assignments in the multilingual learning context and Ali appreciates this support.

Jieyi, Manmeet and John also discuss the importance of a multilingual community of learners:

_Um, there’s a lot of friends that’s from another country and like India, Pakistan, they speak Urdu, Punjabi, English and Spanish and French (laughs)._ (Jieyi)
...it’s good to have friends in our same languages and it’s good to have other ones too. We can learn about that too. (Manmeet)

Like we’re all friends with my teacher too, we’re family. (Manmeet)

If we can’t use our language for, in school, for me that might be hard. (John)

When I asked John for clarification on who “we” refers to in this statement, he said that he meant all of the students learning English. As Rogoff, et al. (2001) state, a community of learners “involves relationships among people based on common endeavors- trying to accomplish some things together- with some stability of involvement and attention to the ways that members relate to each other” (p. 10). The community of learners have had a stable involvement in this multilingual learning context over the last few months and have built relationships where they can relate to each other. I also observe this community of learners within the multilingual learning context, throughout the study, and record it in my research journal:

There appears to be a community of learners that has developed between the multilingual learners. (Cynthia, Research Journal)

As I analyze the data from the interview transcripts and my research journal, I realize there are specific references to the community of learners that develop in the multilingual learning context. The community of learners includes learners who use the same first languages, learners who use similar first languages, as well as learners with a range of first languages. This community of learners also extends to the home. In the following section, I use the data to further explore the community of learners.
Community of Learners with Same First Languages

The community of learners (Rogoff, et. al., 2001) within the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011) includes multilingual learners who have the same first languages. Lesli is a multilingual learner who came to Canada from Guatemala, four months prior to the study. Lesli invests (Norton, 2000) in the community of learners (Rogoff, et. al., 2001) and refers specifically to those who speak the same first language:

Because sometimes I don’t understand very well so I have to ask some friends who speak Spanish. (Lesli)

The community of learners involves multilingual learners who are “inventing and adapting…..who learn from their efforts to develop the principles and practices for themselves” (Rogoff, et. al., 2001, p. 10). Lesli is choosing to invent and adapt in the multilingual learning context to learn the target language (Malt & Pavlenko, 2011). One way she invests in the multilingual learning context is by asking for help from peers with the same first language. Similarly, Bilal and Manmeet express their awareness of the community of learners with the same first languages:

If I don’t get anything and the other person knows that he can tell me that in my first languages and I can understand and he can use my help too. (Bilal)

So it’s good, it’s very good helping each other in our language. (Manmeet)

When multilingual learners’ speak, they are “organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world” (Norton, 2000, p. 11). Bilal and Manmeet recognize that the community of learners with the same first languages could help each other in understanding. Both students indicate that this help between
multilingual learners was reciprocal. While the community of learners includes students with the same first languages, it also extends to students with similar first languages.

**Community of Learners with Similar First Languages**

As Bono and Melo-Pfeifer (2011) report, the cross-linguistic interplay of languages is one of many tools multilingual learners use in developing their skills and knowledge. The use of first languages in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011) supports this cross-linguistic interplay of languages. In the following excerpt, Manmeet discusses the communication she shares with a student I call Mirah. Mirah is a multilingual learner who chose not to be a part of the study. Manmeet insists that she and Mirah do not speak the same first languages. However, because their first languages are similar, Mirah speaks Urdu and Manmeet speaks Punjabi and Hindi, Manmeet believes that they are able to negotiate some understanding and find similarities between their first languages:

> And when I talk to my friends, like Mirah, they can understand me very well because we speak same languages, it’s good to have friends in our same languages and it’s good to have other ones too. (Manmeet)

“Multilingual verbal interaction… can also be a means to….create emotional proximity” (Bono & Melo-Pfeifer, 2011, p. 293). Manmeet is able to make a cross-linguistic comparison (Bono & Melo-Pfeifer, 2011) between Urdu and Punjabi with Mirah and can see how that will support learning in the multilingual learning context. While Mirah did not participate in the study, she continues to be an active member of the community of learners (Rogoff, et. al., 2001), outside the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011), in the mainstream classroom and in the hallways at school. There is an emotional
connection within the community of learners and one way that Manmeet and Mirah negotiate that emotional proximity is through verbal interaction between similar first languages.

The community of learners (Rogoff, et. al., 2001) includes multilingual learners with the same first languages and multilingual learners with similar first languages. However, the community of learners also extends to learners with a range of first languages.

**Community of Learners with a Range of First Languages**

The multilingual learners who participated in this study are metalinguistically aware (Bialystok & Barac, 2012; Cummins, 1978) of similarities and differences between the range of first languages as is evidenced by the multilingual learners interview responses. The multilingual learners invest (Norton, 2000) in the community of learners (Rogoff, et. al., 2001) that develops with students who have a range of first languages. I ask “What languages do your friends at school speak?” Jieyi replies by referring to the community of learners (Rogoff, et. al., 2001) with a range of first languages:

*Uh, there’s a lot of friends that’s from another country and like India, Pakistan. They speak Urdu, Punjabi, English and Spanish and French.* (Jieyi)

According to Bialystok & Barac (2012), children who are raised with two or more languages demonstrate metalinguistic awareness. Many of the multilingual learners in this study identified two or more languages as their first languages and demonstrated metalinguistic awareness (Bialystok & Barac, 2012). Jieyi appreciates the community of learners with a range of first languages. In my research journal, I observe multilingual learners having conversations about first languages, throughout the five weeks of the
study. Sometimes the conversations centre around a specific target language (Malt & Pavlenko, 2011) word and sometimes the conversations were about the similarities between the range of languages (Cynthia, Research Journal). These metalinguistic conversations between multilingual learners with a range of first languages help to create the community of learners.

The community of learners is present in the multilingual learning context that includes learners with the same first languages, learners with similar first languages and learners with a range of first languages. However, the community of learners also extends to the home.

**Community of Learners Extends to the Home**

As Park and Sarkar (2008) state, families play a role in the language maintenance of multilingual learners. Throughout the interview data, multilingual learners refer to ways in which the community of learners (Rogoff, et. al., 2001) extend past the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011) and include family members. Moo He is a multilingual learner who came to Canada from Burma via a refugee camp in Thailand. Moo He came to Canada two and a half years before this study. In the interviews, Moo He refers to the support of his mother. In the first quotation, Moo He is asked if his first language, Karen, could help with learning in school:

"Yeah, I think my mom can teach a class for Karen." (Moo He)

"Ah ha my mom (can help)." (Moo He)

As Rogoff, et. al. (2001) state, a community of learners, in the past, occurred where “children learned the lessons of their community by participating with their elders and with each other in activities of importance for their daily lives and those of their families”
Moo He learns lessons from his mom who is going to start teaching Karen language classes. Moo He’s mom helps him maintain his first language, Karen and supports him with school assignments at home. Moo He invests in the community of learners and sees that this community of learners extends to his home, with his mom.

Manmeet also discusses how her community of learners extends to the home with her grandparents who are teaching her Urdu. The following response came when I asked Manmeet what first languages she can speak, read, write and think.

And I want to learn about Urdu, my grandpa knows, my grandma- they both know how to write in Urdu and read. So I want to learn like Urdu. (Manmeet)

Multilingual learners’ identities are linked to “his or her relationship to the world…and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (Norton, 2000, p. 5). Manmeet identifies Punjabi, Hindi and English as her first languages, but wants to invest to learn more and sees that her grandparents can help her. She sees the community of learners at home as part of her possibilities for the future in learning Urdu and accessing greater cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991).

Moo He and Manmeet invest in the community of learners and believe that the community of learners extends to include their families in the home. The multilingual learners make investments both in the multilingual learning context and in their homes.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I explored the data gathered from the research and related it to the research around multilingual learners’ first languages, identities (Norton, 2000, 2010) and investments (Norton, 2000), the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011) and the community of learners (Rogoff, et. al., 2001). I considered how the community of
learners includes multilingual learners with the same first languages, with similar first
languages and with a range of first languages. This community of learners also extends
to the home. The multilingual learners made investments (Norton, 2000) in the
community of learners (Rogoff, et. al., 2001).

In the following chapter, I will consider the findings of the research and interpret
the information using the three research questions. I will draw conclusions, consider the
implications for policy and planning in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller,
2011) and suggest future possible studies.
Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications and Further Study

Introduction

In this study, I look at the use of first languages in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011) and consider how first languages impact the identities (Norton, 2000, 2010) and investments (Norton, 2000) of nine multilingual learners. The study occurred in the multilingual learning context of an urban, Saskatchewan, elementary school. Participants in the study were multilingual learners in grades seven and eight at the time of the study. The data analysis included the responses to interview questions by multilingual learners, and my research journal observations. In the first chapter of this thesis I state that with the significant increase in the number of multilingual learners coming to schools in Saskatchewan (Statistics Canada, 2012), there has been a tension created by the lack of policy and planning at the provincial educational level (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2012) to facilitate effective learning opportunities for multilingual learners. This lack of policy and planning has led to urgent pedagogy where teachers scramble to create assignments to negotiate understanding between multilingual learners and teachers. However, this pedagogy does not necessarily take into account the identities and first languages of multilingual learners in the multilingual learning context.

In this final chapter, with consideration of the Saskatchewan learning context, I propose that first languages of multilingual learners be incorporated in the multilingual learning context, to not only negotiate for language understanding but to include the identities of multilingual learners. The use of first languages in the multilingual learning context can support the investments and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991) of multilingual
learners. In this final chapter, I examine the findings of this study by returning to the research questions used to guide this study:

1. How does the incorporation of first languages impact the identities of multilingual learners?
2. How do multilingual learners invest in the multilingual learning context where first languages are used?
3. How does the use of first languages impact the perception of target language peers by multilingual learners?

The following conclusions address these three questions.

**Conclusions from the Research Questions**

*How does the use of first languages impact the identities of multilingual learners?*

The role of first languages in the identities (Norton, 2000, 2010) of multilingual learners is significant and influential in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011). In the current study, I observed the role of first languages and the relationship of identities of multilingual learners as I interviewed the nine multilingual learners participating in this study and recorded my observations, from the multilingual learning context, in my research journal. In response to the interview questions, some of the multilingual learners referred to their first languages as “my language” indicating a connection to the identities of multilingual learners in relation to their first languages. In the interviews, when John talked about first languages, he used the term “my language” every time. The multilingual learners did not see first languages just as a means for negotiating language, but as a part of their identities. In the multilingual learning context, many of the students discussed their first languages. Jieyi and Manmeet, two of the
multilingual learners who participated in the study, engaged in a lengthy discussion about first languages and the first cities and countries they had come from. This data indicates that part of the identities of these multilingual learners is related to first languages.

*How do multilingual learners invest in the multilingual learning context where first languages are used?*

As stated earlier in Chapter 2, in the literature review, investment signals the “socially and historically constructed relationships of learners to the target language, and their often ambivalent desire to learn and practice it” (Norton, 2000, p.10). Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) state that if multilingual learners invest in the target language, “they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital” (p.10).

Throughout this section, I will discuss how multilingual learners in this study invest in the multilingual learning context. The multilingual learners invest by:

- using first languages for help with understanding
- using first languages for help with pronunciation
- thinking in first languages
- using first languages to become friends with other multilingual learners
- using first languages to further develop multi-competence (Cook, 2008)
- using first languages to help other multilingual learners and create a community of learners (Rogoff, et. al., 2001)
- using first languages and electronic translators
- asking others for help with learning assignments
To begin, students invest (Norton, 2000) in the use of first languages to help with understanding. Bilal, Jieyi, Ali and Manpreet all stated in the interviews that they use first languages to negotiate for understanding. I also observed the students using first languages to negotiate for understanding with other multilingual learners, while working on the writing assignments in this study. Both Jieyi and Manpreet discussed the meaning of a word they were unsure of with other multilingual learners with the same first languages. This helped create the community of learners (Rogoff, et. al., 2001) within the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011). Bilal also used first languages to help another student, Ali, with understanding. Ali who was new to the school and quiet in the multilingual learning context relied on Bilal to help him in the multilingual learning context. In the interviews, Ali acknowledged that Bilal had helped him with understanding by using first languages. Bilal, Jieyi, Manpreet and Ali invested in the use of first languages to help with understanding.

Multilingual learners invest in the multilingual learning context by using first languages to help in pronouncing target language (Malt & Pavlenko, 2011) words. Manpreet and Bilal stated that they use first languages when working with other multilingual learners to know how to pronounce a word. I observed multilingual learners using first languages for pronunciation when they were presenting their writing assignments at the end of weeks three and four. When a multilingual learner was presenting their writing to the class, and came to a word they were unsure of how to pronounce, the multilingual learner would use first languages to explain to peers what they were trying to state. By using first languages, multilingual learners were able to help each other in pronouncing a word in the target language (Malt & Pavlenko, 2011).
The multilingual learners in this study also invest in the multilingual learning context by thinking in first languages. John said that thinking in his first language occurred not only in the multilingual learning context, but in his mainstream classroom too. So even though his teacher was not incorporating first languages in the mainstream classroom, and may not be aware that first languages are being used in the classroom, in fact, they are. John invests in his school work by thinking in his first language.

These nine multilingual learners identified investing in the use of first languages to become friends with other multilingual learners. In the multilingual learning context, Manmeet enjoyed getting to know other multilingual learners and used one her first languages, Urdu, to become friends with other multilingual learners whose first languages also included Urdu. By investing in the use of first languages to establish friendships with other multilingual learners, Manmeet was enhancing her learning opportunities in the multilingual learning context and, in so doing, helped to create a community of learners.

These multilingual learners invest in the multilingual learning context to further develop multi-competence (Cook, 2008). I frequently saw Jieyi reading Mandarin Chinese in the multilingual learning context to further her knowledge base as she continued to learn her first languages, and the target language. Jieyi invests in her learning opportunities and wants to continue her studies in her first languages alongside her studies in the target language. The nine multilingual learners invest in first languages to further develop multi-competence (Cook, 2008).

These multilingual learners invest in the use of first languages to help other multilingual learners learn in the multilingual learning context. These investments help
to create the community of learners. Bilal works closely with Ali who had recently moved to Saskatchewan from India. As was stated earlier, Ali was quiet in the multilingual learning context. Bilal developed a protective and mentoring relationship with Ali. Bilal made an investment in the learning opportunities in the multilingual learning context for himself as well as for Ali. By helping Ali negotiate understanding with the use of first languages, Bilal saw that this would help Ali. Bilal also saw that this investment in helping other learners benefitted his own learning and understanding and therefore his cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991). The investments by multilingual learners to aid other multilingual learners in the multilingual learning context, helped to build the community of learners.

The nine multilingual learners invest in translating between first languages and the target language. Jieyi talks of how she uses first languages on a web-based translator to help her understand the target language. Jieyi sometimes brought an electronic translator to the multilingual learning context to help in understanding target language texts that she was reading. Several laptops were available consistently within the multilingual learning context so that multilingual learners could easily access the web-based translators. While I facilitated having the laptops readily available in the multilingual learning context, it was the multilingual learners who drew my attention to the usefulness of the web-based translators. As the demand for use of the laptops increased, more laptops were obtained for the multilingual learners to use in accessing information, including web-based translators. The laptops were used daily by the multilingual learners for accessing the web-based translators and finding information to support the multilingual learners as they completed school assignments. Effective
learning opportunities are accessed by multilingual learners who invest in using web-based translators and electronic translators in the multilingual learning context.

Another way that multilingual learners demonstrate investment in the multilingual learning context is by asking for help from teachers, family, and other learners. Lesli asks for help with assignments from her siblings and her friends who speak the same first language, Spanish. John asks his parents, siblings, teachers, and friends for help when learning something new at school. Both Lesli and John invest in the multilingual learning context by asking other people for help with school assignments.

_How does the use of first languages impact the perception of target language peers by multilingual learners?_

Target language peers are learners whose first language is English, the target language (Malt & Pavlenko, 2011), and who attend school alongside multilingual learners. Goldstein (2008) refers to “peer social capital,” which plays a role in the power dynamic between multilingual learners and target language peers. This relationship between peers is a part of the identities (Norton, 2000, 2010) of both multilingual learners and target language peers. When I designed this study, I wanted to further explore the dynamic between multilingual learners and target language peers, particularly in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011). However, I soon discovered by looking at the interview transcripts, that the target language peers played a minor role in this multilingual learning context. Instead, the multilingual community of learners (Rogoff, et. al., 2001) played a more significant role in the multilingual learning context. The research took place in a classroom that consisted mostly of multilingual learners. Occasionally target language peers worked in the room. As Norton (2000) states,
multilingual learners “can choose under what conditions they will interact with members of the target language community” (p. 5). I had observed the multilingual learners negotiate relationships with target language peers continuously in the school hallways, playgrounds and mainstream classrooms. However, all of the negotiating between multilingual learners and target language peers, that I witnessed, took place outside of the multilingual learning context.

In the interviews, Jieyi mentions target language peers. When Jieyi listed the languages that her peers used, she stated, *Canadians, they just speak English.....* (Jieyi). In the three years that Jieyi has lived in Canada, her perception is that target language peers speak English only. When Bilal also listed the languages his peers used, he said, *Most of them speak English....* (Bilal). In both statements by Jieyi and Bilal, they made reference to target language peers speaking English.

Jieyi talks about how she experiences the frustration of not understanding a word and she could see how target language peers were able to access the understanding of the English word with greater ease. Bilal and Jieyi are aware of the peer social capital that their target language peers possess. While few references were made about target language peers, by multilingual learners, the awareness of the target language peer’s English ability was evident.

Having addressed the three research questions of this study, I will now move on to implications from this study, for the Saskatchewan learning context.

**Implications**

If the “factors making for resistance are not constantly taken into account” (Coste, et al., 2009, p. 23) the implications from this study will not effectively influence the
Saskatchewan learning context. Therefore, while presenting implications from this study, I will also draw upon the theories that reveal resistance (Coste, et. al., 2009) in the Saskatchewan learning context where the identities (Norton, 2000, 2010) and first languages of multilingual learners in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011) have not been included.

One of the factors that is key in the lack of government educational policy and planning for multilingual learners is language standardization which is used in “constructing the notion of the modern nation-state” (Baumann & Briggs, 2003, p. 54) and further promotes white settler mythology (Sterzuk, 2011). Acquisition of the target language (Malt & Pavlenko, 2011), English, is seen by policy-makers, educators and parents, as the goal of education for multilingual learners. As such, policies and plans that evaluate the multilingual learners’ target language skills are seen to be paramount in plans (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2012) for multilingual learners. The disregard and devaluing of first languages occurs through the silencing of first languages in policy and discourse. It would be beneficial for policy-makers to realize the importance of using first languages in the educational context. As it appears that assessment and evaluation of students is important in the Saskatchewan learning context (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2012), assessing multilingual learners in first languages would help to better access the multi-competence (Cook, 2008) and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991) of multilingual learners. By using first languages assessment tools, multilingual learners will be better able to demonstrate the broad range of literacies (Pennycook, 2010) they already possess.
As was stated in Chapter 1, there has been a significant increase in the number of multilingual learners (Statistics Canada, 2012) in Saskatchewan. With this significant increase in the number of multilingual learners, and the lack of policy and planning to support multilingual learners in the educational context, there is a tension created between administrators, educators and multilingual learners. This tension to quickly negotiate language understanding between multilingual learners and educators creates a culture of deficit thinking (Shields, et. al., 2006) where multilingual learners are perceived to be lacking in the target language (Malt & Pavlenko, 2011). By creating policy and planning that supports educators and multilingual learners, the culture of deficit thinking (Shields, et. al., 2006) could be reversed. Rather than multilingual learners being perceived as lacking (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2012), the tension could be eased so that multilingual learners are seen to have multi-competence (Cook, 2008) and a broad range of literacies (Pennycook, 2010). By reversing deficit thinking (Shields, et. al., 2006) in the educational context, first languages and the identities (Norton, 2000, 2010) of multilingual learners could be used in policy and planning for the provincial educational context.

White settler mythology (Sterzuk, 2011) promotes a racial hierarchy where white settlers and their now English speaking descendants are placed at the top of the racial hierarchy (Sterzuk, 2011). The educational context is used to promote white settler mythology and therefore devalues the first languages and cultures (Cummins, & Early, 2011), as well as identities of multilingual learners. This racial hierarchy (Sterzuk, 2011) must be addressed in Saskatchewan so that the first languages and identities (Norton, 2000, 2010) of multilingual learners can be incorporated into the educational context. A
dialogue about the incorporation of first languages and the identities in the educational context is required. By developing policy that helps to create multilingual learning contexts, through the use of first languages and the identities of multilingual learners, the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991) of multilingual learners can be realized.

The linguistic hierarchies (Sterzuk, 2011, p. 4) within the Saskatchewan educational context also perpetuate deficit thinking (Shields, et. al., 2006) about the multi-competence (Cook, 2008) of multilingual learners. The standard language culture (Milroy, 2002, p. 531) places the target language (Malt & Pavlenko, 2011), English, at the top of the linguistic hierarchy and it is perceived as being the goal in the educational context. However, by allowing multilingual learners to demonstrate their linguistic capital (Goldstein, 2008), multilingual learners will not have to try to suppress their linguistic capital and will not be required to enrol in remedial speech and language lessons. Currently at the school where I teach, there are fifteen multilingual learners out of a total of twenty-one students who are attending remedial speech and language lessons, as recommended by their teachers. When the linguistic capital of multilingual learners is encouraged through the multilingual learning context, the identities, and first languages of multilingual learners will be supported and remedial speech and language lessons will not be required.

The colonial discourse (Sterzuk, 2011) that people must simply work hard to get ahead or gain cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991) in Saskatchewan is present in many aspects of public and private conversations, including media, education and politics. In fact, I recently witnessed a colleague using this colonial discourse with the mothers of multilingual learners indicating that it was important that all their children needed to do
was work hard and they would get ahead in Saskatchewan. I suggest that this notion of working hard to get ahead be capitalized on in supporting multilingual learners in the multilingual learning context. By demonstrating the connection between the investments and access to cultural capital of multilingual learners to the colonial discourse of working hard to get ahead, the multilingual learning context may become a reality in Saskatchewan.

Provincial educational policy that includes the identities and first languages of multilingual learners will provide resources such as curriculum, trained teachers and classroom materials to support that policy. When multilingual learning contexts are implemented in the Saskatchewan learning context, the identities, first languages, investments and cultural capital of multilingual learners will be included. Having discussed the implications of this study, I will now suggest possibilities for future study.

**Future Study**

From the findings and conclusions of this research, there are several opportunities for further study in the area of first languages and identities (Norton, 2000, 2010) of the multilingual learner in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Möller, 2011). It would be worthwhile to expand the multilingual learning context into the mainstream classroom. Research could be done to explore the use of first languages in the mainstream classroom. What impact would the use of first languages in the mainstream classroom have on the identities and investments (Norton, 2000) of multilingual learners? How would the use of first languages and consideration of identities influence pedagogy in the mainstream classroom? How would the use of first languages and identities impact the relationship and power dynamic between multilingual learners and target language (Malt & Pavlenko,
peers? Researching first languages in the mainstream classroom is one possibility for future study.

Another consideration for future study is further exploring why the identities and first languages of multilingual learners are not considered in government policies in the Saskatchewan learning context. A closer look at government documents directing policy related to education could be undertaken. The focus in education policy has shifted to assessment and evaluation (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2012). Is there a way to combine assessment and evaluation while including the first languages and identities of multilingual learners? What further actions would have to be taken for the first languages and identities of multilingual learners to be included with policy that guides the learning context in Saskatchewan? Now that the implications of this study have been considered, I will summarize this thesis.

Summary

In Chapter 1, I introduced the study by presenting the Saskatchewan learning context for immigrant and refugee students. I also presented the rationale of the study which included an evaluation of some government documents that outline the plan for education in Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2012). This initial chapter provided the Saskatchewan educational context of this study. In Chapter 2, I defined the terms of this study and presented the literature review that informed this study which included theories related to identities (Norton, 2000, 2010), investments (Norton, 2000), and first languages of multilingual learners in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011). In the literature review, I also considered power, policy and planning in the educational context. In Chapter 3, I outlined the research design and
methodology used for the data analysis. Also, in Chapter 3, I presented the three research questions used to guide the study. In Chapter 4, I presented the findings from the data analysis and applied the theories found in the literature review. In the final chapter, chapter 5, I addressed the three research questions with consideration of the findings in the data analysis, and discussed implications for policy and planning in the Saskatchewan educational context. I also suggested possible recommendations for future research. This concludes the recording of this study of first languages and the identities (Norton, 2000, 2010) of multilingual learners in the multilingual learning context (Lytra & Møller, 2011).
References


Appendix A:

OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES
MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 23, 2012
TO: Cynthia Penner-Haughhey
1436 Shannon Rd., Regina, SK S4S 5L5
FROM: Dr. Bruce Plouffe
Chair, Research Ethics Board
Re: First Languages and Identity Construction: Multilingual Learners in the
Multilingual Learning Context (File # 4851112)

Please be advised that the University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed your
proposal and found it to be:

☑ 1. APPROVED AS SUBMITTED. Only applicants with this designation have ethical
approval to proceed with their research as described in their applications. For
research lasting more than one year (Section 1F). ETHICAL APPROVAL MUST
BE RENEWED BY SUBMITTING A BRIEF STATUS REPORT EVERY
TWELVE MONTHS. Approval will be revoked unless a satisfactory status report
is received. Any substantive changes in methodology or instrumentation must
also be approved prior to their implementation.

☐ 2. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO MINOR CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE
ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to
beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the
concerns to the Chair of the REB.** Do not submit a new application. Once
changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 3. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE
ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to
beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the
concerns to the Chair of the REB.** Do not submit a new application. Once
changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 4. UNACCEPTABLE AS SUBMITTED. The proposal requires substantial additions
or redesign. Please contact the Chair of the REB for advice on how the project
proposal might be revised.

Dr. Bruce Plouffe

cc: Dr. Andrea Sterzuk - Education

** supplementary memo should be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at the Office of
Research Services (Research and Innovation Centre, Room 523) or by e-mail to
research.ethics@uregina.ca

Phone: (306) 585-4775
Fax: (306) 585-4693
www.uregina.ca/research
Appendix B:

Letter of Invitation
(Parents and Multilingual Learners)

Re: First Languages and Identity Construction: Multilingual Learners in the Multilingual Learning Context

Cynthia Penner-Haughey
Language and Literacy Education
University of Regina
Regina, SK. S4S-0A2
pennerhc@uregina.ca

Andrea Sterzuk, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Language and Literacy Education
University of Regina
Regina, SK S4S-0A2
andrea.sterzuk@uregina.ca
(306)585-5607

Dear Families,

I am doing a research project to understand the ways in which multilingual learners build identity in the classroom. I want to explore how the use of first languages impacts the identity construction of multilingual learners in the multilingual learning context.

My plan is to ask your child to write their journal reflections as they learn. Your child and I will have an interview about his/her first languages. This is to help me to better understand your child’s construction of identity.

This study is being carried out by me, Cynthia Penner-Haughey, under the supervision of Dr. Andrea Sterzuk. At this time, I am an English as an Additional Language (EAL) teacher with the Regina Public School Division and a graduate student at the University of Regina. I am asking for your permission and support to do this research with your child.

This study will take place in the EAL classroom at your child’s school and will occur for five weeks. During the five weeks, your child will record their thoughts and reflections in a journal and may use that journal when I interview your child. During the study, your child will participate in a first languages writing project and a first languages and English writing project.

I will call you on the telephone to ask if I can come to your house to talk about this research. If you want further information, please contact me, Cynthia Penner-Haughey or Dr. Andrea Sterzuk.

Thank you for considering this research request.

Sincerely,
Appendix C:

Consent Form (Parents)
(Permission for child to participate in the study)

First Languages and Identity Construction: Multilingual Learners in the Multilingual Learning Context

Cynthia Penner-Haughey
Language and Literacy Education
University of Regina
Regina, SK. S4S-0A2
pennerhc@uregina.ca

Andrea Sterzuk, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Language and Literacy Education
University of Regina
Regina, SK S4S-0A2
andrea.sterzuk@uregina.ca
(306)585-5607

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to understand how your child and other children build identity in the classroom. I want to explore how the incorporation of first languages impacts the identity construction of your child and other children in the multilingual learning context. My plan is to ask your child to write their journal reflections as they learn. Your child and I will have an interview about his/her first languages. This is to help me to better understand your child’s construction of identity.

Procedures:
This study will take place in the EAL classroom at your child’s school and will occur for five weeks. Throughout the five weeks, your child and the other children will write their thoughts and reflections in a journal and may use that journal when I have an interview with the children in the second and fifth weeks of the study. During the third week of the study, the children will participate in a first languages writing project and the fourth week will include a first languages and English writing project. After the final interview in the fifth week, the children will be notified that the research project is complete.

Confidentiality:
Your child’s identity will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms (false names) will be provided to protect your child’s identity. When writing information in my journal and the research findings, I will use a false name for each of the children.

Dissemination of Research:
I will share what I learn from the study at local, national, and international conferences, as well as with teachers and policy makers in the field of English as an Additional Language (EAL). The information from this research will also be available to community members, including those in the multilingual community. To obtain results from the
study, I will contact you with a letter to offer a meeting when you can read the results of the research or ask me questions about the results.

**Right to Withdraw:**
Your child’s participation is voluntary and your child can answer only those questions that they are comfortable with. You or your child may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.

Whether you and your child choose to participate or not will have no effect on your child’s grades in the EAL classroom or how you and your child will be treated.

Should you and your child wish to withdraw from the project, please let me know either through email, a telephone call, a note or in person. Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until after the five week project is complete. After this it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

**Questions and Concerns:**
If you have any questions about the research at any time, please contact me using the information at the top of page one. If you have any concerns about your rights, or the treatment of your child as a participant in the research, you may contact the University of Regina, Research Ethics Office at (306) 585-4775. You may also direct any concerns to Regina Public Schools at (306) 523-3000 and ask to speak with the Superintendent, Instruction and School Services.

**Consent:**
Your verbal consent indicates that the information about this study has been discussed with you, and that you have been given a copy of this letter. Your signature below indicates that you freely and willingly give your consent to allow your daughter/son to participate in the study. You may withdraw your permission at any time without any consequences.

______________________________
Printed Name of Child Participating

______________________________  __________________________
Printed Name of Parent  Parent’s Signature

______________________________  __________________________
Date
Appendix D:

Assent Form (Multilingual Learner)
(Permission to participate in the study)

First Languages and Identity Construction: Multilingual Learners in the Multilingual Learning Context

Cynthia Penner-Haughey
Language and Literacy Education
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Regina, SK. S4S-0A2
pennerhc@uregina.ca

Andrea Sterzuk, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Language and Literacy Education
University of Regina
Regina, SK S4S-0A2
andrea.sterzuk@uregina.ca
(306)585-5607

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to understand how you and other children build identity in the classroom. I want to look at how the use of first languages impacts the identity construction for you and other children in the multilingual learning context. My plan is to record your thoughts and discussions about first languages and how that influences your identity construction.

Procedures:

This study will take place in the EAL classroom at your school and will occur for five weeks.

- Throughout the five weeks, you and the other children will write your thoughts in a journal and may use that journal when I have an interview with you in the second and fifth weeks of the study.
- During the third week of the study, you and other children will participate in a first languages writing project and the fourth week will include a first languages and English writing project.
- After the final interview in the fifth week, you will be notified that the research project is complete.

Confidentiality:

Your identity will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms (false names) will be used to protect your identity. When writing information in my journal and the research findings, I will use a false name for each of the children.
**Dissemination of Research:**

I will share what I learn from the study at local, national, and international conferences, as well as with teachers and policy makers in the field of English as an Additional Language (EAL). The information from this research will also be available to community members.

**Questions and Concerns:**

If you have any questions about the research at any time, let me know either by telling me in person, writing a note to me or talking to your parents who can contact me.

If you have any concerns about your rights, or your treatment in the research, you may contact the University of Regina, Research Ethics Office at (306) 585-4775. You may also direct any questions to Regina Public Schools at (306) 523-3000 and ask to speak with the Superintendent, Instruction and School Services.

**Consent:**

Your verbal consent indicates that the information about this study has been discussed with you, and that you have been given a copy of this letter. Your signature below indicates that you freely and willingly give your consent to participate in the study. You may withdraw your permission at any time without any consequences.

_______________________________________
Printed Name of Multilingual Learner

______________________________
Multilingual Learner’s Signature

________________________
Date
Appendix E:
Timeline of Research Project

Week One:
- Send Letter of Invitation to parents and then contact parents of the multilingual learners to arrange for a home visit.
- Offer to hire a translator for each parent meeting.
- Provide copies of the consent letter for parents and assent letter for multilingual learners to sign if they choose to be part of the research project. Leave an extra copy with each family.
- Provide contact information for parents to contact me with further questions.
- Ensure that parents and multilingual learners know that they can withdraw from the research project at any time.
- The researcher maintains an anecdotal reflection journal and records entries on the first, third and fifth days of each week.

Week Two:
- Present the research project to multilingual learners in the classroom.
- Present a copy of the interview questions and allow time for explanation and discussion.
- Multilingual learners will respond to the questions in their private journals. Multilingual learners may talk with each other and me to consolidate their understanding of the questions.
- Provide time and space for multilingual learners to privately respond in journals.
- Meet with each multilingual learner to conduct an audio-recorded interview, using the questionnaire as a guide.
- The researcher maintains an anecdotal reflection journal and records entries on the first, third and fifth days of the week.

Week Three:

- Present the initial language activity at the beginning of the week.
- Encourage multilingual learners to use first languages for the majority of the writing.
- Multilingual learners will have daily class time to work on the first languages writing project.
- Ask multilingual learners to reflect about the writing project, in the journals.
- At the end of the week, multilingual learners can share their writing with the class, if they choose to do so.

- The researcher maintains an anecdotal reflection journal and records entries on the first, third and fifth days of the week.

Week Four:

- Present the second language activity at the beginning of the week.
- Encourage multilingual learners to use first languages and English in the writing.
- Multilingual learners will have daily class time to work on the language activity.
- Ask multilingual learners to reflect about the language activity, in the journals.
- At the end of the week, multilingual learners can share their writing with the class, if they choose to do so.

- The researcher maintains an anecdotal reflection journal and records entries on the first, third and fifth days of the week.

Week Five:
- Present a copy of the post-interview questions and allow time for explanation and discussion.

- Multilingual learners will respond to the questions in their private journals. Multilingual learners may talk with each other and me to consolidate their understanding of the questions.

- Provide time and space for multilingual learners to privately respond in journals.

- Meet with each multilingual learner to conduct an audio-recorded interview, using the questionnaire.

- Inform multilingual learners that the research project is complete.

- The researcher maintains an anecdotal reflection journal and records entries on the first, third and fifth days of the week.