Creating Space for Students' Mother Tongues in College Classrooms:
A Collaborative Investigation of Process and Outcomes

By

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for the degree of Doctor of Education
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Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

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CREATING SPACE FOR STUDENTS’ MOTHER TONGUES

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Abstract
This study is a qualitative action research that I have undertaken with four teachers in the college where I work, for the purpose of improving curriculum delivery and student services to our majority multilingual student body. Based on my research in a public school board with Grades 4 to 12 students where I learned that mother tongues (L1s) are valued by students as scaffolds to their learning of English (L2) I proceeded to explore L1/L2 curriculum delivery with adult community college students whose prior learning is encoded in their mother tongues. I explored the possibility of legitimizing the use of students’ mother tongues in college classrooms as scaffolds to their acquisition of their L2. There were three phases to this study. Through these three phases of the study I sought to understand the impact of this multilingual pedagogical approach on the students’ learning experience, academic engagement and identity formation. In phase 1, I worked with 90 English as a Second Language (ESL) students whom I surveyed to determine their levels of understanding of our English-only curriculum delivery and student services. In phase 2, I worked with three English for Academic Purposes (EAP) students and interviewed them to explore their reaction to their teacher’s allowing them to use their mother tongues in class as part of pedagogy. In phase 3, I worked with 19 EAP students and interviewed them in focus groups to explore more deeply their learning experience, academic engagement and identity formation in two college classrooms where their mother tongues were part of everyday pedagogy. On the basis of the findings
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of this study I argue that the creation of space for students’ mother tongues in college classrooms is an ethical imperative since their mother tongues are integral components of their identities and all of their prior learning and life experiences are encoded in their mother tongues. Overall the findings highlighted bilingual students’ perceptions that their L1s constituted an important scaffold for their learning of English. Students’ comments also expressed their sense of the centrality of L1s to aspects of their identity.
Acknowledgements

So many people have helped me in my explorations into the L1/L2 relationship and its impact on student learning experience, academic engagement and identity. My interest in this area was sparked 37 years ago as a young ESL teacher; but it was the Multiliteracies Project from 2002 to 2008, headed by Professors Jim Cummins (OISE) and Margaret Early (UBC) that gave me the opportunity to get involved in the spectrum of action research discussed in this thesis. I thank Jim and Margaret for teaching me how to research. Jim is my mentor and thesis advisor and I owe him my commitment to this Ed.D. I thank Professors Tara Goldstein and John Portelli (OISE) on my thesis committee who provided support and encouragement. I thank the public school teachers without whom my early related research with grades 4 to 12 students could not have occurred. They are Perminder Sandhu, Lisa Leoni, Amy Dodd and Dr. Ivy Chan. I am grateful to college professors Margaret Fortin and Dara Cowper for allowing me into their classrooms and helping me with my action research with their students. As well, I thank college professors Nina Kilgour and Pepi Lucas and my colleagues Dr. Margaret Brigham and Beverley Williams for their insights. I am grateful to senior library technician, Kim Reaume who provided unwavering support. I thank EAP manager, Janis McCallen, for assisting with the recruitment of volunteers for the study. I am grateful to Luzia Bidwell for her meticulous work in typing up the student transcripts from audiotapes and Janet Maher for helping me to decipher the formatting requirements. I thank Charan Batra for his advice and technical expertise as I waded through the data. I thank the 112 college students who participated in my three phase college study. The honest responses provided by all the students from grade 4 all through to college level students and their trust in this work made our commitment to their progress all the more compelling. I thank my college president, Ann Buller, for not only enthusiastically encouraging my studies, but for her passion in support of all employees at our college in their pursuit of professional growth.

Finally I thank my family for supporting my commitment to my studies.
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Chapter 1:

Setting the Stage: Background, Context and Research Question

“A campus cannot simply recruit a critical mass of international students; it must also intentionally arrange its resources so that international and American students benefit in desired ways from one another’s presence.” (Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005, p. 225).

Canadian and American colleges and universities are actively recruiting international students. At the college participating in this study, the international student population fluctuates between 15% and 20% of the total full time enrolment and 56% of the total student population at the college are students who were born outside of Canada. English is an additional language for 42% of the total student population. Since English (L2) is not their mother tongue (L1) these students experience a range of difficulty with instructional English. However, depending on IELTS (International English Language Testing System) and TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) scores, not all of these students receive specific instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL) or English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Only approximately 15% of the students both local and international are enrolled in specific classes to study ESL or EAP courses. Up to four years ago there was no documented effort to accommodate the L1 in our classrooms or to use L1 to scaffold L2 learning. I conducted a survey (attached as Appendix A) of 90 first year ESL students in January – February 2006. The survey demonstrated a range of language comprehension that these 90 students have of the front line services that the college provides. These include services such as websites, course selection materials, registration processes and lessons delivered by teachers and instructors. 59.8% was the highest percentage of students who indicated easy understanding of a service (i.e. college advertisements). 8.1% of students indicated great difficulty in understanding the course selection process which is one of the fundamental success determinants as students enter and register at college.

What was troubling was the mere 37.9% of the ESL students surveyed who reported that their teachers and instructors are easy to understand (see Tables 2 and 3). The rest of them ranged from 2 on the Likert scale less easy to understand to 7 very difficult to understand. The survey is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. The subject college takes in many students for whom English is not their first language. Teaching is the core business of the college and if the
college is missing the mark on nearly 62% of ESL students there may be evidence of a need for a pedagogical review.

Each year the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) in the government of Ontario, Canada, conducts the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) Survey with second semester and higher college students enrolled in full-time diploma studies across Ontario. This student survey yields demographic data as well as student reactions to the teaching, learning and services offered by each college. The college in this study yielded the following demographic data in the KPI survey conducted in February 2009 (see Table 1 below).

The college’s demographics continue to be unique in the province with the highest percentage of mature students (as seen by age and education). The high proportion of international students—especially those who have lived in the country for less than six years and primarily speak a language other than English—present a remarkable situation for the college. The data further indicate that 27% of the students work more than 20 hours a week, a fact that could affect both their studies and their ability to integrate into campus life and socialize with their peers. These students may experience disconnectedness which may impact academic engagement.

As the data indicates 42% of the total student enrolment at this college speaks a mother tongue other than English. These other languages are continuously heard in the college hallways yet not integrated into classroom pedagogy, hence in essence, shut out of classrooms. Butzkamm and Caldwell (2009) in making a case for bilingual reform in Europe argue for a paradigm shift in foreign language teaching (English in continental Europe) and capture in this quote the essence of my pedagogical exploration in this multilingual college:

In many countries official guidelines create positive pressures for teachers to use the [L2] as much as possible. However, this chapter argues that the way to increase message-orientation in the [L2] is to mobilize targeted [L1] support. We can breathe more communicative life into our classrooms by giving some instructional time over to carefully crafted bilingual techniques. Teachers must be freed from the shackles of misguided restraints that have for too long been hobbling the pace of communicative language teaching and learning. (p.48)
**Table 1**  
*College x Student Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>21-25</th>
<th>25-30</th>
<th>31-35</th>
<th>35+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Province</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Province</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior Education</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Some previous College</th>
<th>College Diploma</th>
<th>Some Univ.</th>
<th>Univ. degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Province</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours worked per week</th>
<th>&lt;10</th>
<th>10-19</th>
<th>20-29</th>
<th>30-39</th>
<th>40+</th>
<th>Didn’t work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Province</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Born in Canada</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Province</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If Born Outside, how long have you lived in Canada</th>
<th>1-3</th>
<th>4-6</th>
<th>7-9</th>
<th>10-18</th>
<th>19+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Province</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Generation</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Province</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Canadian</th>
<th>Caribbean</th>
<th>South Asian</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Filipino</th>
<th>European</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Province</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. This is key performance indicator (KPI) data published by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). Data for age, language and education are published for the entire province; other KPI demographics are only reported to each college individually. College*
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= the college being studied, Province = averages taken from all colleges in the province. The
lexicon is created by MTCU and no definition is provided for the term Canadian. Adapted from
“KPI Student Satisfaction Executive Summary” CCI Research Inc., 2008.

My Own Location in This Study

My life’s work as a teacher, principal, and school superintendent and now as Vice-
President of a college has been in the area of equity and speaking out for the rights of
marginalized and minority students. I inherited this work by default of birth, having been born
on the wrong side of the “colour bar” in apartheid South Africa and having lost family members
to the fight against apartheid. The life or death struggles with legalized racism in the first 21
years of my life solidified my quest for equity for marginalized communities. In the 40 years
since leaving South Africa and living, working and studying in Canada as an educator and
student, I have found that while Canada is indeed one of the most tolerant countries in the
world, Canadian society still has gaps in its approaches to equity. My lived anti-oppression work
led me to see the monolingual pedagogies toward multilingual students in my country of choice
as an issue of equity and ethics. In 1972, very early in my Canadian teaching career, I started to
explore the extent to which the acknowledgement of students’ first languages in class affects
their self-esteem, identity and degree of engagement in literacy and other academic activities.

My interest in this topic dates back from my early years of teaching ESL to newcomer
students, from kindergarten to adult. I observed that students flourished when asked to teach
their language to others in class. Later as the Superintendent of Education in a large
multicultural school system, an opportunity arose to explore potential options for L1
incorporation in the classrooms of schools which I supervised. With funding from the federal
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, a three-year project titled: From Literacy to
Multiliteracies: Designing Learning Environments for Knowledge Generation Within the New
Economy was developed. I was invited by the originators of this project, Dr. Margaret Early of
the University of British Columbia (UBC) and Dr. Jim Cummins of the University of Toronto
(OISE/UT) to join the team as a co-investigator and the York Region District School Board
became one of the project partners. York Region has a large school board with a rapidly
increasing and diverse population. I conducted research in three schools with students in grade 4
to grade 10, exploring the extent to which the incorporation of students’ L1s into classroom
instruction positively affects students’ academic progress. The data from that study are discussed in Chapter 2 as part of the conceptual framework and literature review for this study.

I see *Creating Space for Students’ Mother Tongues* as a continuation of that spectrum of work. I see the inclusion of L1s in post-secondary classrooms as ethical practice because I see language as a key component in the cultural identity of all people, including college students. By excluding L1s in college classrooms we are truncating a piece of the L2 learner’s cultural identity.

Gail C. Furman (2004), in an ethical framework—which she proposed for education in the twenty-first century—defined interdependent relationships among an:

- Ethic of Community (central and surrounded by the);
- Ethic of Justice;
- Ethic of Care;
- Ethic of Profession; and
- Ethic of Critique (p. 222).

In her abstract, she wrote:

> Ethic of community is defined as the moral responsibility to engage in communal processes, as educators pursue the moral purposes of their work and address the ongoing challenges of daily life and work in schools. The ethic of community thus centers the communal over the individual as the primary locus of moral agency in schools. (p. 215)

In defining the ethic of critique she wrote:

> If the ethic of justice looks toward fairness, the ethic of critique looks toward barriers to fairness. The assumption here is that it is insufficient to work for fairness within existing social and institutional arrangements if the arrangements themselves are unfair. One must also critique the present system, examining the ways that policies, practices, and structures might be unfair, how they might be advantaging one group over another. (p. 218)

The ethical question (or opportunity to critique) for me, as the Vice-President of the College, is to interrogate if and how our multilingual students’ learning experiences, academic engagement, and identities are being undermined by our college’s suppression of their mother tongues in favour of the country’s dominant English language. The student population in our College is multilingual and the majority of our students are of South Asian, Chinese and
African ancestry. In suppressing their mother tongues, I believe that we are suppressing key personal characteristics of their identities.

In this study, the four teachers and I are as much learners as are our students. In Paulo Freire’s (1998) words, “There is no teaching without learning” (p. 29). He went on to say:

The school, which is the space in which both teachers and students are the subjects of education, cannot abstract itself from the socio-cultural and economic conditions of its students, their families, and their communities. It is impossible to talk of respect for students, for the dignity that is in the process of coming to be, for the identities that are in the process of construction, without taking into consideration the conditions in which they are living and the importance of the knowledge derived from life experience, which they bring with them to school. (p. 62)

Students in the college being studied bring decades of life experience and prior learning encoded in their mother tongues and first languages of instruction. The college under study is an international community of adult learners with a commitment to its students and to the country’s economic future, to decode their learning with dignity as rich resources for the future of the country. Canadian banks and multinational corporations have already begun to capitalize on the value of international languages; it is important for educational systems to understand the value of L1s. The scope of equity goes beyond equity initiatives or projects in schools, colleges, universities or in the province. Equity is an attitudinal change of dramatic scale; a shift in perspectives; a realization that our journeys here on earth are not about wealth or titles, but about weaving a collective vision of humanity collaboratively for a fragmented and fragile world, our ethnosphere (see Davis, 2001). L2 college students are critical contributors to the global and knowledge economy and their prior learning must be an integral part of their contributions to Canada.

Benesch (2001) discusses the work of critical ethnographers who have examined the role of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) students shaping their educational environment. She calls for greater need for post-secondary institutions to involve students in a more holistic approach to their learning. According to Benesch:

Identity is theorized as multiply constructed and shifting, not unitary or fixed, allowing critical ethnographies to examine the ways in which students move through different discourses, in their families, with peers, in classrooms, and in the workplace. This rich theoretical construct of identity as shifting across contexts offers a dynamic model of the acquisition of academic English. It shows how various discourses compete with one another, presenting significant challenges to students. (p. 38)
The findings of critical ethnographies in EAP point to a need for dialogue with ELLs (English language learners) to discover how they respond to institutional labels, testing and placement, as well as how they view their participation in postsecondary institutions and in other areas of their lives. The findings also suggest a need for critical EAP that encourages students to articulate their attitudes toward academic English, negotiate assignments, ask questions during lectures, and organize with other students for institutional change. (p. 585)

As the Vice-President Academic and Chief Learning Officer at the college it is my ethical and pedagogical duty to dialogue with our multilingual adult students, to “discover how they respond” (p. 585) to our service to them and to explore the best approach to their language learning in their college.

Research Questions and Theoretical Context

For this study I collaborated with four college teachers, two of whom were teachers of Level 3 EAP; an ESL teacher; and a General Education (Gen. Ed.) teacher, all of whom share an interest in the multilingual pedagogical approach at the heart of this study. My goal was to explore, as an administrator, the reaction of students to their teachers’ allowing them to use their L1s for such classroom activities as research, essay preparation and same-language group concept clarification sessions in class. I was guided by Vivian Cook’s notion of a language super system (see Cook, 2003 p. 2), in our multilingual students’ minds. In discussing L1/L2 multicompetence, Cook explains:

In the area of vocabulary some people have claimed that, rather than two separate mental lexicons, the L2 user has a single lexicon where words from one language are stored alongside words from the other (Caramazza & Brones, 1980). In terms of phonology some have found that L2 users have a single merged system for producing speech, neither L1 nor L2 (Williams, 1977). Integration does not say that L2 users are unable to control what they do; they can still choose which language to use in a given context, just as a monolingual can choose which style or register to adopt in a particular situation. In this model the discussion is not about the influence of L2 on L1, but about balance between elements of a single language system. Indeed there is little point to counting ‘languages’ in a single mind – L1, L2, L3, Ln – as they form a single system. (p.7)

Clearly neither of these two models can be absolutely true: total separation is impossible since both languages are in the same mind; total integration is impossible since L2 users can keep the languages apart. These possibilities represent the endpoints on the
integration continuum (Cook, 2002; Francis, 1999). In between these two extreme, and probably untenable, positions of total separation and total integration, there are many different degrees and types of interconnection. (pp. 7-8)

My research sought to explore these claims as they applied to the L2 college students who were experiencing the unique multilingual pedagogical approach by four teachers who legitimized their students’ mother tongues in their classrooms (the University of Toronto’s study authorization for this undertaking can be found Appendix I).

My first and general research question—how does a multilingual pedagogical approach that veers from the current monolingual conceptions of literacy pedagogy, impact on L2 students’ learning experience, academic engagement and identity formation?—was explored through several subsets of inquiry:

- What are the students’ responses to English-only classrooms vs. the classrooms in which their L1s play an important role in their learning (i.e. impressions of learning experience and identity formation?)
- What is the level of academic engagement in these classrooms as opposed to student impressions of their engagement in English only classrooms?
- How do students transfer linguistically and conceptually from their L1s to English? (This is intended to provide insights into their learning experience and academic engagement).
- How does validation of students’ L1s in college classrooms impact on their identity formation?

My second research question sought to understand what the teachers saw as the strengths, gaps and tensions that are created in using this multilingual pedagogical approach with their students. This second question was answered through two sets of interviews with the two EAP teachers whose students participated in Phase 3 of this study. My first research question is answered in Chapters 4 and 5. The second research question is answered in Chapter 6.

**Learning Experience, Academic Engagement and Identity**

My understanding of optimal learning experience is as the active process of knowledge sharing, inter-change of ideas, growth and discovery that occurs in an inclusive classroom in which multiple characteristics and aspects of a student’s personality, prior learning, and life experiences are respected and in which students are allowed to engage mentally, emotionally, intellectually, and enthusiastically
in a participatory environment using all of their accumulated cognitive, linguistic, and intellectual skills. Learning experience cannot be optimal if students are forced to leave certain integral aspects of their personal identities, like their first languages, at the door of their classrooms.

Thus the issue of students’ use of their L1 in learning L2 content is directly related to broader issues of the quality of students’ overall learning experience. As Turnbull and Dailey-O’Cain (2009a) point out, this issue has been highly controversial for a number of years (see, for example, Turnbull 2001, Turnbull & Arnett 2002, Turnbull, Bell & Lapkin 2002, Macaro 2003, Cummins 2007, Butzkam & Caldwell 2009). In many second language teaching contexts, “best practice” has been identified by policy-makers and some researchers as exclusive use of the target language within the classroom. As the papers in the Turnbull and Dailey-O’Cain (2009b) volume make clear, the focus is beginning to shift away from an emphasis on maximum use of the target language to clarifying what optimal use of the target language and students’ L1 might be in particular contexts. Turnbull and Dailey-O’Cain (2009c) note:

> Although researchers still disagree about how and whether optimal first language use can be defined, there is one point of agreement on which there remains no doubt: there is simply no evidence that a prescribed target-language only environment is beneficial to learners, and there is ample evidence that it may be detrimental. It is therefore essential for instructors and policy-makers to keep in mind that we need to begin envisioning learners not as ineffective and imperfect monolingual speakers of the target language, but as aspiring bilinguals. (p. 186)

Most of the debate on this issue has focused on K-12 classroom contexts or on university foreign language teaching contexts. There has been little focus on community college contexts where students are learning through a language other than their L1. The community college student is especially unique in acquiring an L2; adults, unlike their younger counterparts, are students who have decades of learning encoded in their L1. My observations in my own community college context is that most instructors have given little thought to the issue of the link between students’ L1 and the academic challenges they face in learning through English. This study seeks to throw light on this issue. Since the L1 is the language of thinking for many students, I attempted to explore the extent to which the L1 can enhance comprehension of L2. Macaro (2005) has identified a continuum of perspectives on L1 use in the classroom. It ranges from the virtual position, which advocates exclusive use of the target language to, at the other end of the spectrum, the position that views students’ L1 as a cognitive tool that can facilitate L2 learning. Based on my experience in the Multiliteracies project, my perspective at the start of my investigation was close to this latter belief that students’ identities, learning experience and
academic engagement are enhanced if they are allowed to bring their cognitively pre-coded prior learning into the classroom.

I understand academic engagement to be a robust interchange of thoughts, ideas and knowledge between and among students and teachers within and outside of the classroom where students are as much teachers as they are learners and teachers are as much learners as they are teachers. Students are not merely empty vessels as in Freire’s banking model (see Freire, 1983) into which teachers pour knowledge. The teacher, in Freire’s sense of an “unfinished being” (see Freire, 1998) is constantly learning from students as much as from other areas of their lives. Portelli (2005) writes:

The complexity of student engagement increases when one notes that it is not always necessarily observable (that is, it could be personal or private), it involves a certain kind of relationship with peers, texts, educators, and community members that implies some hope, commitment, and possibilities, and it is contingent or context dependent. Student engagement is co-constructed and developed over a period of time (pp. 74-75).

He goes on to suggest that student engagement needs to “go beyond a reductionist or technical perspective to include a way of being guided by the democratic values of equity, social justice, and inclusion and one that guides teaching, curriculum, leadership and policy” (Ibid pp. 76-77).

This study invites students as critical participants to comment on the pedagogy of mother-tongue inclusion and how it impacts their academic engagement. My understanding of identity is that one’s identity is comprised of all personal characteristics developed and accumulated in one’s life journey. Identity consists of all of the petals in Enid Lee’s flower (1985) but it includes the stem and leaves as well and one’s language is a critical component of one’s identity. I see identity formation as the life-long, multi-layered and complex process of creating and developing our personal characteristics from the various and shifting influences on our lives and I devote a significant segment of Chapter 2 below on the social construction of identity. As Cummins points out (2001, p. 304) a school occupies a central location where identities are negotiated between students and educators and both participants in this negotiation can individually and collectively create power structures that impact on the identity formation of one another.
Context for This Study

My experiences with racism and linguicism in South Africa and my early experiences as an ESL teacher provided the context for my decision to pursue the question of a multilingual pedagogy which creates a space in classrooms for students’ mother tongues. The Multiliteracies Project (Early et. al., 2002) with students in grade 4 to 10 was the initial entry point that shaped the subsequent phases of my research with college students. Phase 1 of this study was a survey of 90 ESL college students to determine how much of our monolingual instruction and student services they actually understood. This survey revealed that the ESL students surveyed did not understand much of our services and curriculum delivery. It also provided an insight into the students’ conceptual language abilities. This phase revealed the phenomenon that the mother tongue played an integral role in students’ social construction of their personal identities as well as in enhancing their academic knowledge. However, this process took place outside the classroom since their mother tongues were not permitted in their classrooms. Based on the findings from the survey I explored the possibility of bringing the mother tongue tentatively into one classroom to gauge how students might feel about the college validating their mother tongues in classroom pedagogy. In Phase 2 of this study, I learned that students appreciated their mother tongues having a place in class and that indeed their L1s were interacting in their brains together with the target English as they processed concepts and vocabulary. This finding then led to the structured introduction of the mother tongue in two EAP college classrooms for a full semester as part of everyday pedagogy. This was the major Phase 3 of the study.
Chapter 2:
Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

Relationship Between L1 and L2


L2 users have different uses of second languages from monolinguals, have a different command of the language, and utilize different skills: L2 users of English in particular need to interact with different types of non-native speakers. Internally, L2 users are different types of people with different cognitive processes and different knowledge of both languages. Language teaching is creating L2 users with mental and linguistic potentials that monolinguals lack. The goals should be to help them on the one hand to function as multilingual individuals in whatever capacity they choose in the diverse situations of L2 use outside the classroom, on the other to acquire the benefits of bilingualism in cognitive ability and language awareness. (p. 237)

Cook (2003) in an earlier work argues for an end to monolingual conceptions of the bilingual learner and makes a case for using the L1 in the classroom. He recommends that schools open their doors to using L1 in the classroom, arguing that bilinguals and multilinguals differ from monolinguals insofar as their L1 and L2 competence is qualitatively different from each other and that their language awareness and language processing systems are also different from those of monolinguals. He uses the term multicompetence to refer to these differences. He suggests that the L1 and L2 are interwoven in the L2 user’s mind in vocabulary, syntax, phonology and pragmatics. Because of this interweaving, he suggests that it makes sense to encourage L1 use within the classroom and view it as a resource for learning the L2 rather than an impediment. He suggests that learning an L2 is not just adding rooms to your house by building an extension at the back; it is the rebuilding of all internal walls (2001, p. 4). The attempt to separate and isolate the L2 from the L1 is doomed to failure since the two languages are connected in many ways. Cook summarizes his key point as follows: “since the first
language and other language or languages are in the same mind, they must form a language super-system at some level rather than be completely isolated systems.” (Ibid. p. 2) He maintains that they are not “like watertight compartments” (Ibid. p. 6).

Using brain imaging technology called functional Near Infrared Spectroscopy (fNIRS) a team of neuroscientists from the University of Toronto, Scarborough (UTSC), (see Kovelman, Shalinsky, Berens & Petitto, 2008) conducted neurological research on pre-teen participants to arrive at the same conclusion as Vivian Cook. The team found that the brain of a child is able to learn multiple languages without disadvantaging mother tongues:

Early and extensive dual language exposure appears to have an impact on how the bilingual brain processes language within classic language areas…as well as brain areas that support language processing…The overall implication is that this neural change is entirely positive – bilinguals can read and listen to semantic information in each of their languages with the same effectiveness as monolinguals. The bilingual brain also develops mechanisms that allow for successful processing of two languages concurrently in bilingual mode. We therefore hope that scientists, educators, and bilingual policymakers, alike, will take note of the present findings – especially those who decide on educational settings for the nation’s young bilinguals and on whether early bilingual language learning as a child harms one’s dual language, reading and cognitive processing as an adult. To be sure, we found no evidence of harm and instead found evidence that the bilingual brain processes each of its two languages with the aplomb of a monolingual brain processing one. We further hope that our findings may excite cognitive neuroscientists to view bilingual language processing as shedding new light on the full extent and variability of the brain’s neural architecture underlying the remarkable human language capacity. (pp. 1462-1463)

Yet most English schools in Canada often force young English speaking children to wait until later grades to study a second language; and school policies require students whose mother tongue is not English to not use their mother tongues while learning English (Goldstein, 2003). In an interview with reporter Kyonka of The Toronto Star newspaper, (July 12, 2008) one of the neuroscientists in the study, Dr. Petitto, claimed
that their study showed that children in bilingual schools have a cognitive advantage not only in the study of language but in other areas of the curriculum and have the ability to outperform children in monolingual schools. She added: “human language is the quintessential way in which we harness our inner world – our emotional world. It’s how we share that world with someone else” (Ibid.).

According to Cummins (2004b), there is consistent research support for the language interdependence hypothesis. He suggests that in learning a L2, students will transfer aspects of linguistic and conceptual knowledge from one language to another in input (reading, listening) and output (speaking, writing). Cummins suggests that depending on the sociolinguistic situation, five types of transfer are possible:

- Transfer of conceptual elements (e.g. understanding the concept of photosynthesis);
- Transfer of metacognitive and metalinguistic strategies (e.g. graphic organizers);
- Transfer of pragmatic aspects of language use (ability to use paralinguistic features such as gestures to aid communication);
- Transfer of specific linguistic elements (knowledge of the meaning of photo in photosynthesis);
- Transfer of phonological awareness—the knowledge that words are composed of distinct sounds.

In this study, through student responses, I explored which of these linguistic transfers are being used by the students as they scaffold their learning from their L1s to English in college classrooms in which their L1s are being validated and where this study is located.

While researching the applied linguistic implications of codeswitching (moving from L1/L2) among heritage bilingual children, Potowski (2009) commented that codeswitching “began with native bilingual adults, showing that codeswitching is generally rule-governed behavior that fulfills pragmatic and social functions” (p. 89). Fuller (2009), while working with children, also arrived at the conclusion that codeswitching is used for both structuring conversation as well as constructing social identity. She writes:

Social identity is viewed in this research as something which is discursively brought into being, and as such is fluid and situational. Switching languages
allows these speakers to alternate between aspects of their identity, such as being a dutiful student of English or a part of the local (German-speaking) peer network, and also allows them to create a dual identity. In this way, they create new categories for social identity – not merely (for example) German or American, but an identity which allows them to be both at the same time. (p. 130)

This study would echo this finding among adult college students who are new learners of English and in the formative stages of forming an identity that includes being English speaking Canadian while maintaining their prior cultural and lingual identities. Dailey-O’Cain and Liebscher (2009) look more closely at the problem of the optimal amount of codeswitching that should be used in class and by whom – teacher and/or student? Hence, according to them, the question becomes not if the L1 should be permitted but how much and by whom. In other words—what’s the optimal use? This dissertation looked for student perceptions of pedagogy that created a structured space for their mother tongues in their EAP classroom and focused on student use of L1 not teacher use.

Butzkamm and Caldwell (2009) comment on the optimal and targeted use of the L1 in classroom pedagogy. On bilingual teaching techniques they say:

Until we start using them, we will continue to sell our students short. Yet we are not offering them as a universal panacea, since it will always remain a challenge to survive in the heat of some classrooms. But we do think they can change both the teachers’ and students’ lives for the better. The judicious and skilful use of bilingual activities empowers the student and doubles the teacher’s repertoire of techniques. (p. 243)

L1 Inclusion: Impact on Learning Experience, Academic Engagement and Identity

In addition to L1 and L2 interdependence, Cummins (2001) also argued the importance of positive teacher-pupil relationships in the development of student reading and writing skills, self worth and identity. He examined data from the Pajaro Valley Family Literacy Project in California (1986) which included bilingual writing projects to illustrate the power of L1 acknowledgement in developing a literate identity. The book includes several other studies to illustrate the oppressive power of dominant literacy pedagogies. Cummins expanded further on coercive and collaborative relations of power
and how the interactions of teachers with students mould the identities of each as educators and as students. He concluded that those interactions are the most critical determinants of student success or failure at school.

This relationship between teacher and student is also important in post-secondary classrooms. In classroom observations I noted that the four teachers who form my internal committee demonstrate supportive and respectful relationships with their students and validate their languages, diversity, identity and the prior knowledge that their students bring with them into the classroom. They often engage students about their experiences in their countries of birth and allow students to connect new learning experiences in Canada to their prior learning. An example of this is when two of the teachers write words on the board that students use in their L1s for new English vocabulary that they are learning as the class examines the connections together.

Cummins (2000) claimed that relationships with students sketch a triangular set of images:

- An image of our own identities as educators;
- An image of the identity options we highlight for our students; consider, for example, the contrasting messages conveyed to students in classrooms focused on collaborative critical inquiry (transformational education) compared to classrooms focused on passive internalization of information (Freire’s banking education);
- An image of the society we hope our students will help form (p. 48).

The collaborative student-teacher relationships that the four college teachers are establishing in their classrooms go beyond just the basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and the cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins 2001, p. 64). Their relationships with their students go beyond one dimensional notions of language development and combine the students’ prior learning, skills, knowledge, experiences and expertise with the experiential, accreditation-based education that a college provides for students to help students develop into holistically educated global citizens.

In exploring academic achievement and social identity among bilingual students Wong and Grant (2007) write:
We examine the ways in which societal discourses (e.g., relating to English-only instruction, cultural and linguistic deficits, etc.) affect the ways in which bilingual students in the United States form their social identities. Specifically, socially and historically determined structures within the wider society identify minority communities as subordinate to the dominant group and position students from these communities for academic failure. The ways in which literacy is conceptualized, researched, and promoted in classrooms plays a central role in both the identity formation and academic engagement of racial and linguistic minority students. An alternative model is presented that outlines how educational professionals working with ELL and bilingual students can transform schooling and make a difference in the academic achievement of their students. (p. 682)

They contrast the monolingual meritocracy paradigm against the bilingual culturally inclusive theoretical framework and offer an instructional model that includes three essential components for successful achievement of English language learners and for transforming the inequities in the politics of schooling:

1) Human resources: ELL students, their families, and educational professionals;
2) Dialogic pedagogy; and
3) Curriculum for democratic citizenship, and economic and community development. (p. 681)

Their model works well in a college setting where adult students can be full partners in their own education process. Students can be encouraged to develop a self awareness about important cultural components of identity such as language. The dialogic pedagogy is based on mutual teacher-student respect and collaboration. Teaching for L1/L2 interdependence and transfer does not require that teachers speak the languages of their students. It does, however, require that teachers and administrators be willing to examine critically the implicit assumptions underlying curricula (Cummins 2004b). In other words, the question is what image of the student is constructed by the implicit or explicit language or literacy policy of a school or college? Potowski (2007) in examining identity investment in a dual immersion school writes:

Forming and performing social and linguistic identities is at the heart of the development and maintenance of any language. It is generally agreed that when
people feel that their language and cultures are valued, they will be more likely to claim themselves speakers of the language and members of the cultural group. On the contrary, when a language is stigmatized and the cultural inheritance is ridiculed, people will be less willing to be identified with it, whether they are heritage speakers or L2 learners. (p. 198)

An important question for me as an administrator is: “Does the tacit English-only language policy at the college construct an image of the student as intelligent, imaginative, and linguistically talented? Or are we using a deficit mind-set about our L2 students’ abilities, accents, un-intelligibility and second class citizenship in an English dominant society?” Portelli, Shields and Vibert (2007) in their study Toward an Equitable Education: Poverty, Diversity, and Students at Risk, investigated the impact of deficit mentality in K – 12 schools. Their work and the questions they asked have significance in my work at the post-secondary level:

Almost against the odds and in contrast to what mainstream educational literature tells us, in this school we experienced meaningful student, educator, and community engagement aimed at critical democratic transformation. We noted practices and a way of being in school that consciously worked against the predominant “deficit mentality” for students at risk and enacted what we have termed “a curriculum of life” (Vibert, Portelli, Shields, & LaRocque, 2001; Portelli & Vibert, 2002; Vibert & Shields 2003). In this school, this kind of thinking and practice created possibilities that made a qualitative difference in the students’ lives and contributed to the realization of a critical democratic citizenry, as these educators deliberately worked with students, their families, and community to challenge and overcome dominant constructions of them as deficit. Reflecting on the work in this school we asked: How are students at risk conceived of in general by both theoreticians and practitioners? What happens in schools under the category of programs and practices for students at risk? Who benefits and/or gets marginalized by these practices and constructions of students? What are examples of successful practices? We embarked on an inquiry into these questions by examining the literature and, equally importantly, by collecting and
analyzing the views of students and educators within the schools. (Portelli et al., 2002, p. 1)

The kind of social justice education that Portelli et al. referenced in their study above is echoed by Kohli (2005) as she attempted to answer the question, “What is Social Justice Education?”

Broadening the concept of social justice to include multi-cultural meanings, identities and differential power/privilege, affects our understandings of politics and political change. It also affects how we need to educate others about justice and injustice. Social justice education is a ‘praxis’ that includes a theoretical account of oppression and privilege, as well as practical strategies for changing social institutions. Schools are primary sites for this critical transformation since they reproduce inequality. Educating students to overcome internalized forms of oppression – such as racism, sexism, classism and homophobia, offering them a framework for understanding the external structures that are the source of these different oppressions, and empowering students to become agents of change, are all important goals of social justice education. (p. 100)

In my work, I see an addition to Kohli’s list of oppressions above: linguicism. Goldstein (2003) included linguicism as one of the anti-immigrant discourses that must be rejected in classrooms. She urged teachers to develop their own critical literacy skills and learn to recognize discourses that are discriminatory such as linguicism (see Goldstein 2003, pp. 83-101) in which English hegemony in our educational institutions often suppresses the rich spectrum of L1 language abilities that L2 students have acquired through their life experiences.

In early explorations of the role of L1s in the process of learning L2, and as part of a larger study titled From Literacy to Multiliteracies: Designing Learning Environments for Knowledge Generation Within the New Economy (Early et al., 2002), I completed a study in 2005 involving elementary and secondary schools in a multilingual school board (Bismilla, 2005). That research and its findings inform my present study which parallels the inquiry into L1/L2 relationships in students’ learning experience, academic engagement and identity formation.
In the Multiliteracies Project (Early et al., 2002), students from multilingual backgrounds created dual language books that were displayed on the project web site. The dual language writing projects within the project schools were inspired by a previous project entitled “The Dual Language Showcase” (Chow & Cummins, 2003). The study within the Multiliteracies Project (Bismilla, 2005), explored the extent to which the acknowledgement of students’ first language (L1) in class affected their self-esteem and degree of engagement in literacy and other academic activities. I asked elementary students about their perceptions and experiences regarding transfer across languages. Most of those students were from language backgrounds that have minimal linguistic connection to English and despite the likelihood that the major transfer would be conceptual rather than linguistic, the young students provided critical insights into the cognitive and linguistic processes occurring in their brains as they juggled two languages in the “super-system” of their brains as described by Cook (2003). Despite their limitations in English, these students provided remarkably articulate statements regarding the importance of validating their L1 (and by extension their intelligence and culture) within the classroom. They also commented insightfully about the processes of cross-linguistic transfer that they experienced. The students overwhelmingly expressed pride in their home languages, regardless of their level of literacy and fluency in their language.

Clearly, as Cummins (2001) pointed out, identities were being negotiated in the interactions between teachers and students. The students, in the classes where their L1s were being reinforced and their cultures were affirmed, were enabled and encouraged to invest their identities in the learning process. This interpretation is consistent with the Academic Expertise Framework in Figure 1 below. The students’ insights suggested that for these students the two languages were interdependent. They made explicit and conscious linkages across languages struggling to extend their knowledge of English by using their L1 as a resource. It is worth highlighting, however, that this cross-linguistic facilitation came about in the context of classes in which they were encouraged to use their L1 for writing and to create dual language books. In classrooms where their L1 is effectively prohibited, students may not engage in this kind of cross-language transfer to the same extent.
From my ongoing investigation I found that L1 incorporation into the classroom holds promise in affirming students’ sense of cultural and linguistic identity and also in helping them access the curriculum and develop their English literacy skills. This points to the problematic nature of current Ministry of Education (K-12) English language curriculum guides and policies within school systems in Ontario and other provinces’ policies that explicitly or implicitly discourage students from using their L1 as a resource for learning.

The extent to which students’ L1s should be used for instructional purposes has been controversial in a number of contexts (see Baker & Prys Jones, 1998; Cummins, 2001; Macaro, 2003; Turnbull & Dailey-O’Cain, 2009 for reviews). In the Canadian context, only the Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba provincial governments fund bilingual programs within the public school system in languages other than English and French. There are a handful of bilingual programs involving First Nations languages across Canada and also some use of American Sign Language (ASL) as an instructional medium for deaf students. However, the general picture (outside of Alberta) is one of minimal support for instructional use of languages other than the two official languages. In Ontario, provincial law still prohibits the use of any language other than English or French (and ASL and some First Nations languages) as a medium of instruction except for short-term tutorial purposes. Debates on the issue in the 1980s (e.g. in the context of controversies over heritage language teaching in the Toronto Board of Education) reflect concern that “the floodgates would open” with demands for bilingual programs from a multitude of community groups if provincial policy were changed to permit bilingual programs. There have also been concerns that encouragement of L1 maintenance would encourage ethnic divisiveness and reduce integration as well as impede students’ acquisition of English (see Cummins & Danesi, 1990, for a review).

Cummins (2004b) has extensively reviewed research related to “the interdependence hypothesis” which he proposed to explain the outcomes of bilingual programs. He stated the interdependence hypothesis as follows:

To the extent that instruction in [L1] is effective in promoting proficiency in [L1], transfer of this proficiency to [L2] will occur provided there is adequate exposure
Typically, within bilingual and second language immersion programs, strong L1/L2 relationships are observed for literacy-related aspects of language. Students use their L1 conceptual knowledge to make sense of L2 input, and subsequently L2 interacts with and exerts an influence on L1 (Cashion & Eagan, 1990; Cook, 2003, 2007; Cummins, 2007). Lambert and Tucker (1972) observed that some students in the French immersion program they evaluated over the course of elementary school engaged in a form of contrastive linguistics where they compared aspects of French and English despite the fact that in this program (and in virtually all Canadian French immersion programs) the two languages were kept rigidly separate. Turnbull and Dailey-O’Cain (2009) present contrasting views regarding the amount of L1 that should be used in class and by whom (i.e. teacher or student).

Another potential impact of L1 inclusion is in the affective sphere. The Academic Expertise framework proposed by Cummins (2001) addresses the extent to which L1 inclusion might influence students’ sense of self and the extent to which they invest their identities in academic work.

According to Cummins (2001), the Academic Expertise framework argues for the centrality of identity negotiation and identity investment in any conception of effective pedagogy. Teacher-student interactions, and other interactions within the learning community (e.g. with peers and parents), create an interpersonal space within which knowledge is generated and identities are negotiated. Learning will be optimized when these interactions maximize both cognitive engagement and identity investment.

The Multiliteracies study (Early et al, 2002) demonstrated that identity investment was proposed as a significant factor in the extent to which students will engage academically. Thus, when teachers incorporated L1 in the classroom, students’ language and culture were affirmed and this affirmation is hypothesized as an intervention that might increase students’ academic engagement (see Figure 1 below).

Within the Academic Expertise framework, optimal instruction will include a Focus on Meaning, a Focus on Language, and a Focus on Use. According to Cummins (2001), a focus on meaning promotes the development of critical literacy rather than
surface-level processing of text. The focus on language involves promoting not just explicit knowledge of how the linguistic code operates but also critical awareness of how language operates within society. The focus on use component argues that optimal instruction will enable students to generate knowledge, create literature and art, and act on social realities. In the Multiliteracies project (Early et al, 2002), students from multilingual backgrounds created dual language books for the project website. Thus, their literacy activities clearly fall within the scope of the Focus on Use component of the Academic Expertise framework.

Figure 1. The Academic Expertise Framework. (Adapted from Cummins 2001; Copyright Jim Cummins; reproduced with permission)

According to Cummins (2001), cognitive engagement and identity investment reinforce each other in an upward spiral—identity investment leads to greater cognitive engagement
which, in turn, produces greater identity investment. These all occur through interactions within the learning community.

The hegemonic power over L2 speakers was one of the issues that Goldstein (2003) investigated in her ethnographic study in a Toronto school. While accommodating students’ L1 did contribute to students’ academic success, she found that there were some linguistic dilemmas that the teachers and students had to negotiate. The school’s “Language Learning Policy” (p. 9) legitimized students’ L1s by stating a respect for their linguistic diversity and the importance of L1s in learning English. However, the School Review, a process by which the School Board reviews curriculum delivery in schools, acknowledged a local desire for English monolingualism. This created an interesting contradiction for the teachers, namely “the desire for institutional English monolingualism and the desire for student multilingualism” (p. 9). This resulted in teachers exploring multilingual language pedagogies in their classrooms which echo the desire of the four college teachers who form my internal study committee.

Anecdotally, I believe, as Goldstein (2003) stated regarding her Pre-Service Education class at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, (OISE) that most public school teachers are monolingual, English speaking, university educated with little understanding of the dilemmas associated with L2 learning (p. 2). This is also largely true of English teachers at the college. Teachers may not always be able to discern when their power relationships with their students are coercive or collaborative in Cummins’ (2004b) sense. In my 38 years as teacher, principal, superintendent and now as a college Vice-President Academic, I have frequently encountered the traditional belief about teaching English in Canada namely, that immersion and drill in English are the best ways for L2 students to master English and that the mother tongue must be kept strictly apart from the target language. This is echoed in the Cummins’ paper, “Rethinking Monolingual Instructional Strategies in Multilingual Classrooms” (2007) in which he disputes this drill assumption.

With the teachers and students in this study I probed the dilemma of whether or not it is good practice to leave student mother tongues at the door of the classrooms or to bring them into the learning environment. Phase 1 of this study, discussed in Chapter 4,
in addition to providing quantitative data that showed that ESL students were not understanding much of what the college was teaching and delivering, revealed that the college students I surveyed believed that the most helpful assets to their L2 learning were:

Teacher-student relationship builders such as, “The teachers need to talk more slowly”;

“Helpful teachers; approachable teachers; clear voice of teacher; nice friendly teachers;”

Student to student relationships such as, “My friends help me a lot; my same language friends; speaking English with classmates.”

Phase 2 of this study (Chapter 4) pointed to some significant internal conflicts that our students are experiencing regarding their linguistic identities and, in Goldstein’s (2003) words, their “individual language choice decisions…their goals and roles in life and larger historical, economic, political and educational events” (p. 11). This small sample study was intended to ascertain from students whether introducing their mother tongues in their classrooms would enhance their learning experience, academic engagement and the construction of identity. One aspect of identity formation for L2 students in post secondary classrooms is the student’s accent and how divergent accents are perceived by others. It is important to understand both sides of this issue, that is, how do accents impact L2 students’ understanding of others and what role do they perceive that their accents play in how they themselves are perceived. Lippi-Green (1997) in discussing teacher bias against black students writes:

Evidence clearly suggests that speakers of Black English are presented with more obstacles to success than are speakers of Standard English. This phenomenon permeates the educational institutions and lay communities as well. It affects not only speakers of Black English, but ultimately society at large, for it is often a perceived lack of effective communications that can deprive society of contributions from all its members (p. 112).

Tracey Derwing (1995) explored the interrelationships among accent, intelligibility and perceived comprehensibility of ESL speakers from four first language backgrounds: Cantonese, Japanese, Polish and Spanish. In her investigation, she asked
26 undergraduate university students ranging in age from 18 to 48 who were native speakers of English to listen to 48 college students ranging in age from 19 to 64 years who were non-native speakers of English. The undergraduate students transcribed and evaluated the speech and made judgements of comprehensibility. Derwing’s use of the terms “native” and “non-native” speakers of English is controversial, since defining who is and is not a “native speaker of English” is a complex and controversial undertaking. But the results of her study provided evidence that accent does not necessarily compromise intelligibility. However, in socio-cultural settings these factors may negatively impact how students are perceived and, by extension, their self-worth and identity formation long before they get to the point of displaying knowledge through writing. In Phase 2, I asked students about their perceptions of other students’ accented speech to try to understand the complicated role of accent in identity formation. If L2 students themselves were forming opinions about accented speech how would this impact on how they themselves were being perceived by mainstream speakers of English?

**Social construction of identity.**

There are not too many children or young adults who consciously think about their identities growing up. As a child and young adult growing up in apartheid South Africa I remember the statute that the state called the “Group Areas Act” very, very viscerally. We were Indians and had to live by law in the “Indian areas” usually rocky, shale and steep hills, clay soil areas and other areas that were generally more difficult to build in or to grow crops. Black South Africans had to live even further away from the urban centres in crowded “African areas.” Mixed race people had to live in between Indians and Blacks in “Coloured areas.” The Group Areas Act gave white people all the prime real estate on the beach fronts, in lush valleys, beautiful gentle hills and magnificent landscapes that nature has endowed to Africa. The one and only silver lining to the Group Areas Act was the preservation of our culture, traditions, religions and languages within our highly politicized environment.

Anton Allahar (2001) describes this political and accompanying psychological influence on identity formation as follows:

The issue of identity formation is simultaneously psychological and political. It is psychological because one’s identity speaks subjectively to how one feels and how one
interprets subjectively one’s position in a social context…one does not always see oneself as others do. This is where the political dimension enters.

Social identities often involve social negotiation, and negotiation will always imply at least two opposing sides. Also, every process of social negotiation is a political process because politics speaks to the distribution of power in a social situation. The ability to label (give an identity to) another, and to make that label stick is purely a matter of power. Therefore, in any dispute over identity it is the one with the greatest power who will determine the outcome. (p. 197)

As an Indian in South Africa’s political system of apartheid, I grew up among other Indians and our white government-issued identity cards labelled us as “Indian.” Socially amongst Indians we differed in language and religion. Indians spoke mostly Hindi, Urdu, Gujerati, Tamil and Telegu. The religions practised among us were mostly Hinduism, Islam and a small number of us practised Christianity. In fact my beloved elementary school was a converted Christian church in a graveyard. Our religious rites amongst the Hindus were slightly different according to language and geographic origins in India. South Indians, who mostly spoke Tamil and Telegu, practised Hinduism slightly differently than North Indian Hindi and Gujerati speakers. Muslims amongst us spoke mostly Urdu and Gujerati and practised Islam. Given these variations in our personal characteristics, reminiscent of the petals in the daisy of Enid Lee’s *Letters to Marcia* (1985) we were aware of our differences but were strongly connected by our similarities. In the school yard we played with other children whom we liked for reasons that had not much to do with identity characteristics of language, religion, poverty, class or even gender. Despite our different inter-cultural identity markers our parents were strongly allied against our racist political masters and we grew up drawn together through shared social rituals and visceral political anger.

As we grew up as government-identified non-whites in South Africa, the Group Areas Act solidified our Indianness despite differences of language and religion; and the government’s racism provided the unifying interest or impetus for us to organize, as in Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins (2004): “collective action [to] construct in-group identity strategically so as to construe such action as expressing collective identity” (p. 342).

Having left South Africa in 1970 just as I turned 22, identity became a stark and very important matter when I landed in Canada. I had researched Canada and deliberately chosen it
above other English speaking countries specifically because of Canada’s tolerance of diverse people, as opposed to England, which was beginning to have anti-immigrant rumblings and Australia with a less-than-exemplary record of welcoming non-white immigrants. In Fergus, Ontario where we spent our first three months with family, our Indianness was a characteristic of great curiosity but we were welcomed warmly. We quickly obtained landed immigrant status and entry level jobs in Toronto. We were encouraged by Canadian co-workers and friends to pursue our educational goals because we had university degrees. We trained as teachers and had little difficulty finding teaching jobs, despite the teacher surpluses of 1972.

As a brand new teacher, I was hired to teach ESL to students in Kindergarten to Grade 8 in Toronto which was beginning to see a small influx of immigrant children mostly from Eastern Europe and the Far East. There was no curriculum so this young teacher fresh out of Teachers’ College was expected to write curriculum as well. This was one of the many great opportunities I have been offered by Canada. In the classroom, because my students were multilingual, preservation of their mother tongues while they learned English became very important to me. In the words of Lippi-Green (1997):

Language subordination is about taking away a basic human right: to speak freely in the mother tongue without intimidation, without standing in the shadow of other languages and peoples. To resist the process, passively or actively, is to ask for recognition, and acknowledgement. It is a demand for the simple right to be heard (p. 243).

I had to engage students in multilingual activities outside of the classroom. I resisted the process that denied students their right to speak their mother tongues at school and sought to acknowledge their mother tongues, albeit outside of official classroom pedagogy in a way that did not violate school policy. In writing the curriculum and teaching strategies, I was advised by senior school board curriculum officials to leave mother tongues outside of class. This was consistent with what Allahar (2001) later described as social power relations, in this case the power of English hegemony. Students loved teaching their languages to other students so I ran after-school language clubs. It was through these clubs that the topic of identity emerged for me as an educator.

Moje and Luke (2009) review various ways in which identity is conceptualized in general. They document five metaphors used in identity literature. They named them (a) identity as difference (b) identity as sense of self/subjectivity (c) identity as mind or consciousness (d)
identity as narrative and (e) identity as position. They contend that “subtle differences in identity theories have widely different implications for how one thinks about both how literacy matters to identity and how identity matters to literacy” (p. 416). In examining the metaphor of identity as position they write:

> Just as one might see evidence of the layers of varnish on a piece of wood, so we might also see the layers of identity on a person. To play out the metaphor even further, those layers can be stripped away, reapplied, nicked, scratched, or even gouged. Thus, identity as layers of positions (i.e. laminations) carries with it the histories (hence, the overlap with the concept of histories in person, or even possibly, of *habitus*) of past experiences (p. 430).

By the time a student reaches college, they are adults and have accumulated many layers of “varnish,” their mother tongues being one of the rich and vibrant layers. Through their years of schooling if that layer has been stripped, nicked or scratched, evidence of that would form another layer of their identity. Power relations that subjugate any aspect of identity, “are thought to shape a person’s self (or a group’s identity) through acts that distinguish and treat the person as gendered, raced, classed, or other sort of subject” (Ibid. p. 430).

Gerin-Lajoie’s (2003) study of identity formation examined how a group of adolescents attending two French-language high schools in Ontario formed notions of identity and how they perceived and defined themselves as members of a lingual minority. She articulated her objective thus:

> To examine the identity path of a group of adolescents attending Franco-Ontarian high schools on the basis of the principle that identity is formed by representations resulting from life trajectory. In a minority environment, one’s sense of identity serves to locate oneself linguistically and culturally. Since identity is acquired (rather than innate) and the result of social construction (Barth, 1969; Breton, 1994; Juteau-Lee, 1983) this study aimed to look at how adolescents forge notions of identity. (p. 3)

She concluded that identity is constructed through the various social relationships that are established between individuals and identity is generally first formed in the family environment. Schools not only ignore family or social identity and societal power relations but do not understand the workings and artifacts of the L2 students’ learning
process in their ever-evolving personal identities, life trajectories or linguistic and
cultural locations. She wrote about this study:

I have not only desired to better understand the identity path of these students but
I have also wanted to encourage them to reflect on the concept of identity in order
to sensitize them to the importance of French language and culture for minority
Francophones. (p. 2)

It is this voice of the marginalized that is heard in critical ethnographic research
that is not heard in many of the other genres or “moments” of research (Denzin &
Lincoln, 2000). The voice of participants as co-investigators is what gives power to
critical ethnographic research through inductive processes of observation, interviews and
document analysis rather than the positivist deductive processes which rely on objective
data isolated from social context. While mine is not an ethnographic research study my
hope is to learn from the college students’ voices through their responses to our creating a
space in our classrooms for their mother tongues.

I had grown through Cerulo’s (1997) stages of identity construction from myself
as a child to the collective “we” of political activism; and as a teacher, my vision for the
trajectory of my young students’ identities was that they would keep and value their
important linguistic and culturally formative identities. In my idealistic youth I was
determined that my students would not live in two worlds and belong to neither like
Perez’s student who poignantly said. “I lived in two worlds and didn’t belong in either”
(Perez 2008, p.13). Their shared sense of origin with linguistically and culturally
homogenous communities would be important elements of their identities as they grew
older. In the latter years of my career trajectory, when as a school superintendent, I
explored student self-esteem and identity through our Multiliteracies Project (Bismilla,
2005), a Grade 4 student at Coppard Glen Public School captured the crucial link
between language and identity when he said “being able to speak in my language is the
most magical thing that can ever happen to you.”

In the present study the four teachers who validate the use of mother tongues in
college classrooms believe, as Jana Noel (2001) did, that a multicultural education focus
will enable students to understand their process of identity construction and the
importance of language in that process. At the college level, multicultural education
involves sharing research on cultural diversity with students and validating their language-encoded personal life trajectories. Reyes and Vallone (2007) went further in exploring the pillars of two-way bilingual education programs:

First pillar: The inherent childhood capacity to acquire a second language without explicit instruction.

Second pillar: The literature on academic, cognitive and metalinguistic development in second language acquisition …challenged earlier claims of a negative correlation between bilingualism and intelligence and instead illustrated cognitive gains for bilingual children…with advantages for bilinguals said to include enhanced cognitive skills, superior developmental patterns…enhanced abilities in divergent thinking.

Third pillar: The link to children’s bilingual/bicultural attitudes and hence identity construction may well be found in the third pillar of two-way programs: cross cultural attitudes. This is because language is an integral aspect of culture and some studies suggest that by the age of six, children have already begun to develop cultural identities (Hamers & Blanc, 1992). Although the home environment is the primary source of cultural identity in children, the school can play an important secondary role. (p. 4)

Reyes and Vallone (2007) argued for a fourth pillar of identity construction, that is, two way bilingual education which today flourishes under hostile conditions. They claimed that a student’s active use of two different language systems strengthens their cognitive, linguistic and metalinguistic abilities and these impact positively on academic engagement and achievement. They went on:

When issues of language and culture intersect a solid foundation in both minority and majority languages may positively affect self-identity…Language is the carrier of culture; thus, losing one’s language is equivalent to living outside of one’s culture. This holds true not only for members of linguistic minority groups who speak English as a second language, but for members of linguistic minority groups for whom English is a first language or who are at various stages of bilingual proficiency… Thus…such [bilingual] programs are intimately involved
in ethnic identity construction and the corresponding development of self esteem in children from linguistic minority backgrounds. (p. 6)

Fleming (2007) summarizes the shortcomings of Canada’s ESL funding policies over several decades including present day federally funded programs such as Language Instruction to Newcomers to Canada (LINC):

I also contend that these programming policy decisions fail to take into account the entire individuality of our learners and their identities. The multifaceted and complex process of identity construction in the types of educational settings I have described cannot be fully realized without opportunities for intermediate and advanced language learning that engages the entire individual. Basic level language learning and work specific training may be practical, but they are severely limited (p.196).

At the college level, not only bilingualism, but the discussion of the benefits of bilingualism, in the kind of critical pedagogy that Freire (1970) promoted, make classrooms critical, transformative places where identity construction can be supported. The unequal power structures between the mainstream language and students’ mother tongues begin to become apparent through critical pedagogy. Reyes and Vallone (2007) maintained that:

Students in [additive] two-way bilingual immersion programs may develop a “metacultural awareness,” a heightened awareness of one’s own culture in relation to the culture of others. In subtractive models of education for ELLs students may sense that their own language and culture are not valued. (p. 8)

In additive bilingual programs like those in the classrooms where this study is based, the students’ languages and cultures are respected. Reyes and Vallone (2007) saw these additive bilingual classrooms as gifts to be valued and shared. They saw subtractive language programs as ones in which the dominant language and culture replace minority languages and cultures. They point out:

In two way classrooms where discourse is bilingual, where students and teachers alike are both teachers and learners, and where students and teachers are encouraged to move between cultures with fluidity, this can take on added significance…As socializing agents of students, schools have the opportunity to
While the work of Reyes and Vallone (2007) was set in pre-college classrooms, the process of identity construction described is pertinent to college students who have developed their identities through many processes and paradigms in different settings in multiple countries. Kayongo-Male and Benton Lee (2004) in their study of minority university students in China, commented on the indirect impact of others’ perceptions on identity. They point out that:

The process of ethnic identity construction is conceptualized as a product of macro-level variables in interaction with individual student’s micro-level decision-making and reality construction.

Since every student must deal with others’ perceptions or expectations of him or her, all those who interact with the student can influence the salience of the student’s ethnic identity.

At one level is the family (micro), at the next level is the school structure (meso or middle level), and at the third level is the environment outside of the schools (macro). All the levels are interrelated or nested…An agency (school’s role in understanding social construction of identity) orientation aims to understand how students, with different prior experiences, unique social networks and varying societal expectations, respond to other actors in the school environment and to various structural factors. (pp. 277-279)

Zu Zhiyong (2007) found parallel evidence of minority Tibetan students losing their linguistic and cultural identity markers in the dominance the Chinese hold over Tibetans. He looked at primordial (ethnic attributes), circumstantialist (political, economic, social power structures), and the constructionist (incorporate the two) factors in the process of identity construction. He found that pre-existing Tibetan identities can be changed in power dominant Chinese school settings. His model (2007, p. 42) conceptualizes his findings on the roles of the state, the school and the local community on ethnic identity construction. A school, he maintains, has the power to reproduce the state’s hegemonic power relations.
While China might be an extreme example, here in Ontario the government, through its Ministry of Education, does exert direct intervention and control over our elementary and secondary schools. Their English dominant policies (French language schools are the exception) in school curricula assign English as the lingual identity marker for students and reproduce the province’s English language hegemony. This assigned language identity marker is also pervasive among the teachers in public schools who are mostly English speaking and university educated (Goldstein, 2003). While, in recent years, the Ministry of Education for grades K-12 in Ontario has sought the expertise of L1/L2 teaching and learning scholars, for language and cultural minority students the tension is still between the externally assigned identity at school and their innate, internally developed ethnic identities of which mother tongue is a key component. This tension is exacerbated in college settings where minority students, as adults, come with pre-formed identities and their prior learning is encoded in their mother tongues. While MTCU is silent on English language dominance, all College Curriculum Framework documents (available on the government of Ontario website) stress English language acquisition and the tacit understanding is that English will prevail. Hence the tensions between externally assigned and internally developed identities are evident in the multilingual hallways of the college setting where the study is based.
Chapter 3:
Methodology: Theoretical Rationale and Approach to Research Inquiry for Phases 1, 2 and 3 of Study

Grounded Theory

In designing this study my goal was to discover the role of students’ mother tongue in the acquisition of English in college classrooms. In order to do so, I needed to ask several sets of questions in several phases which narrowed the focus at each phase. During my early Multiliteracies study with bilingual school-age students (Bismilla, 2005) and as I progressed through Phases 1, 2 and 3 of this study, I asked initial questions which in turn generated further questions that needed to be asked and examined. Glaser (1995a, 1995b, 1998) coined the term grounded theory for this method of questioning and analysis based on grounded experiences. In explaining grounded theory Glaser (1995a) states:

In writing [G]rounded theory methodology my goal was and is to empower researchers with an open, generative, emergent methodology. To give them themselves and by giving them an honest approach to the data that lets the natural social organization of substantive life emerge. The goal was not to tell them what to find or how to force it out of the data, but to do research that allows the emergence of “what is going on.” It is designed to produce an integrated set of conceptual hypotheses of a multivariate set of ever moving facts, which continually resolve a main concern of the participants in a substantive area. Thus, I had no wish to control what was going on, but to help researchers keep theoretical control of what was emerging as going on. (p. 7)

The goal of grounded theory is to generate theory from qualitative data derived from systematic inquiry in which the participant’s perspective is key. The data from participants is used to generate potential theory inductively rather than selecting an established theory and deductively working to prove it. Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1997) described grounded theory as a method of inquiry in which the researcher examines the experiences involved in a phenomenon and then attempts to explain the phenomenon by identifying the key elements of that phenomenon; then the researcher explores the
hypothesis, records data, analyzes the data and arrives at conclusions. Given that there is no research in the area of mother tongue and English acquisition in Canadian community college settings, a grounded theory approach was an appropriate choice for exploring a place for mother tongue in community college classrooms. In this study the phenomenon for me was the idea of introducing the students’ mother tongues into classroom pedagogy. My hypothesis, based on my previous Multiliteracies (2005) project was that there might be a place for students’ mother tongue in college classrooms. I asked participants for their views on this approach and probed the role of their L1s in their academic and social interactions through specific sets of questions in each phase. I examined what the students told me (data) and coded the data. Data coding is the process used by researchers to link data to concepts or themes. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) describe the process of coding thus:

All researchers need to be able to organize, manage, and retrieve the most meaningful bits of our data. The usual way of going about this is by assigning tags or labels to the data, based on our concepts. Essentially, what we are doing in these instances is condensing the bulk of our data sets into analyzable units by creating categories with and from our data. This process is usually referred to as coding, although that can imply a rather mechanistic process. We prefer to think in terms of generating concepts from and with our data, using coding as a means of achieving this. (p. 26)

Corbin and Strauss (2008) use the terms concepts and themes interchangeably: Concepts/themes are the foundation for the analytic method described in this book…Concepts are derived from data. They represent an analyst’s impressionistic understandings of what is being described in the experiences, spoken words, actions, interactions, problems, and issues expressed by participants. The use of concepts provides a way of grouping/organizing the data that a researcher is working with. (p. 51)

Phase 3 generated the largest amount of data which I initially coded (first level), then clustered into themes (second level) and then narrowed by interpreting these themes into actions needed (third level coding). I examined student responses and connected them to my research questions. The responses that related specifically to student
engagement, learning experiences and identity were colour coded, as were responses that referred to the processes occurring in the students’ brains, references to strategies they were using and the value that they placed on their mother tongues. I then used the themes that emerged to develop my model and to arrive at conclusions.

**Trustworthiness**

In his paper on strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects, Shenton (2004) summarizes Guba’s (1981) constructs as follows:

Guba’s constructs, in particular, have won considerable favour and form the focus of this paper. Here researchers seek to satisfy four criteria. In addressing credibility, investigators attempt to demonstrate that a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny is being presented. To allow transferability, they provide sufficient detail of the context of the fieldwork for a reader to be able to decide whether the prevailing environment is similar to another situation with which he or she is familiar and whether the findings can justifiably be applied to the other setting. The meeting of the dependability criterion is difficult in qualitative work, although researchers should at least strive to enable a future investigator to repeat the study. Finally, to achieve confirmability, researchers must take steps to demonstrate that findings emerge from the data and not their own predispositions. (p. 63)

I addressed the criterion of credibility by presenting, in the body of my thesis, excerpts of the transcribed interviews in the voices of the students in raw form followed by my analysis in each phase. Because students in a college semester system disperse at the end of the semester, many leaving for jobs or other pursuits, I was not able to present the written transcripts to the student participants for verification. I did, however, present the student transcripts to the teachers in Phase 3 of the study, who in turn responded to the student voices from the perspective of their own pedagogy, confirming the accuracy of what the students were saying about their experiences in class. This helped me to determine that the students’ statements were congruent with the experiences that the teachers were providing in their classrooms. The verbatim transcripts are available and cited (Bismilla, 2008) as a completed document for viewing. The teachers’ contributions in Chapter 6 were examined, proof read and verified by the contributing teachers.
Transferability of my findings to other classrooms in the college was important. Hence, I presented the data in tables and figures which other teachers would be able to examine and dissect. I cited the transcripts so teachers wishing to access them in hard copy may do so. I also included all the ground codes as an appendix to my thesis so teachers can have access to them. I developed a model that depicted the main clusters of information provided by the students and their implications. Other teachers in classrooms wishing to pilot the pedagogy will be able to relate the findings to their own specific classrooms.

Dependability and credibility are closely tied. The processes involved in this study are reported in great detail in this chapter on methodology in order to enable another researcher to repeat the process if they should wish to do so. Furthermore, such open disclosure allows the reader to assess the extent to which I followed proper research practices.

For this study to be confirmable, the study needed to be objective; the student voices, not my own preferences, needed to shape my conclusions. In this study, my model was derived wholly from student voices through which they described the processes of language scaffolding in their brains, the value of their mother tongues in their lives, and the issues of identity that mother tongues unlock for them. The data gathered qualitatively through the transcripts were coded and clustered and the coded hard copy is available upon request. The clusters were counted and quantitatively analyzed into themes which in turn informed the eventual model.

**Administrator as action researcher.**

As an administrator wishing to pursue classroom action research, I needed to partner with classroom teachers since I do not teach at the college. My purpose in pursuing this research was to impact policy around L1/L2 pedagogy at the college. Since no other research in this field exists in the college context I needed to initiate research in order to inform any subsequent examination of college policy, pedagogy and practice in the area of L1/L2 pedagogy. Once the findings of this study are shared at the college, a very carefully designed professional development plan needs to be devised which respects the spectrum of knowledge on the topic. The implementation of any change in pedagogy will need to occur in small increments, with a few teachers in a few programs.
Those teachers in turn may share their findings with others and if their experiences warrant the continued re-examination of pedagogy, the teachers and the college’s organizational learning and teaching department will need to inform pedagogy and policy changes based on their incremental experiences with creating a space for mother tongue in their classrooms. Hence this study is only the beginning of L1/L2 inquiry at the college.

**Value of Action Research as a Methodological Approach**

Sagor (2000) and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) define action research as an inquiry process conducted by practitioners who seek to improve or refine their own praxis. The focus is determined by the practitioners and is therefore highly relevant to their work. For educators, action research hones our focus on an aspect of our work that needs examination in order to make a positive difference in the lives and experiences of our students. Herr and Anderson (2005) discuss action research as becoming more prevalent in dissertations over the decade. They describe it as a collaborative process in which the research participants are either in control or are active participants rather than subjects as in positivist research methods. They are thus personally and professionally empowered. While action research is a reflective process it is deliberate and systematic and presents data and evidence to arrive at conclusions. According to Masters (1995) there are four basic themes that form the basis of action research: empowerment of participants, collaboration through participation, acquisition of knowledge, and social change. In action research, as in other genres of research, educators select a focus that they’ve identified as needing further inquiry and find connections to existing theory or context, clarify research questions, collect and analyze data and report; but most importantly they take informed action. Stringer (2007) describes action research as a method of engagement in research to find effective and localized solutions. He outlines the three overarching steps as identifying an issue or problem, determining a process of inquiry and arriving at an explanation that enables understanding. My choice of action research as an administrator was to work with teachers to arrive at a localized solution for our college.

Burns (2007) describes action research as follows:

As the term implies, action research focuses simultaneously on action and research. The action aspect requires some kind of planned intervention, deliberately putting into place concrete strategies, processes, or activities in the
research context. Interventions in practice are in response to a perceived problem, puzzle, or question that people in the social context wish to improve or change in some way. These problems might relate to teaching, learning, curriculum, or syllabus implementation, but school management or administration are also a possible focus.

The research process is less predictable than in most other research approaches, as it is characterized by a spiral of cycles that minimally involve planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, although like other forms of research the reality is likely to be much messier than this description suggests. (pp. 987-988)

In my action research I chose to focus on the language education needs of our diverse student body. I was interested in carrying out action research into our own college practice from the perspective of an administrator of a large institution focused on learning. In addition to involving our language teachers who are reflective practitioners, I chose to actively involve our students who are adult learners with rich prior learning experiences. I believe that my methodological approach gave the teacher participants as well as the students, opportunities to reflect on their experiences, collaborate in class and shape the outcome of this study. The students had the opportunity to deliberate on their personal journeys and respond to this unique approach to learning English in a college classroom. The teachers had the opportunity to reflect on their multilingual pedagogy and respond to what their students had to say about that pedagogy. Their insights continue to provide guidance as the college looks to expand opportunities for students to have their L1s given dignity in our classrooms rather than left at the door as if they are things of which to be ashamed.

Value of Teachers as Collaborative Participants

As an administrator I do not teach. Yet my inquiry was to explore alternatives to existing L1/L2 pedagogy in college classrooms. To do this I needed to collaborate with classroom teachers engaged in teaching L2 students at the college. As I explored the potential of engaging teachers by discussing my area of interest, I discovered that several teachers themselves had an interest in this area. Four of these teachers became my collaborative internal committee. As the project developed and I visited their classrooms
it became clear that these teachers had developed collaborative environments in their classrooms which respected their students’ multilingual identities.

In highlighting the message that human relationships are at the heart of schooling, in Chapter 1 of his book, *Negotiating Identities*, Cummins (2001), stressed the importance of positive teacher-pupil relationships in the development of student reading and writing skills, self worth and identity. The teachers with whom I worked had established what Cummins called collaborative (vs. coercive) relationships between themselves and their students:

Real change in the education of culturally diverse students requires a fundamental shift from coercive to collaborative relations of power. (p. 18)

The challenge is to change the structure of power relations such that they become additive through collaboration rather than subtractive through coercion; in other words, the structure of macro- and micro-interactions needs to shift so that these interactions generate power for all participants rather than increase the disparities of power. (p. 19)

The structure of educational paradigms that exist in most of our schools reflects the relations of power in our wider society and this is echoed in the way that teachers define their roles in the classrooms. In Canadian English-only classrooms, teachers may tacitly assign a lesser value to languages other than English (and French as the other official language). Current scholarly debates on bilingual education (see Cummins, 2001 & 2007; Macaro, 2005; Turnbull, 2009a, 2009b; Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009) are beginning to give L2 students some room to negotiate their learning experiences, a model reflected in the classrooms of the teachers in this study. The teachers, by facilitating their students’ use of their L1s in class to scaffold their learning of L2 rather than silencing them, demonstrate their willingness to establish collaborative rather than coercive relations of power with their L2 students on the question of language learning (see Figure 1.1, Cummins, 2001 p. 20). Hence these teachers were important for this study which intended to have both teachers and students as participants.

**Research Design**

This study, of necessity, needed to be done in phases. Phase 1 was the stage in which I needed to ascertain the level of understanding that our L2 students had of college
services and current English-only pedagogy. To do this I surveyed 90 ESL students in six ESL classrooms. Once I learned from the survey that our L2 students were having trouble understanding our English only services and pedagogy but that they were using their mother tongues outside of our classrooms to help one another, I proceeded to Phase 2 in which I worked with a teacher to bring the mother tongue into a classroom as part of pedagogy. This in turn led to Phase 3 in which two EAP teachers introduced structured use of mother tongue into their classrooms for a whole semester after which I interviewed all their students to gather their reactions which formed the major part of this study.

I used a mixed methods design in Phases 1 and 3 which incorporates qualitative and quantitative techniques to answer research questions. The mixed methods approach in Phase 1 allowed me to quantify the answers that students gave me about their range of understanding of the English used in our student services and in curriculum delivery. The qualitative data generated in the latter part of the survey allowed me to hear their impressions about the value that they placed on their mother tongues, the language in which all their prior learning is encoded. In Phase 2 I used a qualitative approach because I needed the students’ opinions about our validation of their mother tongues in class. In Phase 3, while I used a qualitative approach to gather student perceptions about the use of mother tongue in class and the interaction in their brains between L1 and L2, I did use quantitative techniques as well. Once the ground codes and second level codes were gleaned I counted occurrences of specific comments that fit into the clusters and arrived at percentages to gauge which clusters occurred most often. These then became the themes that I used in my model.

Data Collection

Data generated with mixed methods built upon data in other phases. While Phases 1 and 2 were not complete projects on their own, when considered together with Phase 3 they were developed as one research program. Hence, data collection was conducted to answer particular questions on similar inquiries in each phase with the total research results triangulated to form a comprehensive whole (Morse, 2003).

Data collection in Phase 1 was done through a student survey requiring both quantitative (Likert scale) as well qualitative responses. In Phase 2 students were given the opportunity to fill out a survey requiring qualitative responses to their teacher
allowing the structured use of mother tongue in their classroom. I then interviewed the three students individually using their completed surveys as the base of the semi-structured interviews. The data was reproduced in the text of the thesis in raw form. In Phase 3 students were invited to participate in five focus groups in which I conducted semi-structured interviews using 12 set questions. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed to form the main data set upon which my model and conclusions were based.

Analysis

The analysis of the data in Phase 1 was a two-step process. Step one involved interpreting the Likert scale to read the levels of understanding of English by the 90 ESL students. The second step was looking at raw qualitative data to determine if there would be any value in creating space in L2 classrooms for mother tongue. Phase 2, an exploratory phase, was a very small sampling, just three EAP students who were asked questions about the multilingual pedagogy that had allowed their mother tongues into one of their classrooms for a limited time. Again, I did not code this data. I simply looked at the raw qualitative data to determine if the students believed that bringing mother tongues into the classroom would have any academic, cognitive or socio-cultural (identity enhancing) value. In Phase 3, the major phase of this study, the two teachers allowed structured use of mother tongue in their classrooms for a whole semester at the end of which I interviewed their students. The qualitative interview data was generated by my 12 questions posed to 19 EAP students and tape recorded and then transcribed. The transcripts were examined and ground codes extracted. The second step was clustering the ground codes to arrive at themes. The themes were key in interpreting the value that students placed on their classroom experience with the multilingual pedagogy and the processes occurring internally as they used their L1s to scaffold their learning of the L2. Prevalent patterns were then used to create a model as a first step toward examining the English only policy at the college and helping teachers look objectively at second language pedagogy. Results of my three phase investigation are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Because each phase of this study was a little different than the other, I outline below aspects of the methodology that were specific to each phase.
Specific Method for Phase 1

I designed the central tool for Phase 1 as a survey (attached as Appendix A) to be completed by ESL college students. I conducted the survey with 90 students in six first year ESL classrooms. Translations of the consent form were authenticated and made available. As per college research ethics policy, neither the teachers nor I as researcher were permitted to directly recruit students to fill out the survey (For the participant authorization, see Appendix G; for the ethics review, see Appendix H). The EAP Manager agreed to explain the purpose of the study, the information letter and consent forms to the six ESL classes and invited students to fill out the survey if they wished. The manager explained each section of the survey to the students and she explained terminology used in the survey such as asset, barrier, enablers, factors and added languages. Ninety students in the six classes signed consent forms and filled out the surveys. In order to protect the identities of the students I numbered each survey from 1 to 90. The quantitative demographic responses are captured in Figures 2, 3 and 4. Tables 2 and 3 capture the levels of understanding that students have of key college functions delivered through the medium of English. These percentages indicated to me that a large number (64%) of ESL students were not understanding many key college services and not understanding curriculum delivery. The qualitative responses in sections E and F were used in the raw form to gauge if students perceived their mother tongues to be barriers or assets in their educational and social lives. Since Phase 1 was an exploratory phase I did not code the qualitative responses further than level 1 which revealed that students saw their L1s as assets in their social interactions but since it was not permitted in class, they were unable to assess the academic benefits. I have quoted a sampling of these responses in the results section in Chapter 4. These qualitative sections were meant to explore whether or not the validation of students’ mother tongues in the college would impact their experience and engagement and therefore justify the continuance of this study. The purpose of these qualitative sections was for me to ascertain if students might be interested, should I pursue the next phase and explore actually creating a space for mother tongues in our classrooms.
Specific Method for Phase 2

The data from Phase 1 led me to Phase 2 to work with one teacher in one class to create a space for mother tongue for her students for one assignment over a two week period. In an EAP Level 3 class one of the learning outcomes is for students to perfect their paragraph writing skills. The variation that the teacher introduced for the purpose of this study is to give students the option of actively using their mother tongues to research the topic and if they wished to write their drafts in their mother tongues. This phase focused on gauging students’ reaction to having L1s in the classrooms, using a sample assignment that students would complete. The teacher’s assignment required the EAP Level 3 students to read an assigned article about dreams, research dreams using their L1s if they wished, use their L1 to make notes and write drafts if they wished and then write a two page response in English expounding on their opinions and beliefs about the meaning of dreams. My follow up survey (Appendix B) required the students to assess the value of this multilingual approach. Both Cook and Cummins in previously cited works hold the belief that L1s scaffold L2. I needed for the students to confirm this claim in order to proceed to the larger Phase 3 of this study. Because the college research policy does not allow researchers or persons in power positions over students to directly solicit their participation in research, neither the teacher nor I was permitted to directly recruit student volunteers in classrooms. The Manager of the EAP program agreed to explain the study to the students and invite them, if they wished, to participate in the study. She talked to the class about the research and explained the consent form, the information sheet and the survey (Appendix B). She asked for six volunteers. I watched and listened in the class. Although six students volunteered and signed the consent forms only three actually submitted completed surveys and came for the individual interviews two weeks later. I then conducted a thirty minute semi-structured interview with each of the three students using their completed surveys as the base document for clarification and discussion. I made notes, coded them and then analyzed them with the purpose of connecting the students’ input with my research questions. Once again, since this was an exploratory phase I did not code beyond level 1. My interest in the student responses was to determine if their responses would encourage me to pursue a multilingual pedagogy on a larger scale. If the students’ raw data revealed that they valued the use of mother tongue
The survey tool for phase 2.

The survey tool is attached as Appendix B. I designed the survey tool to collect demographic data in sections A, B and C. In section D question 1, I sought to understand how these students felt about their teacher allowing mother tongues in class. In question 2 I needed for the students to assess if academic activities such as research, making notes and writing drafts were easier for them in English directly or in the mother tongues first and then transferred to English. Questions 3 and 4 probed this further. Question 5 regarding accents was phrased in a way that students would understand. I needed to know how they, who themselves had accents, understood other students with accents. If L2 students themselves had issues with the accents of L2 peers, might their own accents be difficult to be understood by English monolinguals and hence impact their perceptions of L2 students? Might these perceptions impact the L2 students’ esteem and identities? The sections of the survey that informed the next phase were mainly Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 which specifically sought their input into the processes of mother tongue use in class.

Specific Method for Phase 3 – Major Phase

In preparing for this major phase, I formed an internal committee with the four teachers at the college who were interested in introducing students’ L1s into their classrooms in order to scaffold students’ learning of the L2. Since, as per college policy, neither the teachers (as persons in positions of trust and power in the traditional student-teacher relationship) nor I as researcher are permitted to directly recruit student volunteers to respond to this study, the Manager of the EAP program agreed to explain the study to students in the classes of the four teachers on the committee and invite their participation should they wish to do so. She explained to the four classes about the research and explained the information letter (Appendix C), the consent form (Appendix D), the demographic survey (Appendix E) and the focus group questions (Appendix F). She asked for volunteer students in each of the four classes.

I had originally planned on conducting interviews in four classrooms (i.e. 2 EAP classrooms as well as an ESL class and a General Education class) but students in the
ESL and General Education classes were reluctant to participate in interviews. In their first year and very first semester at the college, the ESL students, brand new to Canada, told their teacher that they did not think they were comfortable enough in their English skills to participate in a research study. The General Education students did not want to participate because, as they communicated with their teacher, they did not want to attract attention to their “differentness.” Most students in this class, including L2 students, were fluent enough in English to have been admitted into professional programs of study rather than requiring English upgrades as is the case with students in EAP and ESL. There were two General Education students who might have participated but were reluctant because, “There are no other same-language friends in class,” to accompany them for the interview and they did not want to try the interview alone. The reluctance of students in these two classes to participate without friends who share their L1/L2 experience was an indicator of their need to rely on their own mother tongue or a mother tongue peer in new and unfamiliar settings.

Based on these reactions, I determined that it would be important for the students who did volunteer, to be interviewed in groups to be comfortable to share their L1/L2 perspectives in the company of peers whom they knew. The literature on focus group interviews in educational research (see Vaughn, Shay & Sinagub 1996; Jarrel, 2000; Moyle 2006) describes focus groups as effective tools to engage participants in carefully constructed conversation about their feelings, attitudes and perceptions. Through the questions the researcher is able to obtain data for specific purposes. The researcher designs the context and in my case these were educational conversations focused on hearing student voices about a new pedagogy. While the conversations were controlled by asking each student the same question individually, group interaction was possible as other students in the group responded to student answers. This approach was different than my Phase 2 approach in which I interviewed students individually.

All 19 students in the two EAP classes volunteered to be interviewed over their lunch periods. I conducted five one-hour focus group interviews and the size of the groups ranged from one student in the smallest “group” to seven students in the largest group. Students signed consent forms and filled out the demographic survey forms before arriving for their interviews. The interview questions are attached as Appendix F. These
were hour-long semi-structured interviews. Each student was given a hard copy of the questions at the focus group table. Each question on the question sheet was read aloud and explained to the students and each student was invited to respond or pass. I audio-taped the interviews, transcribed them and made notes. I then coded the transcripts by colour, picking out key responses that contributed insights into my research question relating to learning experience, academic engagement and identity formation. I found other additional valuable insights that the student responses provided and coded them as well (see full collection of ground codes, Appendix J). I then used all my ground codes to establish the major themes that emerged and analyzed them with the purpose of connecting the students’ input to the literature on L1/L2 relationships and to present the findings in a coherent format. I used the themes to formulate a model to introduce a multilingual pedagogy to the college community.
Chapter 4:
Results

Phases 1 and 2 of Study

The results of the research with elementary and secondary school students in the Multiliteracies Project (Bismilla, 2005) inspired my exploration into L1/L2 relationships with college students for whom English is an added language. I needed to determine how well our L2 students understood our English-only curriculum delivery and student service practices and whether they would regard mother tongue inclusion as relevant at their college.

Research questions in Phase 1.

The two major research questions that I explored in this phase were:

- To what extent do ESL students understand the College’s English-only curriculum delivery and student services practices?
- To what extent would college respect and acknowledgement of students’ L1s facilitate students’ learning experience, academic engagement and identity formation?

The central tool for Phase 1 was a student survey (Appendix A) with questions that sought both quantitative and qualitative answers. To seek answers to the first question I asked college students to indicate their levels of understanding of English-only curriculum delivery and student services such as registration, enrolment, course selection, and student loans. In the next section, to probe pedagogy from the students’ perspective, I asked the students to identify some enablers and barriers to their learning experiences at the college. To seek input from students regarding the value they placed on their mother tongues in their new adopted country, in the last section I asked about their perceptions and experiences regarding use and acknowledgement of their L1 languages both in the college classrooms as well as in outside settings.

I sought to explore what second language learners could tell us about creating positive learning experiences as well as providing insights into the social construction of identity and its impact on academic engagement. The last two pages of the survey yielded qualitative information regarding the identity issues that emerge for ESL learners at the college. These sections also asked students to list enablers and barriers to their learning of
Results in Phase 1

The students in this phase of the study ranged in age from 16 to over 50 (see Figure 2 below) covering a wide range of learners including the secondary school graduate, adults who have not completed high school, foreign trained professionals seeking to re-qualify and re-enter the job market, visa students, international students, apprenticeship students, continuing education, and general interest students. Most had been in Canada less than three years (see Figure 3 below). The students’ self assessments of their own facility in English placed most in the intermediate fluency range (see Figure 4 below). Over 60% of students at the college are older than 20. This demographic appraisal falls in line with that of the MTCU seen in Table 1 of Chapter 1. Most participants consider themselves to be intermediate or fluent speakers of English. Tables 2 and 3 show the results of the Likert scale. Below, table 2 shows the range of percentages of students who understand the college materials and processes and various levels of difficulty they are experiencing; and Table 3 shows the percentages of students who understand people at the college and the various levels of difficulty they are experiencing.

Section E of the survey (Appendix A) provided qualitative data regarding college enablers and barriers with respect to L2 language learning and attitudes towards mother tongues. In answer to the question “what factors help you understand the English used in class,” the themes that emerged were teacher-student relationship builders such as, “the teachers need to talk more slowly; helpful teachers; approachable teachers; clear voice of teacher; nice friendly teachers;” and student to student relationships such as, “my friends help me a lot; my same language friends; and speaking English with classmates.” When asked if they perceived their L1s to be assets or barriers, the overwhelming response was that their L1s are assets outside the college but that L1s were not permitted in class. They used their L1s outside class to clarify meanings and concepts with same-language friends. They considered their L1s to be highly valued in their communities, social circles and professional lives.
Section F of the survey provided insights into their perceptions of the role of their L1s in their lives. Below is a sample of responses from some of the 90 students surveyed, to questions 3 and 4 in Section F that asked if they perceived their L1s to be assets or barriers. The grammar, spelling and sentence structures are quoted verbatim. The numbers in parentheses are the numbers I assigned to each survey to keep them anonymous. I did not code these comments further than level 1 since this was an exploratory phase in which I was looking for a rationale to continue my exploration into creating a space for mother tongue in a few classrooms in order to elicit student reaction. These verbatim comments provided insights into students’ beliefs that they valued their mother tongues and they considered their L1s to be assets.

I don’t think my first language would be a barrier in my professional life. It surely be an asset because it’s good to know more than one language (Bismilla, 2006, No. 83)

I think my first language will be an asset because I believe I can be a translator in my workplace (Ibid., No. 82)

It is an asset for my college education because for my future education it will be helpful (Ibid., No. 80)

My first language will be an asset in my professional life since Canada is an multicultural country. It helps me to know people who come from different countries (Ibid., No. 78)

First language is an asset in our education, as we would be using it our day to day activities be it at home or at work but equal stress should be given to English to help us for our future (Ibid., No. 77)

Different languages represent different cultures, so the more encouragement for these would help new student ease up in the new environment (Ibid., No. 77)

I think my first language is not a barrier because I can understand better the diversity of people in this college (Ibid., No. 76)

In my opinion it is going to be an asset because I can understand people who speak my first language if they prefer talk in Spanish (Ibid., No. 76)
It’s should be an asset. Because used for more than one language that means you can understand more than one culture (Ibid., No. 75)
My first language would be an asset to me in my professional life because I not only can work with the person who speaks English but also Chinese people (Ibid., No. 74)
Well college can gain by giving exposure to different languages (Ibid., No. 71)
It’s an asset because it’s good if you know more language (Ibid., No. 70)
Asset, because I can help others if they can’t understand English well and explain things better (Ibid., No. 69)
Asset, because it makes me who I am and a deep part of my identity (Ibid., No. 69)
Chinese is getting more important. Many Canadian people are learning Chinese
So I think it’s an asset (Ibid., No. 65)
An asset. I think I will work in the international company (Ibid., No. 61)
Yes it will help me if I will work in the company that needs my language (Ibid., No. 57)
If I have a question, I still can ask my classmate who speak Chinese (Ibid., No. 56)
It is an asset because I’m good at 2 languages (Ibid., No. 51)
I can provide my skills and experiences among people speaking Russian, Ukrainian and English and can provide tutors to these people (Ibid., No. 44)
Yes I think that my first language is an asset because it helps to get information well and help to understand some words (Ibid., No. 43)
It would be an asset. In the health care system, at times you encounter with patients who understand your native language but cannot express themselves (Ibid., No. 41)
First language is an asset because if we don’t understand anything or not get any informations, so we can talk in our language and solve the problems (Ibid., No. 22)
Absolutely not it is an asset because most of the time some employers need second language candidates (Ibid., No. 21)
When I graduate from college my first language would be another language to asset my professional life. Because its good to know more than one (Ibid., No. 20)
My first language is my asset because my first language could be bridge between my country and other country (Ibid., No. 13)
An asset, the more you know language the more success (Ibid., No. 9)
It’s a asset. Because Chinese now was very useful in the international business (Ibid., No. 5)

Figure 2. Age Distribution of Students in Survey, based on 2006 survey of college ESL students (Bismilla, 2006).
Figure 3. Length of Residence in Canada based on 2006 survey of college ESL students (Bismilla, 2006). The vast majority of students in the survey can be considered recent immigrants.

Figure 4. Self Assessment of Fluency in English, based on data of 2006 survey of college ESL students (Bismilla, 2006).
Table 2

*Ability to Understand Materials and Processes as a Percentage of the Sample*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material or process</th>
<th>Ability to understand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College ads (print, brochures)</td>
<td>59.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College website</td>
<td>57.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration and fee processes</td>
<td>50.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course selection</td>
<td>47.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Based on 2006 survey of college ESL students (Bismilla, 2006); n= 90; 1 = Easy to Understand; 7 = Very Difficult to Understand. The grid demonstrates the students’ levels of understanding of college services and shows the range of understanding that the students had of the front line services that the college provides in the way of college websites, print materials, and course selection materials.

Table 3

*Ability to Understand People at College as a Percentage of the Sample*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People</th>
<th>Ability to understand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruiters</td>
<td>35.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration desk</td>
<td>47.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loans office</td>
<td>48.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language assessment</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers/ Instructors</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other students</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Based on 2006 survey of college ESL students (Bismilla, 2006); n= 90; 1 = Easy to Understand; 7 = Very Difficult to Understand. The grid explores the students’ levels of understanding of people at the college and shows the range of understanding that the
students had of the front line services that the college provides in the way of teachers, administrators and instructors.

**Major Findings in Phase 1**

The two major findings in phase 1 are summarized as:

1. The percentages of ESL students on the Likert scale who were experiencing difficulties understanding English services and curriculum delivery indicated that comprehension of L2 was a problem.

2. The qualitative responses indicated that students valued their mother tongues outside of the college but that it was not allowed in the college.

   Clearly, as Cummins (2001) pointed out, identities are being negotiated in the interactions between teachers and students. In classrooms where their L1s are effectively prohibited, as in college classrooms, students may not engage in cross-language transfer. As I saw in my earlier study with the elementary-secondary students, when teachers structure their classrooms in ways that enable and encourage students to use their L1, students will bring the knowledge and concepts that they have encoded in their L1 to the task of learning English.

   These findings provided the impetus for me to proceed to Phase 2 and create a space for mother tongue in one EAP class and then ascertain from the participating students if validating their mother tongues in class would be helpful to them.

**Discussion of Data in Phase 1**

The 90 students surveyed had come to Canada from 24 countries and among them spoke 35 languages. 42.9% of the participants completed secondary school in their country of birth, 14.3% completed a post-secondary diploma and 41.4% completed a post-secondary degree. There was a wide range of work experience in their countries of birth including doctor, engineer, university instructor, lab technician, nurse, call centre operator, auditor, teacher, secretary, salesperson and journalist. Their work experience in Canada was reported from the range of none to entry level positions including convenience store clerk, supermarket cashier, clerk, caregiver, banquet server, gate attendant, laborer, machine operator, customer service, telemarketer, waitress, chef and membership co-coordinator. This information was important in informing my
construction of Phase 2 and 3 interview questions regarding self-esteem and identity formation.

The grids illustrated in Tables 2 and 3 above answered the research question that sought to explore the students’ levels of understanding of college materials and services and shows the range of understanding that these 90 students had of the front line services that the college provides in the way of college websites, course selection materials, registration processes, teachers and instructors. 59.8% was the highest percentage of students who indicated easy understanding of a service (college advertisements). 8.1% was the highest percentage of students who indicated great difficulty in understanding a service (the course selection process). The results appear in keeping with the students’ self assessment of their own ability in English as in Figure 4. This shows that the college needs to strive to improve student understanding of these services with a focus on reviewing monolingual conceptions of bilingual learners. The challenge for the college will be to increase the “easy to understand” response from 59.8% to a much higher percentage to ensure greater student understanding of the service areas and to review monolingual conceptions of bilingual learners.

This phase of the study served many purposes in my learning as well as answered my Phase 1 research questions. Regarding whether or not our infrastructure serves our ESL students well, Tables 2 and 3 indicate that while college ads were somewhat more easily understood, some critical processes like recruitment, registration, course selection, loans and language assessment processes were not being satisfactorily understood by students surveyed. Regarding the extent to which respect and acknowledgement of our students’ L1 would facilitate their academic engagement and affirmation of their identity, the qualitative responses from students indicated that they value their L1s outside the classroom. However, on the questions that asked them about their comfort level with mother tongue in the college, the majority of students left those blank and a few indicated that they speak to friends outside the classroom in mother tongue but not in class. However, the majority of students, on the next question asserted that their mother tongues were assets to them in their college education. So even though they indicated that their L1s were assets in their college education they seemed uncomfortable to list where they spoke their L1s in the college.
The qualitative data from sections E and F regarding college enablers and barriers with regards to L2 language learning and attitudes to first language provided an indication that there was a place for mother tongue in the students’ academic lives but that the college was not providing that place. The students were creating that space among themselves and helping one another understand college work outside their classrooms. The important insights they provided regarding teacher-student relationship builders and helpful teaching strategies were echoed in the next two phases of the study.

**Phase 2: A Small Sample Interview Phase**

Phase 1 led me to explore the potential of L1 inclusion in college classrooms to probe the impact on the L2 learners’ learning process. In this exploratory phase my intention was to collaborate with one teacher who allowed structured use of mother tongue in the classroom in order to assess if this multilingual pedagogy would engage students more enthusiastically in class and hence enhance their learning experience.

**Research questions in phase 2.**

In collaborating with a college teacher of EAP Level 3 students with expertise in L1/L2 teaching, my goal was to gauge the reaction of students to the teacher allowing them to use their L1 to research and prepare for their (un-graded) essay and to write that essay in English. Though the essay was not used in the study, it placed the students into a situation where they needed to compose a work that would better facilitate the survey questions I would pose for them. The essay was meant to be an almost hypothetical assignment to allow them to explore the way their L1s interact with their L2s. As a researcher, I was more interested in the process of writing the essay than the end product.

My research questions for this phase were multifold:

1. How will a multilingual pedagogical approach that veers from the current monolingual conceptions of literacy pedagogy, impact on L2 students’ learning experience, academic engagement and identity?
2. Will students value a multilingual pedagogical approach that allows their L1s to scaffold their L2 literacy development, especially in writing, since that is the medium of assessment for accreditation?
3. Will students use translation or other strategies to write their essays (i.e. transferring from L1 research to L2 essay)?

4. How do the students perceive the role of accents at the college? (How an L2 student perceives accented speech may impact on identity formation.)

**The participants in Phase 2.**

The teacher in this EAP Level 3 classroom was a Masters of Education graduate from the Second Language Education Department at OISE. Participant #1 was a male Bangladeshi student, in his mid-thirties who was a teacher in Bangladesh with a Masters Degree in English and a Teaching Certificate. He arrived in Canada seven months earlier with his wife and two young children and was working in a factory. Participant #2 was a male, Spanish speaking student in his late twenties who, with a post-secondary computer software diploma was an executive with a pharmaceutical company in Colombia. He was a refugee claimant here in Canada having arrived less than a year earlier and together with his young family he had spent time in a shelter in Toronto. Participant #3 was a Mandarin speaking student from China in her late twenties who had been here a year and came with five years of elementary school teaching experience in China. She worked as a cashier in Toronto. All three participants checked off “intermediate” as their self-assessment of their fluency in English.

**Interview Data in Phase 2**

I quote directly from the student responses since the raw content of these small sample responses was critical to the continuation of this study as intended. If the students categorically rejected mother tongue usage in class, I would need to devise a different Phase 3 which would explore reasons for the rejection rather than advantages of creating a space for mother tongue in classrooms. This was meant to be an advance test to determine the course of the rest of the study.

**Participant #1.**

On the questions that required the student to talk about how they feel about their mother tongue being included in a college classroom assignment here are Participant #1’s responses on the written survey and confirmed in the interview:

At first I think about my first language, Bangla. Then I translate into English. Sometimes I feel difficulty because some words are not in English.
In the interview he expanded by saying,
There might be a word in Bengali that does not translate into English. If I think in
my first language, I can use or think more words to write anything.
On the questions that required the students to talk about whether using their first
language as a scaffold made specific tasks easier or more difficult he wrote:
(Using my first language to do research on the Internet was) more difficult
because I am not expert to use the internet.
(Using my first language to do research using texts was) easier – it would have
been easy but I did not have the books here (in Canada,) and Dreams is not a
common topic. Bengali poetry would have been no problem.
(Using my first language to make notes was) easier. In Bangladesh there is no
culture of making notes – we read and then we write the essay. I think in Bengali
and then write in English.
(Using my first language to write one or more drafts was) easier – (but) I think in
Bengali and write in English. I don’t do drafts in Bengali.
On the question about whether or not he used translation from his draft to his final
essay he wrote:
I think at first and then I translate into English.
In the additional comment section where he was asked to comment on whether he
would recommend using first languages in Canadian classrooms he said in the interview:
I think that it is good to allow my own language only sometimes for particular
reasons but not all the time, because I want to learn English. I worked with a
group of people in my language and that was O.K. The teacher allows us to get
into language groups to help one another or to discuss topics. I feel comfortable
and think it’s a good idea. Sometimes students are shy to speak out in class so it’s
good opportunity for them to try their English in a small group of same language
students.
On the question of whether some accents are easier for him to understand than
others he wrote and said:
Canadian from English background is easy to understand because I hear it on TV.
Spanish accent, like my boss at work, is difficult because it is too fast and some
words are not pronounced. (In the interview probe he indicated that he had difficulty with Spanish speakers’ pronunciation of English consonants).

**Participant #2.**

On the questions that required the student to talk about how they feel about their mother tongue being included in a college classroom assignment here are Participant #2’s responses on the written survey and in the interview:

When I’m working by myself (at home or alone) for me is not easy to make the switch from the English mode to the Spanish mode. When I’m thinking and communicating in certain language it’s better to do it only in that medium. But in the classroom, it’s always useful to be allowed to communicate in Spanish with other Spanish speakers, because it helps us to clarify and understand instructions and concepts.

On the question about whether being able to use his first language in class helps his learning he wrote:

Yes because it strengthen the learning of new concepts and the understanding of specific examples given by the teacher. We support one another in our language, specially to find translation for idioms and slang commonly used in the academic environment.

On the questions that required the student to talk about whether using their first language as a scaffold made specific tasks easier or more difficult here are Participant #2’s very comprehensive responses:

(Using my first language to do research on the internet was) easier – (but) I was asked to do it in my first language, but if I had have the choice, I would have made it in English from the beginning.

(Using my first language to do research using written texts was) not applicable because in Canada and Colombia it’s far easier to find more text and resources in English. In the field of medicine, physicians are always asking pharmaceutical companies to give them the state of the art information in the original paper that’s always in English. Most of them reject abstracts or translation to Spanish. They want the whole study. The state teaches a very poor English in the schools, so if somebody wants his or her children to learn English, he or she must pay a very
expensive private bilingual school. I didn’t go to one of these schools, I learned on my own, because I wanted to sing American songs but I didn’t want to sing words without meaning.

(Using my first language to make notes was) about the same because I used a mix of Spanish and English in my notes. But, the proportion has changed. Before I came to Canada it was 70% Spanish and 30% English. Now it’s backwards.

(Using my first language to write one or more drafts was) about the same because if I had a choice, I would have done it mixed, English and Spanish but, since I was asked, I did it in Spanish.

On the question about whether or not he used translation from his draft to his final essay he wrote,

I used the mixed method.

In the additional comment section where he was asked to comment on whether he would recommend using first languages in Canadian classrooms he wrote,

I think it’s very useful to allow students to use their first language to communicate, but I’m convinced that regulation is going to be necessary, otherwise, they won’t feel the necessity of the second language. What I mean is, it should happen under control, not like a pendulum, not too few, not too much.

On the question of whether some accents are easier for him to understand than others he wrote and during the interview he provided very detailed examples.

Canadians and North Americans are easy to understand because I learned English using American songs. Bangladesh, Hindi and African accents are difficult to understand because Bangladesh people don’t move the upper maxilar, consequently they don’t open their mouth enough to pronounce. With a friend from Africa, I found they don’t pronounce the endings, in most of the words. He then demonstrated by orally repeating the word pattern of a friend and writing on the survey, “For example, he told me something like: ‘Ya fada ga?’ meaning, “Is your father gone?’
Participant #3.

On the questions that required the student to talk about how they feel about their mother tongue being included in a college classroom assignment here are Participant #3’s responses on the written survey and in the interview:

It should be easy for us to understand complex material, but we probably lose the chance to improve English. Sometimes it is necessary (to use our mother tongue in class) but I don’t think it’s very helpful if we use it too much.

On the question about whether being able to use her first language in class helps her learning she wrote:

Sometimes, especially if I still can’t understand after I study many times. I don’t think too much first language using will be helpful.

On the questions that required the student to talk about whether using their first language as a scaffold made specific tasks easier or more difficult here are Participant #3’s responses:

(Using my first language to do research on the internet was) easier because (I) read faster and easy to get to the point (on the internet).

(Using my first language to do research using written texts was) perhaps it will be easier, because right now I don’t have a book in my language to do this research.

(Using my first language to make notes was) easier and about the same because sometimes I don’t know the correct words in English to express ideas.

(Using my first language to write one or more drafts was) easier and about the same because I always choose the easier way to write. If I know English I write English. If I can’t write very perfect point very quickly I’ll write my language.

On the question about whether or not she used translation from her draft to her final essay she wrote:

No. Sometimes I just write the main point, then I write essay directly.

[Researcher’s note: Despite this response Participant #3 gave me her first draft of her essay on Dreams which was written in Chinese].

In the additional comment section where she was asked to comment on whether she would recommend using first languages in Canadian classrooms she wrote:
My opinions about using first language in Canadian college classroom are (1) For beginner or medium students sometimes it’s necessary because their limited vocabulary (2) For advanced learners I don’t think it’s necessary.

[Researcher’s note: In the demographic section of the survey Participant #3 checked “intermediate” as her self-assessment of her English fluency].

On the question of whether some accents are easier for her to understand than others she wrote,

The accents from my language (are easy to understand) because we are all have the same accents. Accents from other countries (are difficult to understand because) I don’t understand their pronunciation system.

**Major Finding in Phase 2**

The major finding in phase 2 from the raw student data was that their mother tongues were indeed scaffolding their learning of English. They each cautioned against over use of L1 but nevertheless they confirmed that their L1s did play a positive role in their learning of English.

**Discussion of Data in Phase 2**

Overall, my four questions were answered:

**Question #1.**

How will a multilingual pedagogical approach that veers from the current monolingual conceptions of literacy pedagogy, impact on L2 students’ learning experience, identity and academic engagement?

All three students’ responses indicated an appreciation that their L1s were being raised to a level of importance in their writing and thinking processes (their identities were validated). However, just as the Turnbull vs. Cook debate in *The Canadian Modern Language Review* (2001) revealed and the students themselves point out, the extent to which the L1 can be used in class without impacting the learning of the L2 still needs to be investigated. In a more recent publication, Turnbull (2009) continues to advise against overuse of L1 but provides greater insights into the potential of cognitive advantages to careful, structured and measured use of L1 in classrooms.

The student responses allowed me to hear the learners’ voices regarding their own language learning, acculturation, and socialization process rather than just a researcher’s
observations. The teacher makes an effort to create a collaborative learning environment where the students are valued and treated equally, as the mature, capable people that they are. The teacher’s removal of the traditional power relationship between herself and the students in this EAP classroom allows students to think and share in a more collaborative learning environment which appears to make them feel more valued and more participatory in their learning process as per Cummins’ (2001) claim that positive student-teacher relationship impacts learning. This is also in keeping with Morita’s findings (2004) that a teacher’s pedagogical approach can promote equal opportunities for all learners for participation and access to curriculum by scaffolding L2 students’ comprehension of class discussions (the teacher in this study allowed the students to assist one another in mother tongue groups).

**Question #2.**

Will students value this multilingual pedagogical approach that allows their L1s to scaffold their L2 literacy development, especially in writing, since that is the medium of assessment for accreditation?

All three students saw value in this approach but each had some reservation about over-use of their L1s since they saw their goal as learning and perfecting their English and did not want their L1s interfering too much with that process.

**Question #3.**

Will students use translation or other strategies to write their essays (i.e. transferring from L1 research to L2 essay)?

Here the responses indicated that translation is certainly a tool but only one student, Participant #3, used her L1 to write much of her draft before translating it. Participant #1 translated in his mind but wrote the draft in English, and Participant #2 used both languages in the draft and then translated portions of his final essay.

**Question #4.**

The last question sought to understand how students perceive accented speech at the college.

The three participants had very definite opinions about accent and intelligibility. Hence Derwing’s (1997) finding that accents do not impact on intelligibility must apply to only certain categories of listeners. Those listeners who are L1 speakers of English, or
L2 speakers who are fluent in the target language and have been exposed over years to many accents, might find it easier to understand accented speech; but new learners of a target language, while still in the process of developing a listening repertoire, may be in the formative stages of developing an understanding of various accents as the students were in this phase. Since accents were impacting intelligibility in the case of these three students, the learning for me was twofold (a) that as a college we needed to be aware that a teacher’s accent might also pose issues for students and (b) perceptions of students may be formed based on whether or not they can be understood by peers hence self esteem might be impacted. Lippi-Green (1997) writes:

> When speakers are confronted with an accent which is foreign to them, the first decision they make is whether or not they are going to accept their responsibility in the act of communication…members of the dominant language group feel perfectly empowered to reject their role, and to demand that a person with an accent carry the majority of responsibility in the communicative act. Conversely, when such a speaker comes in contact with another mainstream speaker who is nonetheless incoherent or unclear, the first response is usually not to reject a fair share of the communicative burden, but to take other factors into consideration (p. 70).

Overall, in listening to these three students’ responses to all four questions and from my discussions with each of the three students, I found that language is not only a lingual system of symbols, patterns, grammar, and sentence structure. It is also a complex social process. For L2 learners the approaches that are used can validate their prior learning, lift their self-esteem and provide a rich continuum for their continued learning or shut the door on their prior learning, reduce their confidence and truncate their learning.

**What Was Learned from the Multiliteracies Project and Phases 1 and 2 of Study**

Cumulatively, my preparatory Multiliteracies project (Bismilla, 2005) and phase 1 and 2 of my college study paved the way for me to create a larger space for mother tongue in college classrooms. There were several key factors from my early grade school study and from Phases 1 and 2 of this study which threw light on Cummins’ (2004b) interdependence hypothesis. In the Multiliteracies Project (Bismilla, 2005), the
elementary students from Grades 4, 5, 7 and 8 were from language backgrounds that have minimal linguistic connections to English so the expectation was that the major transfers, as per Cummins’ hypothesis, would be conceptual rather than linguistic. Yet the students, especially those who were working on dual language books, not only provided articulate statements regarding the importance of validating their mother tongues within their classrooms, they also commented insightfully about the processes of cross-linguistic transfer occurring in their minds:

Hira: When I read in English, I say it in Urdu in my head.

Tomer: I thinking in Hebrew and write in English (Bismilla, 2005).

Cook (2003) suggests that the L1 and L2 are interwoven in the L2 user’s mind in vocabulary, syntax, phonology and pragmatics and I observed this multicompetence in my exploratory Multiliteracies project as well as in phases 1 and 2 of my college study. These insights suggested that for the students in these studies, their two languages were interdependent.

In addition, as per Cummins’ Academic Expertise framework (Figure 1) these students were able to articulate reasons why it was important to maintain their languages, develop literacy in those languages, and hence reinforce their cultures and identities in the learning process. These students also echoed Cummins’ claim (2001) that teachers can make a significant difference in how they feel about their mother tongues that is, through favouring a collaborative teacher-student relationship instead of a coercive one.

Through the lens of the social construction of identity, the elementary students in my Multiliteracies study (Bismilla, 2005) for whom mother tongues were their first language and English was their second, repeatedly expressed their pride in their mother tongues, and that learning environments that included their mother tongues engaged them in their learning of English. These very young children described thinking in their mother tongues and writing in English. They repeatedly used words such as “comfortable,” “proud,” “feel good,” “feel happy” to verbalize their appreciation of their mother tongues’ place in their classrooms. Clearly their mother tongues were integral parts of their identities that were being brought into their classrooms rather than being excluded.

For the students who were more proficient in English than their home languages, I heard words such as “nervous,” “shy,” “get stuck on my writing in my language,” and
fear of being laughed at when attempting to speak their mother tongues for lack of practice. But, at the same time, these students were pleasantly surprised that their teachers valued their home languages enough to bring them into their classrooms and this rekindled their pride in a part of their identities that would perhaps otherwise begin the atrophy process, the fate of so many first languages in the Greater Toronto Area.

The high school students in my earlier Multiliteracies study (2005) who were older, around 18 years of age, and products of the School Board’s tacit ban on mother tongues, were saying what the English drill believers had said to them all through their elementary and secondary years that to speak their mother tongues would impede their learning of English. The Cultural Community Liaison Officers, professionals within the college who work with immigrant communities, spoke knowingly of this atrophy when interviewed. They blamed the School Board’s tacit ban on mother tongues for the cultural and social chasm that had developed between these young people and their parents and grand-parents, a chipping away of a key piece of their social and cultural identity.

In Phase 1 of the college study, the survey (Appendix A) of 90 ESL college students, the quantitative survey questions shone a light on the great discrepancy in what the college thought the adult students understood and what they, in fact understood in college services and curriculum delivery. The qualitative responses to the questions that asked students to list what factors helped them understand better, suggested that teacher-student and student-student relationships were important to students as they learned English, the new and required language of instruction. They needed teachers to speak more slowly and to use some of the conceptual aids that Cummins (2001) describes in his Academic Expertise Framework (Figure 1) and although the learners were not able to articulate it, their responses in the transcripts indicated that they benefit from what Cummins' (2000) refers to as collaborative rather than coercive teacher-student relationships. Furthermore, the survey responses showed that students’ mother tongues were under-valued by the college as having no relevance in the learning process. Their mother tongues were firmly established as key components of their adult identities and they were finding “un-official” ways to use their mother tongues to scaffold their learning of English by forming same language support groups outside of class to clarify concepts. All of their prior learning, education, and experiences were encoded in their mother
tongues. The college was closing off their social, cultural and linguistic identities in their classrooms and forcing them to perform with missing pillars.

Phase 2 of this study was designed to explore this last finding further and introduced mother tongues in an EAP classroom to not only validate them but to use mother tongues to scaffold the learning of English. This very small exploratory study provided some evidence that the mother tongue was being used by L1 students in various ways. An example of this is when Participant #1 said he thinks in Bengali and writes in English.

If I think in my first language, I can use or think more words to write anything. I think at first and then I translate into English.

The mother tongue was also being used to assist one another in learning new English concepts and vocabulary as shown by Participant #2:

It’s always useful to be allowed to communicate in Spanish with other Spanish speakers because it helps us to clarify and understand instructions and concepts. We support one another in our language, specially to find translation for idioms and slang commonly used in academic environment.

There was also caution provided by the three students regarding not wanting over-use of the mother tongue in class, since they were here to learn English, echoing the balanced approach recommended in the work of Turnbull (2001) and Turnbull and Dailey-O’Cain (2009).

The students appreciated that their mother tongues were being respected and given importance enough to be included in class as part of their thinking and writing processes. The students were being allowed to think and share in a more collaborative environment, making them feel more valued consistent with Cummins’ (2001) argument that positive teacher-student relations improve student engagement. This phase of the study also pointed out that EAP students were certainly using translation as a tool and that both languages were interacting inside their heads as they were processing what they would say and write and this is clear evidence of Cummins’ interdependence hypothesis at work.
Setting the Stage for Phase 3 of Study

These insights from Phase 1 and 2 informed Phase 3, the major phase of this study and helped frame the interview questions for my 19 student participants. The teachers in this phase are aware of current research such as the studies that form the basis of this paper. Rather than under-valuing mother tongues, these teachers regard mother tongues as relevant in scaffolding the acquisition of English and give first and additional languages a place in the learning processes in their classrooms. There is an acknowledgement that their students’ mother tongues are firmly established as key components of their adult identities and they are aware that their students are finding unofficial ways to use their mother tongues to scaffold their learning of English by forming same language support groups outside of class to clarify concepts. In the study, these teachers were providing opportunities in their classrooms for these language support groups to enrich learning experiences with the additional support and presence of themselves as teachers and advocates for this learning style. In discussions with me, the teachers were knowledgeable about research into bilingualism and that their students’ prior learning, education, and experiences are encoded in their mother tongues. Rather than closing off this integral part of their students’ social, cultural and lingual identities in their classrooms and forcing them to perform with that missing pillar, the teachers in this phase of the study chose to create a space in their classroom programs and pedagogy for their students’ mother tongues.

Both teachers in Phase 3 teach in the EAP program and the two particular classes studied were in the Level 3 program, meaning that they had completed Levels 1 and 2. In Levels 1 and 2 the students would have just arrived from their countries of origin and would have used their mother tongues for survival but would have been required to use as much English in classrooms as possible in order to learn the basic expressions, vocabulary, grammar and syntax much like the proponents of the maximum use of the target language (see Macaro, 2005). In Level 3 the students would have been at the college for two semesters and would have acquired a degree of fluency in English conversation and in the writing of a simple paragraph. Input and output of English, however, would still be at various levels of development and instructional English in program areas specific to professions (e.g. nursing, engineering) would still be
challenging. After completion of Level 3 they would have acquired a few credits toward their program of choice and enough basic English to apply to their programs of choice.

In the Level 3 EAP classes the two teachers whose students participated in this study, Marg and Dara, regularly encourage their students to use their mother tongues to scaffold their learning of English; however, in the few credits that the students undertake outside of the English learning classes, the students are not permitted by those teachers to use mother tongue in their classrooms. Those mother tongue prohibited classrooms provided the comparator for students during the focus group interviews to contrast their impressions of the EAP classrooms where L1 was permitted and those classrooms where their L1 was not permitted. Marg and Dara formalize the use of mother tongues by asking students to get into same language groups in class to clarify concepts learned or to discuss assignments. They also allow students to research topics in their mother tongues but require assignments to be submitted in English. They do not object to students quickly checking a word used in class with a same language peer. They discuss with students the advantages of using their mother tongue to scaffold the learning of English and in plain language discuss some research in bilingual education with their students. The students therefore, by Level 3, understand that using their mother tongues in these particular classrooms is a sanctioned activity.

The classroom work of these teachers recognizes the relationship between students’ private L1 processes within their brains and their learning process in L2 acquisition. Lantolf (2003) looked at the process through which learners develop the repertoire of symbolic artifacts for communicative activities (verbal and visual) in the second language. He maintained that this development starts with internalization, a process closely affiliated with private, or internal, speech. He argued that it is possible to observe, at least in part, the process of language learning through the analysis of intrapersonal communication produced by learners in concrete objective circumstances. Lantolf described Vygotsky’s “drama,” between our natural inheritance and our socio-cultural inheritance. He claimed that we develop links with our world through what Vygotsky called “psychological tools” or signs, the most important being human language. His study echoed Woodall’s (2002) research on language switching in the process of writing.
While Woodall differentiated between the more rapid progress in writing of students with cognate L1s as opposed to non-cognate languages, he, like Cook (2001) maintained that what goes on in their heads is a totally different process than the L1 process or the L2 process; it is a third and combined process:

In the literature on L2 writing processes, much has been made of the similarities between writing in one’s native language and writing in a second language. The most salient qualitative difference, I would suggest, is that in L2 writing, two languages can be at work at the same time. This is not just a matter of more (or less) of something; it is a different experience altogether. (p. 23)

The approach of the teachers in my college study committee appears to recognize this phenomenon as they teach their L2 students. Further affirmation is provided by well known L2 writers Silva, Reichelt, Chikuma, Duval-Couetil, Mo and Velez-Rendon in Kroll (2003) who were invited to write about the development stages of their own L2 writing, including rhetorical, linguistic and strategic issues. Common themes that emerged in this collection included:

- The process of learning to write in L2 is slow and difficult.
- Affective, cognitive and social factors intersect in the process.
- A variety of instructional strategies are essential because like L1, not all L2 students learn in one way.
- The role of the teacher is valued as crucial and pleasing the teacher is important.
- Peer feedback is valued in some instances and not others.
- L2 writers are thought of as role models for emergent L2 writers.

Phases 1 and 2 of this study gave me insights into the importance of several aspects of the processes whereby L1 college students learn English and helped me to frame Phase 3 of this study. These insights further educated me about the social construction of identity that is on-going in college classrooms and the role that the college policies and procedures play in impacting those identities whether positively or as barriers to the learning and academic engagement of L2 students.

Tara Goldstein (2003) in Chapter 5 of her book, titled *Resisting Anti-Immigrant Discourses and Linguicism*, quotes well known Latina writer and poet Gloria Anzaldúa and explains:
Gloria Anzaldua talks about her desire to communicate in multiple voices, to feel pride in the many languages she speaks, and to have her multilingual tongue legitimized. The journey toward pride can be a difficult one in multilingual communities where the use of particular languages or language varieties is devalued, trivialized, or vilified. (p. 83)

In our English-only colleges and other educational institutions in the Greater Toronto Area there are thousands of “Gloria Anzalduas” also experiencing the linguicism that Goldstein addresses above.

In summary, Phases 1 and 2 of the study informed the formulation of my Phase 3 research questions and its design. The L1 friendly classroom is a new concept in community colleges and I needed to explore more deeply the potential of a multilingual pedagogy both from the perspective of students as well as the teachers exploring this pedagogy.
CREATING SPACE FOR STUDENTS’ MOTHER TONGUES

Chapter 5
Results: Phase 3 of Study

Phase 2 was exploratory research that educated the development of this Phase 3 research question and the design of the remainder of the study. This phase takes L2 acquisition theory from the literature as well as the primary phases of this study and explores how they might be applied to the community college classroom.

Research Question in Phase 3

The first major research question for Phase 3 of the study resonated throughout the three phases, that is: how does a multilingual pedagogical approach that veers from the current monolingual conceptions of literacy pedagogy, impact on L2 students’ learning experience, academic engagement and identity formation? This concept question was explored through the following inquiry:

1. What are the students’ responses to English-only classrooms vs. the classrooms in which their L1s play an important role in their learning? (i.e. impressions of learning experience and identity formation.)
2. What is the level of academic engagement in the classrooms in which L1 is validated as opposed to student impressions of their engagement in English only classrooms?
3. How do students transfer linguistically and conceptually from their L1s to English? (This was intended to provide insights into their learning experience and academic engagement).
4. How does validation of students’ L1s in college classrooms impact on their identity formation?

The second research question sought to understand what the teachers saw as the strengths, gaps and tensions that are created in using this multilingual pedagogical approach with their students. This second question was answered through two sets of interviews with the two EAP teachers whose students participated in Phase 3 of this study (see Chapter 6).
The Participants in Phase 3

Marg Fortin is a full-time professor in the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Program, School of Advancement, at the participating college in Toronto. She teaches writing, listening/speaking, and a study skills/academic preparation course.

Marg holds a Master’s of Education Degree (2001) in Second Language Education from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. Her Master’s research paper examined the Canadian Language Benchmarks. In addition, she holds a Teaching English as a Second Language Certificate from the University of Toronto (1995) and is a certified Canadian Language Benchmark Association and Canadian Language Benchmark Professional Teacher assessor. She received her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology from York University.

Her 15 years of experience teaching English as an additional language and literacy has been with a large Ontario school board, a university in Toronto, and at the college level. She has also assisted in delivering in-service ESL instructor workshops on assessment, using the Canadian Language Benchmarks.

At the college, in addition to her teaching responsibilities, Marg has been extensively involved in curriculum development in the EAP Program. In 2006, she was a member of the provincial research team on the Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment Project (CIITE) to benchmark the language requirements for selected first semester programs.

Dara Cowper is a full-time professor in the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Program, School of Advancement, at the participating college in Toronto. Dara holds a Bachelor of Education degree from Nipissing University. She holds an Honours Bachelor of Arts degree in English Language and Literature from The University of Western Ontario. Dara also has a certificate in Teaching English as a Second Language from The University of Toronto.

Dara joined the English for Academic Purposes Program at the participating college in Toronto in 1999. In this program, Dara has focused on developing and teaching academic ESL writing courses, speaking and listening courses, study skills and a course

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1 The two EAP teachers whose students participated in Phase 3 gave written permission for their full names to be used. This permission form can be found in Appendix G.
CREATING SPACE FOR STUDENTS’ MOTHER TONGUES

called Canadian Context. Before joining this program at the college full-time, Dara taught Advanced Business Communications, College Writing Skills and she taught in the Federal Language Instruction for New Canadians (LINC) program at the college. Previously Dara taught LINC and Adult Literacy/Beginner ESL classes for the Halifax Regional School Board, and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes for Canadian International Student Services in Toronto. In addition, Dara has taught junior high school and developed and delivered a university preparatory workshop for high school students in Halifax. Her recent projects include co-coordinating a rigorous Comprehensive Program Review and Curriculum Review for the EAP Program at the participating college.

The students.

The 19 students who participated in the interviews represented nine different mother tongues. They were from Marg Fortin and Dara Cowper’s EAP classes. During the interviews the students indicated that rather than being called “student A, B, C etc” that I should use their first names. I am providing demographic details (from their demographic sheets) on each student to honour their identities and the rich prior experiences they bring to the college, to Canada and to this study.

- Ten Chinese speaking students originally from China and Hong Kong:
  - Murphy checked his age category as 16 to 20 years. He has been in Canada less than three years. He identified his first and second languages as Chinese and English and identified himself as an intermediate speaker of English. He achieved a high school diploma in China and was not employed in China. He is not employed in Canada.
  - Justin 1 (numerated to discern between another student named Justin) checked his age category as 20 to 25. He has been in Canada three to five years. He identified his first and second languages as Chinese and English and identified himself as an intermediate speaker of English. He achieved a high school diploma in China and was not employed in China. In Canada he has held jobs as a cashier, waiter and daycare attendant.
  - Bruce checked his age category as 25 to 35. He has been in Canada three to five years. He identified his first, second and third languages as
Cantonese, English and Mandarin and identified himself as an intermediate speaker of English. He achieved a high school diploma in China and was not employed in China. He is not employed in Canada.

- Christina checked her age category as 16 to 20. She has been in Canada less than three years. She identified her first, second and third languages as Cantonese, Mandarin and English and she identified herself as an intermediate speaker of English. She achieved a high school diploma in China and was not employed in China. She is not employed in Canada.

- Xiao (also known as David in class) checked his age category as 35 to 50. He has been in Canada less than three years and speaks Mandarin as his first language. He did not rate his English speaking skills (beginner, intermediate, fluent). Xiao earned a University Degree in Engineering in China and was a professional engineer and a university professor before he came to Canada. He is not employed in Canada.

- Andy checked his age category as 25 to 35. He has been in Canada less than three years and he identified his first and second languages as Chinese and English. During the focus group interview he identified his first language as Mandarin. He rated himself as an intermediate speaker of English. He earned a Post Secondary Degree in China and worked in a bank there. He is not employed in Canada.

- Rachel checked her age category as 25 to 35. She has been in Canada less than three years. Rachel identified her first and second languages as Cantonese and Mandarin and identified herself as an intermediate speaker of English. Rachel achieved a High School Diploma in China and was not employed in China. She is not employed in Canada.

- Lois checked his age category as 20 to 25. Lois has been in Canada less than three years. He identified his first and second languages as Cantonese and Mandarin and identified himself as an intermediate speaker of English. Lois achieved a Post Secondary diploma in Hong Kong and was a chemist trainee for nine months before coming to Canada. He is not employed in Canada.
Wendy checked her age category as 20 to 25 and has been in Canada for less than three years. On her demographic sheet she identified her language as Chinese and does not indicate a second language; however, during her focus group interview she identified her mother tongue as both Cantonese and Mandarin. She rated herself as an intermediate speaker of English. She achieved a post-secondary diploma in China. Wendy was not employed in China. She is not employed in Canada.

Carol checked her age as 35 to 50. She has been in Canada less than three years. Carol identified her first and second languages as Cantonese and Mandarin and rated herself as an intermediate speaker of English. She achieved a post-secondary degree in China and while no field was identified for employment in China, Carol is a part-time Chinese language teacher here in Toronto.

- One Spanish speaking student originally from Mexico
  - Ana checked her age category as 35 to 50 years. She has been in Canada less than three years and identified her first and second languages as Spanish and English. She identified herself as an intermediate speaker of English. Ana was a doctor in Mexico for nearly nine years before arriving in Canada. She is not employed in Canada.

- One Japanese speaking student originally from Japan via Saudi Arabia.
  - Yoko identified her age category as 35 to 50 and has been in Canada less than three years. She identified her first, second and third languages as Japanese, Arabic and English. She identified herself as a beginner in speaking English. Yoko was a nurse in Japan. She is not employed in Canada.

- Three Bengali (Bangla) speaking students originally from Bangladesh:
  - Shabnam identified her age category as 25 to 35. She has been in Canada less than three years. She identified her first second and third languages as Bengali, English and Hindi. She did not rate her English speaking ability. Shabnam achieved a post-secondary degree in Bangladesh and had no
work experience there. She has had a year of work experience in Canada and no specific area has been mentioned.

- Asm identified his age category as 35 to 50. He has been in Canada less than three years and identified his first and second languages as Bangla and English. He did not rate his English speaking ability. He achieved a post secondary degree in Bangladesh and worked for 10 years as an information technologist in Bangladesh. He is not employed in Canada.

- Shariat identified his age category as 50+ and has been in Canada less than three years. He identified his first and second languages as Bengali and English and identified himself as an intermediate speaker of English. He achieved a post secondary degree in Bangladesh and worked there for eighteen years though no field is mentioned. He is not employed in Canada.

• One Korean speaking student originally from Korea:
  - Justin 2 identified his age category as 16 to 20 and has been in Canada less than three years. He identified his first and second languages as Korean and English and identified himself as a beginner in speaking English. He achieved a high school diploma in Korea and did volunteer work in a subway station before arriving in Canada where he has held jobs in a Korean bar, Sushi restaurant and internet café.

• One Arabic speaking student originally from Iraq:
  - Karim identified his age category as 35 to 50 and has been in Canada three to five years. He identified his first and second languages as Arabic and English and identified himself as an intermediate speaker of English. He achieved a post secondary degree in Iraq and worked professionally as a mechanical engineer in Iraq before arriving in Canada. He is not employed in Canada.

• One Urdu speaking student originally from Pakistan
  - Khalid identified his age category as 35 to 50 and has been in Canada three to five years. He identified his first language as Urdu and although he does not list English as his second language he does rate his ability in
English as intermediate. He achieved a post secondary degree in Pakistan and listed “production” as his professional training. He worked in Pakistan for fifteen years as a production manager in a cement factory. Here, in Canada he has had three years experience as a production assistant.

- One Urdu and Punjabi speaking student originally from Pakistan
  - Farwa identified her age category as 25 to 35. She has been in Canada less than three years. She identified her first and second languages as Urdu and Punjabi and rated her English speaking ability as intermediate. She earned a post secondary degree in Pakistan and does not list work experience in Pakistan or Canada.

Formation of Phase 3 Focus Groups

All 19 students in the two English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classes seemed eager to participate and asked by their teachers to indicate their preferred time slots for interviews readily negotiated times. Students who enroll in the college’s EAP programs are, generally, immigrants who need to upgrade their English proficiency to the level of admission requirements of the professional programs to which they aspire including Engineering Technology, Nursing, and Business. In the busy schedules of college students who enroll semester by semester, it was difficult to find slots in the students’ day when they could be interviewed uninterrupted for an hour. Doing the interviews outside the regular school day was not possible because as adult students each had multiple family responsibilities. Hence, the interviews were scheduled based on their availability, during their lunch hours. Simple lunches, respecting their dietary restrictions, were provided.

The five focus groups were each made up of one to seven students with varying mother tongues. A consistent set of questions was used in all five semi-structured interviews (see Appendix F).

Results in Phase 3

The responses provided by the multilingual students in the five focus groups (captured in the full ground codes appended as Appendix J), yielded six large clusters of key insights. The title or titles of the clusters are indicated in parentheses.
• Questions 1, 2 and 12 yielded insights into their feelings about the mother tongue being validated in their participating classes compared to classes where mother tongues were disallowed. Comments about cultural and lingual identity, cross cultural attitudes and metacultural awareness (Reyes & Vallone, 2007) were made (Identity, Engagement, Feelings).

• Questions 3, 4 and 5 yielded insights into how useful students regarded their mother tongues to be in class work, assignments, and academic engagement. They also spoke to the shortage of resources in various languages in libraries and educational websites (Usefulness of mother tongue in class/college/assignments and lack of resources in mother tongue).

• Questions 6, 7 and 8 provided keys into the students’ brains and the scaffolding strategies they are using to bridge between their L1 and L2. Their two languages, as described by the students, showed interdependence (Cummins, 2004) and they described the language super-system (Cook, 2003) or super highway type of busy activities that were occurring in their brains between their L1s and L2s (L1/L2 strategies for scaffolding and interdependence).

• Question 9 gave students the opportunity to give teachers some hints as to small everyday accommodations that we might make to alleviate their struggles in understanding our speech patterns (Helpful hints for teachers).

• Question 10 provided insights into the thought processes in their brains when they listen to one language as input and speak in a different language as output (Thought processes in brain – cognate/non-cognate and superhighway).

• Question 11 allowed students to reflect on the importance and value of their language in a new country (Value of mother tongue).

• Question 12 further explored issues of identity and self esteem as perceived by students in settings where their mother tongues are not given a role in their learning process (Identity, Engagement, Feelings).

**Analysis of data by group.**

It should be noted that English is a brand new language for most of the 19 students, some only having started to learn it upon arrival in Canada less than three years ago. Hence in these semi-structured interviews it was necessary for me to repeat
questions and often to repeat the students’ answers to assure the students that I understood them. Also, some students used gestures to show what they meant like using the hand to gesture chopping a word into parts; in these cases I asked them to say what their gestures meant. Some students stumbled on words repeating the word several times. I repeated the word to them to ensure that it was what they meant to say. It should also be noted that since English is a new language for the participating students it often takes them longer to say and clarify what they want to say; hence the excerpts from the transcripts are often lengthy.

**Group 1.**

In Group 1, comprised of Andy (Cantonese), Carol (Cantonese and Mandarin), Khalid (Urdu), Rachel (Cantonese and Mandarin), and Lois (Cantonese) the word “comfortable” was heard 17 times as they discussed their feelings about being allowed to use their mother tongues in class. They did also, however, as did some students in other focus groups, display cross cultural respect, hence some reservations about speaking their mother tongues when others may not understand and think them impolite. Their need to use the mother tongue was captured by Carol precisely when she said: “I can’t control myself to...think...in Chinese...Mandarin...language...my mother language...It’s very natural I think” (Group 1, November 14, 2008, Bismilla, 2008, L62-74,).

Khalid’s statement that his mother tongue allows him to understand more and “restore more in my mind,” about difficult concepts such as theorems speaks to the necessity of mother tongue in his learning process as all his prior learning is encoded in Urdu.

K: Then I feel comfortable and I understand more and I restore more I think. And sometimes when ahh...we are talking about ahh...English theorems here and then ahh...where I...I try to talk in other classmate here, Farwa, that ahh….what you think about in our language about this theorem?

V: right

K: Then ahh...then I think...I feel I restore more in my mind. (Ibid., L94-100)

The usefulness of the mother tongue to bridge the gap between a limited understanding and a fuller understanding of classroom activities was illustrated when the students described their difficulties with such colloquialisms as idioms like “hit the
books!” They laughed about it in the focus group but when confronted with idioms by teachers in classrooms, the stress for them stems from not knowing whether that phrase is important to their learning and outcome in class. If the teacher recognizes this gap and explains the idiom the stress level is alleviated; or if other students with varying degrees of understanding can allay their fears in their mother tongues, the students can then continue with their learning. Vocabulary was another area of difficulty. An English-English dictionary is often not very helpful or precise as Rachel explained, since in the dictionary she “can see so many sentences to try to explain what the word is. Maybe you have...some concept that not in that way the meaning” (Ibid., L301-303).

Lois explained that even when he looks up a word in the dictionary he still does not understand it as well as when Rachel explains the meaning in Chinese to him.

L: Actually I have the same opinion with Rachel. I think it is … is better on the vocabulary. Sometimes, but I look it up in the dictionary, I … I don’t understand what it is like
V: right
L: But when Rachel tell me that … tell me that … OH! Is … is … who … yeah … in ..umm… tell me the meaning in Chinese.
V: right
L: Yeah. OH!
Laughter from group
L: I got it!
V: That’s great. (Ibid., L310-320)

Carol described a painstaking exercise she calls an experiment that she undertakes in her effort to learn English while catching up on world news. There is a newspaper that prints the news in both Chinese and English. Carol cuts the articles and translates the Chinese and corrects their English translations. She said:

C: Yeah, is my … my experiments for here. For when I ahh… come here and as a week and I … I will … I ahhh… ahhh… let some ahh… every week … I reads from this … this paper
V: Right.
C: This newspaper is for free and there are many long articles ahhh… like the review of the Canadian news or anything, policies or anything and they have ahh… the Chinese ahhh… one paragraph Chinese and one paragraph is Ch…. English and I really like to cut… to … to… to… correct this articles and I want to read ahh… compare with the Chinese to English how to translate this ahh… ahhh.. this thing.
V: Right.
C: Because this not ESL test
V: Right.
C: This is the real life and ahh… really difficult then … then … then … the ESL ahhh…
V: Exactly.
C: Yeah … yeah. So I … I think it’s really helpful. Because I want to know ahh… many other things, the big ahhh… topics
V: Right.
C: How … the English ahh… to … how … how … they translate the English and Chinese.
V: In real life.
C: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So many Chinese … Chinese … ahh… I have ahhh… 2 Chinese for Chinese newspaper free Chinese newspaper in Chinatown
V: Right.
C: I take every week
V: Right.
C: And then c… and correct the article. (Ibid., L324-352)

A critical area in the college that these students identified as a place where allowing mother tongue usage would be helpful, is the counseling office. Lois explained: “When I have some…emotional problems I can express more comfortable to the people who speak the same language with me” (Ibid., L368-370). Rachel continued: “…when…I have a strong feeling that I…know what…what’s in my heart, but I when I try…to translate it into English…everything’s changed because it…it’s not the exact thing what I’m going to express” (Ibid., L379-382).
Khalid took the issue to a different level when he talked about the importance for him to understand English in order to ensure his compliance with a key aspect of his Islamic religion that is ensuring that the food he is consuming is Halaal. Islam disallows the eating of certain kinds of flesh like pork and certain shell fish. If a food is edible according to Islamic rule, it is referred to as Halaal. So confronted with the word turkey at the class Thanksgiving lunch, his conflict was resolved when he and Farwa looked it up in their mother tongue resource. Khalid went on to mention that having multilingual resources in the library would be helpful.

K: Actually, I ahhh… I have bilingual dictionary at home.
V: Right
K: To understand the difficult terms. ahhh… A few days before I was not ahhh… able to understand about turkey. If it is Halaal
V: Right, right
K: And I talked to Farwa, ahh… you have bilingual dictionary and what we think about that turkey. We can eat or not. Then we discovered that it is good for us and we can eat
V: And it’s Halaal, yeah.
K: And she discovered from bilingual dictionary.
V: Okay.
K: And… It’s good to have ahhh… ahhh… the books ahh… from other languages in library and we can discover and I think we can understand easily and it’s helpful for us. (Ibid., L402-416)

In the discussion of how the students conduct research in their mother tongues the Chinese students said that they have access to Chinese websites while Khalid said that he does not have much on the internet in Urdu. However, even with the availability of Chinese websites the students expressed some concerns about the difference in perspectives presented on Chinese websites as opposed to English sites. Andy attempts to go directly to English websites but when vocabulary presents a problem he needs to translate the words or resort to Chinese sites.

A: While I research something ahhh…I directly to English website. I think this very useful and ahh… ehhh… I like ahhh… essentially …. is ahh… very
helpful for me. But ahhh… not so for the clues very difficult. For example, vocabulary, but I will change it ... change website another by engl... by Chinese.

V: So you go ... you go to an English website.
A: Yes.

V: Or a Chinese website.
A: Yes.

V: Depending how... what you need, so you go from one to the other.
A: Yes. (Ibid., 488-498)

Lois surmised that, to take the extra time needed to translate back and forth is dependent on the researcher’s attitude and willingness to take the extra time needed and Carol concurred:

L: I think.... For me is the attitude to ... re... to searching information in English because ... I need extra time to translate it information in...to English from Chinese.
V: Right
A: Yes, sure
C: It’s not helpful if you use your Mandarin... your ahhh... mother tongue to... to research
V: Right, not helpful.
C: You have to many time to... to translate
V: To translate
A: Yeahhh
C: And something you can’t

[Laughter from group] (Ibid., L502-514)

In probing the kinds of strategies the students are using to discover meanings of new words and whether there are lingual and conceptual transfers from their mother tongues to English, I was given a window into their scaffolding strategies. Andy described a decoding process whereby he asks for the spelling of the word, writes it, looks at the prefix or suffix and root and attempts to figure out the meaning:

A: Also, first time I can so ask ahhh... ahh... another people ahhh... spelling. How spelling about this word.
V: Spelling
A: Yeah, spelling. She spell or da da da da I just a try to or like ahh… like ahh… some I know some vocabulary, if I don’t know I will ahhh… write. I will …[gestures]
V: You take a look at it, you break it apart and you see if it’s similar to another English word?
A: Yes
V: Okay
A: Yes, I root and the prefix and the suffix, like that, yeah. (Ibid., L521-531)

Rachel added to this process by saying that syllables and context also help, but in order to get an exact meaning she has to go to both Chinese and English dictionaries. All four of the Chinese students chimed in to say that both dictionaries were used by them and most of their friends:

R: mmm… Sometimes in ahhh… there might not be any re-creations based just base on the word ahh… you … if you just ahhh… the syllables. But I will try to ahhh… get the meaning ummm… using the context to just get a meaning. But also after that I will check it the exact meaning in the dictionary.
V: In a Chinese dictionary or in an English dictionary?
R: Both

Laughter from group
V: ahhh huh
R: I… I…. I have told you that umm… if I use English to English I can get most of the meaning, but
A: Yesss…. Exactly
R: Not exactly, so I… I of my things I’m (??) unclear (inaudible other participants talking as well)
V: That’s very important, so… so you’re … even though you look it up in English you still would like to look it up in your language so you get both languages helping you to understand it.
Everyone: Yeah
R: I find everyone always use both dictionary
A: Both dictionaries
V: All of your friends.
Different group members responded: Yeah…. Most of friends.. Most. (Ibid., L533-554)

However, they cautioned that:
L: But sometimes the Chinese meaning is a little bit different than English meaning
Group members: Yeah, yeah. Sometimes. Not.. Not the exact meaning. They are not match 100% match to each other. No.
V: There are more words in … there are more total words in Chinese than there are in English? Is Chinese… does Chinese have more words for the same word?
R: Maybe, we have a strong context of that word in Chinese but when you translate to English it’s an … you feel very is …. 
A: I think it a different words used different situation. They form the meanings.
V: You said context. So….
Group: Yes, yeah….yeah sure. (Ibid., L556-568)
So while both English and Chinese dictionaries are used to double check meanings, the nuances are still missed and the subtle differences that different words have in different contexts are lost.

The students in this group and in subsequent groups were not able to identify words that were the same or similar in their languages and in English. Since Chinese is a language that has minimal lingual connection to English in script, phonology or roots, (non-cognate) there were understandably no words shared by the two languages. But Rachel and Carol made an important observation about why some Chinese speakers of English might make mistakes with the pronouns “he” and “she.” Whereas in English these are two words, Chinese has only one word:
R & C: I think the most im…. example is that he and she.
V: Okay
R & C: Because we have two words in English but we have only one word in Chinese. So that’s the main cause that … umm… I don’t know … umm… whether you have to experience or not. Some teachers may found the Chinese
students they confuse he or she, his or her all the time. I might ahh… make a sentence like the… “Oh he’s coming at … at ten ahh… may… maybe in the afternoon. That’s her daughter come with her together”

V: Okay
A: Just ahhh… in the conversation, that’s a pronun….

[Several group members spoke at same time <inaudible>]

V: And it’s just the pronunciation that’s different for he and she?
Group: Yeah….yeah… English.

C & R: Before we speak we have to think about he or she
Group: yeah…. yeah…. yeah

[Several group members spoke at same time <inaudible>]

A: he or do something
V: Right. Oh wow.

C & R: I always make this mistake
A: me too…. me too. (Ibid., L609-631)

Khalid was not able to identify shared words and in fairness the shared words are not commonly associated with their shared cross-linguistic and academic roots. In this study, in addition to Khalid who speaks Urdu, we met students in later focus groups who speak Spanish, Bengali, Japanese, Arabic and Korean. Japanese, Chinese and Korean have minimal linguistic connections to English; however Bengali, Urdu, Arabic and Spanish do share some basic roots that are similar.

Consider, for example, the following set of basic words taken from several branches of the Indo European language family:

English: father, mother, two, three
Anglo Saxon: faether, modor, twa, thrie
Latin: pater, mater, duos, tres
Greek: pater, meter, duos, tri

Sanskrit: pitar, matar, dho, theen (Huffman, 2009).

In Hindi and Urdu these words would be “pitha, matha, dho, theen.” In Spanish they would be “papa, mama, dos, tres.” In Bengali they would be “pitha, matha, dui, theen.” In Arabic they would be, “baba, mama, beh, theh.” In Korean they would be,
“Apba, Uhma, tul, set.” (Informal research among speakers). However, in our focus groups the students were not in the mindset to mentally reach back to bring forward these or other linguistic similarities.

Group 1 was able to offer practical suggestions for English speakers addressing L2 learners to facilitate better understanding of the teacher’s speech. Lois suggested that we need to speak more slowly and reminded us that there is translation going on in the heads of L2 learners and if we speak too fast they cannot translate quickly enough to understand.

L: I think …. they may try to speak slower
V: okay
L: Yeah, because if they speak too fast we can’t … umm… we can’t… should…should I use calculate? Or ummm… can’t translate
V: Right
L: We can’t translate into our own language so that I can … we can get the meaning.
V: Right. So the slower pace would help you.
L: Yeah. (Group 1, November 14, 2008, Bismilla, 2008, L648-654,)

Rachel asserted that it is important for teachers to give examples in class because when translations alone do not help, examples will help:

R: I think examples. Yeah. It’s really helpful. Like, umm… just think about, I… I’m not in an engine…. engineering class, but in fact I’m in a psychology class.
V: right
R: So there are so many terminologies in psychology and maybe that’s umm… what ha … what might help you a lot it just translate it into Chinese and you can get the meaning. Even those I translate in Chi… Chinese I don’t know the meaning because it’s terminology. But if my teacher gives us some example I … I can get the meaning or I can get the method or the theory. (Ibid., L658-667)

The point that Rachel made here is a critical one. It speaks to technical vocabulary that students need for the professions they wish to pursue. This year the college has made great strides in recognizing the problem that L2 students will struggle with technical
vocabulary in content specific trade curricula and is now offering foundations programs in all training areas where students can master technical terminology.

Khalid, picking up from Rachel, and supported by Andy, pointed out that “sign language” (meaning gestures) by the teacher when speaking helps students to understand and the other students echoed this suggestion.

R: Yes, actually if umm…. maybe there was some terminology in English but we can… we are failed to find one exact word to … to explain what … what it is, we might just try to use sentence and sentences and phrases to … to explain what that thing is.

V: right

R: So it might help.

V: Okay, great. And Khalid?

K: I think ummm… if an instructor use a sign language … at a … a circular table, he… he make a, like that, sign language, then maybe we understand [Khalid makes gestures].

V: So using gestures?

K: Gestures

A: Yeah

[Several group members spoke at same time <inaudible>]

V: Okay. Yeah, yeah, for some things.

K: For some things. (Ibid., L674-689)

Carol, in this interview, directly asked for mother tongue scaffolding in class when she said: “in sometimes the teacher maybe…ask the…other students…who speak the same language to explain to you” (Ibid., L691-692).

This process of facilitating student access to mother tongue clarification of concepts in class is not part of the practice or pedagogy in the rest of the college. It was identified here as an important need for L2 students and in subsequent interviews it was repeatedly echoed.

Group 1 yielded some critical insights into the thought processes that occur inside the brains of L2 learners in the L1/L2 learning mechanism. Andy, in keeping with Cook’s (2003, 2007) description of multicompetence and of the L2 learner’s mind being a super
system (in my words, a super highway) in which both languages traverse at the same time, described how in his mind both languages are occurring at the same time as he is speaking to me:

V: Okay, number 10, we’ll start with Andy and go around. Number 10. When do you think in English and when do you think in your mother tongue? How do you switch from one to the other at college or outside the college? So … so I… now I’m interested in your thinking, I’m interested in what goes on in your head. So when do you think in your mother tongue and how do you switch?

A: I thinks ummm… the same time. I use the same time. ahhh… ahhh… For example, use ahhh… you speak with by English to me I just ahh translate Chinese. And ahh… understand then answer you by English. So….yeah…

Group: yeah

A: So very fast in the bridge

V: Very fast highway

A: yeah… yeah… bridge, bridge.

C/R: We can control how we ahh… ahhh…very things

A: But a something I… I find… I found something like ahhh… a easy word, a thank you, bye bye. No translate.

V: right

A: Just get right away. But in some difficult and must a translate.

V: okay

A: I just think, I think, okay, answer back in English.

V: So some English words like thank you umm… hello, have become part of your…

Group: yes..

A: Very quickly, and ahhh.. and ahhh… don’t use ahhh… your ahhh.. your mother tongue in your brain. But not that difficult. (Ibid., L708-734)

So Andy is bridging both languages in his brain. He said that the easy words like “thank-you” and “bye-bye” are established and do not need to be translated but difficult English words must be translated.
Carol, who teaches Chinese classes in Toronto, made a pertinent point when she said that even when Canadians are learning Chinese they need to translate into English to understand, so we must make the same allowance for Chinese speakers who are learning English.

C: Yes I think that at the same time and ahhh… this situation is by the ahhh… Canadian to learn Chinese. They also translate at the same time. Because I… I’m a part-time teacher.

V: Right

C: To… to teach Chine… to teach a Chinese in… in… in a Chinese school.

V: Oh good.

C: And I think the students use it that way too and to… to… to translate the English to Chinese.

V: Okay, so you have students who speak English and you are teaching them to teach… to speak Chinese.

C Chinese, yeah.

V: And you think that the same thing is going on in their heads too.

C: Very… very… very ahhh similar, yeah, yeah.

V: Okay

C: They also ask the question, I… I… I guess they think about this English how to translate to Chinese at the same time.

V: So there’s translation going on in their head.

C: Yeah, yeah. (Ibid., L736-754)

Khalid, coming from Pakistan, a country that was colonized by Britain before partition, and where English had therefore assumed a power position and been learned by the resident population, finds that in his mind he uses translation both ways. He often translates English words into Urdu to better understand them but occasionally he needs to look for an English word to help him understand an Urdu word.

V: Okay. Khalid how about you, when do you think in English and when do you think in ahh… Urdu.

K: ahhh… I think when I have ahhh… difficult topics and difficult words, even in my language, I’m thinking about both, I can’t understand and ahh… once maybe
idea in English. I have seen difficulty in both in my mother language, for difficult words,
V: right
K: For English, and for Urdu
V: So sometimes when you hear a difficult Urdu word you sometimes look for an English word to help you. Okay. Okay, totally bilingual.
K: Totally bilingual, yeah. [chuckle] (Ibid., L755-765)

Rachel made the point that, “I have learned Chinese for past 20 years,” (Ibid., L780) so she struggles with English because she has twenty years of learning encoded in Chinese. She asserted that for her family members who are born here and have learned English since birth, they do not experience the language “interference” (Ibid., L783-792) that she does. She, like Andy, also has some code-switching occurring with “some very simple simplified words,” (Ibid., L786) that have become embedded into her everyday Chinese usage.

Lois too needs “to translate the English into Chinese and translate back to English. Yup!” (Ibid., L800-801).

R: umm… Actually I have been struggling with using English directly for long time that, right now still impossible for me to do that. Because maybe I have learned Chinese for past 20 years
V: Right
R: So if I want to use English, I… I have to translate it because there are interference in my mind. And as Andy mentioned why we can say hello, okay, something like that unconsciously because, even to my father he didn’t… he doesn’t know English at all, but we can say some very simple simplified words, I… Even to my father I can say, “Hello Father,” and keep going Chinese and “Bye, bye, okay.” This very commonly used words even in China. And I… in my family when I’m living with the family, they have a grandchildren… they have a grandchild umm… who is a girl and they are Chinese and she is Chinese too, but she wa… is born here. So… she can speak English without interference by Chinese and I think she’s started ahh… using English even she was a infant. So, it’s much easier for her to use English directly, but to me it’s still hard.
V: Right, cause like you said at the beginning, for 20 years your knowledge is coded in English. Okay. And Lois when do you think in Chinese and when do you think in English?

L: Same as Andy and Carol I think.

V: Right

L: I use it in the same time. I need to translate the English into Chinese and translate back to the English. Yup.

V: So it’s constant translation going on.

Group: Yeah. (Ibid., L778-803)

In speaking about whether their mother tongues are valued, they mentioned that their mother tongues are valued in the class where they are permitted to use them to clarify concepts and vocabulary. However, their mother tongues are greatly respected in the Toronto community at large: “Toronto is a freedom…most respect another…Toronto is a multiculture society…understand many kinds of language it can help you to find a job easier” (Ibid., L827 and Ibid., L856-858).

Khalid qualified this observation by saying that one’s language is only valuable when others understand it in class or in the community. And Lois qualified the sentiment by saying that while it is valuable in class and in the community, his goal is to learn English.

Rachel made a critical observation. She said that it is important to allow concept clarification in class in the mother tongue because if a concept is missed at the beginning or middle of the class and not allowed to be clarified, then the rest of the class may not be understood.

R: ummm… I think in class it might umm… it might be valuable because maybe the teachers going to ahhh… explain some main points if you can’t get it maybe the main problem is related what she’s going to explain a bit later, but i… if you can’t get the main point you might… you might u… you might fail to understand what’s or what’s coming, what’s coming up. (Ibid., L890-895)

On the issue of their feelings in classrooms where mother tongues are barred, the students used such words as “nervous” and “uncomfortable,” both conditions that would interfere with academic engagement. However, the students appeared to be resigned and
compliant about not being permitted to use their mother tongues as scaffolds in other classrooms.

**Synthesis and analysis summary of group 1 data.**

This first focus group validated the space for their mother tongues that this study created in their EAP classrooms. They further brought to life Cook’s (2003, 2007) super system of language interaction that exists in their brains as they described the activities that occur in their minds as their mother tongues scaffold English (Cummins 2007a, 2007b). By revealing the emotional needs that mother tongue fulfills for them in their academic and social lives the participants opened a window into the identity aspects (Cummins 2001) of language encoded prior learning. They articulated the academic perils of disallowing their mother tongues in class by articulating that if they cannot clarify a concept quickly in class they risk losing the rest of the lesson. Of the 57 ground codes in this group’s data 18 (32%) were related to identity; 15 (26%) related to the usefulness of mother tongue and the desire to have more resources in the mother tongue; 14 (25%) referred to the value that the students place on their mother tongues socio-culturally and academically; 10 (18%) of the ground codes related to scaffolding and language interdependence between mother tongue and English (see table 4 and figure 5).

**Group 2.**

The students in group two were Shariat (Bengali), Justin 1 (Chinese), Christina (Cantonese and Mandarin), and Bruce (Cantonese). Farwa (Urdu and Punjabi), who participated in all the other activities as part of this group, was ill on the day of this interview. While the students in this group expressed that they “feel good” (Group 2, November 17, 2008, Bismilla, 2008, L20) about being allowed to use mother tongue in class as an “advantageous” (Ibid., L57-61) tool to understand the topic or question better, there were several comments about the importance for them to use every opportunity to better their English. There were conflicted feelings expressed:

- that while allowing mother tongue in class has its advantages, the college was their only chance to speak English (Ibid., L42-44);
- that at home they do not have much opportunity to practice English (Ibid., L52-53);
that the disadvantage of allowing mother tongue in college is that it does not force them to speak and develop English skills. (Ibid., L62-65)

While Bruce thought that other students are curious and want to learn his mother tongue when they hear him use it, Christina, on the other hand, talked about the issue of respecting the feelings of people who do not speak their language. But she rushed on to say that she thought it “is okay,” that they might just want to learn the language and want to communicate.

C: mmm… I think, actually I’m not sure what are they thinking about, but, I think, ahhh… sometime, maybe when… when we are in your group, but I speak the same language with any other people but some people they don’t understand, I think it’s not res… respect to them. So sometime I will… I will speak again in English and tell them what I … what we are talking about anything like that

V: Right. So for you it’s a question of respect?

C: Yeah

V: That you shouldn’t speak a language that other people around you can’t understand?

C: But, I think is okay too, be…aah… because if you sort of say is “oh what are you talking about is very nervous and I will tell he… tell her”. But ummm… if he… he just ahhh.. want to know, “oh I want to know learn this”, I will tell him.

V: right

C: Yeah, I think is a kind of communication. (Ibid., L91-106)

Justin made an interesting point about Chinese speaking students at the college who are born here, for whom English is an equivalent language, but they do not want to associate with newly arrived Chinese students who still wish to speak Chinese.

J: ummm… Some native people who are older and are studying college ummm… they will, like umm… be ahhh… friendly with to you. But ahh… if you… you speak a your own language and ahh.. if you have some like classmate that they are like ahhh.. just graduate from high school, they don’t want to be part of it with you.

V: Right

J: Yeah. (Ibid., L110-116)
Shariat used an example to illustrate the issue of respect that Christina made, citing himself as an example. When other students are conversing in a mother tongue that he does not understand he feels isolated, “…alone I am feeling bad.”

S: Yes… I have ummm… 4 or 5 languages, ahh… in my class, there are 4 or 5 languages who ahhh.. if they… Chinese, ahhh… the Farshi, Arabic, so… when they speak in ahhh.. different language other than English, then actually we don’t understand anything. Sometime, then we want to know ahh… what you are talking and don’t talk in Farshi or other languages, talk only in English. So sometimes we force them and sometimes we feel bad, I am… I am an alone and some other ahh… group people are there. So they’re talking in their language, I am alone I am feeling bad. So this is one source of respect, that’s what she’s mentioning.

C: yeah

S: It is strictly to… one who is feeling bad, that’s talking the same language so that everybody can understand.

V: Right.

S: K…. So, this is one type of respect.

V: okay

S: We talk and the… and in… in a language which can understand

V: Okay

S: to all others. (Ibid., L118-136)

However, he concluded that group sharing to promote understanding among same language peers is very helpful.

S: Yes… sometimes Dara ahhh.. gave us some assignment and she mm…ummm…she gave us permission, perm….permit us all Bengali language you … sit together, you explain yourself with your, you discuss with yourself and your this… explain it yourself. So ahh… out of 4… 5 a student we have in be…Bangla language, Bengali language, so everybody don’t understand everything, okay. Sometimes I understand ahhh..mmm..two… few times, somebody else here understand other times, so we explain each other, and need to helps to… get clear idea about the whole topic.
V: Alright. So they may understand two English terms, you may understand,
S: understand
V: you may understand two other English terms,
S: yeah, yeah
V: so you share
S: yeah, share our idea.
V: Okay, so you s…
S: We clarify our self.
V: Okay, great.
S: That is very helpful. (Ibid., L142-161)

On questions 3, 4 and 5 that probed the students’ perspectives on the usefulness of
the mother tongue in college classrooms, assignments and research tasks, the students in
group 2 offered rich data. Justin and Christina said that it is important to have same
language peers to clarify assignments, share ideas and consider examples that may be
useful in essays.

V: When you are in your same language groups, what… what kinds of things do
you talk about?
J: mmm… I’s also share some ideas.
V: Okay. So when… when the teacher gives you an assignment to do and says,
get in your same language groups, you do share ideas?
J: Yeah
V: Okay. Can you give me an example? Like if she gives you, let’s say she gives
you ahh… write a…an essay on ummm… dreams. So you would share ideas as
to how to write the essay?
J: mmm… S… maybe like ahh… gave some example, what ahh.. you will use in
your essay.
V: Okay
J: And a we talk ahhh … around this, which is harder.
V: Okay. So you talk in Cantonese and you share the ideas?
J: mmm hmm
V: Okay. Christina?
C: mmm… I think if ahhh… if we are in one group if we use the same language, sometime we have an idea for, I can’t explain that in English and if we are in the same language we can we can talk with another and exchange our … ahh… ideas better. And … but… mmm, I thinks, just I think it’s better. (Ibid., L164-184) Christina, like the previous focus group, identified the difficulty that English idioms present.

C: Yes, I can’t explain in … in English, like some, …that’s it. ahhh… Chinese idiom, Chinese have a lot of idiom, but I don’t know how to ss…say that in… English. But if we are in the same language, you can understand me, maybe you can use another ways to explain it (Ibid., L189-191).

Christina and Bruce made an interesting observation that all Chinese speakers do not share a homogenous culture, noting that North China and South China have very different cultures. However they found value in being able to discuss assignments with cultural nuances in a shared language and considered it important to clarify ideas that can then be used in their English assignments.

B: Yes… ahhh… same as … Christina and … usually we … we … we use our language to … to discuss about idea, cause esp…especially about Chinese culture, cause we are … we came from … the same country, but … different … place, maybe different province,

V: Right

B: So we have also a little difference culture … so ahhh…. sometimes we don’t know how to … express the idea in English,

V: Right

B: So we can discuss how to use English, ho… how to… how to express the … the idea in English.

V: Right.

B: Yeah.

V: That’s interesting too, that you may all come from China, but you have different cultures within China.

B: Yeah

V: And then how do you translate all of that into…
C: Yeah… different parts of China so, like he is come from ahhh.. the north of ahh… China, we are come from south of China, we are ahh… we are cultures is different.
V: Different
C: Yeah, when we ahhh… talk about that is interesting too. (Ibid., L202-223)
Echoing the first group, Justin 1 pointed out that mother tongue is critical for them, as adults, to keep abreast of world events and news and build their knowledge base more quickly and efficiently than their proficiency in English allows.
J: mmm… Like ahh.. our English is not that good or not, if we want to a get a some information like a news ummm… Sometimes you very difficult to understand, we want to build up our knowledge … you… or we use our mother tongue, that would be much ahhh… faster.
V: Okay. So to build knowledge, your…
J: yeah
V: mother tongue would be useful. So to discuss the news, like if something has happened in the news.
J: Like if something create news, something like a that.
V: Okay. Okay, that’s a good… I nev… I didn’t think of that. (Ibid., L238-248)
Shariat and Justin confirmed the data that I found in phase 1 of this study, that L2 students often have difficulty understanding college processes, events, important notices, and signs which if explained by a same language peer provides operational clarity for them.
S: Yeah… ahhh… It is a, actually ahh.. useful if you allow us ahh… to discuss even outside the classroom, so we can clarify ahhh… ourself umm… and … different issue of the college. Let’s say ahh… there are some notice signs … some events going on the college, even if I don’t know if you are allow ahh… I cannot ahhh.. ex… somebody cannot explain me or I don’t understand from the English language, then I can ask my ummm… peer or my friend … the same language, to ahh.. clarify this, so then she can clarify this and then I we… huh….
V: Okay, so … so things that are happening in different parts of the
J: Different parts of the college
V: of the college. Okay.
J: different events.
V: So if there are events happening it would be helpful…
J: If there is important notice, haaaaa… If there are important, so I can get clarification from my friends.
V: Okay.
J: The same language. (Ibid., L250-266)

Christina and Bruce reminded us that while the mother tongue helps them scaffold their learning it is important to speak English as much as possible.

B: and this is a … an English program, we should use English, this a…the… the … the country is speaking English, so ummm… outside the classroom we should speak English.
V: right
B: Just in case in classroom, in case we don’t understand some action, then we can use our mother language to help us to build up the English language. (L289-295)

On the issue of using mother tongue to research, Shariat who comes from Bangladesh, where English is taught in schools, expressed his view that English should be used for research. Bruce concurred with this view on research. Justin, on the other hand, does use Chinese websites but he expressed two difficulties with them. One, the Chinese information is often difficult to translate into English and secondly, it is often difficult to separate opinion from fact on the websites making it difficult to get good information. Christina said that she uses mother tongue when she is doing research with a same language peer for better communication but she tries to use English when working with others.

V: And Justin? If you were asked, if the teacher said to you, you can... you can do your research in your own language. How ... what do you do? Do you ... what sorts of activities do you....
J: ahhhh... ahhh... I can say like, ummm... I never did a research like ahh... in Chinese like a website. mmm... umm... Most important reason is I think umm...
umm… my ahh.. get idea… ahhh… from like ahhh.. ummm.. my ahhh.. hometown, ahh.. other language, but ahh.. I very difficult translate it like ahhh… in English.

V: Okay. So… so you do go to the website. You look at ahh… the information in Chinese, but then you worry about the translation?

J: mmm hmmm

V: Okay.

J: And umm… ahh. Chinese website ahhh… like um… they have a lot of advertisements like a that. Is ahh.. with a some opinion.

V: okay

J: So is very difficult if find a some good information.

V: Okay. So you … it’s hard to separate the

J: yeah

V: opinion from the information. Christina?

C: ummm… When I do the research ahh.. if I … this is a pa… have a partner ahhh… do with me, I … I want to speak mother language with him, but when I ummm… like some research we have to interview some people we don’t know it and then I want to speak that is English … we … we speak English. Because umm… I come here to improve my English sho… so ummm... when I exchange our … our ideas, if you ahh… if I use mother language we could… we can communicate better, but when we ask another people I should use ahh… English to improve my English, and when I write down the… the conclusion or something like that, I should use English too.

V: Right.

C: Yeah. (Ibid., L315-346)

Group 2 yielded several strategies that they use to unlock meanings of new vocabulary. Shariat identified colloquialisms as particularly problematic for him. He then went on to explain in detail how he goes about establishing the meaning of new English words and information. He explained that he first tries to get clarification from the teacher. Then he tries to match the meaning as he understands it in English with his Bengali understanding, remembering that he used both languages in Bangladesh. He also
checks the dictionary and website and then, “match with our own language for better understanding.” He writes down new words (as in a word bank) and reviews them weekly. He constantly connects the meaning back to his mother tongue which he said helps him to “remember…to keep the word.”

V: Now number 6. When you see or hear a new English word, how do you figure out its meaning? How do you discover the meaning? Can your mother tongue help you figure out its meaning? So if you get a brand new word, and you never heard the word before, and it’s being used in class, right. How do you figure out the meaning of that word?

S: ummm… ahhh… After starting class we ha… ahhh…we came to know many new English word, and that we did not know before.

V: Right.

S: Not hear this words. And some colloquial of language also. mmm… There’s ahh… different meaning from our language. Okay. So when we get a new English word, we try to ahh… get the meaning, exact meaning, and try to understand in our own language also. Match the meaning what in our language is and what in English is. We try to figure out the ahhh… meaning from dictionary even from website and ahhh… match with our own language for better understanding.

V: Right.

S: Okay

V: Okay. So when you get a brand new word,

S: es

V: hen … the first thing you do is go … is go to a dictionary?

S: ahhhhh….. First to to get the clarification in English from teacher, I get from teacher okay.

V: Right

S: Teacher, we went to get the clarification from them and sometimes and we are not always ahhh… clear from the ahhh… what sh… ahhh… what my teacher is explaining. So, somewhere we have to go back to ahhh… dictionary.

V: Okay.
S: Say that meaning, so … or sometimes we don’t get clear idea from dictionary also,
V: Right
S: Sometimes … then we have to go back from website different meaning…compare… us then ahh… synonym, antonym, then we get the clear idea.
V: Okay.
S: Okay, and sometimes we ahhh…. we have to write down this new word and weekly re…review this new words.
V: Okay
S: Sometimes we …
V: And you said you compare the meaning in English and then you compare the meaning in your language.
S: language, yeah
V: Okay. Justin?
S: Actually that’s… this ahhh…. comparison with Bengali language in my own language help me to keep ahhh… remember.
V: Right.
S: hmmm… To keep the word
V: To keep the memory.
S: Yeah, yeah. To keep the memory.
V: So… so … so Bengla helps you to keep the memory.
S: Memory, yes.
V: Okay. (Ibid., L356-409)

Justin explained that he first seeks clarification from the teacher. He then uses an electronic translator that gives him the meaning and contextual usage in Chinese and English (Ibid., L410-425).

J: mmmm… mmm… If I hear a English word and ahhh I don’t know the meaning, ahh… most time I will directly ask the teacher what does that mean. ahhh… If I still cannot get understand umm… like umm… in China we have web products like ahh… electronic translator. I can just a punch a the word in the
translator and I get … I can get a English meaning or Chinese meaning or
understand like examples.
V: Okay. So you use your electronic ahhh… gadget
B: dictionary
V: dictionary, it’s an electronic dictionary. So you
punch in the English word and it gives you … ahhh..
Chinese word, examples?
J: ahhh… They have like ahh… English translation,
Chinese translation and ahhh... they give you some a
sentence ahh… using the word. Yeah.
V: So you get the context.
J: The usage, yeah.
V: Oh, great, thank you. (Ibid., L410-426)

Christina said that she seeks clarification from the teacher as well as from a same
language peer. She asserted that referring to the dictionary is time consuming and in class
there is often no time to do so, hence asking a Chinese speaking peer is more expedient.
The peer’s response in the mother tongue, she says, helps her “remember it better” (Ibid.,
L437). She continues regarding memory: “if you tell me that…how to…explain it in
English, maybe later, a few minutes, I will forget it. But if I remember it is in Chinese I
will remember…better” (Ibid., L439-441).

Bruce, a Cantonese speaker, who uses the dictionary as a last resort gave some
deeper insights into language transfer strategies (Ibid., L447-494). He said that he first of
all tries to guess the meaning of new English words based on the sentence and context. If
he still does not understand he asks a same language peer, then the teacher. If he is still
unclear, only then does he go to a dictionary. When asked if he has transferred any skills
from his formative learning of his mother tongue to his learning of English, Bruce
responded:

Chinese and English is very different…is totally different…if there is a
relation…maybe their strategies are review, review, rebuild…that is the only
strategies the same as English…cause… when I was small I try to learn a word in
Chinese, my mom will ask me to write it…10 times, 20 times, 30 times to
remember the...the words how to write it. So I think is the only way can...do it in English. (Ibid., L482-494)

Bruce’s response is an indication that strategies for learning language can be transferred from Chinese to English but any language clues or phonological elements depend on transferable elements which might be easier in cognate languages than non-cognate languages. The drill aspects that he mentioned are echoed again by his same language peer, Christina, who said:

I think that is a type of Chinese education. Our teacher just tell me if you don’t remember that word you just should write down it again, again and again. So...if I don’t remember one English I will watch that words and write, write, write, write down a lot of time. (Ibid., L502-508)

She too went on to explain that Chinese is too different to try to figure out pieces (syllables) of the word. However, she does use the dictionary for the purpose of learning to spell the word and appreciates the segmenting of a word found in dictionaries:

“dictionary they will...will spell them in one piece, one piece, one piece, one piece, right...I will use that to remember the...how to spell it” (Ibid., L517-520).

Justin 1 said that he does see one similarity between Chinese and English: in both languages the decoding for pronunciation purposes is the same process. So the strategy of stringing the sounds together to pronounce the word is the same in both languages according to Justin 1.

J: Ohhh... There are little, like ahhh... for the pronunciation. ahhh.... In Chinese ahh ways I will like ahhh... the letters of help us like a pronounce the word to.

It’s like a similar that ... similar as a English. Sometimes I can use a like a some like a pronunciation ahhh... to pronounce like a English. (Ibid., L532-536)

His observation of the phonological process of language coding and decoding is a sophisticated one. Similarly, Shariat pointed out that in Bangla, using syllables to break up a word into segments is the same as in English. As well, examining prefixes and suffixes against the root word to figure out the meaning of a word is a similar strategy in both languages. He went on to say that when the dictionary breaks up words into syllables he finds this useful for both meaning and pronunciation.

S: I... I want to give on an example.
V: Okay
S: This is… this is a word in Ben…beng [chuckle]
V: Yes
S: Language. This is Bang…la…desh
V: Right
S: You tr… you have 3 syllable here.
V: Right
S: In Bengali. We learned in our, when we’re boy… ahhh… boy, we a learned that this is… you have to break it up [chopping gesture].
V: Right.
S: This words. Bang….la….desh
V: desh
S: Okay, there are the 3 syllables.
V: right
S: Similarly in English, there are words we learn to the new words by breaking the syllable. So that a we can get memorize and different type of words. You know ahh… some we in… in English we use some prefix and some suffix,
V: Right
S: And that helps to ahhh.. increase our word a strong, to ahhh… to … explore the different meaning of the aa…main root word.
V: Okay, okay
S: Okay. So in Bangla also we did the same thing. Bangla we did the … you see, this is a several words and this is the … different word.
V: Right
S: But on… combined together the that, this different meaning.
V: Oh, okay
S: Okay, this is the name of country. So in English we are doing the same thing. ahhh… We are taking help from ahhh… pronunciation case from dictionary or Longman dictionary they have the very good ahhh… resources to tell that telling us the pronunciation and they are breaking up the word in different syllable and that helps us. So we are the same strategy in Bangla we are using the... English…
V: Right. So when you were a little boy you were learning these strategies in your own language and now you’re doing the same thing.
S: Yeah, doing the same thing.
V: Okay. Alright. (Ibid., L541-581)

Christina, Bruce and Justin, when probed if there were any common words or roots at all that they knew of between Chinese and English, said that some English words had become common in Chinese like *strawberry* just as some Chinese words like *dimsum* had become part of English usage. But they again pointed out that Chinese words are made up of symbols not letters like English words, so they cannot be the same, hence they are linguistically different (Ibid., L604-616).

Shariat made an insightful comment about English creeping into Bengali (Ibid., L620-652). He said that there are many words in Bengali that are imported from English, Hindi and Farsi. From English there are the words *taxi, bus* and *train*. He went on to say that the word *train* has actually replaced the pure Bengali word *railgari* which is the word for train: “many people doesn’t know the word is…railgari means but everybody knows train, what is train” (Ibid., L645-646).

Regarding their advice on what English speakers might do to accommodate L2 learners in our speaking patterns, Group 2, like Group 1, confirmed that speaking slowly helps them understand better. They, too, requested that teachers avoid colloquialisms and slang (Ibid., L664) in class instruction. They expressed difficulty understanding idioms:

So many idioms are there. We understand the meaning of the individual word, but when three, four words come together in a …phrase, word or idiom… can’t understand it…then we don’t understand it. …we…check up the dictionary, check the meaning of the idiom…yeah (laughter) …so…avoid and actually…if they even they say it, they can explain it, then we can understand it. (Ibid., L670-684)

Later in the transcript (Ibid., L725) the students joked about the idiom “have a break,” so common in our everyday usage, but for second language learners it can be bewildering: “when I saw…have a break and other people left the class, I think, what happened? [laughter]” (Ibid., L725-727).

Christina also pointed out that using a simpler version of a word together with the more sophisticated version of the same word facilitates understanding as well as teaches a
new word. She referred to my use of the words *strategies* and *ways* in my Question #7 as helpful. Bruce, as the past group did, explained that speaking slower gives L2 learners “enough time to think about it what…what is the teacher talking about” (Ibid., L712-713).

We then saw an example of what Cummins (2001) might describe as collaborative student-teacher relationships, self explanatory in these excerpts in which Shariat refers to his teacher as, “our Dara.”

Sometimes our Dara is talking…our class and she says some colloquial language that she uses and immediately she explain it, so we understand her clearly…pronunciation is very clear and…not too fast…and not too fast and explaining if there is an unknown word. She understand what we are understanding. So she’s explain…immediately she’s explaining. That’s actually very helpful for us. (Ibid., L731-750)

When we delved into the thought processes that are on-going in their brains between English and their mother tongues, Shariat, for whom English was a second language before he came to Canada, claimed that when he is speaking with an English speaker he thinks and speaks in English; but when he is speaking to a Bangla speaking peer he thinks and speaks in Bangla. Earlier he had said that when he does not understand English speaking teachers’ words he connects it with Bangla in order, “to remember,” “to keep the word” (Ibid., L401-408). So in this instance he is likely referring to conversational English with friends rather than instructional English.

Bruce, Christina and Justin made key contributions to our insights into the concurrent processing in the brain of Chinese and English. Bruce indicated that when he is listening to someone speaking to him in English he is able to think about it in English, but if he needs to speak, he needs to think in Chinese about what he is going to say then translate it into English in order to say it:

B: Yes… umm… When I … … when I listen to … to … people who speak English … … they speak English to me I … I … I’m thinking about English. But if I need to express my … my words or my opinions, something, ahhh… I need to speak English, I will first think in Chinese then translate to English, how to …
Other group members: express
B: Express, yeah, my … my … my opinion.
V: Okay, so … so when you are speaking to somebody who doesn’t understand Chinese, you first try to think in English, but if you can’t then you think in Chinese and then you translate.
B: First I … I think in Chinese. I … aaaa… I think in Chinese, then I translate to English and then say all the words.
V: Okay, so there’s a translation.
B: Make .. make a sentence in … in English.
V: Okay.
B: Yeah. But I listen to people who speak Engl… English just like I… I … I’m talk … talking to you. You speak to me and I can get the idea right away in English.
V: Right
B: There’s no problem.
V: Okay
B: Yeah, but I… if I need to speak English I have to … use … Chinese first to … to make a … b… an idea, then trans… aaa… exchange the idea in English.
V: Okay. (Ibid., L780-804)
Christina further explained this concept that simple English words need no translation in conversational exchanges but:
When I create a new ideas, I will think in my own language. But if I talking with…English speaker, I will…I will use English to think about it. But if I talk with…like Chinese people, I will use Chinese to think about it. (Ibid., L807-810).
I have to like…like organize…organize my ideas, I will have to use…Chinese to organize and then I will translate in English. But if…in daily life…when I…when I saw you during the…the street other thing, I say hello and just talk with you as I …I use English. (Ibid., L817-821)
Justin and Christina went on to clarify that the use of English for thinking, speaking or writing depends on the situation and the level of English being used. An example that Justin cited was the process of organizing the structure of an essay. He
thinks in Chinese about the structure, the details, the main points, and what the essay is going to look like but he puts his main ideas down on paper in English. Christina explained: “we just think it in our language, but we will translate it first quickly and write down in English” (Ibid., L853-854).

When asked if they write their drafts in their mother tongue they all in a chorus said, “No, no, no.” (Ibid., L865) Shariat explained:

That…that’s don’t actually make sense. Because…direct translation is not possible. In my language if I write it…in paragraph in my language and…someone says that you directly translate it to English, it is very difficult. But the context, if you know the context, if you…it is if it is a remind you can write in English if you had some English words. (Ibid., L857-862)

In our discussion about the value of mother tongue Shariat spoke about the importance of preserving Bangla in his home for his children, as part of his culture, and that it is important not to forget his family’s language, an indication of the importance he assigns to this cultural and lingual identity marker.

S: Yeah… ahhh… Language is of course valuable to me, my language, because I was born … brought up with this my own language. So I have to ahhh… because I… I… I… I was born and brought up in ahh… one … in my own culture. So I have to ahh… keep my culture first. Okay. But ahh… learning English is different issue. There’s for my better develop ahh… my career, my… how to better job, we’re learning each other, it not … we did not ahhh… we don’t need to come from Bangladesh to Canada [chuckle]

V: Right

S: That’s for haaa…learning language it’s not the…, so I have to keep my ahhh… own language and I have to build ahhh… in … in it is ahhh… for class the Bangla is important for me just if there are ahhh… some umm… my classmates are … can … speak in Bangla then I can explain, I can and get help from them or they get help from me, just explaining the different terms, in class or college. But in our day to day life in Toronto in general, actually … … and in my ahh… ahhh… back home so ahh… my Bangla is very important ahhh… ahhh… because if you see my aaa… my kids are … is… ehhhhh… six, seven years old, they came here
just few ahhh… months back, so he’s learning English. He knows already
Bangla… Bangla language and he’s learning English. So in ahhh… my home I we
speak we try to speak in Bangla because we want to keep ahhh… learning the …
the Bangla also. mmm… We don’t forget, don’t want to forget our ahhh… own
language. So everybody I think so… ahhh… they speak when they are at home
they speak in their own language.
V: Right.
S: This is just for keeping their own language.
V: So you do think it’s valuable to keep?
S: Yes, of course.
V: That language.
S: Of course this is valuable. (Ibid., L872-903)

Justin told the group that his mother tongue is the pathway to getting important
information quickly. He said that he does not have the two to three hours it would take
him to read an English newspaper in order to bring himself up to speed with the news;
reading a Chinese newspaper gives him the news in 10 minutes. He went on to say that
Chinese is his social language, important for friendships, but also a language that
facilitates school work, in conducting research and as an aid to deciphering the meaning
of English words in a dictionary.
J: mmmm… ummm… At the very beginning when I come to Canada I try to push
myself only dealing English instead Asian, but ahh… I find out is very difficult.
Like umm… while I c…ummm… come Canada I just a want to read a some
newspaper ummm… maybe I will took a like umm… about a two hours, three
hours to understand one newspaper. I’m also a student, I don’t have a that a much
time to under… just take a two, three hours to understand a one newspaper. If I
read it just in … in my ahhh… own language maybe just ten minutes.
V: Okay
J: Yeah
V: But that’s a really good point. So… so you think your language is valuable
then outside the college in Toronto because it helps you to get information
quickly.
J: Yes
V: Okay. And in the college do you believe that your language is important in … in the college?
J: ahhh… mmm… I can make some like a Chinese friends. Yeah.
V: Understand. And … and does your language help you to understand some of your work, as well, your school work?
J: ahhh… Yeah, if I do not understand I can do some research on the internet.
V: In your language?
J: Yeah
V: Okay. So it does help you in …
J: Yeah
V: In both in the school and outside of the school.
J: They all help a me pick up the ideas. (Ibid., L905-932)

Christina described the value of mother tongue for survival in daily life for things that we take for granted like shopping. Shariat added, “Nobody’s there to explain us, we don’t buy it” (Ibid., L960). He continued to explain the importance of bilingualism in negotiating business between countries.

S: Yeah, between countries is also important. When an their business negotiation between ahh… two countries with ahhh… ahh… then there are some bi-lingual adv… ahhh… schools, there then business can be grow.
V: So your language, your mother tongue is valuable.
S: Yeah, yeah. (Ibid., L972-975)

Bruce pointed out that not only does he want to keep his mother tongue as very important to him, but when he has children he wants to teach them his mother tongue. He went on to say that in the college, the mother tongue may just be important to acquire information, but outside the college, in the city at large, “…over 50% are Chinese” (Ibid., L896) and his language is very important. Christina added that if one knows more languages it is easier to acquire jobs and being multilingual is critical for business:

If there…if two people in front of you, one people he…he knows a a …foreign kind of language, one people just know English, so what will we choose? I will choose some people know foreign language like Chinese… Cantonese, Mandarin,
English and maybe another language, then he can...he can...sway more people to buy their product. (Ibid., L1014-1019)

This prediction that Christina made above is critical in our global economy and in our rapidly changing demography in Toronto and Canada. For a multilingual, multi-ethnic college that professes equity and inclusion, this is an important message. If colleges are educating students for success in the business and professional world, they must consider the needs of society. Languages for communication are central needs of an increasingly diverse society; and having the microcosm of that society within the walls of the institution must be seen as an advantageous opportunity to prepare better rounded professionals to serve the country’s economy.

On the question of their feelings in classes where mother tongue is banned, this group expressed discomfort. They made two critical points. Firstly, that if a teacher does not allow the mother tongue in class for quick clarification with a peer about a concept, then the rest of the lesson is missed because that key concept was missed.

Nobody should stop us allow...stop us talking in our own language to get clarification...if we miss one main point that I cannot understand, I cannot follow the whole class, and the whole class will be...is not justify to stay in that class because I’m not following that class. The main point I have missed. So if I’m not allowed ...talking other than English, it’s not justified. (Ibid., L1090-1097)

Secondly, these students asserted that they are adults. They have come to the college and paid tuition fees to learn English and to learn a profession. They fully understand this. They use their mother tongue in class for emergencies related to understanding key building blocks. They pointed out that they should not be subjected to rules barring their mother tongue in class:

We...we are adults; we know why I’m here. If I don’t want to learn English I won’t give money and starting here right. [Chuckling from group]. And like, I’m not international student, I spend more, lots of money than them right. So I know why I come here, so I will do my best to speak more English. [The speaker, Christina is an international student, so this is a slip of her tongue, or speaking passionately, she was flustered amid her equally passionate and animated peers – she might have meant to say, “I’m not a domestic student” rather than, “I’m not
international student.”] But…like some…sometimes, some situation you have to speak your own language. You have no choice. If you don’t speak that maybe that’s is just one words. If you speak at that just one word to…to…to understand…the whole class will help you a lot. (Ibid., L1168-1177)

**Synthesis and analysis summary of group 2 data.**

For the distribution of the ground codes from this group’s data over the four themes see table 4 and figure 5. There were 72 coded comments in this the group 2 transcript. 19 (26%) of the comments related to mother tongue being central to their identities; 15 (21%) of the comments related to how useful they found their mother tongues to be in class; 13 (18%) of the comments were about the value of mother tongue in their lives and 25 (35%) of the comments described specific activity occurring in their brains between their L1 and English. While group 2 continued as did group 1 to provide comments related to identity formation, usefulness and value of mother tongue and L1/L2 scaffolding strategies, a further insight provided by the Chinese students in this group related to guarded comments about political freedom. Justin, Christina and Bruce talked about the difficulty of separating opinion or propaganda when using Chinese websites for research. The impact of political power relations on identity is a phenomenon that I experienced personally in apartheid South Africa. There was nothing that we could do about the propaganda of the racist government without risk to life. Zu Zhiyong (2007) found that Tibetan students’ identities were impacted in Chinese power dominant school settings. Power relations and propaganda were not directly referenced by the students in this group but their need to separate Chinese website opinion and fact indicated a concern. The students in this group also affirmed that while linguistically there may be similarities among Chinese speakers, there are vast cultural differences among Chinese immigrants depending on where they lived in China geographically before coming to Canada. This is a useful caution for educators to respect individual differences regardless of seeming similarities among students.

**Group 3.**

Group 3 was comprised of Asm and Shubnum who speak Bangla, Justin 2 who speaks Korean and Murphy who indicated in both his demographic form and the interview that he speaks Chinese (he did not specify Cantonese or Mandarin). Shubnum
and Asm indicated that using their mother tongue in class makes it easier for them to understand concepts by clarifying them with each other using their first language.

V: How do you feel about being allowed to use your mother tongue in a college classroom? So, ummm…we’ll start with you since you’re not chewing, Shubnum.

S: Something feels that very easy for me because I can easily communicate to with my language another student who came from Bangladesh tis easy. Sometimes is easy for me to understand something.

V: So… so you find being allowed to speak in your language makes it easy for you.

S: Yeah, yeah.

V: And it’s easy because there are… there’s another student that speaks Bangla?

S: Yeah.


A: I also feel comfortable if I found someone and is from my country who can ways speaking my same first language.

V: Right

A: And then if I can’t understand anything or I can share with my mmm… colleague or co-worker ahhh… to get better idea.

V: Okay. So when you say if I don’t understand something, ahhh… like anything, or a word or what. What do you mean?

A: Concept.

V: Like a concept?

A: Yeah.

V: And then you ask your same language ahh… friend?

A: Yeah. (Ibid., L35-46)

Justin, who does not have a Korean speaking peer in class indicated that having a same-language peer would have been helpful to clarify vocabulary and concepts (Ibid., L61-62). He cautioned that allowing students to use their mother tongues to clarify might lead to cheating on exams. Murphy felt that using Chinese with peers is convenient but,
again, as in other interviews there was the issue of respect of others. He said it is fine to clarify but others might think that they are talking about “some secret.”

M: ahhh… Actually, if … if just for me … mmm… is convenient. Cause mmm… cause I can answer some question but if it … if I change a position, if I and other people their talk, use their own language talking in class back. If I will feel they might have some secret don’t … don’t wanna let me know about it. (Ibid., L84-88)

The reticence to use mother tongue out of concern about excluding others came forward again from Justin (Ibid., L140) who said other peers may be curious or react in a good way if they heard him and his friends talking in Korean but “they might feel bad.” Shubnum and Asm asserted that Toronto is a multicultural city where diverse languages are respected.

S: but, ahhh… we … when we use our mother tongue ahhh it’s our classmates ahhhummm… respect us. Okay. Some their told me, “What you saying Shubnum?”
V: Right
S: What is meaning.
V: right
S: They curious about our language.
V: So there’s the curiosity, but they respect you.
S: Respect you, yeah.
V: They respect your language.
S: Yeah.
V: Is it because they’re also speaking their language at times? Or is it just a culture of respect?
S: Culture of respect, maybe.
V: Right, yeah. But from different languages.
S: Yeah.
V: Thank you. And Asm, how do you … students react?
A: I think ahhh… the… aa… specially Toronto is a multiculture people, lots of diverse people coming here. So ahhh… all the students are, respect each other.
ahh… Like my opinion ahh.. so Shubnum ahhh… when I say my … my language on the time someone curious nnn… what… what the meaning of that.
V: So they’re curious about the meaning.
A: Yeah, yeah.
V: But they’re not angry with you, or upset that you might be talking secrets or anything.
A: No. (Ibid., L104-130)

Regarding the usefulness of the mother tongue in class, teenager Justin who attended high school in Toronto, indicated that although he does not have a same language peer in class he did in high school. He indicated that mother tongue was helpful to discuss ideas and examples regarding school work assignments (Ibid., L162-185). He made an important observation about the expediency of using mother tongue for concept clarification in class. He said that if he asked English speaking friends they just repeated what the teacher said and he felt foolish asking several times; but if he asked Korean friends they were not just repeating the teacher but were more specific. He said that Canadian friends know the meaning and the way that the teacher explains things because it is what they are used to. The mother tongue speakers understand it the way he does (Ibid., L192-210).

J: I have when I was in high school.
V: Right. So… so in a situation where you have Korean speaking friends and you’re discussing schoolwork, what kinds of things do you talk about?
J: About the school?
V: About school work, yeah, Justin.
J: ummm… … We talked about how to do this first and then get some ideas. … … … Please can I have to talk about. I talked about school works in my language
V: Right
J: my ……………(silence)
V: So you… so in high school when you were with your Korean friends, did you sometimes talk about schoolwork and assignments and you said you talk about how to do it.
J: Yeah. Lot of time, actually I ask them and then get ideas, like, ummm… … it’s hard to explain, ahhh…
V: Get some ideas?
J: Yeah, get… getting some ideas and then, like basically we just ask them how to do this and then like ask them to show me how you to that.
V: Right
J: And then get some examples for that, in Korean of course.
V: right
J: So umm… yeah, just to get some ideas (Ibid., L162-185).
J: It was different because, in ummm… a…maybe it’s my opinion, but if I ask the Canadian friends they ask me, they’re just repeating what the teacher says, so that’s just same thing I really don’t understand.
V: right
J: But if I ask the Korean friends, they’re not repeating in… in English but they’re speaking it to my language. And if I don’t understand, I don’t need to ask, like, when I ask to Canadian friends like, four or five times, I feel like I’m foolish.
V: Right
J: But I don’t wanna do that. So if I ask to my friend, if I don’t get it, then they will be … ahhh… more… specifically, like
V: okay
J: (inaudible) yeah. I’m not saying like Canadians are not explaining very well, but, they actually know what this that means so, that’s the only way that they can explain to me
V: yeah
J: There’s other way in my language to explain that that I can easily understand.
Yeah, and so
V: That’s an excellent point, and I didn’t think of that. Umm. (Ibid., L192-210)
Murphy made the point that understanding examples in mother tongue is “very, very, very fast” (Ibid., L219) whereas English is too hard to understand. Shubnum and Asm also made the point that Justin did: English speaking friends repeat what the teacher said while same language friends are easier to understand because they go to the root of
the word (Ibid., L265). Concepts like “summary,” or a point made during a lecture if
quickly clarified makes it “easier to go forward” (Ibid., L257) for them.

A: umm… s…s… Suppose mmm… if I can’t understand an a lecture or… or a
point from my ohhh… a teacher mmm… who is… delivered my which is
delivered my teacher aaa… on that time, I cannot mmm… aaa… my classmate
ummm… they … if… if umm… the ahhh… if … if I get the idea from my
classmate on that time aaa… aaa… is too easier to go forward.

V: Right. Okay. So something that the teacher has said that you need to ask your
classmate about and so you find it easier to ask in Bangla.

A: Yeah. If I start ask mmm… it in English ask like, th… Justin told that he will
repeat same thing most teacher has said, but I don’t understand them word.

V: right

A: But if I … mmm… aaa… express in Bangali I can go to the root

V: The root of the word?

A: Yeah. (Ibid., L252-267)

Regarding other places in the college where being allowed to speak to someone in
mother tongue would be useful, Justin explained that if someone in Student Services or in
the International Student Office were there from Korea they would understand cultural
situations, like in his case, the interruption of educational pathways by the requirement
for military service:

Actually the kind they… office doesn’t really know, they don’t know what’s going
on, like what’s my situation because all Koreans should know that, like man
should go military and then that’s for how long and then, like, whatcha gotta do
for that thing… why didn’t drop the courses and then they ask me all those
questions, but if they were Korean there, like, just tellin them I gotta go to
military and they he’ll understand everything… (Ibid., L286-294)

As in previous interviews where students explained that Counseling and
Advisement Offices were not serving the needs of L2 students, Shubnum expressed the
same frustration:

… when I go to Enrollment Office I want to know how I can go the way
sub… subject, they give me some advice, but I do not understand some words,
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some sentence and...is I think there if...there...there...aaa...person who speak Bengali, it was easy for me to understand. (Ibid., L319-323)

She went on to explain that even though she speaks English (a language commonly spoken in Bangladesh) she has an easier time with Bengali: “but Bengali I can express very quick and fluently” (Ibid., L337-338). This point was expressed before regarding the need in Counseling Offices to be able to express feelings.

Regarding the possibilities of researching in mother tongue both Justin and Murphy said that they translate the English topic into mother tongue and surf the net because it makes it easier for them to understand and differentiate what is really important and what is not. However, Justin explained that the limitation is that Korean sites do not have some articles that may show up on North American sites, so limited resources is a problem in mother tongue researching on the net.

J: First I did it and then...aaa...then it should be really really easier to me to understand and maybe I have some knowledge already about those topics. Or I can go on a Korean website, so I can surf on them and then it should be much more easier because when I thinks in English I...ahhh...most of the time I just type the same topic as what it says in the paper, but in my language I will know, like, what to find and what...what is not really important. So, it should be much more easier to Google it and then...

V: So you would translate the topic into Korean,

J: mmmhuh

V: And then you would use that Korean language topic to surf the Korean language website.

J: Yeah

V: That’s what you’re saying. And can you Google in Korean?

J: Yeah.

V: Okay.

J: So...ummm...I’ll actually use internet access probably to do the assignments that I can do at home. But there is some problems sometimes, because, sometimes they’re talking about some articles that have them in US or Canada and then that doesn’t really show up in my website, so...
V: Right
J: That’s a problem sometimes, but anyhow it’s not like, special issue, but about general knowledge stuff like that. And I can’t, then I can’t use my … aaa… internet to…
V: Right
J: Find all those things, much easier.
V: Excellent. Thank you. Murphy? What do you do when you are asked ahhh… to research and the teacher says you can do it in your own language. Wha… what do you do?
M: mmm… Same as Justin… just… just translate the topic and maybe aaa… find some idea in my own language somebody, somebody show… show idea or on internet, cause you know the language is… language are different. Maybe … maybe the same idea is in English in Google, but I couldn’t understand, couldn’t understand the point or the specific part, but maybe in my language it would be clear. (Ibid., L371-407)

Shubnum and Asm made an important observation about researching in English and Bengali. The computer language in Bangladesh is English so even if they search a topic in Bengali, the information appears in English.

S: When we find translating in Bengali, we are… I ahhh… give my assignment in English, I Google, I’ve a… type it as English, and I find out from English.
V: So you do your research in English and you write in English?
S: Yeah
V: So at any point are you thinking in Bangla or?
S: No, no, no, no
V: No?
S: No
V: No, it’s thinking in English?
S: In English
V: Researching in English?
S: Yeah
V: And writing in English?
S: Yeah
V: Okay. And Asm?
A: ahhh, yeah, aaa… Same mmm… as Shub…Shubnum, because our Bengali language ahhh… don’t have an in…internets work, all computer language in English.
V: Okay
A: So if we try it in Bengali trans…information from the website, is also written in English. So… ummm… if we umm…aaa…if we aaa… if I… I’m interested to find out some information from internet, I have to depend on English only, yes.
V: So… so I heard you say that there is no Bengali internet.
A: Yes. (Ibid., L415-440)

In discussing strategies that help to unlock meanings of new English words, Asm said that he depends on translation, “all the time it’s translating it,” (Ibid., L454) and that he compares the word to the Bengali word and tries to figure out the meaning. He went on to say that there are English words that have crept into Bengali. Shubnum said that she uses the English to Bengali dictionary.

Justin made the point that there is no connection between English and Korean (linguistically different languages) so he uses “a dictionary too, because there is no connection between English and Korean at all. So I cannot use my…my brain to think about what it means” (Ibid., L493-495).

Contrary to the previous group where some students found the variety of meanings in an English dictionary to be confusing, Justin said that he prefers the English to English dictionary precisely because it gives a choice of meanings and he can see the little differences in meaning.

J: Yeah, most of the time, but I actually … prefer to use English to English because that’s ahhh… little more … better to understand. Because sometimes there is like three different words which might means little little different.
V: okay
J: But in Korean dictionary it says all the same thing. So if I go to English English dictionary, then it says what will be the little differences between them, it’s a little easier I find. (Ibid., L505-512)
A strategy from his mother tongue that Murphy said helps him is to break up the words into prefixes, suffixes and pieces. He said that Chinese symbols can be broken apart to figure out meaning just as English words can be.

M: I try same language is almost the same, is…it… it’s a lot syn… ummm… syn… something, cause

V: A lot of synonyms?

M: Yeah, synonyms. And cause a Chinese word always have s… Chinese word has the fixes also.

V: Sorry, Chinese words have?

M: Fixes… suf… suffixes.

V: Ohhh, suffix and prefixes.

M: Yeah, same idea like that, cause … cause some if it has… you have this suffixes, this prefix maybe means about animal in English is the same.

V: Okay, so you rely on suffixes and prefix. So… so you do break up the words.

M: Yeah.

V: And take a look. Okay.

M: Has this like this (gestures with fingers and uses pencil and paper to show Chinese symbol).

V: Okay. So you… Chinese have umm… Chinese words have umm… symbols

M: Yeah

V: And so do you find that in English you can break up symbols as well or just in Chinese?

M: Both

V: Both.

M: Yeah. (Ibid., L541-564)

Justin said that he finds that media helps him enlarge his vocabulary in both Korean and English. In Korean newspapers he often finds new words to learn in Korean. When watching English sitcoms and listening to lyrics he often finds new words that he might be interested in learning and he checks those in dictionaries (Ibid., L579-589).
V: Okay. Justin what kinds of things do you do in Korean to … to learn new words in Korean and those same strategies help you when you’re learning a new word in English.
J: ummm… I just … talk a lot and watch media sometime, read newspapers, that sort of thing.
V: So you talk a lot, watch a lot of media, you read a lot of newspapers?
J: Yeah.
V: So you… so exposure, you just try to get
J: I get some ideas from reading or seeing it, like visually.
V: Okay.
J: It’s … actually in Korean there are a lot of words I already know, but in newspaper there are a little more harder words, like, that are not commonly used in talking. So, that’s what I’ve done, I mean, that’s what I did when I learned Korean more. But in English there are, like even easy words, that I don’t really know, so, I see like comedies or like, sitcoms first and
V: Right
J: If then if they’re using some words and then if I think I’m interested in those words then I find it in the dictionary and then get the meaning of it then, yeah.
V: That’s a great idea. So you use things like television and sitcoms and
J: Yeah, music
V: A lot of exposure, music and lyrics. Okay, okay. Thank you. (Ibid., L565-589)
For Shubnum (Ibid., L591-603) a similarity between learning Bengali and English is that both languages have tenses that require slight variations to a root word. Asm said that he learned to brainstorm ideas with friends in Bengali and he finds that strategy a useful one in learning English as well (Ibid., L617-621).
S: In Bangladesh we have (inaudible) more tense and similar in Canada aaaa… English, there are past tense and we tell easy for me to understand the tenses.
V: So there are tenses
S: Yeah
V: In Bangla and there are
S: Yeah, tenses
V: Tenses in English
S: Yes, yes.
V: So you understand the concept of tense.
S: Concept, yes.
V: Okay.
S: Easy for me to understand. (Ibid., L591-603)

A: A suggestion ummm… mmm… if I found mmm… one my classmate who
speak the same my language first time I prefer to go for br…brainstorming. In
my own language, umm… after then I nnn… go forward. And aaaa… there are
some similarities also English and Bangali regarding tense with already. (Ibid.,
L617-621)

Asked if there were words in their mother tongues that were the same in English
Shubnum, Asm and Justin gave examples of common English words that have crept into
their mother tongue colloquialisms like chair, table, taxi driver, TV, television, and radio.
Justin explained that the pronunciation might be a little different like Koreans say, ‘tel-
eee-vis-ion” (Ibid., L665). He also said:

Western languages and Koreans or Chinese or Japanese, they’re really…their
parents really want their kids to be highly educated so they educate them very,
very much. So they use like English on the street or something cause their parents
actually force them to do. So now-a-days they’re using English words very, very
much…they’re using some vocabularies but they’re not using like same grammar
rules… (Ibid., L671-687)

The advice that this group gave regarding things we might do when we, as
English speakers, are speaking to an L2 audience, include hints we heard in the first two
interviews like speak slower, do not whisper (as whispering is hard to understand) and
use body language (meaning gestures) when speaking. Murphy said he likes Barack
Obama’s slow word per minute count.

J: ahhh… Marg actually speaks louder than other teachers. But there is one
teacher who is actually whispering in their class so I will never understand her at
all. Then she speaks also so fast but Marg sp…is trying to speak slower. So louder
and slower that’s really helpful for second language students.
V: Yes. So not whispering and not speaking too fast.
S: Same, same, same
V: Okay, anything else that they do that helps you.
J: Body language
S: Yes they
V: Body language, right.
S: Same, body
A: Same body language, same.
V: Yes. So body language, speak slower and don’t whisper. Okay.
M: Like for an example Barack Obama his … his speaking is very slowly per minute [inaudible] under 10 word loudly.
V: So Barack Obama
M: Yeah
V: You said he speaks slowly
M: Slowly word per minute text on monitor he speaks one…fifteen or ten words
V: Per minute
M: Per minute
V: Oh that’s a good statistic, I didn’t know that. Okay. (Ibid., L713-736)

In describing their thought processes between mother tongue and English, Asm and Shubnum used the supermarket as an example. When they examine a product they are thinking in mother tongue but when they reach the check-out counter they switch to English to communicate with the cashier. In class it is the opposite, they think in English in class and when they leave class and want to clarify they switch to Bengali.
A: Okay. When I went to the supermarket,
V: This is Asm, yeah.
A: ummm… the time… I… we first a went to ahh…s…s… see the same thing compare it in my aaa…mmm…country also, is that thing also it available in my country and ahhh… how comfortable is here also.
V: So when you …when you’re…so you’re in a supermarket.
A: mmmhmm
V: Right. In a supermarket when you take a look ataaa… an apple. So when you pick up the apple, do you think about it in Bangla or do you think about it in English?
A: First Bengali
S: Bangoli
V: First Bangali
S: I am same. We will go to grocery first [inaudible] I put in one thing and think Bangali and English, same thing [chuckles].
V: Right. So you … so in your head you’re thinking in Bangali,
S: Bangali, yeah.
V: Okay. And… and then when do you switch to English?
S: mmmm…
A: When I
S: [interrupts]When I go to the g…. ahhh…
A: Shopkeeper
S: Shopkeeper, yeah.
V: Okay. So when you go to the shopkeeper
S: Shopkeeper
V: Or the checkout counter, or
S: Yeah, and then I try ahhh… think English.
V: Then you switch to English.
S: English, yeah.
V: Okay. And in the college, when do you think in English and when do you think in ahhh…ahhh… Bengali?
S: When ahhh…we are in classroom then we are English and after class when we get clear then we are … we think Bengoli.
V: Well you’re speaking Bengali
S: Yeah.
V: Okay. But in the classroom, are you always thinking in English?
S: Yes.
V: Always thinking in English. So… so when you are trying to … to translate in your head, is there any Bengali in your head at that moment?
S: No, no, no
V: Okay, alright. (Ibid., L744-786)

Justin said that he thinks at most times in Korean but he described the speedy highway like, precipitous process happening in his brain. He gave a description of the process occurring in his mind where his first and second language appear to form a language super-system (Cook, 2003) interacting quickly enough to allow him to think in Korean but carry out a conversation in English:

Like, just a moment be…until a moment before I talk with some Canadian speakers, I think it in Korean and I…not sure how the function goes, but I just put some words that I need to ask or that I need to know and then I just put it in the order by myself and then ask like …a question or something. And in class I …think it’s 50/50, yeah. I think in Korean, but when she…the teacher speaks or classmates speaks, then I think it in English first and then I try to translate in Korean. If I have something to ask, if it’s a simple things like what time is it or something like that, then I don’t even need to think. But if it’s like very…hard thing to ask or thing that I need to think about, then I think it in Korean first and then translate it to English and then I ask again. So it goes here (pointing to his brain). (Ibid., L789-802)

There had been a fire alarm on the day of this interview and I asked Justin if in that moment of emergency he was thinking in Korean or English. He replied, “Korean” (Ibid., L813). Murphy said that he always thinks in Chinese unless it is something that is specific to English like a special English rule then he switches to thinking in English (Ibid., L821-822).

In discussing the value of their mother tongue, Asm and Shubnum spoke passionately (Ibid., L843-895) about the historical significance of their mother tongue in Bangladesh during partition:

[In] 1952 there are many who sacrificed their lives for Bengali language and we respect this person that persons…respect the way they sacrificed their lives for
Bengali language…and how it is world…mother tongue language 21ᵗʰ February [mother tongue day]. (Ibid., L847-860)
A: I think is aaa… valuable every nation or country have their own mother language emmm… our mother nn….nn…nn…nn…for Bangladesh our mother language Bangoli and in ahh… nineteen hundred ahhh…
S: 1952
A: Yeah, 52
S: There are many who
A: There are ss…
S: sacrificed their lives for Bangoli language and we respect this person that persons …
V: right
A: respect the way they
S: sacrificed their lives for Bangoli language.
V: right
A: And how it is world and aaa…aaa…aaa…mother tongue language twenty-first February
S: February
V: Right, okay. So they actually have a mother tongue day.
S&A: Yeah
V: Okay. And so in your opinion what you’re saying then is your language is very valuable to you
S: Very valuable
V: So it’s valuable for you in the world,
S&A: World, yes.
V: It’s valuable for you in Toronto?
S: Yeah
V: It’s valuable in your home?
S: Yeah
V: Okay. And it’s valuable at college?
A: Yeah
V: And why is it valuable at college?
S: ahhhh…
A: There is … [mumbles then clears throat]… ahh…mmm…Canada is a diverse multicultural diverse country to aaaa…emmm…many people nn..aaa…from different country, so every we…aa… we respect each…each other and ahhh… I… I also respect an…another language mother…mother language ummm… with a…mmm…mother language actually we can express nnn… that…mmm… whole idea … aaa… flu…fluently and we can go to the root even if problem happen I can share with my friend and ahhh we can mmm… go to the roots
V: The root
A: Yeah
V: Okay
A: emmm… And ahh… I am proud for Bangoli because ahhh… for the nnn… whole world know the Bangoli and there the Bangoli language some people and died for that language now it become a mother tongue and mother tongue day.
V: Alright. And Subnum, you said it’s become a national language.
S: Yeah.
V: People have died and fought for it and it’s become a national language. So it’s a question of respect.
S&A: Yeah. (Ibid., L843-895)

Justin at first asserted that the Korean mother tongue for him is only valuable in Canada as a social tool but not for studying or being in Canadian society (Ibid., L908-925). He then said that it might be helpful for business. For Murphy, the large numbers of Chinese speakers here make it an important tool for communication (Ibid., L930). He said that if two Chinese people together do not speak English very well it would be stupid to speak to each other in English. However, at the College he concurs with Shubnum that it is essential to try and speak English (Ibid., L946-965).

Regarding those classes in which L1s are barred, Shubnum and Asm said that they have no opposition. However, Asm objected to the teacher barring students from speaking mother tongue during breaks, that would be “embarrassing to me,” he said
(Ibid., L999). He said that he cannot express to friends the same opinions in the same way in English as he would in Bengali.

A: But ahhh… in the free maybe ten minutes break, on that time if teacher nnn... told me don’t use any nnn… aaaa… your own language on that time I feel embarrass by that.

V: Alright. So if in your thbreak if she just said you’re not allowed to use Bengali in your break,

A: Yeah

V: Then you would find that …

A: Embarrassing to me.

V: Embarrassing for you. And why would it be embarrassing for you?

A: ahhh… Because ahhh… every na…nation have his own culture, ahh…so ahhh… when I found my friend I have nnn…some opinion, I…I…I…I … I can express m…my opinion with my friend with my culture. So… so ahhh… if I … exp… on break express the ahhh…situation in my own culture or saying, my English I can’t express that thing. (Ibid., L991-1006)

Justin explained that in English learning classes like EAP it is important to be able to speak in his mother tongue but in program specific classes it is important to try to understand the English concepts; and if one does understand the concepts in English one should speak in English--it would be rude to speak in his mother tongue:

I think, …using mother tongue language in classroom is important because especially for students like me in the EAPP [English for Academic Purposes Program] classes learning English they should be allowed to speak in their mother tongue language because they’re there to learn. If they’re there to learn English, but if they don’t understand English very well and if the teacher cannot express them like 100%, then student cannot understand that, then there’s no point of learning. And if there is somebody who can help them to understand it better, even more than teacher in some ways, then they should be allowed to speak it. But in like in…in like…academy classes, not like learning classes, English learning classes…they might be not allowed to speak in their mother tongue English, because they already know what’s, I mean, how do they speak and how
do they understand in English with if they’re using their language and that’s just
…how to say it…I think that’s it could be sort of rude things. (Ibid., L1011-1025)
Murphy, on the other hand, said that he believes it is rude to bar mother tongues
from the classroom (Ibid., L1050). He expressed his belief that having to wait until after
class to clarify a concept with a mother tongue peer is a waste of time. An immediate
clarification in class with a mother tongue peer is much more useful to his learning
process.

V: Okay. ahhh… Murphy how do you feel in classes where the teacher says don’t
speak ahhh… Chinese?
M: It’s kinda rude.
V: You feel it’s rude for the teacher…
M: Yeah
V: To say that.
M: Yeah.
V: Okay.
M: Cause, I … I misunderstanding ahhh… even… even I English good or … or
something.
V: So you could misunderstand her
M: Yeah.
V: And you would need clarification.
M: Surely you can ask some… you can use my… my language after class or
somewhere, but that’s wasting time.
V: mmmhmmm
M: And also, if we are talking this … how to explain it.
V: So if you’re talking to a friend in Chinese
M: Yeah
V: Then you’re
M: Can understand im…imed…immediate.
V: You can understand immediately.
M: Immediately, yeah. Then we good at remembering.
V: Right
M: Easy to remember and [mumbled]
V: Right. So if you were given a chance to speak in your own language to a friend you would understand the concept immediately.
M: Yes
V: Is that what you’re saying?
M: Yeah. (Ibid., L1048-1077)

**Synthesis and analysis summary of group 3 data.**

There were 75 ground codes in this group and significantly, 33 (44%) of the comments related to the usefulness of mother tongue (see table 4 and figure 5 below). The students continued as in previous groups to provide insights into their mental processes involved in L1/L2 interdependence through 15 comments (20%). Seven comments (9%) related to the sociocultural value of mother tongue and 20 comments (27%) related to identity. A powerful emotional piece related to identity was provided by the Bangladeshi students. As part of colonized India, Bangladeshi experienced English as the language of their colonizers. On this issue Cummins and Davison (2007) write:

> When English is taught in former colonial contexts, the language carries complex baggage related to its historical role in establishing and reinforcing patterns of power relations both between colonizer and colonized and within the colonized population. In non-colonial contexts, access to English is also associated with social stratification both with respect to who gets access and the social advantages of access. (p. 3)

Pennycock (2007) in the same volume explains that colonizers used the vernacular languages for instruction in schools in order to keep the populace docile. Education in the language of the colonizer would mean that the locals would not be willing to perform the much needed manual labour. This produced an image of English as a superior language. The educated class of Indians who already had power learned and perfected English and some emerged as writers of English literature. Shubnum and Asm displayed a visceral reaction to this multi-tiered class system based on power and language when they spoke passionately about “mother tongue day” in Bangladesh and about the people who sacrificed their lives in the struggle for independence from the
British. Both of these students talked about their passion for preserving their mother tongues for their children with a sense of pride in that identity.

**Group 4.**

This group was made up of Yoko who speaks Japanese and Arabic, Karim who speaks Arabic, Ana who speaks Spanish and Wendy who speaks Cantonese and Mandarin. Yoko has no one in class who speaks Japanese; Arabic is her second language which is still developing. Ana has no one in class who speaks Spanish.

Karim began the discussion saying that it is comfortable (Group 4, November 28, 2008, Bismilla, 2008, L36) to be able to use mother tongue in class. Ana, even though there is no one with whom to speak Spanish in class, made the observation that grammar is different in Spanish and English so when learning English the grammar constructs are difficult (Ibid., L60). Wendy said she finds mother tongue good for “explaining something” making it easier “to get the meaning” (Ibid., L79-86). She said she finds mother tongue an easier medium to express feelings and ideas. Yoko struggled in her third language, English, to explain that she has only been learning English since May (this interview took place in November). Being the lone Japanese speaker, she said she wants to express her thoughts in Japanese but there is no peer in class. She finds that when other students speak mother tongue in class it is distracting for her and she cannot enter the conversation because of the language barrier (Ibid., L169-170). Wendy, even though she does speak mother tongue with her peers, shares Yoko’s view that other mother tongues are distracting. She said that she feels that if other students do not understand her group speaking mother tongue that, “they will feel we are talking about them” (Ibid., L201). Ana said that she feels “out of place because nobody ..can…can talk with me” (Ibid., L221-222).

Even though the group generally expressed some discomfort about using mother tongue in class as being rude to those who do not understand, they did find examples of situations when mother tongue usage in class is helpful. Wendy said that in her psychology class the students who are, “good at psychology,”(Ibid., L282) can explain to her in Chinese. Yoko suggested that if there were someone else in class with whom she could speak in Japanese it would be helpful to figure out vocabulary or understand what
the teacher is discussing, with which Ana agreed. Ana described how she uses two dictionaries to do her assignments:

…to be able to do some assignments I can’t…I have use my…Spanish dictionary to know what they…what is the…meaning of the word and then…look for a English dictionary and be able to apply that word because I already know what means. (Ibid., L334-339)

Karim said that he would have found it useful to have had an Arabic speaking peer in the class with whom to check vocabulary and for someone to explain to him missed assignments.

K: I think it’s helpful … especially if we are in the same class it will help to explain the meaning for the new vocabulary.
V: New vocabulary
K: Yeah. And sometime maybe I didn’t catch the word and maybe he… he know the meaning or … and this is, I think this is the more main point. Ever I think maybe after the class or I … absent from the class, ahh… this is what happened with me or ahhh… I think web…website evaluation, I missed the first a class in the ahhh… website evaluation
V: Right
K: And I haven’t ahhh… exact idea about the procedure and I … I suffered for all the website evaluation. I… I need to spend more time cause I … I missed one class. And sometimes when I ask the other students, specially the Bengali or Chinese groups in my class, ahhh… I think I can’t communicate with them in to find the…the exact point I want to ask about. Specially there are sheets available very well and ahhh…that what we call for ahhh… evaluation and she spent a long time with it, but because I missed that class ahhh… it makes me difficult to ahhh…
V: So the teacher did explain it, but you missed the class and so you didn’t have an opportunity to check with somebody else?
K: Yeah, and my if I if my language maybe we did like, I … even after now that… ahhh… the student will some because of different language I think there is some specific one that we … we can’t ahhh… figure it exactly, like, “bias.”
V: And
K: “Sway”
V: Oh, Bias … Bias and sway
K: Yeah
V: And so if there were an Arabic speaking person who understood it
K: And … yeah, yeah, maybe.
V: Then
K: I mean when he is in the class when the time I am absent
V: Right
K: I was absent, in this way I…. I he maybe he will explain to me and this… this way he save time. (Ibid., L347-383)

He also explained that research is difficult because he has to conduct website searches in Arabic and then translate back into English. He further explained that during research he reads material in English, isolates difficult words, finds translations in Arabic and then translates back into English.

K: I think this what happened what happened with us in level 2 when we write and … a paragraph. Always the teacher, like we have three assignment, I think we have to write a paragraph about space. We have go… we have to go home and we … we have to … look for information for ahhh… topic and then write the topic. I think it’s ordinary we … when we … until now we use our language in thinking… ahhh… sometimes maybe if some words we…we look for the … for…for the meaning. ahhh… I … I think I try it, I look for specific information … when I use English language to a… English word to make search for specific word… for specific topic and I can’t get information, I went to Arabic… my language, I make search in my language and then when I found topic I found the name in English and then I go to… again to the … to use this word in English or the name.
V: So when you make a search in your language, do you make a search on the website or?
K: Yeah.
V: Oh, on the website.
K: I mean, like, for example, we have I think, we have tried about … I remember last semester, some we have ahhh… to write about something … someone or something in our history in our lang… in our country, if you want. Like I choose to write about Babylon.

V: Babylon

K: Yeah. And there’s a lot of words, I using… I … if I know the word I use the… the words in English, like, ishtar or goddess or the god, but sometimes I don’t know the words that, I write it in Arabic, I found the article in Arabic, I read it in Arabic and then I found in the same articles some word in English and I take this word to use it in … in search in English again.

V: Okay. So you search in both Arabic and

K: And English. (Ibid., L404-436)

Ana, the Spanish speaker, said (Ibid., L442) that she prefers to do her research in English. It is pertinent to note that Ana was a pediatrician in Mexico and North American pharmaceutical research is often predominantly written in English, as explained by a Colombian student in Phase 2 of this study who was a pharmaceutical executive in Colombia.

Wendy said that she does her research in Chinese only when there is something that she cannot find in English. She said that she uses her Chinese high school text book to figure out words she cannot understand in English (Ibid., L478-482).

W: ahhh… I will….. … ahhh… find from my … ahhh… te…textbook, it’s about in my hi…. hi… high school, something is come ahhh… can explain my a… that a… something, some words I didn’t understand in English, but … before I learn… learn it in high school or in col…college, yeah.

V: So you use your high school textbook?

W: Yeah

V: Now was that textbook in Chinese?

W: ahhh…

V: Do you use a high school textbook in Chinese?

W: Yeah. (Ibid., L478-488)
Yoko explained that she researches in Japanese and translates into English, her third language, and it takes time. She further explained that she uses the English-Japanese dictionary and also her personal knowledge and her life experiences to figure out meaning.

V: So you do use English-Japanese dictionary (laughter)
Y: (laughter) I can no ahhh… consider meaning
V: right
Y: uhhuh. Also my…about my knowledge or experience umm… I figure out.
V: Okay. So you use the English-Japanese, Japanese-English dictionary,
Y: mmhmm
V: and you use your knowledge and experience.
Y: mmhmm
V: Okay, so Yoko you use both ways.
Y: Mmhmm. (Ibid., L515-528)

Karim said that he uses contextual clues, general knowledge, and experience first then goes to an English-English dictionary. He translates the meaning into Arabic in order to store the meaning in his mind (Ibid., L566-567). Using the Arabic-English dictionary is only a last choice for him (Ibid., L578-579).

Regarding strategies learned in mother tongue that now help students learn English, Ana explained that she writes out words, makes sentences, repeats the words, tape records them and listens to them repeatedly while travelling on the bus and subway and tries to use them contextually.

A: In my … if I want to learn ahh…mmm.. new words or ahh… new a structure of sentence, ehhh… I like to write the … the, for example, the se… I like to … make sentences, I like to repeat words if I want to remember and also I recorder some words and while I’m on the … on the bus or on the sub… ahh… the subway, I use my ahhh… my recorder to remember that word. mmm… And also when I’m reading I.. newspaper or book if I found that kind… that word that I already learned, I try to look ehhh… ehhh… what is the situation in … ehhh… the pa…book is using the … the word.
V: So you look at the situation
A: Yeah
V: Of the word
A: Yeah
V: In the book, to figure out the meaning.
A: Yeah
V: Okay. And you also said you use a recorder
A: Recorder
V: To record new words.
A: mmmhm
V: What do you put into the recorder? Do you just put the word in the recorder or the meaning?
A: I ... first I ... ehhh... record the ... the words.
V: mmmhm
A: The word, I try to repeat that many times. When I remember I try to ehhh... give the meaning.
V: Okay
A: mmm...And then ehhh... makes sense.
V: Okay.
A: Mmmhmm. (Ibid., L590-619)

Wendy was taught to make sentences (Ibid., L641) with new words in Cantonese and Mandarin and she still finds this a useful strategy when learning English. Karim explained that every human being tries to connect the meaning of a word to a picture in the mind and he finds this contextual connection with a new word to be helpful.

K: ummm... I think every ... every human being he... he make, he try to connect the meaning or the word with a picture or situation.
V: With a picture or situation?
K: that
V: okay
K: that ... this way he can ... when he try to remember the word, he would remember it easily because if he tried to memorize the word like, what's quick, air
or without any … anything it’s difficult to remember then. I always I try to connect with a … with a picture or situation. It’s way easy.

V: Okay, thank you. (Ibid., L655-666)

As with previous groups, this group was not able to offer words in their mother tongues that were the same in English. They mentioned English words that had crept into their mother tongues. For example, Yoko said that \textit{radio} was \textit{ladio} and \textit{camera} was \textit{camira} in Japanese; however, she pointed out that because Japanese has adopted some English words and changed the pronunciation it is now problematic for Japanese speakers of English in Canada where everyone else pronounces the same words in the standard Canadian English way (Ibid., L686-714). Wendy mentioned \textit{sofa} as an English word that had crept into Chinese. Ana offered \textit{television} in Spanish and Karim remembered that \textit{chili} is \textit{chileh} in Arabic.

As with other groups the hints that this group offered to us as English speakers speaking to L2 audiences were that the teacher should speak slowly, give examples, give more contextual clues which help retention, and use more gestures when speaking. The new idea was that teachers should use audio-visual aids in class which Karim said is, “difficult to forget” (Ibid., L817).

Regarding the value that these students place on mother tongue Yoko maintained that retention of mother tongue is important for her as a mother and for her daughter as well as for industry in Canada and that when it is barred in class she “suffers.”

V: Okay. Alright. And then the last question ahh… for Yoko and Ana is. How valuable is your mother tongue to you? Is it valuable for you in the world? Is it valuable for you in the college? Yoko is Japanese valuable to you?

Y: Yes. [chuckles]

V: Where?

Y: umm… ahhhhhhh… Of course I can’t use in the class, but ahh… umm… mmm… ahhh… in the home.

V: At home it’s valuable?

Y: At home, yeah.

V: Okay.

Y: Ahh… oh… a… I use only with my… my daughter.
V: Right
Y: And, yeah, because ahhh… if I’m to, I don’t want to forget my daughter Japanese, this is my mother language.
V: Right
Y: This is important for her.
V: Okay
Y: Yeah.
V: Is it important in the world?
Y: I think so. Yeah
V: Why?
Y: Because ahhh… (chuckles)… ahhh. as well as you know, ahhh…I …a Japanese company or a something, like it’s ca…co…many… many extra industry…. great men in Japan or (inaudible)
V: Right
Y: Also now Japanese is currently industrial country, round industry countries. I think ahh… many Japanese all over the world.
V: Right. So because it’s an industrial country.
Y: Yes, maybe.
V: Okay. How about Spanish? Is Spanish valuable ahh… Ana?
A: Yeah, ahhh… for me is val…valuable. ahh.. I think ahhh.. around the world is val…valuable because ehhhmm… is the language that ehhh is sp…speaking mmm… more countries. ummm… Now more people are talking Spanish.
V: Right
A: So… I think that…
V: Is it valuable at the college?
A: emmm… This college?
V: mmmhmmm
A: ahhh… Maybe no, but in another. I… I … I heard something about umm… uni… Toronto University,
V: mmmhmmm
A: University of Toronto where there are classes in Spanish, so I think that’s important.
V: That’s important.
A: Yeah.
V: Okay. And last question. How do you feel in classes where you’re not allowed to use your own language? So if you walked into the class, the teacher says don’t use your own language. How do you feel?
A: mmm I might feel. But because the pur... the purpose of ahhh… the program is to learn English, so I prefer to use English instead of my language. I can use my language at home with my husband.
V: Okay.
Y: If in... in my class there are Japanese ahhh... mate, maybe I... maybe I want to use Japanese sometimes. Yeah.
V: Right
Y: mmm
V: So you do like to use Japanese.
Y: Yeah, uh huh.
V: Okay. And if they said don’t speak in Japanese how would that make you feel?
Y: Yeah, suffer [chuckles]. (Ibid., L836-903)

When discussing thought processes that occur in their minds between mother tongue and English, Yoko said that she thinks in Japanese and translates into English while Ana said that at the beginning she used to think in Spanish but now she thinks in English. Karim said that for easy words he thinks in English but for difficult words and meaning he thinks in Arabic because he said that the information is saved in his brain in Arabic. He also specifically said and emphasized that his language is part of his identity. He said that at the college his mother tongue does not have the same value because it is not used. Wendy said that when she writes she always thinks in Chinese and translates into English; but in conversational English she does not need to translate.

V: Okay. Karim. So number 10. So when you, when do you think in English and when do you think in your mother tongue. So now I’m interested in what goes on
in your head. Right. So Karim, when do you think, in English and when to you think in your mother tongue?

K: Big question (chuckles)

V: Big question, yes.

K: ahhh… Currently I … some of the la… English language become… I become familiar with it.

V: right

K: Especially the generallll ahhh… conversation I have and that what I related with these word. I think ahh.. it’s easy to me to use English, I think in English. But and that specific topics or ahhh… or cases or umm… questions and difficult situation with… difficult words with difficult meaning I think I use my… my mother language to think about it because I have the… the… all the information saved in my mother language.

V: That’s a very important thing you just said. That sometimes when it’s a difficult word you think in your own language because you’ve got a lot of information saved about that word in your own language.

K: Yeah, I mean the topic in general and this way I can … I can think in ahhh. easy.

V: In your

K: My … yeah

V: In your mother tongue?

K: Yeah.

V: Okay. Wendy, when do you think in Chinese and when do you think in English?

W: I write … write in class, we always need to write essay and paragraph and at that time I always use my mo…mother language and translate to English.

V: Okay, so you think in your mother language and

W: Yeah

V: You translate in English.

W: yeah

V: Okay!
W: And, but conversation I don’t need to translate, I just … I .. I think I just can speak.
V: So when it’s a conversation you can think in English and you can speak in English?
W: Yeah
V: Yes. Okay. Alright. Number 11. How valuable do you believe your mother tongue is to you? Is your mother tongue valuable to you?
W: Yes
V: Yes, Wendy, where?
W: Ahhh.. Like the Chi… Chinese is the ahhh... Chi…China is a big country, huge… huge country, they have a lot of pop…population.
V: Right.
W: And they always have umm… a lot of ... of … business with ahhh... U…Uni… United States, A…A… ahhh.. Japan and some of them now they start to learn Chinese. Yeah.
V: So… so for business it’s important and
W: Yeah
V: You’re saying it’s important for the US and for other countries and some people are starting to learn Chinese.
W: Yeah
V: For business.
W: For business.
V: So you think it’s really important.
W: Yeah.
V: So is it important for us at the college?
W: mmm… If the college have a pro…program for learning Chinese, so I think is will ahhh... yeah.
V: It would be helpful?
W: Helpful.
V: Okay. So it is a valuable language you’re saying?
W: Yeah
V: Okay. Thank you. How about Arabic? Is Arabic valuable to you Karim?
K: From which perspective? (chuckles)
V: Alright! You tell me?
K: I… I knew this, we go there was a language and this is part of the identity.
V: Language is part of your identity?
K: Yeah, I… we… we don’t, yeah we can’t … I can’t say I’m Arabic and I don’t speak English, I think ahhh… this is part of the identity. But if … if the topic is specific or ahhh… is related to the college or ahhh… speak where ever people is comfortable. I am … comfortable and relax when I found people I can communicate with in my language or write think in my language and this way I take lo…less time to … express my ideas or ahhh… my thinking or my requests or anything, instead of using other language.
V: right
K: But here in the college or … or .. I don’t think it has the same value as it for my … for my identity or for what … what you can say there that think like, communication would be…
V: So you feel that at the college it doesn’t have the same value at it does outside of the college for you?
K: I think so, yeah.
V: right
K: Cause now it’s not used.
V: Okay, because it’s not used.
K: Yeah. (Ibid., L918-1015)
Wendy made the point that if Chinese is barred in class she might see that as prejudice: “…if the teacher told…tell me I cannot speak my mother language, language, I maybe feel…the teacher maybe didn’t like…Chinese people” (Ibid., L1035-1038).

Synthesis and analysis summary of group 4 data.

There were 47 ground codes in this group 4 transcript. The majority (17 or 36%) of the ground codes in this group related to identity (see table 4 and figure 5 below). Thirteen or 28% of the comments related to the usefulness of their mother tongues in their classrooms; only four (9%) of the comments related to the value of mother tongue in
their social lives and 13 (28%) of the comments gave insights into the processes in their brains between their L1 and English. Yoko, the Japanese student who arrived in Canada via Saudi Arabia just a few months before the interview struggled with her third language, English. Yoko was a nurse in Japan and is unemployed in Canada. Leki (2003) wrote about the travails of a foreign trained pediatrician Yang, who was re-training in the United States to become a nurse. While Yang’s clinical knowledge was intact, expressing that knowledge in English and accurately filling out the nursing care plan forms were the aspects of her academic program that posed seemingly insurmountable difficulties for her. The literacy needs of the students were not being met in the traditional accreditation based curriculum. This is still evident in many post-secondary programs and Yoko’s journey to her desired pathway into a Canadian nursing program will be a long one. She is still struggling with English and says that she would “suffer” if her mother tongue is disallowed. The dilemma of course is that without a proper grasp of English, foreign trained clinical practitioners cannot perform life and death related health duties. The impact on the identities of all the participants in this group was evident. In addition to Yoko, there was a pediatrician, an engineer and a technologist in this group, all foreign trained and all unemployed in Canada. Hence the focus of this group was their professional identities as evidenced by the majority of the codes generated.

**Group 5.**

Xiao was the final interviewee—and the only member of this group—and he arrived at noon for this interview in a December snow storm even though the college had been closed that morning because of the inclement weather. He regarded this as an important meeting. He was alone for the interview because the other times were not convenient for him and he requested this time slot.

He expressed that this particular teacher was the first to ever allow Mandarin in class and that it made him feel confident because Mandarin allows him to know exact meanings while English is still confusing. He said that while meaning may be lost in English, in Mandarin it is very clear.

X: Yes… ahhh… It was a first the teacher in English taught us in…in class can talk in Mandarin.

V: Yes.
X: No other teacher allow us to, yeah. Other class no people only English people
don’t allow us speak in English.
V: The other…
X: The other language, just English.
V: So the other teachers don’t allow you to speak any other language except
English and she’s the first teacher
X: Yes
V: that allows you. Okay. So how do you feel about being allowed to use your
mother tongue in a classroom?
X: b … as … if I can speak a … the Mandarin in class I always a can get a very
confidence knowing exact what meaning it is.
V: right
X: If I can speak in Eng…English sometime I always con…confused about the
words.
V: right
X: Not in… not sure what … what the meaning is, that meaning it is.
V: Right. So you’re saying that Mandarin gives you confidence in class,
X: Yes
V: and when you have to speak English, you’re not always sure of the meaning.
X: Yeah.
V: Yeah.
X: Sometime if we always some … I guess what meaning is what it maybe
something is maybe lost, if is say in Mandarin it’s very clear.
V: Right.
X: I have to find a word … the a same in two word or something.
V: That’s interesting, so sometimes … the meaning is lost if you don’t get to use
the Mandarin together with your English.
X: Yes. (Group 5, December 19, 2008, Bismilla 2008, L20-56)
However, he said that he feels that while other students might be curious when
they hear Mandarin in class, he worries that they may think it is rude or that Mandarin
speakers might be saying, “something about him or her” (Ibid., L75-76).
The kinds of things that he said he finds useful to discuss in Mandarin with peers include cultural conversations and the differences in writing styles between Chinese and English. Explanations in Mandarin by a peer are easier to understand than explanations in English by the teacher (Ibid., L135-143). Xiao indicated that when he attended a different college in Toronto he was not allowed to use his mother tongue and that caused him to miss due dates on assignments and not be able to clarify rules and concepts (Ibid., L162-167).

Xiao does his research in Chinese because, “…in Chinese we have very clear concepts what the topic is, what the point is” (Ibid., L193-194). When he uses the Chinese internet he said that he can research more quickly:

When you in Chinese we can go there very quickly, when you, I can’t get it quick…criticize which articles is the best, which is the…the regular. But in English we can’t have identify which is better, which is the good one…(in Chinese) I can understand deeply. (Ibid., L200-208)

To unlock new English words he said that he uses the Chinese dictionary and then uses contextual clues to figure out the meaning. He finds English – English dictionaries give “a lot of word,” (Ibid., L237) that is, several meanings of a word, which he finds are not exact enough; in English-Chinese dictionaries he finds the “exact meaning” (Ibid., L239).

A strategy he learned from originally learning his mother tongue was to repeat:

…when I was in primary school we try to remember 6 thou (thousand) Chinese words…I repeat …every 10 time… every days…here I use similar strategy, I think we might command the basic in English…word, so I can’t try to remember is…I got to repeat it again and again and try it again. (Ibid., L258-267)

He went on to say that just memorizing vocabulary does not make him a better reader of English:

But I think …this is not very…efficient for English because English has more words than Chinese. If in Chinese we can remember 6 thousand words we can read the article no problem…But for English I try and…and I know I saw…10 thousand words, but I cannot read some English…properly yet. (Ibid., L273-280)
Regarding similar words in Chinese and English, Xiao gave the example of “typhoon” which is a word that English has borrowed from East Asian languages (Ibid., L297). His advice for teachers was similar to all the other groups (speak slower, give some context to the word, and use clear English). He made the point that in program courses like Psychology (as opposed to English learning courses like EAP) he might clearly hear the word pronounced by the teacher but understanding the meaning is difficult for him. If the teacher explained it, speaking more slowly, he would be able to “get it” (Ibid., L354).

In describing his thought processes in Chinese and English, Xiao explained that to work with “deep ideas” (Ibid., L363) he needed to think in Chinese but for simpler conversations, which he has practiced, he can think in English. But if difficult to understand then “I want to translate it [into] Chinese first” (Ibid., L400).

Xiao had some rich comments about the value of his mother tongue. He said that Chinese has, “a lot of history” (Ibid., L422).

[It is] concentrated …I think meaning have a code…has a decoded language….only a few words have a lot of…have more meaning. For example if I write…one page article in Chinese, I translate in English maybe three or five pages. (Ibid., L421-428)

A comment that he made reminiscent of the work of Wade Davis (2001) and the problem of language extinction is:

…my language only is a tool of communication depend on how many people hear…if there lot of people here then…good communication. If no people use it, you can’t. How can you for example, you have good tools, but no people to use it, how do you use it? (Ibid., L453-459)

Xiao described Mandarin characters and symbols as being used as art in Toronto but that it also impacts on Toronto’s culture as a multicultural society. At the college he finds Mandarin important in the EAP program and for students whose mother tongue is Mandarin and are learning English but again he related its importance to the number of speakers (Ibid., L501-502).

Regarding his feelings when his mother tongue is barred, Xiao returned to his concept of deep meanings and deep understandings. He said that he can engage in deeper,
meaningful conversation if allowed to use Mandarin as a scaffold, otherwise using just basic words makes his conversation more shallow (i.e. “skin deep.”)

…why some people are not, don’t allow a use in the Mandarin, why I can speak a little, because I want to get more deeply that I can only try to speak more deeply some…see some easy word I come press clear, in some deep ideas I can’t speak…well. So I cannot find word to communicate…if I can speak Mandarin, I can talk a very, very deep, very exactly meanings and I …because for me I have a lot of knowledge and background…about any topic…but while I in Chinese I can speak very deeply…I talk in English, I only can talk some…use some words I know I can express it sometimes it’s only the basic words and a is always a …skin deeply. (Ibid., L522-541)

I heard frustration here from Xiao who was an engineer and post secondary professor in China. He went on to say that one word in English may have several meanings but one word in Mandarin has one meaning (Ibid., L546-561).

**Synthesis and analysis summary of group 5 data.**

The 28 ground codes from Xiao’s interview provided insights into all four major themes that emerged from all the focus groups (see table 4 and figure 5 below). The issue of identity (nine or 32% of the comments) resonated for this professional engineer and university professor from China who was still unemployed after 3 years in Canada. But it was his passion for Mandarin that came through in his rich comments (eight or 29%) about the usefulness of his mother tongue. He made seven comments (25%) relating to the value of his mother tongue in his life. Four (14%) of his comments were about the ways in which his mother tongue scaffolds his learning of English. His differentiation between the ability to express “deep ideas” in his mother tongue compared to “skin deep” conversations in English was poignant. The critical pedagogy in his EAP classroom where he was allowed to discuss the benefits of bilingualism (Freire, 1970) contributed to his ability to look at his bilingualism through his unique comparative lens from his experience as a professor in China. Not only is his language the “carrier of his culture” (Reyes & Vallone, 2007) it is also the language of deep thought as opposed to the surface level expressions of conversational English.
This interview completed the five sets of semi-structured interviews for this phase of the study.

Table 4

**Major Themes from Ground Codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Comments related to Identity, Engagement, Feelings</th>
<th>Usefulness of Mother Tongue</th>
<th>L1’s/L2 Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In Class/Assignments</td>
<td>Lack of Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>18 (32)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>19 (26)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>20 (27)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9 (32)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>83 (30)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n= 279. MT= mother tongue. Values shown without parenthesis are expressed as counts; Values shown in parenthesis are expressed as percentages.

![Various themes as percentage in 5 Interviews](image)

**Figure 5.** Various Themes as Percentages. Data taken from Table 4.
Major Themes That Emerged From Phase 3 Group Interviews

Close examination of all of the student transcripts through the coding process (see Appendix J for ground codes) yielded the following major themes: Impact of the L1/L2 process on identity/engagement/feelings gleaned through student comments;

- Usefulness of mother tongue in the L2 learning process despite shortage of L1 resources;
- Value of mother tongue to L2 students;
- L1/L2 strategies used by L2 students to scaffold their learning of English.

Table 4 chronicles the number of times students in each interview transcript made references that fall into these major themes.

The Level 2 codes or themes in Table 4, when viewed as percentages of occurrence throughout all five focus groups of all 19 student participants, are captured in the graph above (Figure 5). It was necessary to use this quantitative approach to qualitative data to serve my intention of creating a model to explain my findings to college teachers, not all of whom are language teachers. A community college employs teachers who are subject matter experts in a range of occupations like auto mechanic, nurse, business manager, food service worker and other areas in which the teaching of English is not a particular expertise. For teachers across the college to understand the needs of L2 students they would need to understand how the transcript data was used to arrive at a recommended model of instruction for L2 students.

Major Findings in Phase 3

The major findings in this phase of the study were:

1. Students articulated the value of their mother tongues to their families, heir children, to business and in society.
2. Students’ feelings, identity and engagement were impacted positively through validation of their mother tongues in their EAP classrooms
3. Students clearly articulated the usefulness of their mother tongues cognitively, academically and socioculturally
4. Students provided insights into the activities occurring in their brains as mother tongue scaffolded English and they described the strategies they were using that demonstrated interdependence between L1 and L2.
Discussion of Data in Phase 3

This study asked a multi-part first question: how does this multilingual pedagogical approach that veers from the current monolingual conceptions of literacy pedagogy, impact on L2 students’ learning experience, academic engagement and identity formation? This question was explored through the following subsets of inquiry:

1. What are the students’ responses to English-only classrooms vs. the classrooms in which their L1s play an important role in their learning (i.e. impressions of learning experience and identity formation)?

2. What is the level of academic engagement in these classrooms as opposed to student impressions of engagement in English only classrooms?

3. How do students transfer linguistically and conceptually from their L1s to English? (This is intended to provide insights into their learning experience and academic engagement).

4. How does validation of students’ L1s in college classrooms impact on their identity formation?

The data provided by these 19 college students opened a window into their perceptions about the impact of this pedagogical practice on their learning experiences, academic engagement and identity. Students were clear that barring the mother tongue in some of their other classrooms was perceived by them as the teachers’ right but that they felt that a part of their identities was being undervalued. Their highly engaged multilingual activities in seeking meanings of vocabulary and concepts by using mother tongue dictionaries and same language peers pointed to academic engagement that represented academic survival for them at the college. We also saw specific examples of interdependence between mother tongue and English in all of the interviews (see quoted excerpts and Appendix J, ground codes). Mother tongue and English, existing simultaneously in their brains, in their social and cultural norms and validated in their two classrooms allowed them to be valued as holistic, multilingual, multi-ethnic and multicultural beings in a microcosm of Toronto society that is their college.

The second research question sought to understand what the two teachers saw as the strengths, gaps and tensions of their new approach to L2 teaching and to explore their reactions to their students’ transcripts. The teacher data is presented in full in Chapter 6.
Connection between Phase 3 Findings and Both Research Questions

The multiple facets of my research questions were answered by the students and teachers in my interviews. With regards to the overarching first question: How does this multilingual pedagogical approach that veers from the current monolingual conceptions of literacy pedagogy, impact on L2 students’ learning experience, academic engagement and identity formation?

The students in Marg and Dara’s classes indicated in every interview that being allowed to use their L1s in class allowed them to understand concepts more easily than in classrooms where their mother tongues were not allowed. This pedagogy enhanced their learning experiences and engagement and allowed their holistic identities into the classroom. They did not have to leave their mother tongues at the door. Furthermore, the students provided micro level insights into Cummins’s claim (2004) regarding linguistic and conceptual transfers from their L1s to English as they gave me insights into exactly how they were decoding and carving out meanings of new words. Their passionate responses about their mother tongues being key components of their cultural and social identities—about who they were as learners in our classrooms and people in our community—answered my question about the importance of identity in academic engagement.

At a closer level I sought to investigate the students’ opinions and their impressions about English-only classrooms in comparison to the classrooms in which their L1s play an important role in their learning. The students in all of the interviews described the importance of using their mother tongues to scaffold their understanding of English. For most it was just a quick clarification with a same language peer or a dictionary and for some it was a longer explanation of a concept taught in class; but either way they needed to be able to use their mother tongues as a reference point. The students were also conscious and respectful of other students who may not understand their mother tongues or be uncomfortable with their use of mother tongue in the college. Hence they displayed the metacultural awareness that Reyes and Vallone (2007) proposed as a quality of bilingual students. The students were aware that a balanced approach to L1 use in class is necessary and this was also a recommendation by their teachers for pedagogical reasons. This is aligned with the recommendations of Turnbull
CREATING SPACE FOR STUDENTS’ MOTHER TONGUES


I also sought to probe their level of academic engagement in these classrooms as opposed to their impressions of how they engaged in English-only classrooms. As their teachers indicated in their interview with me, the students’ academic engagement was enhanced by allowing them, at the intermediate level of English acquisition, to consciously use their mother tongues to assist their understanding of English. The students indicated that if they were not allowed to use their mother tongues to clarify concepts, expressions and vocabulary they could lose the lesson entirely. The potential for panic, disengagement or drop-out may be consequences of this frustration.

I sought to probe at a micro level Cummins’s claim (2004b) regarding linguistic and conceptual transfer from their L1s to English. In the analysis of the data by groups above, there were multiple examples of both linguistic and conceptual transfers occurring in students’ minds as they decoded new words and unlocked new meanings, supporting Cummins’ Interdependence Hypothesis (2004b). Students said that they were constantly referring back to their L1 understanding of new concepts in order to enhance their L2 understanding of the same concept.

I also sought to investigate, through student voices, the impact on their identities as students and social beings that the validation of their L1s in college classrooms has on them holistically. Again, in the analysis above, there are multiple examples of how important students considered their mother tongues to be linguistically, culturally and in some cases politically and psychologically as well.

I believe that the student data answered my first research question and its sub-sections. The further utility of my student data is that it echoes the findings of Cook (2003, 2007), Cummins (2000, 2001, 2004b, 2007), Early (2002), Goldstein (2003) and Gerin-Lajoie (2003), whose aforementioned research studies establishing the benefits of L1-friendly classroom pedagogy were conducted with K-12 students. This study adds to the smaller body of existing L1/L2 research in college settings conducted by researchers who concentrated on specific and segmented components of second language teaching and learning. Examples of this type of study can been seen by researchers such as Leki on writing conventions (2003,) Ferris versus Truscott on Grammar, and Benesch (2001)
who, in Chapter 38 of her book, looked at issues of identity and called for institutional and pedagogical reforms pertaining to English language learners in post-secondary settings.

**Connection between Phase 3 Findings and Literature Review**

Several students made reference to the “super-highway” of languages in their brains. For example, in Group 1, Carol said “I can’t control myself…” in lines 62 – 74; in Group 1, Andy referred to “very fast bridge,” in lines 715 – 722; in Group 2, Bruce referred to “exchange the idea in English” and Christina noted “when I create new ideas I think in my own language…but use English to talk about it” in lines 801 to 810 of the transcript (Bismilla, 2008). This is a concept that Vivian Cook (2001; 2003) labelled as a “super-system” and this metaphor easily captured for the students the process occurring in their brains and they were able to relate to this imagery.

In discussing the often frenetic activity in their brains during a class, especially a program-specific class in which new words and concepts are constantly arriving into their brains as input and having to be processed in the brain in their L1s and quickly translated into L2 for output, the students demonstrated Cummins’ interdependence hypothesis (2004b). In every interview the students described the transfer of conceptual and linguistic elements proposed in the interdependence hypothesis such as:

- understanding the concept of idioms;
- the transfer of metacognitive and metalinguistic strategies (e.g. in interview #5 Xiao’s need to understand “deeply”);
- transfer of pragmatic aspects of language (e.g. multiple interviews yielded the value of paralinguistic features such as gestures to aid communication);
- transfer of specific linguistic elements as they looked up whole words in their dictionaries and broke words up into pieces to figure out meaning;
- transfer of phonological awareness (i.e. the knowledge that words are composed of distinct sounds e.g. in Group 3, Murphy said just as English words can be broken apart to figure out pronunciation and meaning so too can Chinese symbols in lines 541-564).

Cummins’ (2000) claim that L1 inclusion facilitates the learner’s identity investment and positive self image is echoed by the students I interviewed. A powerful
example is found in Group 2, (Bismilla, 2008, lines 1168-77) when Christina, supported by her equally passionate peers, vehemently expressed that L2 learners pay a lot of money to come to Canada to study. They know that they are here to study English and do not need to be subjected to “English-only” rules. They indicated that there are some learning situations when “you have to speak your own language.” Also, in Group 3, Justin profoundly stated that allowing students to use mother tongue in the classroom is important to facilitate understanding because “if students cannot understand…then there’s no point of learning,” (Group 3, November 18, 2008, Bismilla, 2008, L1017). This is also a statement about academic engagement. It points to the frustration of students who continue to sit in a class where their lack of understanding of concepts presented may lead to disengagement. There were similarities between the young K-12 students’ expressions of pride in their L1s in my school board Multiliteracies study (Bismilla, 2005) and the college students in this phase of this study (e.g., in Bismilla, 2008, Group 2, lines 857-62 Shariat spoke about the value and importance of preserving Bangla for his children as part of his culture as did Yoko in Group 4 (Ibid., lines 836-62).

In his Academic Expertise Framework (Figure 1) Cummins claimed that teacher-to-student and student-to-student interactions create interpersonal space within which knowledge is generated and identities are negotiated. Optimal learning occurs when there is cognitive engagement and identity investment. The students in all of my interviews described how they were generating new knowledge constantly by combining their own understanding of newly learned L2 concepts with those of their L1 peers who added to their understanding by clarifying those concepts using the L1 to increase the folds of knowledge about that concept.

In Anton Allahar’s work (2001) on the social construction of identity he talks about the political and psychological influences on identity formation of which language is a key contributor. In my interviews I heard a validation of this claim in the passionate words of Asm and Shubnum in Group 3 lines 843 to 895 (Bismilla, 2008) as they talked about the many people “who sacrificed their lives for Bengali language” (Group 1, November 18, 2008, Bismilla, 2008, L851). The political struggle that they referred to is the struggle for Bangladesh’s independence. Xiao in Group 5 provided a window into the psychological influences of language on identity formation when he said that the Chinese
language has “a lot of history” (Ibid., L422) and in lines 522 to 541 when he made his comparison between the “skin deep” superficial understanding of concepts in one’s L2 compared with the “deep” understanding of the same concept in one’s L1. Xiao is also a testament to Reyes and Vallone’s (2007) view that bilinguals often have enhanced abilities in divergent thinking. These authors’ claim that bilinguals often have a heightened awareness of one’s own culture in relation to the cultures of others (metacultural awareness) can be heard in several of the interviews when students said that they need to speak their L1s however, they were aware that other students might be uncomfortable or think that they were talking about them.

On the practice of forming same language groups in class for concept clarification, Butzkamm and Caldwell (2009) have this to say:

It is vital for minority language groups to share among themselves and consolidate what they have managed collectively to glean from the instruction through L2. Some schools use a ‘time-out’ precisely to allow for such sharing. In Dusseldorf International School with a heavy intake of Japanese students, among others, the teachers, after the full-class presentation…give students some time to clarify the problem among themselves, in their own language groups, thus providing the best of both worlds. (p. 234)
Chapter 6

Interviews with Teachers of Participating Students

In pursuit of answers to my second research question which sought to understand what the teachers saw as the strengths, gaps and tensions that are created in using this multilingual pedagogical approach with their students, I conducted two unstructured interviews with the two participating teachers of the college students interviewed in Phase 3. The first teacher interview was conducted sequentially after the student group interviews. In the first interview with both teachers together, I asked the open ended question: describe your L1/L2 pedagogy.

The participating students’ teachers, Marg and Dara, stated that their teaching practice is informed by their own second language learning processes. Marg, a second language learner herself, found that English helped her develop metalinguistic strategies in learning French. She found that English helped her awareness of language constructs and the comparison helped speed up her process of acquiring French vocabulary. Dara is also a second language learner of Spanish and echoed similar views. Both teachers are acutely aware that their EAP students have a small window of opportunity to acquire English. Many of their students are internationally trained immigrants who came to Canada with the assumption that their professional training, degrees and diplomas would be accredited here. Now they are finding that they need to train very quickly in another profession and need to acquire English skills in order to do so.

Both teachers used metalinguistic strategies in learning Spanish and French respectively and their awareness and comparison of language constructs helped their acquisition of the second language. Thus, they are supportive of their students’ selective use of their first language to decode the second. However, both Marg and Dara are very aware that a balance must be carefully maintained between English and mother tongue in class because it is an English skill building class. In beginner and low intermediate classes (as opposed to the intermediate level students in this study) they see a disadvantage in allowing over-use of mother tongues with students who have just arrived to Canada. Students with minimal English language skills use their mother tongue in those classes as a natural default for survival; both teachers stated that requiring them to use and repeat English is critical for early acquisition of language and early acquisition of
bilingual strategies. Otherwise, mother tongue would be over-used at the expense of English. This carefully considered pedagogy is echoed in Macaro (2003):

What does the research say about the use of the first language in the classroom? This book has examined the positive and negative influence of the learner’s L1 on second-language learning. We can conclude that its negative effects have in the past been grossly over-stated. Especially in near cognate languages there is a whole host of strategies that the learner can deploy which use the L1 in a positive way, particularly with regard to reducing the learning burden. This does not mean that we should return to a methodology which relies entirely on the analysis of the contrasts in the two languages and frequent translation between them. Rather it implies an increasingly sophisticated pedagogy where the teaching strategies are in tune with the learning strategies of the students, where the teacher facilitates optimum use of the L1 in the students’ learning but also helps to steer them away from the dangers of over-reliance on the L1 for all activities (p. 256).

It is important to note that a college semester is four months long; so in four months beginner students need to acquire sufficient listening and speaking skills in English to enter the next level of EAP where writing and reading skills need to be developed. By the third level of EAP (in Marg and Dara’s classes) they do allow structured mother tongue usage in class in formal same language groups. The students taught by these two teachers understand the scaffolding role of L1 and consciously use the L1 to aid comprehension of L2. The teachers allow the use of L1 in brainstorming and other pre-writing activities or to discuss complex issues, for which students do not often have sufficient L2 vocabulary. Hence, when the students progress out of these classes and enroll into their professional programs of choice they have an appreciation for using their L1 to scaffold their learning of the L2.

Dara pointed out two areas of difficulty she has observed with mother tongue usage in class. One is when there is no same language peer for a student who then feels left out. The second difficulty is that the weaker students may have same language peers in class but are self conscious and reluctant to participate with peers who are further along in English. Their lack of confidence causes their reluctance to participate. She
reminds them of their L1 strategies as she encourages them to use those strategies to participate in class and with their groups.

Another observation that both teachers made has to do with their students’ potential over-use of bilingual electronic dictionaries. Students have to reach a threshold of L2 language skill to use their L1 selectively to scaffold their L2 learning in specific ways, instead of immediately reaching for their electronic dictionaries, which can be distracting to the flow of learning. Using the L1 within the context of scaffolding helps their receptive skills of listening and reading and their output skills of speaking and writing. Using the scaffold effectively comes with L2 practice, as many of the students in the interviews confirmed. Confidence comes with practice and discussion. When students put effort into actually understanding the nuances of meaning they not only improve their input and output skills but they improve comprehension as well.

Fossilized errors that students picked up in their countries before arrival are often difficult to correct in their conversational English. Dara and Marg used the example of their Spanish student who says, “I’m agree.” She has used it that way for years. The differences between Cummins’ (2004b) BICS and CALP of English usage is seen as their students struggle between conversational English and instructional English and the formal conventions required for writing English.

Both teachers find that the closer the written L1 is to written L2 (cognate), the easier it is for students to use such strategies as syllabication and decoding to unlock meaning. However, students can experience greater difficulty when their L1 is significantly different from L2 (non-cognate). As well, in decoding a new word, students may succeed in decoding for pronunciation but often the meaning or comprehension is still not possible. Therefore, decoding and comprehension require distinct teaching strategies. Students with low language skills are often taught language in chunks which they might initially reproduce automatically in spoken language. Later, with increased language development, they are better able to analyze the chunks and apply them in reading and writing contexts.

Both teachers find that allowing students to use their L1s in class helps their students to be academically engaged and on task. Time for classroom instruction is scarce (two three hour classes a week) and maximum effort and engagement is critical for
progress. Both teachers find that metalinguistic awareness and the ability for their students to talk about language while learning a language is a key enabler of L1 development. The older students in their classes, more often the Internationally Trained Immigrants (ITIs), are generally more mature and professional with great sensitivity and respect for other students and the learning process. The younger students, just arrived after completing high school in their country of origin, need greater reliance on their L1s in order to survive the first few months at college. Hence, for both teachers, the issue of balance is a key consideration. Both teacher and student must understand the need for balance between L1 and L2 and the teacher must be able to appreciate the pedagogical implications of this balance; therefore, the lower the student’s functionality in English the more monolingual the English environment may need to be. As the students develop their L2, the teacher can then use intentional instructional strategies to allow the L1 to scaffold the L2.

After the student interviews had been converted from audiotapes to typed transcripts I shared the transcripts with the two teachers. I then asked them the second question: Now that you have seen what your students have said about L1/L2 instruction, what impact will their voices have on your pedagogy and what are the implications for L1/L2 instruction at our college?

Marg’s response validated the valuable utility of the students’ advice to teachers regarding the role of their mother tongues in scaffolding their learning of English. In planning to start a new practice in her class of giving students time at the end of class to deliberately find the connections between their L1s and English, Marg is more firmly formalizing bilingual education in her language class not only to build their metalinguistic skills but as a tool for enhancing student engagement. Her consideration of the importance of the affective sphere highlighted the centrality of students’ mother tongues in their lives. Marg wrote in response to this question:

The positive reactions from the students affirmed that the judicious use of L1 in my English language classes contributes positively at least to their self-esteem, feeling of validation of their mother tongue, and generally affective states. These enhance the learning conditions, so I will continue to use this strategy. However, my objectives in allowing the use of L1 extend beyond the affective state,
primarily vocabulary development and language awareness. These would be areas for me to focus on in the future.

Students reported that a benefit of their collaboration in their L1 with others while creating text, is exposure to new, unknown vocabulary. However, there is little reported evidence that the students for whom the vocabulary is new are using strategies that would assist them in bringing the new words into their lexicon, the first of which would be focused attention. I also know that in their group work, students often compare the structure of their first language to English in order to arrive at an appropriate English text, but the degree to which individual students develop greater language awareness is also not reported in the data. In other words, group work in the L1, by itself, is insufficient for assuming vocabulary acquisition or language awareness. To enhance these objectives, my plan for the upcoming semester is to ask students to keep a language journal, perhaps a small pocket-book size notebook, in which they can record new vocabulary and events related to their language development at any time during the day. Then, whenever the use of L1 is allowed in class activities, I will allot five minutes at the end of the class for each student to record at least one item relating to vocabulary and one item relating to language differences between their L1 and English. Later, in formative take-home writing assignments, I will ask them to use and circle new vocabulary and structures generated in class. I think that these two strategies will better measure the usefulness of the strategy of using the L1 in an English language classroom as well as more intentionally and individually engage and develop students’ metalinguistic skills. (M. Fortin personal communication, August 27, 2009)

Dara’s response to the question gave consideration to her students’ learning experience. She described the viscerally unpleasant practice in a school where she taught where students were actually punished for using their L1s. Fortunately, using her own journey as a second language learner of Spanish and French, Dara emerged out of that situation with strong pedagogical reasons for allowing the use of mother tongue which she now practices with her students at this college. Her students’ transcripts highlighted for her the importance of mother tongue both in their affective sphere and in the
cognitive, metalinguistic strategies that could be developed to scaffold their learning from L1 to L2. Dara’s new plan to have students record how they use their L1s to approach the task of paraphrasing will involve students in the actual research and study of the role of metalinguistic strategies within the L1/L2 language super-system that exists in their minds.

If I prohibit or discourage the use of L1 in the classroom, I risk creating a learning environment that may compromise the students’ learning experience. When I first began teaching ESL many years ago, it seemed there was a trend in some of the schools and institutions where I taught to insist on “English only” in the classroom. In one particular school, teachers were encouraged to have a jar at the front of the class. Any time a student was ‘caught’ using his/her L1, a nickel, dime or quarter was collected and added to the jar. I must say, I could never stomach enforcing this rule, and my “L1” jar was always empty. It seemed to me that allowing some use of L1 as needed and within reason could be helpful for students. I knew this from my own experience as a student of French and Spanish.

After reading my students’ transcripts, many of the students’ comments confirmed my belief in the value of allowing the use of L1 in the classroom to enhance the quality of the students’ learning experience and to help keep students engaged in the classroom. Phrases such as I feel comfortable, I understand more, I understand the topic a bit faster, I feel confident knowing the exact meaning, and comments related to respect and identity, are encouraging and I will continue to provide opportunities for students to use their first language to help them acquire English language skills.

The comments from the students in the transcripts will further inform my pedagogical approach as I can see the benefits of using a more guided approach to L1 use. I will experiment with spending some time introducing the concept of L1 use in language learning with my students, discussing parameters for the use of L1, and helping students develop their meta-linguistic awareness of when, why and how to use their L1 to assist in their language learning. In one high intermediate course on academic skill building, students are required to practice paraphrasing skills. Students typically find paraphrasing a daunting task, and I
usually encourage them to use their L1 as they attempt to paraphrase a text. I can use the paraphrasing unit as an opportunity to stretch the language learning experience beyond just task completion. I can ask students, individually or in same language groups, to record examples of when and how they used their L1 to help them work with the vocabulary, structure, and meaning of the original text to create a paraphrase. After completing a paraphrase, students can reflect, orally or in writing, on how they used their L1 to assist in understanding the original text, choosing appropriate vocabulary and drafting their paraphrase. In follow up discussion and reflection activities, the students may become more aware of metalinguistic strategies in language learning and the interdependence between L1 and L2 in the language learning experience. These guided opportunities for my students to engage in activities that recognize and validate the use of their L1 will help foster a positive and more enhanced learning experience. (D. Cowper personal communication, August 28, 2009)

The data from the teacher interviews and written submissions pointed out the strength of their multilingual pedagogical approach as being one that is respectful of their students’ prior learning and holistic identities and one that engages their students in academic learning. Dara spoke of her experience with a highly punitive approach to L1 suppression that she found intolerable. They also spoke of the ways in which the first language scaffolds the second. Their own personal experiences in learning a second language were instrumental in their creating collaborative spaces in their classrooms for L1/L2 interaction. However, they also identified some gaps and tensions associated with their multilingual pedagogy that the college will need to consider in applying the pedagogy more widely. The differences between cognate and non-cognate first languages and their similarities or differences with English sometimes pose specific difficulties in the teaching of decoding skills. Fossilized errors that students bring to their learning of English are often difficult to correct. But correction is necessary as these students will need instructional level English as they proceed into professional programs of study.

The teachers also pointed out that creating a space for mother tongue too early in a college student’s English learning process would be problematic since when they first arrive, mother tongue is a crutch and they need to become acclimatized to intentionally
use English in class. As they progress through Levels 1 and 2 to the third level of EAP, students become more aware of strategies that they, with the assistance of their teachers, can use to bridge L1 and L2. The teachers indicated that it is at this Level 3 EAP stage of English proficiency that the L1/L2 bridge most effectively enhances students’ vocabulary, usage, learning experience and academic engagement. This in turn impacts their identities as valued multilingual learners of English. The teachers found the student interview transcripts helpful to adjust their own teaching strategies, for example, going forward they would ask students to keep language journals or pocket-sized vocabulary notebooks. So there is active learning and identity formation occurring for both the teachers and students in these two mother tongue friendly classrooms where collaborative relationships have been forged between and among teachers and students.
Chapter 7
Implications, Applications and Conclusions

Potential Implications of This Study

The findings from this study are consistent with empirical data in Cummins’ (1991, 2000, 2001, 2004a, 2004b, 2007) and Cook’s (1997, 2001, 2003, 2007) work regarding interdependence and multicompetence. This research also highlights the relevance of identity issues in bilingual language learning and academic engagement. My findings will increase the small body of research on the impact of L1 validation on post-secondary students and may initiate exploration in this area of research in community colleges in Canada.

From the perspective of practical implications the results of this study may:

- Assist the college to see the value of L1s;
- Assist the college to provide appropriate professional development for teachers willing to pilot similar projects in their classrooms;
- Assist teachers to adjust their teaching practice to include L1s;
- Assist the college to consider a L1/L2 policy;
- Assist college students to understand the value of their L1s which up to this point have not been acknowledged.

Developing a Model to Share Data with the College Community

From discussions with the teachers and upon reflection of the ground codes and level 2 themes, there emerged the need to develop a model that would allow the college to use the insights gleaned in the spectrum of this study from elementary and secondary students through to post-secondary college students. The intent of the model is to facilitate and encourage other teachers who are willing to acknowledge the relevance of students’ L1s in their learning to create an interlingual space in their classrooms.

In developing the model I had to be aware that the model would have to be appropriate for two groups of teachers: those familiar with language learning as well as those who are professionals in their trades and fields but not as knowledgeable about the processes of language learning. It would have to address the issues of what instructional hints would be most helpful and what rationale was underlying these suggestions.
College teachers would need to learn from these participating students exactly what goes on in their L2 students’ brains when they listen to a lesson in English delivered by college professors.

When I looked at all the data collected from the Phase 3 interviews and counted the occurrences in my level 1 ground codes I found that, in addition to the four major themes that emerged, the students also gave clear messages to educators regarding what teachers needed to do in order to accommodate the computer-like super-highway of activity that occurs in their brains from the time the professors’ words are heard as input, processed in the brain, and then answers are produced as outputs by the L2 students. As outlined in Chapter 5, the students provided a substantial amount of information about the strategies they are using to scaffold their learning between L1 and L2; they validated that there is interdependence between the L1 and L2; they commented on the centrality of their mother tongues to their identities; they stressed the value of their mother tongues in their socio-cultural lives; and they provided helpful hints for teachers. These large clusters of information and themes informed the content of my eventual model.

**Applications**

I created a mind map to track all the input into and output from my research, my findings and conclusions, and for presenting the research study to faculty at the college. The mind map is attached as Appendix K. In order to explain my findings to the college it was necessary for me to develop a visual model of the applications. This model (Figure 6) was derived from all the ground codes (see Appendix J), and from the initial work on creating the model which I described in Table 4 and Figure 5 found in Chapter 5. The model incorporates the level 1 codes on the outside (the major themes) and the level 2 and 3 codes on the inside (language interdependence and pedagogical impacts).

In Figure 6, the major themes, distilled from the level 1 and level 2 coding processes are shown as circles on the outside supporting the new insights into brain activity and the required action items for teachers (Level 3 codes) contained inside. Starting at the top left hand outer corner and working our way anti-clockwise around the model the student data informed us that when college students’ mother tongues are given a place in their classrooms, their prior learning, encoded in their mother tongues and their whole identities are invited by the teacher into their classrooms. “Whole students” with
all their integral characteristics including language, are therefore participating in the
classrooms rather than students with truncated profiles. Recognition of their feelings and
identities enhance their engagement in the academic space.

Proceeding to the next cluster down, despite the lack of their mother tongue
resources in college, the L2 students thrive by helping one another in the learning
processes. They find same-language peers to be of great value in quickly explaining
concepts so they can keep pace with the teachers. Clarifying concepts in their mother
tongues assists them to understand assignments and participate more fully in the learning
processes. Moving to the next cluster, the students’ words provided a window into their
multilingual profiles in the complete socio-cultural spectrum of their lives both inside and
outside the college. Respect for their mother tongues validates multiple facets of who
they are allowing them to become robust contributors to their educational, personal and
job-related personalities.

Finally, in the top right hand cluster, the rich processes of language scaffolding,
through the numerous strategies L1 students are using in peer language groups, provide
insights into the interdependence occurring inside their brains. These processes are given
the dignity of acknowledgement as critical cornerstones to educational pedagogy in the
classrooms of teachers who have created spaces for students’ mother tongues.

The items inside the model frame the two most important aspects for teachers to
understand in order to teach the “whole” multilingual college student. On the right hand
side, teachers need to understand that their students’ brains contain all of the information
gathered through their lives and learning, regardless of the language in which those key
experiences and learning took place. Attempting to erase those foundations or pretending
that the intricate, translation and scaffolding occurring inside the students’ brains are
irrelevant strips the students of important keys to their educational process.

Once the thought processes are understood we arrive back at the inside left hand
side of the model that is, what do I do as a teacher then, to accommodate my new
understanding of the L2 learners’ needs and the rich skills, profiles and experiences that
they bring into my classroom. The final most central box in the middle of the model is the
final third level coding pointing to the essential paradigm shift in pedagogy that needs to
occur in order to create inclusive college classrooms in which the learning experience,
academic engagement and identity formation of L2 students are given the same importance as they are for other students.

Figure 6. Creating Space for Mother Tongues in College Classrooms: L1/L2 scaffolding action model. This model is derived from the level 1, 2 and 3 codings (Appendix J) of the student interview transcripts and through the process of refining the codings through Table 4 and Figure 5.
Limitations of the Study

In this study there were three Phases. There were 90 students paper surveyed in Phase 1, there were three students interviewed in Phase 2, and there were 19 students interviewed in focus groups in Phase 3 for a total of 112 community college students. Although the total sample size was large, only the intensive focus group interview data from the Phase 3 ground codes were used to create themes for application through my model. This was considered the major phase of this study. The 19 students had participated in a full semester of the multilingual pedagogy in two participating classrooms. The focus group questions and interviews were controlled and consistent in all the five groups and the sample size was large enough to generate themes across the groupings. The in-depth, semi-structured, audio recorded focus group interviews with the 19 students elicited 102 pages of transcripts which generated 279 ground codes which were sufficient for thematic saturation (for definition of saturation see p. 143, Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Guidelines for determining optimum sample size for L1/L2 research in community colleges are non-existent, but this sample was meant to be a preliminary push into this area of study, and the small group afforded the intimacy needed to garner quality information from the participants. The four major themes (identity, usefulness of mother tongue, L1/L2 scaffolding strategies and the socio-cultural value of mother tongue) that emerged were consistent in all five interviews; but if I had chosen to conduct a larger number of focus groups with a larger number of L2 students there might have been more than four major themes emerge. My application and model make evidence-based recommendations drawn directly from the student transcripts.

Conclusions

The students in this study gave us an insight into the workings in their brains between their L1 and English and thus confirmed the importance of their L1 in scaffolding their L2. Cummins’ (2004b) interdependence hypothesis and Cook’s (2001, 2003) language super-system in the L2 learner’s brain were confirmed. There were several comments from students cautioning against the overuse of mother tongue in class which is consistent with literature on bilingual education that calls for balance and a search for the optimal use of the L1 in class (see Turnbull 2001, Macaro, 2003, Turnbull & Dailey-O’Cain, 2009a, b, c). The code counts in Table 4 and Figure 5 demonstrated that students in every focus group commented specifically on the
centrality of their mother tongues to their identities. These college students are adults with decades of prior learning encoded in their mother tongues. At present the college is not respecting that prior learning by excluding their mother tongues from the classroom. Freire (1998) in his book *Pedagogy of Freedom* encourages respect for the autonomy of the student:

> Another kind of knowledge necessary to educational practice...is the knowledge that speaks of respect for the autonomy of the learner, whether the learner be child, youth, or adult. As an educator, I have to constantly remind myself of this knowledge because it is connected with the affirmation of respect for myself. This principle, once again, is a question of the ethical implications of being an unfinished being. Respect for the autonomy and dignity of every person is an ethical imperative and not a favor that we may or may not concede to each other. It is precisely because we are ethical beings that we can commit what can only be called a transgression by denying our essential ethical condition. The teacher who does not respect the student’s curiosity in its diverse aesthetic, linguistic, and syntactical expressions; who uses irony to put down legitimate questioning...who is not respectfully present in the educational experience of the student, transgresses fundamental ethical principles of the human condition. (p.59)

Dara and Marg’s collaborative classrooms and inclusive pedagogy respect the whole identity of their students including their mother tongues. Recognizing a multilingual approach to pedagogy as an ethical imperative is transformative for both the teacher and the student in Freire’s paradigm. By being “respectfully present in the educational experience of the student” (Ibid.) these two teachers, according to their students, have enhanced their learning experiences and academic engagement. In order to teach the whole student they recognize that there is a place for mother tongues in college classrooms. Bringing this multilingual pedagogy to the attention of the college through this research begins to fulfill my ethical imperative as an administrator and honours the voices of the students who participated in this research and informed the outcomes.

Reyes and Vallone (2007) used identity construction as one of their arguments for two-way bilingual education and urged the removal of the “hostile conditions” (p. 6) under which bilingual programs presently flourish. They claimed that a student’s active use of two different language systems strengthens their cognitive, linguistic and metalinguistic abilities, and this impacts positively on academic engagement and achievement. As engaged educators it is
important for college teachers and administrators to examine whether we are creating a hostile linguistic environment in our classrooms for our L2 students by affording English its hegemonic place to the exclusion of a balanced, structured and pedagogically informed use of mother tongue.

All of the college students interviewed for this study touched on all of Moje and Luke’s (2009) metaphors of identity. The authors named their metaphors (a) identity as difference (b) identity as sense of self/subjectivity (c) identity as mind or consciousness (d) identity as narrative and (e) identity as position. While evidence of all of these metaphors are found in the student transcripts quoted in Chapters 4 and 5, their metaphor of identity as position resonates poignantly as we examine the life and learning experiences of our college students in this study. Their “layers of varnish” that make up identity as described by Moje and Luke (p. 430), have been stripped away in many different ways as they journeyed from their countries of birth to Canada. We heard from students who were professional engineers, nurses, doctors and professors starting their professional lives all over again in our college. By reaffirming their lingual identities, through a carefully considered multilingual pedagogy, we as college educators have the opportunity to reapply and repair some of the scratched and damaged layers of their identity “varnish”.

This study will impact the work of faculty at the college. During the study, several additional faculty members, in addition to the four on my internal committee, expressed interest in the research and are willing to try this approach to pedagogy with guidance from the faculty involved in this study. The 19 participating students in Phase 3 of the study and those in Phases 1 and 2 are the first at the college to have allowed us to probe their minds about language interdependence. They have given us important insights into the learning processes of multilingual college students. L1 and L2 interdependence is a critical educational process occurring in our classrooms and in the minds of a majority of our students every hour of every day. This reality is especially true at our college, a highly multilingual in Canada. Discussion of this research and model with other teachers all over the college will most certainly add more perspectives and richness to this discourse.

The spectrum of studies that I have undertaken in my quest for a better understanding of the interdependence between L1 and L2 confirmed my belief that creating a space for mother tongue in the classroom has benefits for both student and
teacher. The studies revealed visceral passions from the very young elementary student who referred to his ability to speak his mother tongue as “magical.” (Bismilla, 2005) to the angry outcry of the college student who said that she has paid a large sum of money to come to Canada to study and knows that English is important but does not need the indignity of being told not to speak her mother tongue in class for quick clarification with a peer. It was fascinating to have a window into the students’ brains that revealed the mental activity between their L1 and L2. The students taught me the folly of pedagogical approaches that look at multilingual students through deficit lenses. The quiet dignity of the student in the last interview (group 5) when he spoke of “deep learning,” reminded me that L2 students sitting before us in class carry a huge and sorrowful weight when their profound academic qualifications are negated by our regulatory bodies that do not recognize the credentials of internationally educated immigrants. The bilingual students in the study confirmed that their L1s constituted an important scaffold for their learning of English and hence enhanced their learning experiences and academic engagement in class. Their perceptive comments also expressed their sense of the centrality of their L1s to aspects of their identity.

Areas of Further Potential Research

A potential area of further study might be to explore the differences in scaffolding and interdependence between cognate and non-cognate L1s to English. This will require a non-randomized sample of L2 learners in groupings of mother tongues that share roots with English and those that are non-cognate.

Another potential area for further exploration would be a longitudinal tracking of the academic performance of students from mother tongue permitted English language learning classrooms to mother tongue prohibited English language learning classrooms. This will need to be a new mixed mode study involving pre and post English proficiency testing of students as well as a comparison of graduating grades of both groups of students. Impact on academic engagement and identity will need to be gauged through student interviews.
References


Turnbull & J. Dailey-O’Cain (Eds.), *First language use in second and foreign language learning* (pp. 87-114). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.


Kyonka, N. (2008, July 12). Toronto researchers are dispelling the myth that infants learn multiple languages to the detriment of their mother tongues. The Toronto Star, p. D1.


CREATING SPACE FOR STUDENTS’ MOTHER TONGUES

Glossary

ASL: American Sign Language
BICS: basic interpersonal communication skills
CALP: cognitive academic language proficiency
CIITE: Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Employment
EAP: English for Academic Purposes
EFL: English as a Foreign Language, as the province of Nova Scotia refers to ESL
ELL: English Language Learners
ESL: English as a Second Language
fNIRS: Functional Near Infrared Spectroscopy, a team of neuroscientists from the University of Toronto, Scarborough
Gen.Ed: General Education
IELTS: International English Language Testing System
ITI: Internationally Trained Immigrants
KPI: Key Performance Indicators, annual survey of demographic data of full-time college students
L1: Refers to an individual’s primary language or mother tongue
L2: Refers to the language an individual is learning
LINC: Language Instruction For New Canadians Programme
Linguicism: One of the anti-immigrant discourses in use in classrooms
MTCU: Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, a Ministry of the Ontario Government.
Multicompetence: A term coined by Vivian Cook to refer to differences in language awareness systems and language processing systems between multilingual and monolingual learners
Multilinguals: Individuals who speak more than one language
Metacognitive strategies: Refers to mental strategies for organizing and learning new concepts
Metalinguistic strategies: Refers to linguistic strategies for organizing and learning new concepts
Monolingualism: Speaking only one language
**TOEFL**: Test of English as a Foreign Language.
**Appendix A**

**Phase 1**

**Survey of Speakers of English as an Added Language**

**College Students (Jan. /Feb. 2006)**

(conducted by Vicki Bismilla, Vice-President Academic and Chief Learning Officer, Centennial College and doctoral student at OISE, University of Toronto.)

[A]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Optional)</th>
<th>Country of Birth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Language Spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20  ____</td>
<td>#1______________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-25  ____</td>
<td>#2______________</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-35  ____</td>
<td>#3______________</td>
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<tr>
<td>35-50  ____</td>
<td>Arrival in Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>50+  ____</td>
<td>Under 3 years</td>
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<td>Semester #  ____</td>
<td>3-5 years</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5-10 years</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Over 10 years</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self assessment of fluency in English</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beginner</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fluent</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

[B]

**Education in Country of Birth**

Secondary Diploma  ____
Post Secondary Diploma  ____
Post Secondary Degree(s)  ____

**Education in Canada**

Secondary Diploma  ____
Post Secondary Diploma  ____
Post Secondary Degree(s)  ____
Professional Training  ________________
Skills/Trade Training  ________________
## Work Experience in Country of Birth

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

## Work Experience in Canada

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

## College Education Enablers and Barriers

### Re Language at Entry into College

Please rate your answers from #1 to #7

#1 = easy to understand
#7 = very difficult to understand
N/A = not applicable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>#1</th>
<th>#2</th>
<th>#3</th>
<th>#4</th>
<th>#5</th>
<th>#6</th>
<th>#7</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Please rate your ability to understand the following materials and processes at this college</strong></td>
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<td>1. College Ads (Print, Brochures)</td>
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<td>2. College Website</td>
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<td>3. Registration and Fee Process</td>
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<td>4. Orientation</td>
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<td>5. Course Selection</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>People</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Please rate your ability to understand people working at this college.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Recruiters</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>2. Registration Desk</td>
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<td>3. Loans Office</td>
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<td>4. Orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Language Assessment</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
College Education Enablers and Barriers
Re Language and Learning

1. Classroom Enablers: What factors/activities, if any, have helped you to understand the English used in your classroom learning?

   (a) ____________________________________________________________

   (b) ____________________________________________________________

   (c) ____________________________________________________________

2. Classroom Barriers: What factors/activities, if any, have hindered your understanding of English used in your classroom?

   (a) ____________________________________________________________

   (b) ____________________________________________________________

   (c) ____________________________________________________________

3. Homework/Project/Assignment Enablers: What factors/activities, if any, have helped you to produce your best work?

   (a) ____________________________________________________________

   (b) ____________________________________________________________

   (c) ____________________________________________________________

4. Homework/Project/Assignment Barriers: What factors/activities, if any, make assignments difficult for you.
(a)_____________________________________________________________________

(b)_____________________________________________________________________

(c)_____________________________________________________________________

[F]

College Education Satisfaction Enablers and Barriers
Re Attitudes to First Language

1. To whom are you comfortable speaking in your first language at the college and why?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. Where at the college are you uncomfortable speaking in your first language and why?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. Do you think your first language is a barrier or an asset in your college education?
   Why?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4. When you graduate from college do you think your first language would be a barrier or an asset to you in your professional life? Why?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

5. Your added languages are added skills. How can the college gain from your added languages?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

6. If the college could do 3 things to help you as a new learner of English, what would you find
most helpful?

(a)_____________________________________________________________________
(b)_____________________________________________________________________
(c)_____________________________________________________________________

7. Other Comments:

(Your name and any other personal identifiers will be removed from this survey when used for college purposes and for doctoral study purposes. This survey will not affect your assessment.)
**Appendix B**  
**Phase 2**

Survey of Speakers of English as an Added Language  
EAP College Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[A]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name (Optional) _________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of Birth _________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Age  
| 16-20 ___ |
| 20-25 ___ |
| 25-35 ___ |
| 35-50 ___ |
| 50+ ___ |
| Semester # _____ |
| Language Spoken  
| #1__________ |
| #2__________ |
| #3__________ |
| Arrival in Canada  
| Under 3 years _____ |
| 3-5 years _____ |
| 5-10 years _____ |
| Over 10 years _____ |
| Self assessment of fluency in English  
| Beginner _____ |
| Intermediate _____ |
| Fluent _____ |

**Education in Country of Birth**

High School Diploma _____  
Post Secondary Diploma _____  
Post Secondary Degree(s) _____

**Education in Canada**

High School Diploma _____  
Post Secondary Diploma _____  
Post Secondary Degree(s) _____  
Professional Training ____________________________  
Skills/Trade Training ____________________________

[C]

Work Experience in Country of Birth_________________________________________________
About your experience in using your first language to research and prepare for writing your English essay.

1. Describe how you feel about being allowed to use your first language in a college classroom in Canada.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. Think about the experience of using your first language in this assignment. Then complete the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I used my first language to:</th>
<th>Using my first language was (circle one)</th>
<th>Because:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>do research on the Internet</td>
<td>a) easier b) about the same c) more difficult than using English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do research using written texts</td>
<td>a) easier b) about the same c) more difficult than using English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make notes</td>
<td>a) easier b) about the same c) more difficult than using English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>write one or more drafts</td>
<td>a) easier b) about the same c) more difficult than using English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Do you think that being able to use your first language in Canadian college classrooms can help your learning? Yes ___ No _____. Give your reasons:
4. Did you first write the essay in your mother language and then translate it into English or did you use a different way?

5. When you hear English spoken in many different accents do you find some accents more difficult to understand than others? Which accents, if any, are easy to understand and which ones, if any, are difficult to understand?
   Easy: ____________________________________________
   Why? ____________________________________________
   Difficult: _________________________________________
   Why? ____________________________________________

6. Please make additional comments about this experience of using your first language in a Canadian college classroom. Please comment on whether you would recommend this method and why.
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

(Your name and any other personal identifiers will be removed from this survey when used for college purposes and for doctoral study purposes. This survey will not affect your assessment.)
Appendix C  
Phase 3  

Participant Information Document  

Focus groups of Speakers of English as an Added Language  
College Students  

Principal Investigator/Researcher: Vicki Bismilla, Vice-President Academic and Chief Learning Officer, Centennial College  

INTRODUCTION  
You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before agreeing to participate in this study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation describing the purpose, procedures, benefits, discomforts, risks and precautions associated with this study. It also describes your right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is known as the informed consent process. Please ask the researcher to explain any words you don’t understand before signing the consent form. Make sure all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction before signing this document. You are being asked to take part in this study because your knowledge of another language is important in helping the college understand the role of other languages in our teaching of English at our college.  

BACKGROUND / PURPOSE  
I am conducting a study on how a student’s learning can be made better if we allow the use of the mother tongue in our classrooms and to explore students’ experiences when they use their mother tongue in an ESL/EAP/Gen.Ed classroom. There are many researchers around the world who believe that if a student’s prior learning is honoured then the student will perform better on new learning. Hence, if that prior learning was in another language then that language must be honoured in our classrooms and that language will help the student perform better in English, the new language.  

I am studying for my doctoral degree in Second Language Education at the University of Toronto, and I will use the responses that you give me to write my Ed.D. (Doctor of Education) thesis. That thesis will be shared with you upon request. I invite you to participate in the study.  

PROCEDURES
If I agree to participate what does this mean?

Anyone who agrees to participate in the study will be asked to:

- Complete the survey attached which will ask you some voluntary background information.

- Participate in three focus groups with the researcher together with other students regarding how you feel about using your mother tongue in a college classroom. There will be a total of at least 20 students in this study. Since three classrooms are participating there could be many more than 20. Each of these focus group discussions will be about an hour long and will be audio-taped. One will occur at the beginning of the semester, one in the middle and one at the end. The focus groups will not be scheduled close to your exams and will take place outside of class time.

- The focus groups will be conducted by me face to face with you and other students who speak the same mother tongue and you may invite your teacher to be present. The focus group discussion will be audio-recorded. (While I would like you to participate in) the focus group it is completely optional. If you are not comfortable with any question during the focus group interview you can pass or you may withdraw from the study if you wish.

- Because of your active participation in this study you will be co-investigators in the study. This means that your responses will be included in the text of my thesis but your names will not be used.

You may choose to leave the study at any time.

RISKS AND SIDE EFFECTS

There are no known risks to participate in the study.

BENEFITS

While you may or may not personally benefit, as the researcher I feel that your participation in this study will benefit students who speak other languages as the college begins to understand the importance of mother tongue in college education.
PARTICIPATION

How do I participate?

- Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose not to participate or you may withdraw at any time. This will have no impact on your grades in any course.

- Please take the letter and form with you and if you would like to participate, please fill out the consent form and bring it to Room C-204 at the Ashtonbee Campus and Beverley Williams will book you into the focus group discussions. We will meet in a meeting room next to Beverley’s desk or if the focus group is large we will book a classroom outside of class time.

CONFIDENTIALITY

How confidential is the information I share in the surveys and interviews?

- The information you share in the study will be kept strictly confidential. Your surveys will be stored in a locked cabinet. Research findings will be reported so that individuals cannot be identified.

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions, please contact Lynda Atack at 416.289-5000 x 4003 (latack@centennialcollege.ca) or call Vicki Bismilla at (416) 289-5165 or you may talk with your teachers, Marg Fortin, Pepi Lucas or Nina Kilgour.

If you would like advice regarding your rights as a research participant, please call: Lynda Atack at 416.289-5000 x 4003 or e-mail her at latack@centennialcollege.ca

This person is not involved with the research project in any way and calling her will not affect your participation in the study. Lynda is a professor at the college and has advised dozens of researchers and students at the college.

You may contact the U of T Education Ethics Review Board at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or (416) 946-3237.

Please keep this information document for your own use.
CREATING SPACE FOR STUDENTS’ MOTHER TONGUES

Appendix D
Phase 3

Focus Groups and Survey of Speakers of English as an Added Language
College Students Consent Form

(Not participating in this survey and interview will not affect me or my grades. My name will not be used in any publications.)

This is my consent to respond to Vicki Bismilla’s English as an Added Language College Students’ Survey and to participate in a focus group with her and other students who speak my mother tongue. Each focus group will be an hour long and I am allowed to ask my teacher to be present.

This research study will explore ways in which the college can better serve the academic needs of students whose first language is not English. Our responses will be collected and analyzed to show areas in which improvements can be made.

☐ I understand that my name will not be used in her study.
☐ I understand that I will not be assessed or graded through this survey.
☐ I understand that my responses will be used to assist the college to better serve students whose first language is not English.
☐ I am not being forced to participate in this survey and focus group.
☐ I am not being paid to participate in this survey and focus group.
☐ The results of this survey will be shared with me upon request.
☐ I understand that I need to be as honest as possible in my responses.
☐ I understand that if I change my mind during this study I can tell the researcher and she will excuse me from the focus group and give me back my forms to be destroyed. If I am not comfortable answering a question on the survey or in the interview I can pass. I can withdraw from the study at any time.

Please place a check mark in each box above to show that you have read and understood each statement above.

Name:_______________ Date:_______________

Signed______________ Witness signature_____________

Researcher: Vicki Bismilla (416) 289-5165
If you have questions you may contact Dr. Lynda Atack at the College Research Centre:

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CREATING SPACE FOR STUDENTS’ MOTHER TONGUES

(416) 289-5000 ext. 4003 or
latack@centennialcollege.ca

You may contact the U of T Education Ethics Review Board at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or (416) 946-3237. A copy of this form will be given to you.
Appendix E  
Phase 3  

Demographic survey of Speakers of English as an Added Language  
College Students (Sept. 2008)

[A]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Optional)</th>
<th>Country of Birth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Language Spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 ___</td>
<td>#1_______________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-25 ___</td>
<td>#2_______________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-35 ___</td>
<td>#3_______________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-50 ___</td>
<td>Arrival in Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50+ ___</td>
<td>Under 3 years ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3-5 years _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5-10 years _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 10 years ___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which class?</td>
<td>Self assessment of fluency in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Com.131____</td>
<td>Beginner ______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAP___</td>
<td>Intermediate ___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen.Ed____</td>
<td>Fluent ______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[B]

**Education in Country of Birth**
- High School Diploma _____
- Post Secondary Diploma _____
- Post Secondary Degree(s) _____

**Education in Canada**
- High School Diploma _____
- Post Secondary Diploma _____
- Post Secondary Degree(s) _____
- Professional Training __________________________
- Skills/Trade Training __________________________

[C]
Work Experience in Country of Birth

_______________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________

Work Experience in Canada

_______________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________

(Your name and any other personal identifiers will be removed from this survey when used for college purposes and for doctoral study purposes. This survey will not affect your assessment or grade for your class.)

If you have questions you may contact Dr. Lynda Atack at the College Research Centre: (416) 289-5000 ext. 4003 or latack@centennialcollege.ca

You may contact the U of T Education Ethics Review Board at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or (416) 946-3237.
Appendix F

Phase 3

Interviewer: Vicki Bismilla

Focus group questions for semi-structured, audio-tape-recorded group interviews:

1. Describe how you feel about being allowed to use your mother tongue in college classrooms?
2. How do other students react when they see/hear you using your mother tongue in class?
3. If you are in your same language groups in class what sorts of discussions do you have? In what ways are these helpful to you? Were there ways/times when this was not helpful?
4. You are being encouraged to use your mother tongue while preparing for assignments and clarifying classroom discussions. Are there other times and activities where this might be helpful?
5. When your teacher allows you to do research in your mother tongue what do you do? Is it helpful? Why or why not?
6. When you see or hear a new English word how do you try to discover its meaning? Can your mother tongue help you to figure out its meaning? How?
7. What strategies (ways) have you learned from your own mother tongues that help you to learn English? For example breaking the word up into smaller pieces or thinking about word associations.
8. Can you think of pieces of an English word that might be the same in your mother tongue that help you to figure out meanings of English words? For example in Greek or Latin “auto” or “inter” are also used in English.
9. When an English speaker speaks to you what kinds of things might they do to help you to understand better?
10. When do you think in English and when do you think in your mother tongue? How do you switch from one to the other at college or outside the college?
11. How valuable do you believe your mother tongue is to you (a) in class (b) in the college (c) in Toronto in general? Why?
12. How do you feel in other classrooms where you are not allowed to use your mother tongue in class?

OISE thesis committee:
Dr. Jim Cummins, Second Language Education, (SLE) Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning (CTL) OISE/UT.
Dr. Tara Goldstein, Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning (CTL) OISE/UT
Dr. John Portelli, Department of Theory and Policy Studies, (TPS) OISE/UT.
Appendix G
Phase 3

Professor participation consent form
This is my consent to participate in Vicki Bismilla’s research study titled:

"Creating Space for Students' Mother Tongues in College Classrooms:
Collaborative Investigation of Process and Outcomes".

This research study will explore the benefits, advantages or disadvantages of allowing students, whose first language is not English, to use their mother tongues in class during teacher-specified activities to scaffold their learning of English in College classrooms.

My name is ___________________ and I am a Professor of ______________ at Centennial College. I will be validating students’ mother tongues in my classroom through such activities as:

◆ forming same-language groups in class in which students will scaffold one another’s understanding of English language concepts by using mother tongues to explain said concepts to one another
◆ allowing students to complete essay research in their mother tongues
◆ allowing students to complete essay drafts in their mother tongues. (All final submitted projects will be in English)
◆ other pedagogically appropriate activities as I see fit

My contribution to the research study will include the following:

1. Allowing the study to be explained to my students for 10 minutes in class by a Manager from The School of Advancement.
2. Meeting with the researcher at mutually agreeable times before, during and after the study to discuss study progress.
3. If invited by my students to attend their focus group interviews I may sit in if I desire.
4. My contribution of notes, observations etc. though important, is optional. If I do contribute these, I understand that they may be incorporated in the study and I will be given credit.

Name: _______________ Date: _________________
Signed________________ Witness signature_____________

Researcher: Vicki Bismilla (416) 289-5165
Director of Research: Trish Dryden (416) 289-5000 ext. 8056

You may contact the U of T Education Ethics Review Board at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or (416) 946-3237; or Dr. Lynda Atack at (416) 289-5000 ext. 4003 or latack@centennialcollege.ca
A copy of this form will be given to you.
Appendix H
Phase 3

Ms. Vicki Bismilla
Vice President Academic, Chief Learning Officer
Centennial College

January 30, 2008

RE: Protocol 037: Preparing to Legitimize Students’ First Languages in College Classrooms
(Creating Space for Students’ Mother Tongues in College Classrooms: A Collaborative Investigation of Process and Outcomes)

Dear Vicki;

The Centennial College Research Ethics Board involving Human Subjects has reviewed your ethics review application and documentation and grants expedited approval for the above-named study. The approval is based on the following:

1) The Centennial ethics committee must be informed of any protocol modifications as they arise
2) Any unanticipated problems that increase risk to the participants must be reported immediately
3) You have one year approval for the study from the time your study begins. At that time you may continue the study for a further year, however you are required to submit an annual renewal form.
4) A study completion form is submitted upon completion of the project. Please contact Celine Carson, ccarson@centennialcollege.ca for these forms.

On behalf of the committee at Centennial, I’d like to wish you every success with this innovative and interesting project which has important implications for the College.

Sincerely,

Lynda Atack, R.N., Ph.D
Chair
Research Ethics Committee
Centennial College
Email: latack@centennialcollege.ca
Tel: 416. 289-5000 x 4003
University of Toronto
Office of the Vice-President, Research
Office of Research Ethics

PROTOCOL REFERENCE #22738

May 22, 2008

Dr. Jane Cummins
Second Language Education
Curriculum, Learning and Teaching
OISE/UT
252 Floor St. W.
Toronto, ON M5S 1V6

Mrs. Vicki Bismilla
42 Mendip Cres.
Scarbrough, ON M1P 1Y4

Dear Dr. Cummins and Mrs. Bismilla:

Re: Your research protocol entitled “Creating Space for Students’ Mother Tongues in College Classrooms: A Collaborative Investigation of Process and Outcomes”

ETHICS APPROVAL

Original Approval Date: May 22, 2008
Expiry Date: May 21, 2009
Continuing Review Level: 1

We are writing to advise you that a member of the Social Sciences, Humanities & Education Research Ethics Board has granted approval to the above-named research study, for a period of one year, under the RERs expedited review process. Ongoing projects must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

The following consent documents (revised May 20, 2006) have been approved for use in this study: Appendix #2: Participant Information Document and Appendix #3: College Students Consent Form.

Any changes to the approved protocol or consent materials must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process prior to its implementation. Any adverse or unanticipated events should be reported to the Office of Research Ethics as soon as possible.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your project.

Yours sincerely,

Raquel David
Research Ethics Coordinator
### Appendix J

#### Creating Space for Students' Mother Tongue in College Classrooms: Level 1 and 2 Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Identity, Engagement, Feelings</th>
<th>Usefulness of mother tongue in Class/college/Assignments</th>
<th>Lack of Resources in mother tongue</th>
<th>Value of mother tongue</th>
<th>L1s / L2 Strategies</th>
<th>Helpful Hints for Teachers</th>
<th>Thought Process in Brain - Cognate / Non-cognate</th>
<th>Superhighway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>When paraphrasing I think in mother tongue then translate</td>
<td>Different people different comprehension - mother tongue speakers help to clarify</td>
<td>Some limitations re availability of North America Content in Korean Language</td>
<td>Mt is valuable, comfortable</td>
<td>Tools for decoding meaning: Spell - Write - Look - Root - Prefix, suffix syllables</td>
<td>Different meaning in different context</td>
<td>Speak slower</td>
<td>In his mind both languages the same time - super highway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Feel comfortable when I use Mandarin (Identity engagement)</td>
<td>Idioms - what do they mean?</td>
<td>lack of mother tongue resources in Canada</td>
<td>In college outside of class a little valuable</td>
<td>Directly going to English website is useful</td>
<td>Chinese &amp; English totally different (non-cognate)</td>
<td>There is translation going in head: If speech is too fast can't translate quickly enough to understand</td>
<td>Thought process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Can't control myself. I Think in Mandrin</td>
<td>e.g of idiom = Hit the books</td>
<td>English Dictionary still not clear</td>
<td>Native language respected in Toronto</td>
<td>Website for research: Chinese website perspective different</td>
<td>Strategies can be replicated not language clues themselves</td>
<td>Give examples</td>
<td>Two way translations clicking away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Using own language: Feeling: Comfortable yet a little impolite (cross-cultural attitude)</td>
<td>exact meaning still unclear - mt helps to understand vocabulary: English dictionary still not clear.</td>
<td>Library good to have books in other languages - need for Multilingual books</td>
<td>Usefulness in class and in college for concept and vocabulary clarification</td>
<td>Lack of mother tongue resource in Canada</td>
<td>Drill – Education – drill Chinese language- drill</td>
<td>Even when translation doesn't help examples will help</td>
<td>Super highway bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Comment</td>
<td>Chinese Newspaper Translation</td>
<td>Use of Website for Research</td>
<td>Chinese Language Is Too Different from English to Find Similarities in Pieces of Words</td>
<td>Using Sign Language ie Gestures</td>
<td>Bridging of Both Languages</td>
<td>Comment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Comfortable but a little impolite</td>
<td>Newspaper translate Chinese to English paragraph by paragraph and compare</td>
<td>use of website for research</td>
<td>Time consuming research Translate from MT to English</td>
<td>Chinese language is too different from English to find similarities in pieces of words</td>
<td>Using Sign Language ie gestures</td>
<td>We just copy the common English words when we speak Korean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cross cultural attitudes Multi cultural awareness see Rayes &amp; Vallone 2007</td>
<td>She does her own translation of Chinese newspaper</td>
<td>Directly to English website but too difficult so change to Chinese website</td>
<td>Decoding meaning by dividing word</td>
<td>Dictionary useful to learn spelling</td>
<td>&quot;Sometimes teacher can ask a same language student to explain it&quot; - request for L1 / L2 Scaffolding</td>
<td>Easy English words are established but difficult English words must translate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Non Chinese friends interested, want to speak Chinese; we want to speak English</td>
<td>emotional problems - I can express more comfortably to people who speak same language = Counselling</td>
<td>English vs mother tongue - lots of English sites if available in my language will prefer it</td>
<td>If main point is not understood then whole lesson content not understood</td>
<td>Using context to get meaning then dictionary both Chinese + Eng</td>
<td>Decoding for pronunciations is the same i.e. each letter or symbol represents a sound in each language - so the strategy of stringing the sounds together to pronounce the word would be the same in both languages</td>
<td>Even when Canadians learn Chinese they must translate so we must allow this of Chinese learning English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Impolite - maybe they think it's confidential</td>
<td>I know what's in my heart, when I try to translate into English everything changed = Emotional level Identity</td>
<td>Chinese website info available but difficult to translate into English</td>
<td>mother tongue valuable in class to learn and for jobs but want to learn English</td>
<td>Both dictionaries to double check</td>
<td>In Bangla - using syllables to break up a word in both languages</td>
<td>Speak Slowly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>If mother tongue disallowed then feel nervous</td>
<td>Conflicted between usefulness of mt and appearance of inappropriateness</td>
<td>Both dictionaries needed for meaning and applications</td>
<td>Helpful if allowed</td>
<td>Nuances of meaning lost in mt dictionary</td>
<td>Prefix &amp; suffix to separate root word to figure out meaning</td>
<td>Don't use colloquial or slang</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>If mt disallowed - can accept (Complaint)</td>
<td>issue of Halaal Turkey - personal/religious/id entity</td>
<td>mother tongue helpful in class with another student of same lang</td>
<td>Colloquial language difficult to understand</td>
<td>Dictionaries break up words into syllables - so help pronunciations</td>
<td>Can't understand idioms - may understand the individual words but not together in an idiom</td>
<td>I have learned Chinese for past 20 years, I have to translate - language coded in Chinese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The table contains a summary of comments and observations related to the challenges and benefits of using different languages in various contexts, including the use of mother tongues in class settings, the importance of bilingual resources, and the translation of cultural content.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Compliant but &quot;helpful if allowed.&quot;</th>
<th>Helpful to understand difficult tasks in own lang</th>
<th>Match meaning between Eng &amp; mother tongue</th>
<th>Chinese &amp; English don't share common words or roots</th>
<th>If you use an idiom – explain it &amp; we'll understand it for next time</th>
<th>Easy English words are established and incorporated into Chinese (code switch.) Difficult English words I must translate. “I have to translate because interference in my mind.”</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>use mt but not too much</td>
<td>Helpfulness to understand difficult tasks</td>
<td>Match meaning between Eng &amp; mother</td>
<td>Chinese &amp; English don't share</td>
<td>If you use an idiom – explain it &amp; we'll</td>
<td>Easy English words are established and incorporated into</td>
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<td>in own lang</td>
<td>mother tongue</td>
<td>common words or roots</td>
<td>understand it for next time</td>
<td>Chinese (code switch.) Difficult English words I must</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>translate because interference in my mind.”</td>
</tr>
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<td>Helpful if allowed</td>
<td>Chinese website but results different =</td>
<td>First clarification sought from</td>
<td>Chinese words are made up of</td>
<td>Speak clearly and use simple words</td>
<td>Friend born here can speak English without interference by</td>
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<td>teacher then dictionary, then website</td>
<td>symbols not letters like in</td>
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<td>Chinese.</td>
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<td>English- so they can't be the</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>same</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Helpfulness to understand the</td>
<td>Research time consuming to translate from</td>
<td>Do not overuse but helpful</td>
<td>English words from the days of</td>
<td>Use the simple words together with the harder</td>
<td>I need to translate Eng to Chinese and then back again to</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>difficult tasks in own language</td>
<td>mother tongue to English and some things</td>
<td>Write down new words &amp; review</td>
<td>the Raj have been colloquially</td>
<td>word e.g. &quot;strategy&quot; and/or &quot;ways&quot;</td>
<td>speak English to friend.</td>
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<td>can't be translated</td>
<td>weekly</td>
<td>used in India and Bangladesh so</td>
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<td>that even a pure Bangla word like</td>
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<td>railgari has been replaced by</td>
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<td>English word Train</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>mother tongue</td>
<td>Usefulness of mother tongue in class</td>
<td>Uncomfortable if not allowed</td>
<td>Connect with mother tongue helps</td>
<td>Speaking slowly - allows time for students to</td>
<td>First think in Chinese then translate into English in order</td>
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<td>absorb meaning</td>
<td>to speak it in English</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Don't over use mother tongue but</td>
<td>Chinese opinion on Chinese websites hard to</td>
<td>Have to keep culture and language</td>
<td>First teacher for dictionary</td>
<td>Use of Chinese to make the idea then translate</td>
<td>Use of Chinese to make the idea then translate &amp; exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>it is helpful</td>
<td>separate opinion from information.</td>
<td>= cultural identity marker</td>
<td>then friend</td>
<td>&amp; exchange the idea into English in order to speak</td>
<td>the idea into English in order to speak it.</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>If mother tongue not allowed</td>
<td>Research with partner then mother</td>
<td>Bangla to explain concepts with</td>
<td>Electronic translator with</td>
<td>Have a break – e.g. of confusing idiom</td>
<td>Organize ideas in Chinese then translate into English in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>then uncomfortable</td>
<td>tongue</td>
<td>peers of same mother tongue</td>
<td>meaning E.g., In mother tongue</td>
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<td>order to speak then in English</td>
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<td>=mother tongue as a scaffold for</td>
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<td>clarification</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Comfortable = engaged</td>
<td>Research with others then English</td>
<td>Preservation of mother tongue</td>
<td>Also gives context in sentences</td>
<td>Explain colloquial usage</td>
<td>Simple words need no translation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Comfortable</td>
<td>Came to college to learn English—doesn’t make sense to research in mother tongue</td>
<td>cant take and don’t have 2-3 hours to read and understand an English newspaper. Much faster in mother tongue</td>
<td>Ask the teacher then ask a same language peer</td>
<td>TV comedies &amp; sitcoms, lyrics, use mother tongue dictionary</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>mt to clarify assignments give examples</td>
<td>With mother tongue get info quickly</td>
<td>Dictionary—need to be able to spell the word-time consuming</td>
<td>Tenses</td>
<td>Give examples; give association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Feel Good</td>
<td>Translate English to Chinese and Chinese to English idioms both ways</td>
<td>mother tongue for memory of meaning</td>
<td>Concept of tense</td>
<td>Do not whisper, difficult to understand</td>
<td>Don’t do drafts in mother tongue—difficult to translate double job—so think in mother tongue but write in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Need for Eng - Conflicted school= only chance to speak English</td>
<td>North China &amp; South China different cultures talking about it in mother tongue helps clarify for the English assignment</td>
<td>mother tongue important for research</td>
<td>If explained in English I forget - if explained in mother tongue I remember better</td>
<td>Brainstorm with a mother tongue peer</td>
<td>Speak slowly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>At home – not much chance to speak English</td>
<td>To build knowledge e.g. for news mother tongue is much faster</td>
<td>mother tongue for dictionary = scaffold</td>
<td>Guess based on context then mother tongue peer then ask teacher then dictionary - last resort</td>
<td>Write out the word, make sentence, repeat the word, tape record it &amp; listen to it repeatedly, use contextual clues</td>
<td>Use body language (gesture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Same Language—mutual support of one another</td>
<td>College processes signs, events, need to be explained—cannot understand English explanations as readily as mother tongue explanations by peers</td>
<td>mt for everyday daily life survival like shopping</td>
<td>Translation of new words</td>
<td>Make a sentence</td>
<td>Barack Obama speaks slowly = e.g. of speech style-asset for L2 learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Disadvantage— it does not force me to speak Eng So cannot develop English; So advantage and disadvantage</td>
<td>Speak English whenever possible to improve but seek clarification in mother tongue</td>
<td>Business negotiation between two countries in mother tongue = Bilingual advantages between countries</td>
<td>Very quickly translating all the time</td>
<td>Try to connect the meaning or the word to a picture or situation (context)</td>
<td>Body Language; give background</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>If no same language peer then cannot clarify</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Curiosity &amp; interest in L1 by other students</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Self conscious regarding disrespect if others don't understand</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>When they ask about the L1 it is opportunity to communicate</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>L1 students who have grad high school here don't want to be using L1 with newcomers</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>Even L1 speakers of other language feel isolated if other L1s are converging among themselves</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Speak English as much as possible but-- mother tongue “to build up the English language” = scaffold</td>
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<td></td>
<td>we use mt to get ideas about school work</td>
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<td>use mt to show me how to do that</td>
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<td>Get some examples in Korean</td>
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<td>If I ask Canadian friends they just repeat what the teacher says and I feel foolish asking 4-5 times but if I ask Korean friends they speak in my language not just repeating they are more specific</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Canadian friends know what it means in English and that’s the way they explain it the mother tongue way is another way</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Language of society in Toronto where 50% Chinese</td>
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<td>mother tongue very important outside of the college very valuable</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Business: the more language one knows the more people she/he can sway</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Historical passion for preservation of Bengali</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Sacrifice of life with struggle for mother land in Bangladesh</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Canada is diverse multicultural country, respect one another from different countries</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compare new word &amp; see if you can figure it out</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Intersection between English &amp; Bengali for many words (Colonial impact?)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>No connection between English &amp; Korean (non-cognate) so I can't use my brain to find it out so dictionary is a must</td>
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<td></td>
<td>English dictionary helpful for variety of meaning-gives little differences between them</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Listen in English, then translate into Arabic then translate back into English to speak</td>
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<td></td>
<td>English words used in mt -English creep</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Because Japanese now adopted some English Words + changed their pronunciation it is now problematic in Canada when everyone pronounces it in standard English way</td>
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<td>Spanish similar words</td>
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<td>Clear English</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher should give examples, application and clues; videos, audio-visual aids = difficult to forget (better retention)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Familiar topics easy e.g. family is easy to get meaning but psychology is difficult</td>
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<td>Can hear the word pronounced but can't get its meaning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Spanish mother tongue prefers to think in English</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Think in Japanese &amp; translate into English</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Easy words-think in English Difficult words and meanings then think in mother tongue because all information stored in mother tongue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese student - I always think in mother tongue and translate into English</td>
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<td>In simple conversation in English I just think and speak in English</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Group sharing of understanding among same mother tongues very helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Uncomfortable if mother tongue is banned in class</td>
</tr>
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<td>33</td>
<td>When mother tongue is barred then difficult to follow the class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>If can’t clarify the concept will lose rest of class - cannot follow the teacher</td>
</tr>
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<td>35</td>
<td>Use of mother tongue in class is emergency- level of need to understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Miss whole lesson if not allowed to use mother tongue to clarify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>We are adults, we know why we are here - to learn English, so don’t make rules that say we cannot speak our mother tongue</td>
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<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td><strong>Some situations we have to speak mt</strong> (Feelings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Easy to understand in mother tongue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business e.g. Japan &amp; US now learning Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Comfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Importance/value of language related to # of people using it as communication tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Concept clarification with colleague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You have tools but nobody using it - Analogy of tools that nobody uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>No Korean peer in class - if there were - helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mandarin is the language of art</td>
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<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Caution re cheating in mother tongue</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mandarin is the language of culture</td>
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<td>44</td>
<td>Mother tongue is convenient</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Mother tongue important to understand concepts</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>Others think discussing secret - issue of discomfort - but ok to clarify</td>
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<td># of speakers</td>
</tr>
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<td>46</td>
<td>Other students are curious about our mother tongue but respectful</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>Toronto = multicultural students respect mother tongues, curious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>They react in a good way – curious</td>
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<td>49</td>
<td>But sometimes they may feel it is inappropriate</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>Curious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Maybe think - secrets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>If teacher can’t express 100% no point in learning (Feelings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>No opposition to mother tongue being barred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>But teacher cannot say not to speak mt in breaks - that would be embarrassing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Cant express the same opinion in English as well as in mt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Feeling: Allow peer help, teachers</td>
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<td>57</td>
<td>Rude of teachers to disallow mother tongue</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lone Japanese speaker if someone else spoke mother tongue it would be helpful to figure out vocabulary and understanding an answer</td>
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<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Waiting until after class for mother tongue clarifications is a waste of time – as opposed to an immediate understanding in class</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lone Spanish speaker same as above</td>
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<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Comfortable</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mother tongue helpful to explain meaning of new vocabulary</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>Makes it easy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>mt for understanding assignment in a missed class</td>
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<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Confusing i.e. grammar constructs between 2 languages</td>
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<td>On website search for word in Arabic, translate back into English</td>
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<td>62</td>
<td>mother tongue good for explaining, easier to get the meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read in English, isolate difficult words, find translation in Arabic and then back to English</td>
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<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>mother tongue helps in express feelings, ideas, more easily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spanish speaker prefers to do research in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Lone Japanese speaker in class, want to say, nobody to say it to</td>
</tr>
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<td>mother tongue to research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Wants to express in Japanese but nobody to say it to</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Use of high school text book in mother tongue</td>
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<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Arabic not a strong second language. So helpful in learning the 3rd language ie English</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Researching in Japanese &amp; then translating into English takes time</td>
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<td>67</td>
<td>The noise of other mother tongues in the class interrupts lone mother tongue user</td>
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<td>We talk about differences between Chinese culture and Toronto</td>
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<td>68</td>
<td>Cannot enter the conversation of other mother tongue groups</td>
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<td>69</td>
<td>Perceptions that speaking mother tongue is rude</td>
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<td>70</td>
<td>Feel out of place with other mother tongues, can't enter conversation</td>
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<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>If have Japanese mate then I want to use Japanese, if barred then I suffer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>Arabic language is part of identity</td>
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<td>73</td>
<td>Comfortable and quick to communicate in mt</td>
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<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>When in class for learning English then we should speak English but in a program class, if barred then maybe teacher don't like Chinese people (issue of prejudice)</td>
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<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>The first teacher to allow in college in mother tongue</td>
</tr>
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<td>76</td>
<td>Very confident knowing exact meaning</td>
</tr>
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<td>77</td>
<td>English confusing - not sure of meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Meaning may be lost in English but in Mandarin it is very clear</td>
</tr>
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<td>79</td>
<td>Ask me to speak in English wants to know (Curiosity Factor)</td>
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<td>80</td>
<td>Rude factor and discomfort factor - &quot;maybe about him&quot;</td>
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<td>81</td>
<td>Discomfort factor</td>
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| 82 | Can engage in deeper meaningful conversation if allowed to use Mandarin as a scaffold- otherwise it is only "skin deep."
| 83 | One word in English may have several meanings- one word in Mandarin has one meaning |
Appendix K – Mind Map

The mind map starts by tracing the study from its early philosophical inception in apartheid South Africa where nonwhite race, ethnicity, culture and language were suppressed and relegated to a marginalized stature.

The map progresses through to the early exploratory stage when as an ESL teacher I saw the importance that school aged children placed on the preservation of their mother tongues. During the Multiliteracies study involving school age children, evidence emerged that students were using their mother tongues to help them learn and remember English vocabulary and concepts. These early explorations combined with the literature on the social construction of identity saw the emergence of the phenomenon that mother tongue might be a scaffold to L2 learning for college students.

Phase 1 of the college study developed and refined this concept.

Phase 2 provided the opportunity to explore the potential of creating a space for mother tongue in the college classroom.

Phase 3 of the study was the major phase in which the 19 student participants were provided with a full semester of structured opportunity to use their mother tongues in two college EAP classrooms.

The mind map reproduces a few of the comments made by the participating students in each focus group. The map lists the findings from the student data and ties the student input together with the teacher input. It goes on to list the conclusions and the major application which was the model developed by using the coded student data.
CREATING SPACE FOR STUDENTS’ MOTHER TONGUES

Findings:
1. Feelings, identity, engagement impacted positively through MT validation
2. Usefulness of mother tongue articulated
3. Insights into strategies being used in the brain, for scaffolding and interdependence
4. Comments related to value of mother tongue in college and in society.

Teacher interviews re strengths, gaps and tensions of multilingual pedagogy; balance is key; positive academic engagement; self-esteem; learning experience.

Implications and applications; students not empty vessels; centrality of MT; interdependence; super-system.

Model conceptualizes the findings and the significance of this study as contribution to the field of multilingual pedagogy.

Conclusions from this study:
1. Importance of scaffolding
2. Transformative for learner & teacher
3. Don’t overuse mother tongue – structured use & balance
4. Adults with prior learning encoded in MT - need key to open
5. Language interdependence – bridge – super system
6. Connection with identity – centrality of MT
7. Learning experience enhanced
8. Academic engagement enhanced
9. Place for MT in classroom pedagogy
10. Teach the whole student

Phase 3 – MT used in pedagogy. Prior experience and learning are foundations for new learning. Teacher approach is collaborative vs. coercive; academic engagement, learning experience and identity investment.

Focus group interviews with students – few excerpts below.

Group 1
I think in MT then translate; MT peers help to clarify; idiom hit the books? Counselling office, I know what’s in my heart; 2 languages in my mind, very fast bridge; even when Canadians learn Chinese they must translate; I have learned Chinese for 20 years; if main point is not understood then whole lesson is lost.

Group 2
MT helps to keep the memory; MT sharing of concepts very helpful; college processes difficult; if explained in English I forget, in MT I remember; born and brought up with my own language; preservation of MT important for my children; we are adults we know why we are here don’t tell us we can’t speak our MT

Group 3
Canadian friends repeat the teacher, MT friends are more specific, clearer very fast, easy to understand; MT would be helpful in Sta. Services, International Office & Counselling Office – cultural understanding; don’t understand advice in Enrolment Office; waiting until after class to clarify concept is a waste of time.

Group 4
Listen to Eng then translate into MT then back to Eng to speak; research in MT then translate into Eng; write word, make sentence, repeat word, tape record then listen to it repeatedly; contextual clues; connect word picture or situation; teacher must give examples, context and use gestures; “If Japanese is barred I suffer.”

Group 5
Mother tongue helps reach exact meaning; I understand deeply in Chinese; in Eng only skin deep; for deep ideas I think in MT then translate into Eng; for simpler conversations I think in Eng and speak in Eng; my lang will die, it must be a tool for communication; banning MT is difficult, cannot clarify, will lose the lesson.