The Prism of Children’s Plurilingualism: A Multi-site Inquiry with Children as Co-researchers across English and French Schools in Toronto and Montpellier

by

Gail Lori Prasad

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Curriculum, Teaching & Learning
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Abstract

Through this multi-site study of children’s plurilingualism, I asked what we would discover about plurilingualism by positioning children as co-ethnographers of their plurilingual lives and what teaching might look like if it were based on a plurilingual rather than a monolingual paradigm. During a 4-month collaboration with four different English and French school models in Toronto, Canada and one bilingual school in Montpellier, France, children documented their plurilingual and pluricultural experiences: they took photos of their literacy practices at school and at home and classified them by theme to analyze the linguistic landscape around them and to reflect collaboratively on language policies that manage different spaces. Based on reflexive techniques such as drawing, creative writing and collage, students represented their plurilingualism by creating a series of individual and collective "identity texts" (Cummins & Early, 2011). Creative arts-informed methods were used to allow children to express their views without being limited to the language of instruction (Molinié, 2009; Auger, 2010). In addition, these reflexive techniques scaffolded students’ engagement as co-researchers by enabling them to creatively co-construct new knowledge and represent their perspectives.
Five key elements emerged as being foundational for teaching in the 21st century through the prism of students’ plurilingualism: 1) a vision of all students as ever-evolving plurilingual learners; 2) a purposeful inclusion of the full range of students’ communicative repertoires; 3) collaboration among teachers, students, families and the wider community, often supported by technology; 4) valuing creativity by building time, space for the creative expression of academic work; 5) adopting an inquiry-based approach to language and literacy learning.

This research contributes to an understanding of the complexity of children’s plurilingualism, as well as to the development of a didactique of plurilingualism in mainstream classrooms that is both culturally responsive and linguistically inclusive.
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The paradox of the doctoral dissertation is that while its authorship is ultimately credited to one doctoral candidate, the task could never be completed alone. My doctoral journey has indeed been enriched many times over by the generosity of so many people who have given of themselves to help me realize this vision. There are not enough words in any language to adequately express my thanks but that does not prevent me from trying. To begin, I want to thank Dr. Normand Labrie, my supervisor, for your faith in me so many years ago when you first convinced me to come to OISE to do my Master of Arts with you. This dissertation would not have been possible without your encouragement to take creative risks in my research and your wisdom and discernment to help shape my creativity and thought into rigorous scholarship. Thank you for challenging me to develop my French and to engage with scholarship outside my linguistic and disciplinary comfort zones. From the outset, you had a vision of who I could be(come) as a scholar and have graciously invested time, resources and thoughtful attention in order to assure that I develop the necessary skills not only to carry out this doctoral inquiry but also to lay a foundation for a programme of research as I now move into an academic career.

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Dedication

To John Jaideva Sullivan,

our plurilingual son
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Chapter 1
Setting the Context

If asked to describe the typical Canadian elementary classroom, what picture comes to mind? A few images might include: a blackboard or a smartboard at the front of the room; bright and colourful anchor charts hanging from the wall or suspended from the ceilings; attractive displays of student work around the classroom; student desks, likely arranged in groups; a wide selection of fiction and non-fiction texts to support a rich balanced literacy program; a teacher’s desk, as well as a table for working with students individually or in small groups; and, a carpeted seating area, possibly with comfortable cushions, large enough for the whole class to sit together. While such images depict the learning environment of many elementary classrooms, such a view lacks a representation of the actual students who fill Canadian classrooms today.

In an age of transnationalism, classrooms have increasingly come to be filled with culturally and linguistically diverse students. Plurilingual learners have become the norm rather than the exception. Although gains have been made to recognize the cultural diversity of students through multicultural education and culturally relevant pedagogy (Howard, 2003; Gay, 2000; 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995, Nieto, 1999; 2003), students’ rich linguistic repertoires have often remained overlooked, if not completely rejected from schools. At first glance, it might seem obvious that students should not leave school with fewer linguistic resources than when they first began. Yet, while all students acquire varying degrees of the dominant language of instruction over the course of their schooling, language loss, particularly of their home languages, is a real concern (Fillmore, 1991; 2000). Language has always been political and within the context of schooling, students’ proficiency in the language of instruction has remained a primary indicator of their integration and their projected academic success. As such, schools have historically adopted a monolingual approach to teaching and learning that has valued the language of instruction at the exclusion of others.

Today, in a knowledge-based economy, however, languages are key resources for developing engaged global citizens of the 21st century. What could teaching and learning look like if we shifted paradigms and we began to take children’s plurilingualism into account as a resource for their entire learning community? This dissertation takes up this question by first examining children’s plurilingualism from their own perspectives by engaging with them as co-researchers.
of their lived realities in English and French schools in Toronto, Canada and Montpellier, France. Then, drawing on the 5 school case studies that comprised this multi-site inquiry, I identify key elements for a framework of teaching through the prism of children’s plurilingualism. Throughout this dissertation, I argue that understanding children’s plurilingualism is central to design and support linguistically inclusive teaching and learning in the 21st century.

In this first chapter, I describe Canada’s diverse linguistic landscape with two official languages and a plurality of non- or un-official languages. Against this backdrop, I contextualize this multi-site inquiry exploring children’s representations of plurilingualism in four elementary schools in Toronto, and then one additional elementary school in Montpellier, France. Next, I position myself within this study as a pluricultural and plurilingual Canadian teacher and researcher. After defining key terms for this study, I then outline the research questions that guided this doctoral inquiry and I conclude by providing an overview of this dissertation.

### 1.1 Canada’s Linguistic Landscape

In 2011, the census of population in Canada found that 20% of Canadians spoke a language other than English or French at home; more than 200 different home language languages were reported. Overall, 17.5% of the Canadian population, or 5.8 million persons, reported speaking at least two languages at home. Statistics such as these underline that cultural and linguistic diversity is increasingly a quotidian reality for Canadians even if it may at times seem to be ignored in societal and educational discourse.

#### 1.1.1 Canada’s two official Languages: Two monolingual solitudes

In 1963, the Government of Canada established the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (RCBB) examine three areas: bilingualism in federal offices, the role of organizations in facilitating English-French cultural relations, and opportunities for Canadians to become bilingual in English and French. The deliberations of the RCBB resulted in the enactment of the first Official Languages Act by Canadian Parliament in 1969. The main purpose of the Act was to establish institutional bilingualism and provide Canadians access to official services in both French and English. Canada’s linguistic duality was fortified through the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982, and the revised Official Languages Act of 1988. Section 23 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms further guaranteed official linguistic minorities the right to minority language education for their children. The provision of section 23 has allowed official
minority language groups to win minority school governance across Canada (Behiels, 2004).

Due to opposition to the Official Languages Act from ethnic minorities and Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau’s opposition to the conception of Canada as a bicultural country, Trudeau established a policy of official multiculturalism in 1971 (Carey, 1997; Hayday, 2005). This policy established official multiculturalism in a framework of English-French bilingualism such that Canada would have two official languages but no official culture. In other words, the government recognized the potential contribution of immigrants’ cultural backgrounds to Canadian diversity but not their languages. Whereas Canada’s linguistic duality was intended to bridge English and French relations, multiculturalism endeavoured to make space for allophones (Carey, 1997; Mady, 2007; Prasad, 2012). Even though the policy of official multiculturalism recognized the contributions of linguistically and culturally diverse allophones to Canada’s identity as a multicultural nation, it is important to note that the government only guaranteed support for allophones to acquire one of Canada’s official languages – English or French, rather than both languages. So from the outset, while Canada’s policy of multiculturalism is heralded as an inclusive policy, a critical reading of this policy from a language perspective would suggest in fact that Canada’s policies on official languages and multiculturalism set up conditions for linguistic exclusion of immigrants from Canada’s linguistic duality (Haque, 2012). Thus, despite widespread representations of Canada as a “bilingual nation”, it approximates much more a nation of parallel official monolingualisms. Canada’s language policy in 1969 grew out of the dominant discourses of that period of nation building and in particular the one nation – one language ideology. Canada’s two “founding” nations each fought to have their respective language represented at the federal level; consequently, Canada adopted both English and French as its two official languages. Maclellan’s iconic metaphor of Canada as “two solitudes” reflects the strict separation of the two languages in Canadian discourse and society in general.

During her investiture speech as governor general in 2005, the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean declared that “the time of two-solitudes that has long described the character of Canada is past” (Jean, 2005). Her call to Canadians sought to unite anglophones and francophones based on their commonalities rather than their differences, as well as to bridge other divisions including gender, and race. Nonetheless, language issues and Canada’s linguistic duality continue to be polarizing issues that are debated in public spheres as Canada’s linguistic landscape continues to diversify.
1.1.2 Canada’s un / non-official languages: be(com)ing a plurilingual nation

In their deliberations, the original Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (RCBB) recognized the contribution of non-British and non-French cultural groups to Canada’s linguistic and cultural identity. Yet, because such groups had only loosely been defined as a tangential “third force” or “third element” (1969, p. 10) within Canada, the RCBB did not have any statistics upon which to make accurate estimates of their presence and contributions to Canadian social realities. In their final report on “The Other Ethnic Groups”, the RCBB clearly expressed that

linguistic variety is unquestionably an advantage, and its beneficial effects on the country are priceless. We have constantly declared our desire to see all Canadians associating in a climate of equality, whether they belong to the Francophone or Anglophone cultural groups. Members of ‘other ethnic groups’... must enjoy these same advantages and meet the same restrictions. Integration, with respect for both the spirit of democracy and the most deep-rooted human values, can engender healthy diversity within a harmonious and dynamic whole. (1969, p. 14)

The RCBB sought a term to describe individuals from other cultural backgrounds who had neither English or French as a first language. As Prasad (2009) documents, Professor Jean Darbelnet proposed the term “allophone” as the umbrella category for Canadians who spoke first languages other than Canada’s official languages. He reconstructed the term from the French “allogène” which refers to people “d’une origine différente de celle de la population autochtone, et installé tardivement dans le pays” (Petit Robert, p. 51) and the English use of the suffix “-phone” to denote speaker. (i.e. anglophone - English speaker; francophone - French speaker) (Makey, personal communication, 2009). In retrospect, Darbelnet’s application of the French “allogène” in the Canadian context would have applied to all citizens who were not members of Canada’s First Nations - anglophones, francophones and speakers of all other language backgrounds. Instead, the term was used to separate people who spoke languages other than Canada’s recognized official languages English and French. Makey originally opposed the term “allophone” as a sociocultural language category because within the field of French linguistics, the term allophone means “one of several similar speech sounds belonging to a phoneme. Each allophone is the form of the phoneme used in a specific context”(Petit Robert, 1993, p.69).

Nonetheless, the term allophone became a heuristic category in the 1970s and 1980s for which Canadian census data could be gathered to track Canada’s linguistic duality and at the same time its cultural diversity. The term has been taken up, particularly in francophone policy and
scholarship relating to newly arrived “allophone” (im)migrant students in schools in Quebec and in France. I have previously argued that the category “allophone” is in fact a label of exclusion that marks the Otherness of individuals because they speak languages other than official languages as their first language. For this reason, I describe students involved in this research as plurilingual rather than as English language learners in English schools or allophones in French schools. Plurilingualism offers a lens through which to view all people as continually developing and expanding their linguistic repertoires over the course of their lives. Over time, the starting point(s) of a plurilingual repertoire may be less obvious as an individual’s repertoire expands in an organic, flexible manner. Rather than defining people by fixed unchanging categories such as Anglophone, francophone, plurilingualism offer a flexible evolving category that can expand its reach to include individuals of all language backgrounds and futures. Today, Canadians are perhaps marked more by their individual plurilingualism than by their affiliation to one set linguistic group – whether that be an official language community or a non-official language heritage.

1.1.3 Plurilingualism in schools: a snapshot from Toronto

We get an even clearer picture of the plurilingualism that characterizes many Canadians’ lived reality when we look at student populations in major urban centres. For example, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), which is responsible for English and French immersion public schools in the city of Toronto, reports on its website (http://www.tdsb.on.ca/AboutUs/QuickFacts.aspx) that more than 75 different languages are spoken in the homes of its students; and only 43% of students learned English as a first language. Put differently, for more than half of the students attending a TDSB school, the language of instruction at school does not necessarily correspond with the language(s) they speak at home, on the playground or in their communities. This reality is no different in French-language schools even though they were established for “francophones” living in Canada as official linguistic minorities. The Conseil Viamonde, the public French-language board website (http://csviamonde.ca/Viamonde/Pages/Default.aspx) reports that more than 67 different languages are spoken by students attending their schools. For these students then, the language of instruction does not necessarily correspond with the language spoken at home nor the language spoken in the wider surrounding society.
What are the effects of this growing cultural and linguistic diversity on teaching and learning in Canadian schools today? How might our pedagogical practices need to be adapted in response to the changing face of diverse classrooms? How do students, both the “monolingual” learner and the “plurilingual” learner, make sense of the cultural and linguistic diversity that they encounter in their learning communities? Over the past decade, growing concern has been expressed by teachers, parents and researchers for schools to support culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners: mainstream English schools (Cummins, 2001; Goldstein, 2003; Heydon & Iannacci, 2008; Smythe & Toohey, 2009), French immersion schools (Dagenais & Berron, 2001; Dagenais & Moore, 2004; Dagenais, Walsh, Armand & Maraillet, 2008; Lapkin & Swain, 2005; Taylor, 2006) and French-language minority schools (Farmer & Labrie, 2008; Gérin-Lajoie, 2003, 2006, 2008b; Masny, 2009; Prasad, 2013). The reality for schools in the mobile 21st century is that both mainstream classroom teachers and subject specialists have all become (second) language and literacies teachers. The added challenges for teachers include that for many students the language of instruction is not a second language but rather a third, fourth or multiple language; and, students’ additional home languages are not necessarily shared across the class. For example, it is not uncommon today for teachers to have students in their classrooms who come from more than 5 different language backgrounds. While there are some particularities to the way linguistic diversity is addressed in each of the three principal school models in Canada, English, French and French immersion teachers are all tasked with engaging CLD students in learning in and through languages that are not necessarily their first languages.

1.2 Personal location: becoming a plurilingual inquirer

The researcher is the principal instrument in every qualitative inquiry and that certainly holds true in this research. My parents’ diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in a sense set me up to develop an unrelenting curiosity about cultural and linguistic diversity and a heightened sensitivity to language politics. The migration stories and the personal (hi)stories passed down from my Japanese-Canadian mother, Marty Toyoko Yasunaka (maiden name) and my East Indian father, Chandreswar Prasad, as well as our experiences as a family negotiating cultural difference and linguistic divides have indelibly marked my personal story and my view of the world. My journey first as a classroom teacher and then as a researcher, through this inquiry investigating children’s plurilingualism, have led me to equally examine my own representations of cultural and linguistic diversity and language learning. This iterative inquiry has in a sense
allowed me to shed my linguistic identity as a “monolingual” Anglophone to see and position myself as a plurilingual social actor – researcher, teacher, wife, mother, daughter, friend and citizen - in an ever-diversifying mobile world. (See Appendix 1: Be(com)ing a plurilingual researcher)

In addition, as a result of the breadth and depth of this exploratory collaborative multi-site inquiry across four different schools in Toronto and one school in Montpellier, I became the mobile constant across all school cases. I drew on the lessons learned in each school to scaffold the collaborative design of each subsequent school case study. My reflections and researcher’s notes throughout the 2.5 years of data collection have woven the five school cases together. As such, throughout this collaborative inquiry, I have increasingly embraced my identity as both a collaborative classroom inquirer and a university-based researcher: the two roles are in fact two sides of the same coin for a language-in-education scholar. I have come to recognize the privilege of time, space and resources that my position as a university-based researcher has afforded me over the past 5 years; as a junior fellow of Massey College and a doctoral candidate with the support of an Ontario Graduate schoolship, Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship, Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplement and a Weston Doctoral Fellowship, I have had not only had the privilege of asking questions concerning language and education in multilingual settings but also the privilege of wrestling with them over a sustained period of time as my full-time work. Throughout the process, I have been mindful of the generosity and gracious trust of practicing teachers who invited me into their worlds for 4 -6 months when their overwhelming daily work already included but was not limited to teaching, administration, and service. This classroom-based inquiry would not have been possible without their collaboration so I am mindful and deeply appreciative of the fact that my role as a university-based educational researcher rests upon building collaborative relationships with practicing teachers and honouring their commitment to work with students, families and their communities over the long haul. As a former classroom teacher myself, I hold teachers in high esteem and rather than simply critique their work, I seek to support them by collaboratively coming along side to help identify obstacles and move towards more inclusive language and literacy practice. In the following section, I highlight key concepts that frame this collaborative inquiry.
1.3 Key Terms

Three key terms that I draw on throughout this inquiry originate in francophone scholarship on language learning and teaching: *le plurilinguisme, les représentations sur les langues* and *la didactique (des langues)*. I use the English variants of the first two terms, plurilingualism and language representation respectively and I purposefully directly borrow the French *didactique* as acts of translanguaging. Translanguaging has emerged as a construct for describing how plurilingual individuals purposefully mobilize the diverse resources in their communicative repertoires to negotiate meaning, to construct knowledge and to engage in the world (Garcia & Wei, 2013). While this dissertation is primarily written in English, French concepts, literature and transcripts from my interactions with children and their parents, as well as their teachers throughout this inquiry are generally left in their original form in French. This choice was motivated by my desire to highlight both intercomprehension between languages and the affordance of drawing on the full range of one’s communicative repertoire to construct knowledge and meaning, as well as articulate and share one’s thinking. In addition, by weaving English and French together, I hope that this dissertation on children’s plurilingualism serves also as a model of academic translanguaging in practice.

1.3.1 Plurilingualism (and/or multilingualism)

In the twenty-first century, we have seen a proliferation of terms used in English-language scholarship to describe the practice of multilingualism including but not limited to: biliteracy (Hornberger, 2003), plurililiteracies (Dagenais & Moore, 2008; Garcia, Bartlett & Kleifgen, 2007), translanguaging (Garcia, 2009), polylingual languaging (Jorgensen, 2008), codemeshing (Canagarajah, 2011), translingual practice (Canagarajah, 2012), metrolingualism (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010), multi-competence (Cook, 2007), code-switching and crossing (Rampton, 2014), heteroglossia (Creese & Blackridge, 2014) and plurilingualism (COE, 2001). This diversity of terms highlights the recent “Multilingual Turn” in applied linguistics (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015; Conteh & Meier, 2014; Little, Leung, Van Avermaet, 2014; May, 2013) that represents a significant shift away from monolingual norms that have long dominated the field and language education in particular. In reality, multilingualism is far from new in the sense that multilingualism has historically been the norm around the globe rather than the exception. What is new, however, in the present age of superdiversity (Vertec, 2007; Bloomaert, 2013) and transnational flows (Appadurai, 2009), is a growing recognition of linguistic diversity and
variation, as well as an acceptance of multilingualism as the norm.

While greater interest in multilingualism can similarly be traced through Francophone scholarship, it has not been accompanied by the same explosion of terms as seen in English-language literature. Rather, the multilingual turn has been conceptualized as a paradigm shift vers le plurilinguisme (Bigot, Bretegnier & Vasseur, 2014; Coste, 2013). Following the Cadre Européen Commun de Référence pour les langues (CECR – version française), plurilinguisme refers to the individual’s development of a repertoire of languages and cultures that s/he develops over the course of his or her life and draws on according to need and context. The CECR makes a clear distinction between plurilingualism and multilingualism: whereas multilinguisme refers to “la coexistence de langues différentes dans une société donnée” (COE, 2001, p. 11), plurilinguisme focuses on the individual and the development of the individual’s dynamic cultural and linguistic repertoire over the course of his or her life. Moore and Gajo (Moore & Gajo, 2009; Gajo, 2014) point out that this distinction between societal multilingualism and individual plurilingualism grows out of French scholarship. In addition to this societal-individual distinction, the construct of plurilingualism in French has also been set up in contrast to a traditional view of bilingualism or multilingualism that has typically set the goal for language learning as the equal mastery of two or more separate languages, ideally to the level of a native speaker (see COE, 2001; Piccardo, 2013). According to a traditional conceptualization of bilingualism or multilingualism, languages are kept in relatively strict separation, producing what in Heller’s (2007) terms is described as multiple monolingualisms. Over 30 years ago, Cummins’ (1979, 1981) conceptualizations of a bilingual individual’s Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) and the Interdependence Principle countered this traditional view of language separation by bilinguals and multilinguals. Today, the myth of language separation has been dispelled by empirical scholarship and the myth of monolingualism as global norm, at both the societal and individual levels, has been challenged (Cummins, in press; May, 2014).

Conteh and Meier (2014) have pointed out that the distinction made in French scholarship between plurilinguisme at the individual level and multilinguisme at the societal level has not been paralleled in English-language literature: in English, multilingualism as a construct is used both to describe society and the individual; and, the “Multilingual Turn” in applied linguistics is underpinned by an understanding that individuals develop a network or communicative
repertoire of language and cultural practices across and between their languages rather than developing languages in separately and in isolation. So, if the term multilingualism is recognized within English scholarship as an equivalent translation for both the French terms *multilinguisme* and *plurilinguisme*, why use the English variant “plurilingualism” in this inquiry rather than the more common term “multilingualism”? Surely, if I were writing in French, this discussion about terminology would not be necessary because there is no risk of polysemic confusion; the constructs are generally accepted as distinct. But, as we have seen earlier, the plethora of terms used in English-language scholarly discourse about cultural and linguistic diversity gives us reason to pause and consider why I have purposefully described this inquiry as an investigation of children’s plurilingualism rather than their multilingualism. Is this simply another example of the predisposition of academics to offer new constructs to describe their work? In today’s research climate that prioritizes planning for knowledge mobilization, does not the use of the term “plurilingualism”, a less familiar English variant of the French term *plurilinguisme*, risk making this research less accessible to a wider audience? Conteh and Meier’s (2014) suggest in their book, *The Multilingual Turn in Languages Education: Opportunities and Challenges*, that the choice of whether an author uses multilingualism or plurilingualism “depends largely on the tradition in which the literature was produced” (Kindle, Introduction, Language and Multilingualism: paragraph 1). They highlight contributions by Laurent Gajo (2014), a Swiss scholar and Enrica Piccardo and Joelle Aden (2014), two scholars with French ties, as examples of European scholars who the use of the term plurilingualism in their English-language publications. It should be noted that these scholars have published their work on plurilingualism in French, as well as, in Spanish, German, Italian and English. The use the term “plurilingualism” in their English-language publications clearly references the ethos of plurilingualism promoted across Europe by the Council of Europe since the creation of the CECR/CEFR in 2001. For his part as a world scholar who publishes primarily in English, Cummins (in press) explains that “his preference is to use both terms [multilingualism and plurilingualism] with ‘plurilingualism’ preferred when the communicative goal is to emphasize specifically the dynamic and integrated relationships among language varieties within the individual” (n.p.).

Terminological debate often creates more divisions in the field rather than bringing scholars together to co-construct knowledge and even more critically to act together to bring about
transformative change. At the same time, intramural discussion among scholars about constructs is valuable to the extent that it helps us be(come) more reflexive in our discourse and fosters constructive critique that moves us deeper in our thinking and practice.

For this reason, it is important to define our use of terms clearly and at the same time to remain open to critique. Like Cummins (in press), I use both both multilingualism and plurilingualism with a preference for a plurilingualism in reference to individual’s dynamic use of a plurality of language practices and register. For my part herein, I would suggest that my purposeful use of the term “plurilingualism” in this English-language dissertation can further be read as a visible intertextual sign of scholarly integration of literature and traditions across linguistic boundaries. In the case of this dissertation, this inquiry was designed as a multi-site study with children across English and French schools in Canada and in France. My motivation in theory and in practice was to bridge anglophone and francophone scholarship regarding children’s plurilingualism and bridging language traditions and communities creates occasions for purposeful translanguaging (Garcia & Wei, 2013), codemeshing (Canagarajah, 2011) and/or transfer (Cummins, in press) according to the construct(s) to which one subscribes. While I could have uniformly used the term “multilingualism” throughout this inquiry, I have chosen to use the term “plurilingualism” to describe children’s dynamic practices and representations as a visible sign of the contribution of French scholarship to English scholarship on multilingualism, and as a demonstration in practice of the complex and nuanced understanding we can co-construct by not restricting our scholarship to a single linguistic or even a single disciplinary tradition. (see Moore & Gajo, 2009) I use the English variant of the French plurilinguisme as a discursive sign and visible reminder that my reflections and analysis have been shaped simultaneously by English-language and French-language literature, traditions and fieldwork. I have navigated among both Anglophone and francophone communities, and across a variety of registers of language in the design, implementation and the dissemination of this plurilingual inquiry with children.

Through my interactions with children across schools, I also intentionally introduced this collaborative inquiry as a study of plurilinguisme. Whereas both prefixes pluri- and multi- mean more than one, the prefix “pluri-” evokes a sense of pluralism that provided a heuristic frame for our discussions about children’s experiences of linguistic and cultural diversity at home, at school and in the wider community. As the story of this dissertation unfolded, it became clear that for many students who, at the outset of this collaborative inquiry, might have been reluctant
to describe themselves as being multilingual, came to celebrate themselves as plurilinguals over the course of our collaboration. Within the educational setting of the classroom, children often expressed reluctance towards identifying themselves as multilingual because they had previously received messages, directly or indirectly, that they were not proficient *enough* in a language or languages to be worthy of or to count themselves as being multilingual. The construct of plurilingualism provided an alter(n)ative way of conceptualising multilingualism that created the possibility for children to take on a transformative asset-oriented identity as an individual with a repertoire of cultural and linguistic resources that s/he could continually enrich over the course of his or her life. By using the relatively new term “plurilingualism” throughout our collaborative inquiry, children gained fresh language with which to shift paradigms from a traditional understanding of multilingualism at the individual level as having an end goal of proficiency across 3 or more languages to understanding individual multilingualism as a process of be(com)ing plurilingual by expanding our cultural and linguistic dynamic communicative repertoires. It is difficult to shift paradigms without developing the vocabulary with which to talk about one’s new understanding of the self and the world. Throughout our collaborative inquiry, I invited children and teachers to move towards teaching, learning, and co-researching through a plurilingual paradigm as articulated in the Common European Framework of Reference on Languages (CEFR):

> the plurilingual approach emphasizes the fact that as an individual person’s experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples (whether learnt at school or college, or by direct experience), he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact. In different situations, a person can call flexibly upon different parts of this competence to achieve effective communication with a particular interlocutor. (COE, 2001, p. 4)

The image of the individual’s cultural and linguistic repertoire is central to the plurilingual paradigm: it provides an alter(n)ative starting point for approaching language learning and linguistic identity. According to a plurilingual paradigm, any and every individual can be seen as plurilingual because each person builds on and expands his or her communicative repertoire over the course of his or her life. This holistic dynamic view of plurilingual speakers’ communicative repertoires is the foundation for teaching and learning in multilingual school settings because it positions all learners according to an asset-oriented perspective in terms of the plurality of the
skills and competencies that they possess and can potentially develop. A shift away from binary constructions such as majority-minority, L1-L2, monolingual-bilingual towards a paradigm of linguistic pluralism offers Canadians, in particular, a way of bridging solitudes. An inclusive plurilingual paradigm allows us to go beyond divisions as Anglophones, francophones, and allophones by conceptualizing all Canadians as evolving plurilinguals. “Plurilingualism” and by association of linguistic pluralism do not require us to jettison such traditional, and some even might say foundational, constructs in language education in diverse settings (Cummins, in press). Instead, pluralism invites us to move beyond binary thinking towards paratactic thinking that can allow us to understand home languages, school languages, foreign languages, second languages and language variation more inclusively.

1.3.2 « Répresentations sur les langues » and language representation

The study of répresentations sur les langues originated in European francophone scholarship as language researchers took up the notion of social representation from French social psychology (see Moscovici, 1968, 1984; Moscovici & Jodelet, 1989) as a heuristic lens through which to study how individuals and groups make meaning in multilingual situations, to examine language discourse and to analyze negotiations of language, power and identity. (Dagenais & Jacquet, 2008). “Répresentations sur les langues” refer to the mental images or schemas that people form of languages, language learning and language users. These representations or mental schemas, then, influence how people engage with different languages and their users.

Calvet (1999) elaborates that representations consist of “la façon dont les locuteurs pensent les pratiques, comment ils se situent par rapport aux autres locuteurs, aux pratiques, comment ils situent leur langue par rapport aux autres langues en présence: en bref tout ce qui relève de l’épilinguistique” (p. 158). Language representations then influence:

- Des jugements sur les langues et les façons de les parler, jugement qui souvent se répandent sous forme de stéréotypes.
- Des attitudes face aux langues, aux accents, c’est-à-dire en fait face aux locuteurs que les stéréotypes discriminent.
- Des conduites linguistiques tendant à mettre la langue du locuteur en accord avec ses jugements et ses attitudes. (p.158)

This inquiry sought to understand children’s representations of plurilingualism. Contrary to the old saying that children should be seen and not heard, this inquiry prioritized the voices and
perspectives of children themselves about their experiences of cultural and linguistic diversity and language learning. Through creative praxis, children as researchers of their own plurilingual lives engaged in making visible their representation, schema or mental images of plurilingualism through creative media. These creative representations then scaffolded our conversations and their verbal narratives of experience as plurilingual children. In their reference study on “Social Representations of Language and Teaching,” Castellotti and Moore (2002) explain that language “representations play a crucial role in constructing identity, relationships with others and knowledge. They are neither right nor wrong, and nor are they permanent; rather they enable individuals to categorize themselves and to decide which features they consider relevant in constructing their identity in relation to others” (p. 20). The overarching goal of this inquiry thus was to access children’s representations of plurilingualism as a way of understanding children’s lived experience as plurilinguals and to develop an inclusive framework for teaching and learning through the lens of students’ plurilingualism in multilingual schools in the 21st century.

1.3.3 “Didactique(s) des langues et du plurilinguisme” and language pedagogy

Francophone scholarship generally describes the science of language teaching as “la didactique des langues”. Language teaching and learning in anglophone scholarship, however, is most often discussed in terms of language pedagogy rather than as language didactics. While some may consider the French didactique des langues and English language pedagogy to be interchangeable translations of the same basic concept, I have chosen not to translate the French didactique throughout this dissertation in part as a visual sign of the cultural difference between the two scholarly communities, and to highlight the value of translanguaging as a way of co-constructing knowledge and meaning across languages, cultures and communities.

Caillot (2007), along with others such as Kansanen (2009) and Hopmann and Riquarts (1995), have underlined that the term ‘didactic’ in English carries with it a pejorative, pedantic and moralistic meaning that is not present in the French didactique or the German Didaktik. Furthermore, in her discussion of the distinction between pedagogy and the French term didactique, Allal (2011) explains, “pedagogy is generally considered to be embodied in teachers’ actions and ideas, rather than being focused on teacher–learner transactions” (p. 330). Caillot (2007) underlines that pedagogy as it is often conceptualized in France, relates to the practice of
educational theories of philosophers such as Freinet, Friere and Montessori. The French didactique(s) places much more emphasis on the content of the subject, as well as a more dynamic conceptualization and understanding not only of the teacher’s and the students’ relationship with specific academic content of a subject but also the negotiations of teacher-student relations within the learning space of the classroom.

Over the past 20 years, the study of the didactique du plurilinguisme has emerged in francophone language teaching and learning scholarship and has gained increasing attention across Europe in no small part due to the promotion of plurilingualism by the Council of Europe. Nevertheless, Coste and Simon (2009) have found that even though plurilingualism is increasingly the norm in schools, “individual plurilingualism is unfortunately not in itself a guarantee of acceptance and tolerance of the diversity of others, and this may well be a result of building our identity [in schools] on just one identifying language.” (p. 174-175). Given the growing diversification of student populations in the 21st century in Canada, the goal of this research was to move towards an inclusive plurilingual approach to teaching and learning across English and French schools in Toronto, Ontario. This inquiry was designed to be carried out in Ontario schools in response to the Ministry of Education’s 2009 release of Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (OEIES) which sought to conceptualize students’ multiple diversities as resources for learning and growing inclusive communities.

1.4 Framing Research Questions
This multi-site case study was guided by two primary interconnected research questions about children’s plurilingualism: whereas the first question addresses methodological approaches for engaging children in plurilingual inquiry, the second question takes up how classroom practice in the 21st century might be reconfigured according to a plurilingual paradigm.

1. If we shift from doing research about children’s plurilingualism (adult-driven research paradigm) to engaging with children as co-ethnographers of their own plurilingual language and literacies practices (child-centred research paradigm), what would such a shift entail methodologically? What might a child-centered research paradigm reveal about children’s plurilingualism?
2. If (mainstream) teaching were to be based on a plurilingual paradigm rather than a monolingual one, what would it mean for classroom practice? What would be the advantages and the constraints of such an approach?

1.5 Overview

The following chapter provides a review of literature, divided into two main parts: the first part reviews scholarship across the social sciences concerning the shift from researching about children and youth to researching with them as co-researchers; the second part examines English and French scholarship in the field language learning and teaching with a focus on children’s plurilingualism in schools. In the first part of this review, I briefly trace the shift in the twenty-first century towards engaging children as researchers and methodological innovations for doing so. Then in the second part of this review on language learning and teaching scholarship, I focus on four domains that come together to form the theoretical framework for this inquiry: 1) theories of social representation; 2) plurilingualism; 3) multiliteracies; and 4) the language learner as actor.

Chapter 3 then moves on to describe the strategic design of this collaborative inquiry with children as co-researchers of their plurilingual language and literacies practice at school and at home. First, I begin by explaining the research strategy that guided my decision to conduct a multi-site study with students and teachers from four different school models in Toronto and then to juxtapose these four sites with an additional elementary school in Montpellier, France. I also describe the process of recruitment of teachers, children and their parents. Then, I move on to justify my choice of methods involving an extended university-school partnership engaging children in the creation of a number of individual and collective “identity texts” (Cummins, 2006). These creative plurilingual and multimodal artifacts were complemented by research conversations with students in small groups and semi-structured interviews with their teachers and parents. After outlining data collection procedures, I describe my strategy for analysis, as well as sharing students’ creative works and research representation through a companion website to this dissertation: http://www.iamplurilingual.com. (see Appendix 2: Complementary research website)

Chapter 4 through chapter 7 present findings in response to the first methodological research question: If we shift from doing research about children’s plurilingualism (adult- driven
research paradigm) to engaging with children as co-ethnographers of their own plurilingual language and literacies practices (child-centred research paradigm), what would such a shift entail methodologically and what might it reveal about children’s plurilingualism? These three chapters are structured around the 5 main creative plurilingual multimodal research artifacts that students generated across the five participating school sites: 1) reflexive drawings of monolingual, bilingual and plurilingual individuals; 2) personal language and cultural self portrait collages; 3) home and school language and literacy documenting through digital photography; 4) creative collaborative plurilingual multimodal “identity texts”; 5) reflexive collages of plurilingualism. Through a meta-analysis of each group of artifacts, I reflect on engaging with children as co-researchers through each representational method. Then, by drawing on specific examples of each type of artifact, I present keys themes about plurilingualism that emerged through students’ reflections on both their creative process and the products themselves.

Chapter 8 moves on to present findings related to this study’s pedagogical research question: If (mainstream) teaching were to be based on a plurilingual paradigm rather than a monolingual one, what would it mean for classroom practice? This chapter offers an analytical reflection on my extended collaboration with classroom teachers in English and French schools in Toronto and Montpellier to engage in teaching their existing mandated curriculum through a plurilingual approach. Referring back to the creative plurilingual multiliteracies collaboration carried out in each of the class sites as described in Chapter 4 through chapters 7, I discuss the 5 key elements that emerged as being essential for supporting teaching through the prism of students’ plurilingualism in mainstream classrooms: 1) a view of all students as Plurilingual; 2) inviting and fostering and collaborative Relationships among students, teachers, parents and the wider (global) community; 3) an Inquiry-based approach to language and literacy teaching and learning; 4) prioritizing Space and openness for creative expression; 5) encouraging Multimodal meaning-making. I conclude the chapter by discussing the advantages and the constraints of fostering a situated collaborative creative plurilingual inquiry-based approach to teaching in general across English and French school models.

The concluding chapter summarizes the central argument advanced through this dissertation and acknowledges its limitations. I consider the implications of shifting towards a plurilingual paradigm in the field of language learning and teaching with particular attention to
the implications for policy, methodology and classroom practice. Finally, I point to several lines of inquiry that grow out of this exploratory inquiry with respect to children and youth’s language and literacies practice and creative plurilingual research both in and out-of-school settings.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

2 Children’s representations of plurilingualism

The literature is divided into two main movements: the first movement reviews the shift in New Childhood studies scholarship from researching about children and youth to researching with them as active co-researchers, as well as the emergence of arts-informed methodologies as alter(n)ative modes of inquiry through which children’s voices and perspectives can be seen and heard. The second main movement then examines scholarship in the field of language learning and teaching pertaining to representations of plurilingualism. These two movements are ultimately synthesized to form the conceptual framework for this collaborative inquiry with children as creative co-researchers of their plurilingual lives.

2.1 A new vision of children as creative social actors

Extant research regarding cultural and linguistic diversity in schools has largely focused on adult perspectives on the issue such as teachers’, administrators’ and parents’ perspectives on and goals and strategies for language minority children (Stagg-Peterson & Heywood, 2007, Wiltse, 2006). Children’s accounts of their own multilingual learning experiences, however, have remained marginal in educational research. Children have often been excluded from participating in research based on historical conceptions of childhood that positioned the child as “developmentally immature and incomplete, and therefore unreliable respondents” (Freeman & Mathison, 2008).

Since the international adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, interdisciplinary New Childhood Studies researchers have advocated for a shift from conducting research about children to engaging in research with children as co-researchers and informants (Albanese, 2009; Belanger & Connelly, 2007; Bucknall, 2012; Christensen & James, 2008; Freeman & Mathison, 2009, Mason & Hood, 2010; Kellet, 2005; Prout, 2005). As social scientists have focused on how children and youth construct meaning in their lives, they have come to acknowledge children’s active role in society, “as cocreators of society, not just absorbers of it” (Mathison & Freeman, 2008, p. 4). Brooker (2001) has outlined four main principles that underpin the New Social Studies of Childhood:
1. Chilhood is a distinct and intrinsically interesting and important phase in human experience, valued for its own unique qualities rather than for its resemblance to adulthood.
2. Children are viewed, therefore, as fully formed and complete individuals with a perspective of their own rather than as partially developed, incompletely formed adults.
3. Children are autonomous subjects rather than members (or even possessions) of their family; their parents’ and family members’ interests and views are no longer assumed to be identical to their own.
4. Children have rights of their own, including the right to protection from harm and the right to voice opinions and influence decisions in matters relating to their own lives. (p. 162-163)

While these four principles underline the agency of children and their rights to engage in research not only as participants but also as co-researchers, they do not specify a singular approach for researching with children. Rather, the four principles point to the need to rethink or reimagine how we approach researching with children as co-researchers of their lives rather than researching about children’s experience from and through adult perspectives. Concurrently, within francophone scholarship, Bélanger and Farmer (2004) review the development of a souci de l’enfance in the field of sociology and offer Perrenoud’s concept of “métier d’élève” as a way of understanding the agentive role of children in schools. They highlight the need for recognizing children as legitimate, reflexive actors in educational research:


Rather than proposing one method for engaging children in research, Clark (2004) in particular has advocated the use of ‘a mosaic approach’ in order to develop a full picture of their experience. She underlines the importance of giving children multiple opportunities and ways to represent their perspectives and understanding. This need to approach inquiry in a variety of ways becomes even greater when working with children who speak a diversity of languages. For this reason, this multi-site inquiry invited children as co-researchers to adopt a variety of creative visual and multimodal representational methods to express their perspectives and represent their experience.
Following French scholarship on language learners’ representations of language and learning (Moliné, 2009, 2014; Moore & Castoletti, 2008; Auger, 2010; Stratifili, 2011) as well as anglophone scholarship on arts-based methodologies, creative visual and multimodal methods offer a way of exploring and understanding the voices and experiences of children without limiting them to communicating in a given language (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Bagnolia, 2009; Diaz Soto & Swadener, 2005; Freeman & Mathison, 2009; Leavy, 2009; Thompson, 2008). Creative multimodal research methodologies draw on alternative ways of knowing and being and as such offer insights that may not be revealed through traditional approaches to inquiry. Cahnmann Taylor (2008) traces the emergence of arts-based methods across the social sciences and in language education in particular to the 1980s as a result of the postmodern turn and the crisis in representation in qualitative inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln (2008). Two branches of arts-based methodologies have developed: 1) hybrid forms of artistic and scientific scholarship; and, 2) art for scholarship’s sake. Cole and Knowles (2008) would define the former as arts-informed research or research that is influenced by the arts while not being based in the arts. That is, arts-informed methodologies draw on processes and forms of literary, visual and performing arts to deepen academic inquiry and advance knowledge. (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Cole & Knowles, 2008, Leavy, 2009). One of the hybrid forms of artistic and scientific scholarship has been described by Neilson (2002) as scholartistry. By drawing on their arts, “scholartists bring to inquiry an understanding and sedimented knowing of schooling, education, and learning. They bring to inquiry the artistry of their imaginative powers in the literary and visual arts. These combine to become the skills and insight that unleash the spirit into new territory.” (p. 212).

Through previous arts-informed inquiry (Prasad, 2012), I conceptualized alter(n)ative modes of inquiry as forms of inquiry that draw on alternative (creative) methods that privilege voices and perspectives that have traditionally been excluded in scholarly representation. By placing the (n) of alternative in parentheses, I highlight how setting up in-between creative third spaces in which inquiry can unfold makes room for the transformation of thought and experience. Alter(n)ative modes of inquiry foster an alter-ation of the status quo and produce an alter-ative shift in power and privilege to allow previously unheard voices and unseen perspectives to be seen and heard. As with visual researchers such as Thomson (2008) and classroom based researchers such as Thiessen (2007), transformative change is an intended outcome of alter(n)ative inquiry.

Researching with children invites the use of alter(n)ative modes of inquiry as they offer the
opportunity to scaffold children’s engagement as co-researchers of their plurilingual practices and lived experiences, as well as to enable them to have their creative research representations seen and their voices heard. The subsequent chapter presents the research design for this multi-site inquiry that engaged children in the generation of a variety of representational research artifacts to allow them to make visible complex, insider perspectives on how they themselves understand their plurilingual lives and literacies. While visual and multimodal methods might not seem an obvious choice at first for engaging children in language or plurilingual inquiry, the second movement of this literature review elaborates on the centrality of imagery or representations that learners and speakers have of their languages, their linguistic practices and their language learning environments.

2.2 Theories of Representation

In their review of theories of representation as they have been applied to research on multilingualism, Dagenais and Jacquet (2008) highlight how European researchers have drawn on the notion of la représentation sociale developed in French social psychology (Jodelet, 1984; Jodelet & Moscovici, 1989; Moscovici, 1961, 1984) to “explain how individuals and groups construct collective images of languages, language speakers and language learning through their discursive practices” (Dagenais & Jacquet, p. 42). French and Swiss researchers, in particular, have adapted social representation as a heuristic lens through which to study how individuals and groups make meaning in multilingual contexts, to examine language discourse and to analyze negotiations of language, power and identity. (see Castellotti & Moore, 2002, 2009; Ludi & Py, 2002; Moore, 2001, 2006; Stratilaki, 2011) Castellotti and Moore (2002) explain that “representations play a crucial role in constructing identity, relationships with others and knowledge. They are neither right nor wrong, and nor are they permanent; rather they enable individuals to categorize themselves and to decide which features they consider relevant in constructing their identity in relation to other.” (p. 20). They argue that linguistic and cultural representations are an inherent part of language learning and as such need to be incorporated into language policies and teaching methods. In their more recent work with students in schools, Moore and Castoletti (2009) advance that engaging students in expressing their beliefs about plurilingualism through reflexive drawings offers a powerful way for children and youth to engage in language research:
From her work with teachers working with linguistically diverse students in South Africa, Busch (2010) argues that “processes that influence language use tend to operate unconsciously and cannot easily be verbalized. The switch in mode of representation from word to image helps deconstruct internalized categories, to reflect upon embodied practices and to generate narratives that are less bound by genre expectations” (p. 286). Busch has engaged teachers and students in drawing and colouring language portraits to represent their views of how they use and relate to the languages in their lives.

Similarly, from the field of visual sociology, Gauntlet and Holwarth (2006) elaborate that visual creative methods challenge the traditional notion that the social world can be explored fully through language. Visual creative methods function as “an enabling methodology -- it assumes that people have something interesting to communicate and that they can so do creatively... by inviting participants to create things as part of the research process, it's a different way into a research question... and engages the brain in a different way” (p. 84). A variety of language biographical approaches have been used in recent years in the context of language awareness inquiry and since the adoption of the European Language Portfolio (Armand & Dagenais, 2008; Brohy, 2002; Krumm, 2008; Perregaux, 2002). Auger (2010) has also highlighted the value of moving beyond drawing as a single mode of representation to incorporate a fuller range of artistic practices to help migrant children and youth in France to express their views and experience with diverse languages and cultures:

“Les approches créatives... permettent de déconstruire les stéréotypes négatifs liés au plurilinguisme, à la variation. Elles favorisent la subjectivité de l'élève (donc la prise en charge de ses apprentissages), la motivation, la co-construction des connaissances tout en valorisant les connaissances antérieures (sur les expériences langagières et culturelles). La perspective culturelle permet, de plus, de faire interagir dans des rapports complexes le corps, la parole, les textes, au gré des langues et des pratiques des élèves.” (p. 113)

Although it is less common to find the concept of representation in English scholarship on
language teaching and learning, representation is a cornerstone of cultural studies. Stuart Hall (2001) in particular, has focused on visual representations in the media and how such images and their meanings / interpretations function to contest power, politics and ideology. Hall acknowledges the role language plays and how identity issues emerge through individual and group interpretations of images. He emphasizes how individuals construct their own identities in relation to images they see and interpret in the media. In like manner, Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers and Leggo (2009) describe how individuals’ representations, expressed through their (creative) writing, function like bats use of ecolocation:

[through our creative writing] , we are seeking to locate ourselves in a rapidly growing network of contexts, including family, neighbourhood, community, profession, school and society, by sending our resonances from one embodied and personal location to other embodied personal and public locations... we seek to know our locations in connection with the past, the future, and others, as well as with our unfolding sense of self-identities. (p. 4)

Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers and Leggo (2009) suggest that through literary métissage individuals express their braided identities and that their self-representation through diverse, multiple literary arts both affirms their identities and allows them to locate themselves in relation to the network of contexts that inform their lives. This practice of literary métissage as performed by adults parallels Cummins and Early’s (2011) study of immigrant students’ “identity texts”, which they have described as:

products of students’ creative work or performances carried out within the pedagogical space orchestrated by the classroom teacher. Students invest their identities in the creation of these texts which can be written, spoken, visual, musical, dramatic, or combinations in multimodal form. The identity text then holds a mirror up to students in which their identities are reflected back in a positive light. When students share identity texts with multiple audiences (peers, teachers, parents, grandparents, sister classes, the media, etc.), they are likely to receive positive feedback and affirmation of self in interaction with these audiences. Although not always an essential component, technology acts as an amplifier to enhance the process of identity text production and dissemination. (p. 7)

While Cummins and Early’s conceptualise the creation of identity texts as a powerful pedagogical tool for teachers to “promote equity for marginalized students” (p. 7), I approach students’ creative identity texts herein as research artifacts that allow us to access their representations of plurilingualism. Theories of representation offer the lens through which to analyze the wide range of students’ creative plurilingual identity texts generated through my partnership with teachers and students as we engaged in a transformative multiliteracies
As discussed previously, the study of language representation in French has focused on three overlapping areas: representations of language(s); representations of language learning; and representations of language learner. In applying this tri-partite approach to this study of children’s plurilingualism, I focus on their representations of plurilingualism; their representations of multi / pluri-literacies practice; and their representations of self as plurilingual actors. Figure 2.1 provides a schematic representation of this theoretical framework.

**Figure 2.1: Theoretical framework for studying children’s plurilingualism**

Theories of language representation offer a lens for analyzing children’s representations of plurilingualism. By adopting a triadic focus on children’s representations of languages, learning and the learner, we are able to develop a multi-dimensional understanding of how children understand and make sense of their plurilingual lives. I now discuss in greater detail how I bring the fields of plurilingualism, multiliteracies practice and production, along the notion of the plurilingual actor together in my analysis of children’s representations of plurilingualism.

### 2.2.1 Plurilingualism as a paradigm

Over the past 15 years, the concept of plurilingualism has developed within the field of second language education signifying a shift away from a traditional compartmentalized view of an individual’s use of multiple, but separate languages. A plurilingual paradigm suggests that
individuals develop an inter-related network of a plurality of linguistic skills and practices that they draw on in a variety of contexts. (Coste, 2005; Dagenais & Moore, 2008; Garcia, Bartlett & Kleifgen, 2007; Moore, 2006; Zarate, Lévy & Kramsch, 2008). Whereas multilingualism has traditionally referred to the study of the societal contact of languages, plurilingualism has developed as the study of individual’s repertoires and agency in more than one language (Moore & Gajo, 2009). In addition, as previously explained, the traditional view of multilingual speakers has been historically rooted in a monolingual assumption that such speakers develop separate mastery of multiple languages with the ultimate goal of becoming an ‘idealized native speaker’ in each language. By contrast, more recent sociolinguistic studies have focused on two critical inter-related aspects of plurilingualism:

the bi/plurilingual person uses two or more languages – separately or together – for different purposes, in different domains of life, with different people; and (2) the view that, because of the needs and uses of several languages in everyday life are usually very different, plurilingual speakers are rarely equally or entirely fluent in their languages. (Moore & Gajo, 2009, p.141)

The view that plurilingual speakers possess uneven competence across many languages fosters a focus on the linkages across one’s linguistic repertoire rather than a focus on languages as separate and isolated components (Coste, 2005). This holistic view of the individual’s evolving cultural and linguistic repertoire is the starting point for exploring children’s plurilingualism across English and French schools because it views all learners from an asset-oriented perspective in terms of the plurality of the skills and competencies that they possess rather than in terms of the school language which they may be perceived to lack. Plurilingualism as a paradigm offers inclusive language with which to explore the culturally and linguistic diversity that pervades classrooms today irrespective of the language of instruction and students’ proficiency in the language of instruction. According to a plurilingual paradigm, rather than being identified as Anglophone, francophone, allophone or English language learners, all students in all schools are evolving plurilinguals; all of the languages and cultures that are part of students’ lives at home, at school and in their wider community contribute to their communicative repertoires and can be mobilized as resources for individual and collective learning.

Coste and Simon (2009) articulate the need for educational systems to design and adopt new
models of education based on the evolving diversity of student populations in the twenty-first century, they underline the power of schools to affirm the plurality of students’ diverse identities and even more, to challenge students to develop an appreciation not only for their own plural identities but also the plurality represented in the lives of their fellow members of the learning communities:

If school as an institution is able to recognize, in whatever modest way, a language or linguistic varieties which in some cases are even denigrated by the speakers themselves, then it will succeed not only in enhancing the self-image of youngsters concerned, but also in creating suitable conditions for the development of a complex identity which includes these extra-scholastic languages and varieties as well as heritage languages, rather than excluding them systematically as is so often the case. (p. 177)

Coste and Simon (2009) suggest that a plurilingual curriculum can “contribute to the complexification and deepening of perceptions that social actors have of [cultural and linguistic] plurality, encourage acceptance of difference and tolerance, enhancing social inclusion and cohesion” (p.177). The emergence of plurilingualism as a paradigm has initiated a broader focus not only on la didactique des langues in mainstream classrooms and across the content areas like mathematics, science and history but also towards a didactique du plurilinguisme. In Europe, the study and practice of a didactique du plurilinguisme has gained great currency and support through research programs directed by the European Centre for Modern Languages since 2000. This research explores the relationship between schooling and children’s representations of plurilingualism and their experiences of cultural and linguistic diversity. How do children understand this notion of plurilingualism? What mental images or schemas do they have about the linguistic and cultural diversity in their lives? How do their experiences at home, at school and in their communities inform their representations of plurilingualism? This research shifts from a singular approach to looking at specific linguistic group’s representations of a specific language to adopting a pluralistic approach to working with children across English and French schools to access their representations of plurilingualism.

2.2.2 From Literacy to multiliteracies practice and plurilingual production

In addition to exploring children’s representations of plurilingualism, the second area of language representation that I examine is that of plurilingual students’ diverse literacy practices and production. In my Master’s thesis (Prasad, 2009), I traced the shift from viewing Literacy as a singular construct anchored in the discrete cognitive skills of reading and writing towards a New Literacy Studies conceptualization of literacy as multiple, and encompassing diverse
cultural practices. New Literacy Studies has expanded research perspectives on literacy practices outside the school context and has invited educational practitioners and researchers alike to consider critically a broader understanding of reading and writing across cultural contexts (Collins, 1995; Collins & Blot, 2003; Gee, 1996; Street, 2003). The conceptual shift towards literacies as multiple has problematized the traditional binary opposition of Literacy against Illiteracy (Macedo, 2000; Masny, 2005; Street, 1984). By recognizing the practice of multiple literacies outside the traditional notion of school-based literacy, New Literacy Studies critique an a-social and a-historical understanding of literacy as discrete reading and writing skills and has allowed for the emergence of more culturally sensitive literacy frameworks that incorporate bilingual and multilingual contexts, as well as, the ways in which the proliferation of information and communication technologies has transformed literacy practices and productions.

While the development of the field of New Literacy Studies has created greater acceptance and an inclusive conceptualization of literacy/ies as multiple and as social practice, it should be noted that research on multiliteracies has largely been limited to Anglophone scholarship. Hébert and Lafontaine (2010) explain that even though the plural form of literacies appeared in Anglophone scholarship as early as the 19th century, la littératie in the singular only began to appear in francophone scholarship in the 1990s. Even today, there continues to be discrepancy regarding the form of the term itself in French: littéracie, littératie, etc. Within the last decade however, researchers in francophone settings in Canada, as well as, in Europe and in Africa, have begun to engage questions regarding linguistic and cultural diversity and the development and practice of multiple literacies. Masny (2001) highlights, in particular, the relationship between the evolving definition of what constitutes texts and the multimodal culture within which they are constructed in the twenty-first century. She argues that “l’écrit est un système de notation (ou de représentation), tout comme le système de notation en musique, en mathématiques, en chimie et en français” (2001, p. 14). Thus, she establishes a literacy relationship between the multidimensional process of writing and its product or representation through text. La culture de l’écrit: Les défis à l’école et au foyer (2001) brings together studies with a particular concern to address the integration of social, community and personal literacy practices across the curriculum in the francophone minority settings across Canada.

Dagenais and Moore (2008) further highlight the expansion of multilingual literacies research.
within both anglophone and francophone contexts and Canadian scholarship. Based on their work in both French-language and French immersion schools, they advocate for the adoption of the French term “les répertoires plurilittératiés” as a heuristic lens for new literacies research and pedagogy for increasingly diverse student populations in a globalized knowledge economy.

Drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari, and from educational research in francophone communities over the last decade, Masny (2009) consolidates a French framework for *les littératies multiples* (TLM) or multiple literacies for the twenty-first century. Masny and Waterhouse (2009) present a case study of one plurilingual student, Estrella, who prior to her enrollment in a French-language school kindergarten class in Ottawa, spoke Spanish with her mother, Portuguese with her father and English with her friends. The case of Estrella reflects the experience of growing numbers of students enrolled in schools who draw on more than one language and multiple literacy practices at school, at home and in their wider communities. Masny and Waterhouse (2009) suggest that schools need to respond to growing cultural and linguistic diversity by expanding multiple literacies practices to allow students to respond creatively in potentially unanticipated ways: “Les processus créatifs permettent aux littératies d’aller au-delà des littératies multiples, de les prolonger, de les transformer et de transformer les apprenants” (p. 359). They advocate that an openness to the diverse literacy practices of students like Estrella offer “une voie différente pour formuler la recherche sur le langage et les littératies et élaborer des stratégies d’enseignement et d’apprentissage de manière à offrir des possibilités et des perspectives autres sur l’apprentissage du langage et des littératies” (Masny & Waterhouse, 2009, p. 359).

Moving beyond the conceptualization of multiliteracies towards a pedagogy which builds on multiliteracies, Cummins’ (2009) Transformative Multiliteracies pedagogy takes into account students’ plurilingual resources and advocates for an openness to creative plurilingual multiliteracies production. In brief, Transformative Multiliteracies pedagogy is based upon the multiliteracies framework proposed by the New London Group (1996) that conceptualizes literacy as encompassing not only the cognitive skills associated with reading and writing, but also the social practices associated with language. Multiliteracies theory and practice has been increasingly taken up in English and French school settings in Canada. Cummins (2009) integrates the components of the New London Group’s multiliteracies with transformative
practice to support the literacies development and practice of culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

This additive orientation language learning is central to Cummins’ (2009) Transformative Multiliteracies Pedagogy (TMP). His conceptualization of TMP is based upon the multiliteracies framework proposed by the New London Group (1996) that conceptualizes literacy as encompassing not only the cognitive skills associated with reading and writing, but also the social practices associated with language. The New London Group (1996) originally articulated four dimensions involved in a pedagogy of multiliteracies: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing and transformed practice. Cummins (2009) integrates these dimensions with particular focus on transformative practice to support the literacies development and practice of CLD learners. Cummin’s TMP counters the traditional deficit construction of the minority language learners. It is built on the following five principles:

1. TMP constructs an image of the student as intelligent, imaginative, and linguistically talented; individual differences in these traits do not diminish the potential of each student to shine in specific ways.
2. TMP acknowledges and builds on the cultural and linguistic capital (prior knowledge) of students and communities.
3. TMP aims explicitly to promote cognitive engagement and identity investment on the part of students.
4. TMP enables students to construct knowledge, create literature and art, and act on social realities through dialogue and critical inquiry.
5. TMP employs a variety of technological tools to support students’ construction of knowledge, literature, and art and their presentation of this intellectual work to multiple audiences through the creation of identity texts. (Cummins, 2009, p. 50-51).

Pahl and Roswell (2007) have similarly made a case for examining children’s multimodal literacy productions or texts as artifacts into which students’ multiple or layered identities sediment. Lotherington and Jenson (2011) have strongly advocated the necessity of supporting students’ use of multimodal literacies in a knowledge-based mobile economy. Lotherington’s work on students’ digital literacies highlights the need for schools in the twenty-first century to move beyond two dimensional literacy practices that have traditionally been limited to paper-based reading and writing to include students’ access and development of dynamic three dimensional, interactive literacies. In a similar vein, through their school-university research collaborations, Smythe, Dagenais and Toohey (2014) have developed the concept of “production pedagogies” to describe the complex multiliteracies practice embedded in video production for
meaningful social engagement. The shift from approaching Literacy as a set of discrete skills to multiliteracies as social practice and on towards plurilingual literacy/ies production as social engagement repositions learners as social actors who through their creative multimodal and plurilingual texts contribute to the transformation of social realities.

2.2.3 Language learner as plurilingual social actor

Language learning and teaching has also seen a shift in the reconceptualization of the student from a singular view of the student as language learner to a multi-dimensional understanding of the student as a plurilingual social actor. In his sociological theorization of the *Plural Actor* (2011), Lahire questions the traditional analysis of the individual in isolated contexts or from a singular dimension. Instead, he argues,

> We live experiences that are varied, different and sometimes contradictory. A plural actor is thus the product of an - often precocious - experience of socialization in the course of their trajectory, or simultaneously in the course of the same period of time in a number of social worlds and occupying different social positions. We can therefore propose the hypothesis of the embodiment by each actor of a multiplicity of schemes of actions (sensory-motor, perception, language, movement, etc.) and habits (of thinking, language movement...), organized around so many repertoires and the pertinent social contexts that they learn to distinguish -- and often to name -- via the ensemble of their previous socialization experiences. (p. 31-32)

Lahire argues that as social scientists, we must consider the ways in which a plurality of worlds and experiences are integrated into the fabric of each person’s being and that in order to understand a person, we must observe their actions in a variety of settings. Lahire’s theorization of the individual as a plural actor offers a particularly helpful frame for analysing children’s plurilingual identities. The shift towards seeing language learners as social actors reframes students from being passive disembodied vessels, waiting to be filled with a new language at school, to becoming active and engaged community members who mobilize their diverse repertoires to make meaning of their world and to make meaningful contributions to their communities.

Kramsch (2009) similarly advocates a shift from towards conceptualizing students of foreign languages as multilingual subjects. In an age of transnational mobility and with the proliferation of information and communication technologies, language teaching and learning increasingly involves complex negotiations among teachers and students with diverse linguistic and cultural repertoires. Kramsch (2009) explains that
if language is one symbolic system among many through which our bodies and minds apprehend themselves and the world around them, then speaking or writing another language means using an alternative signifying practice, that orients the body-in-the-mind to alternative ways of perceiving, thinking, remembering the past and imagining the future. Each of the languages we speak adds its unique dimension to our signifying self that, in its efforts to maintain its autonomy, its continuity and coherence, struggles to become a multilingual subject. (Kindle location 4619)

She further underlines that “what teachers are often faced with today are learners with embodied memories of various languages acquired in various circumstances and with varying degrees of proficiency. Even if these languages have not been learned in any formal manner, they are visible and audible in the streets, online, and in the many multilingual encounters of modern life” (Kindle location 4663). While Kramsch’s work on the multilingual subject has focused on foreign language teaching and learning, Coste and Simon (2009) conceptualize all students in the twenty first century as plurilingual social actors and from a plurilingual paradigm, they assert that the “function of school has changed radically. Its aim is no longer to prepare each pupil to become a conforming adult within a nation presented as homogenous, united, sharing the same history, the same references and all the same values. School should not generate a purely personal, unified and stable image of individual identity” (p. 175). Instead they underline the need for the schools to affirm the plurality of students’ identities as a way of supporting the growth of inclusive democratic citizenship and the struggle against exclusion. In the language classroom or across the content area, teaching and learning in the 21st century must move beyond language instruction as the only end goal of education to include a more holistic approach to students as social actors.

In this chapter, I have reviewed how theories of representation have been taken up in the French study of la didactique des langues and du plurilinguisme and in English cultural studies scholarship. What emerges across both scholarly communities is a shared understanding that individuals draw on symbolic representations of language(s) and of plurilingualism as they construct their plural identities. To frame children’s representations of plurilingualism that are taken up in this dissertation, I have traced in this review three shifts that grow out of a paradigm of plurality as it relates to the three areas of language representation: 1) a shift from a monolingual view of languages to a plurilingual one; 2) a shift from the conceptualization of Literacy as monolithic towards an situated understanding of multiliteracies as social practice and
plurilingual production as social engagement; and finally, 3) a shift from a view of the language learner as a passive student towards seeing all learners as plurilingual social actors.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

To conclude this review of literature, Figure 2.2 integrates a New Childhood Studies approach with theories of language representation to provide a schematic representation of the conceptual framework for this multi-site inquiry.

![Conceptual Framework Diagram]

**Figure 2.2: Conceptual Framework**

Children are at the centre of this multi-site inquiry: they were active co-researchers, who through the use of creative and multimodal methods, made visible their representations of plurilingualism. This multi-site inquiry analyzes not only children’s representations of their plurilingualism but also considers what their representations show us about language and education policies in school, classroom praxis and in working with children as co-researchers in language inquiry in the 21st century. Cultural and linguistic diversity continue to be the norm across classrooms around the world, regardless of the language of instruction and the instructional content. This conceptual framework supports collaborative inquiry with children in
order to support them in their learning in their classrooms, as well as in their positioning as plurilingual social actors in their diverse communities.
Chapter 3
Research Design

This chapter describes the design of this qualitative creative inquiry with children as co-researchers of their plurilingual language and literacies practice at school and at home. Because I sought to engage with children as co-researchers, I purposefully drew on creative visual and multimodal methods that could actively engage them in reflecting on their plurilingualism. In addition to understanding children’s representations of plurilingualism, I also sought to understand how different school models including English (only), French Immersion, French-language and bilingual, could support children’s plurilingualism while at the same time delivering their academic programmes and linguistic mandates. I followed Stake’s (2013) multiple case study model with five different school cases. While each case study could stand alone as an investigation of plurilingual teaching and learning within its particular model, this dissertation brings together all five cases studies for two purposes: first, to analyze children’s representations of plurilingualism across school models; second, to work towards a research-based framework that is inclusive not only of children’s plurilingual repertoires but also divergent school models. Although each of the school cases in this study subscribed to different linguistic mandates, all five schools shared a high level of cultural and linguistic diversity across their student populations. While separate, uncoordinated efforts have been made within specific school models to take children’s plurilingualism into account in teaching and learning, there has not been a study in Canada that has sought to coordinate research across different models. The impetus for this multi-site inquiry was not rooted in a desire necessarily to compare different school models in order to critique them but rather through an iterative analytic process to learn from each model in order to build an inclusive plurilingual framework for teaching and learning in the 21st century.

Through this chapter, I explain the research strategy that guided my decision to conduct a multi-site study with students and teachers from four different school models in Toronto and then to juxtapose these four sites with an additional elementary school in Montpellier, France. I also describe the process of recruitment of teachers, children and their parents. Then, I move on to justify my choice of methods involving an extended university-school partnership engaging children in the creation of a number of individual and collective “identity texts” (Cummins, 2006). These creative plurilingual and multimodal artifacts were complemented by both informal
and guided research conversations with students in small groups, as well as semi-structured interviews with their teachers and parents. After outlining data collection procedures, I describe my qualitative analysis strategy. Finally, I explain how I decided to share students’ work and represent emerging themes, findings and implications through a companion website to this dissertation: http://www.iamplurilingual.com.

3 Overall Research Design
To date, many studies of multiliteracies classroom practice have adopted a qualitative design in order to provide rich descriptions of teachers’ practices and students’ work (e.g. Cummins, 2009; Lotherington, 2007; van Enk, Dagenais, Toohey, 2005; Smolin, 2010; Stille, 2011). In this qualitative study, students’ individual and collaborative creation of plurilingual identity texts supported their reflection on and representation of their plurilingual practices. The goal of this inquiry was to understand how children make sense of cultural and linguistic diversity and in particular of their own plurilingual language and literacies practices. Through many informal interviews or “research conversations” as they came to be called over the course of the study, students shared, interpreted and analyzed the plurilingual artifacts they created over the course of their 4-6 month school-university partnership. Teachers’ and students’ prolonged collaboration with me allowed us to develop a sustained, thoughtful reflection on the cultural and linguistic diversity that pervades schools both in large international cosmopolitan cities, like Toronto, as well as in smaller cities like Montpellier, in France. Figure 4 provides a schematic representation of the general sequence of data generation and analysis within each school case study.
Figure 3.1: Schematic representation of school case study data generation

Five different classes ranging from grade 4 to grade 6 were included in this multi-site study; the first 4 classes were from schools located in Toronto, Canada and the fifth class was from a school in Montpellier, France: 1) an official majority language English public school; 2) a French immersion public school; 3) an official minority French-language language public school; 4) a French private school; 5) a French public school that also offered Occitan as a regional language and English as a foreign language. Whereas much extant literature concerning multiliteracies practice and cultural and linguistic diversity has focused on teachers and students in second language programmes, this inquiry was primarily interested in how children in mainstream classrooms are making sense of the cultural and linguistic diversity around them and their own plurilingualism. This shift in focus towards cultural and linguistic diversity in mainstream classrooms grew out of the recognition of the increasing diversity of publics across all of the five aforementioned school models. Each school model was selected purposefully because of its distinct language policies that determine the language of instruction in the classroom and also shapes students’ and teachers’ language use outside of the classroom such as on the playground and in school-home correspondence. My goal in designing this multi-site study was to move beyond the traditional “two solitudes” monolingual paradigm that has largely dominated Canadian research in language and literacies studies in education (Dagenais, 2013). Researchers and practitioners alike have tended to focus their attention on phenomena and practices within the specificity of one schooling model in isolation, be it English schools, French-language minority schools or French immersion schools. In recent years, there has been a call for greater
collaboration across the English-French divide in Canadian scholarship both in terms of bridging theory and practice. To date, however, no study has investigated an issue such as children’s plurilingualism across English, French immersion and French-language schools. Given that cultural and linguistic diversity has come to pervade schools in 21st century, the driving force behind this study was to explore from a meta-perspective on how children make sense of their plurilingualism across various models of English and French schooling in Canada in order to support teachers working with plurilingual students across all school models.

3.1 Recruitment
I set out to recruit one Greater Toronto Area (GTA)-based junior level (grade 4-6) teacher and his/her class as a case study from each of the following public school models: 1) a mainstream English school; 2) a French immersion school; and, 3) a French-language school. Toronto’s highly CLD population combined with the presence of all three school models within the city made it a particularly rich setting for this multi-site inquiry. I limited participation to grade 4-6 classes to focus on children who were learning at least two languages at school. In Ontario, students are required to begin instruction in their second official language in grade 4. Thus, by working with teachers and students in grade 4 – 6, I could assure that all students were receiving instruction in English and in French and that they could all potentially consider that they were in the process of becoming bilingual or plurilingual. In addition to these three public school models, I also recruited a grade 5 teacher and his students from a French private school in the GTA. The grade 5 English teacher also accepted to collaborate in this project. The French private school provided an opportunity to engage with students who had been learning in English and French from Kindergarten. This school also offered semi-private Mandarin classes from the age of 6 for which parents could pay an additional fee for their children to be enrolled at lunch or after school. In Grade 6, students were required to take a third foreign language: German or Spanish. At the time of the study, students and their parents were in the process of deciding what additional language to take the following year. Plurilingual development was part of the curricular expectations followed by the school.

Upon completion of the four case studies in the GTA, my observations at the French private school, the French-language (minority) school and the French immersion school, led me further to recruit a French public school in Montpellier, France as a fifth case study. I had noted
throughout my collaborations with teachers of French as a first language and French as a second language, a greater openness towards experimenting with supporting students’ plurilingualism than in the English mainstream school. When these teachers made conscious efforts to support their students’ plurilingualism, the students too demonstrated greater capacity to make connections among the languages in their communicative repertoires. I was thus motivated to conduct a fifth case study in a French school in a francophone majority setting in order to juxtapose my observations and findings in the 4 Greater Toronto Area, Ontario, Canada case studies. With the support of a Weston doctoral fellowship and a Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplement from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, I recruited a French public school in Montpellier, France. Rather than recruiting a public school in Quebec, I choose to complete the fifth case study in France for two reasons: first, the private French school case followed the same curriculum as the public schools in France and would therefore lend itself to comparison on a programmatic level; second, a growing body of research concerning the didactique du plurilinguisme in francophone Europe has evolved over the last 20 years and I felt compelled to compare how Canada might cross not only the two solitudes divide but also the North American – European boundaries to share practices for developing plurilingual instruction to support global citizenship in the increasingly mobile 21st century.

Because the plurilingual multi-literacies classroom collaboration was designed and implemented with classroom teachers in each school, all students participated in all the related activities. Full class participation was sought in each case; a minimum of 12 participants per class was required in order to proceed with the classroom intervention. In each case, at least 90% of students and their parents consented to participation. One hundred and six students were included in this research across all 5 schools. Table 3.1 illustrates the breakdown of the number of students per school case. The name of each school appears in the principal language of instruction in each case.
Table 3.1: Table of student participants per school case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Case</th>
<th>Students in class</th>
<th>Students participating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>École française privée</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English public school</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French immersion school</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>école de langue française</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>école élémentaire publique</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>118</strong></td>
<td><strong>106</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although children were principal actors in this study, I complemented the analysis of their language portraits, plurilingual drawings, plurilingual identity texts, and classroom observation with interviews with teachers and parents. With each case, I sought the participation of the classroom teacher and the second-official-language teacher (e.g. FSL in English schools; English in French-language schools). Other interested teachers and administrators were also invited to participate. In addition to interviewing teachers and engaging them in the transformative classroom multiliteracies interventions, I invited parents to participate by offering feedback and their reflections through interviews or through e-mail correspondence.

All children and their parents, as well as teachers and administrators were provided with consent forms explaining that participation was completely voluntary and could be terminated at any point. In the case of students, parental consent was obtained and children assented orally. Copies of informed consent forms and an oral assent script are included in Appendix 3: Research Consent Forms and Oral Assent Script. Copies of ethics review approvals are included in Appendix 4: Ethics Review Approvals.

3.2 Data Generation

The shift towards conducting research with children rather than on them necessitates a shift in research methods and practices. I use the construct alter(n)ative inquiry to describe research practices that engage participants in alternative (versus traditional) modes of expression and representation, as well as in alter-ative, empowering interactions that promote participants’ reflexive co-construction of knowledge and meaning through the research process (Prasad, 2013, 2014). I purposefully construct the term alter(n)ative inquiry to make explicit the ways in which
words or signs can be read differently. I seek to draw out the multiple meanings embedded in the construct of alter(n)ative inquiry: first, the understanding of alternative as different, but legitimate, ways of building knowledge (epistemology); and second, the evocation of the sense of the potential alter-ative change that can be produced by including non-traditional methodologies in research. Alter(n)ative, non-traditional approaches invite greater participation and representation of the views of CLD participants, and particularly of children, in research (Bochner, 2000). I draw on the poetic function of language by placing the $n$ within parentheses, both to signify and to highlight visually the transformative nature of bhabha’s (1994) in-between notion of third space. What happens to our reading of multimodal research texts or artifacts and, in the Freirian sense, of the world, when we invite alter(n)ative practices, representations and interpretations into our research and teaching repertoires? By putting the letter $n$ of the word alternative in-between parentheses, I suggest that the effect of adopting alternative methods can in fact be alter-ative for the researcher, the participants and the research itself. As researchers, we expand our understanding of diverse perspectives; and, diverse research participants express their voices in empowering ways that enable us to work together to co-construct knowledge and meaning. This multi-site study involved a mosaic of methods including more traditional methods such as semi-structured interviews, observation and note-taking as well non-traditional methods such as drawing, photography, multimodal bookmaking and collage.

Applied linguistics research has traditionally privileged language-based methodologies that focus on the data in a single mode – the verbal mode. As such, language and literacy scholarship has understandably drawn heavily on linear methods such as surveys, interviews, and participant journals. In this inquiry, however, I set out to engage children as co-researchers. Traditional methods posed a challenge to conducting this collaborative inquiry with plurilingual children. I thus embraced the opportunity to experiment with the use of non-linear, visual/semiotic and multimodal methods. I sought methods that would be inclusive of and responsive to the full range of plurilingual children’s communicative repertoires.
Figure 3.2: Traditional and alter(n)ative methods in applied linguistics

Figure 3.3 illustrates how I conceptualize this move from traditional linear-verbal approaches towards including alter(n)ative, creative non-linear visual methods in applied linguistics and education scholarship. In the top left quadrant appear traditional language-based that support linear dialogic exchange between the researcher and participants and are largely dependant on the verbal as a primary mode of expressing thoughts, feelings and perspectives. If we move across to the top right quadrant, we find methods such as theatre and poetry that have been taken up more experimentally in language and literacy scholarship. Theatre and poetry are still largely contingent on the verbal mode for carrying their message but they open up the possibility for more non-linear interaction and exchange. They rely on the co-construction of research representations by the researcher with participants. Examples of this type of research include ethnographic plays, performed readers’ theatre and interview and focus groups transcript poems, to name a few. (Cahmnn-Taylor, 2008, 2009; Goldstein, 2001; Prasad, 2012). Finally, we can move down to the bottom right quadrant where we find methods that prioritize visual, multimodal and non-linear modes of inquiry and representation. I include in this quadrant drawing, photography and collage which are all more dependent on the visual than on the verbal. That is, images are used to represent thoughts, feelings and perspectives rather than words. In addition, these visual modes resist a linear or singular entry: there is no set starting point or ending point as in an interview or journal entry, there is a more holistic engagement in the representation and interpretative processes. Other methods could certainly be added to this
schematic representation of methods according to linear-non-linear / verbal-visual and multimodal continua but for the purposes of this study with children, I prioritized the use of creative visual non-linear methods as a way of inviting children into the co-construction of knowledge about and meaning of plurilingualism in their daily lives.

3.3 Plurilingual Multiliteracies Classroom Collaboration

Each plurilingual multiliteracies classroom collaboration was designed to take place over approximately 10 weeks, as agreed to by the participating classroom teacher, school administrator and school board. The collaboration involved students in a number of individual and group activities that generated a range of representational artifacts. The motivation to engage students in a variety tasks was to enable them to become co-ethnographers of their own language and literacy practices. Because of the exploratory nature of this inquiry with children as researchers, a number of different representational methods were brought together. Clark (2005) advocates that when researching with children, a ‘mosaic’ of the representational artifacts should be generated throughout the inquiry: “The name, the Mosaic approach, was chosen to represent the bringing together of different pieces or perspectives in order to create an image of children’s worlds, both individual and collective. The Mosaic approach combines the traditional methodology of observation and interviewing with the introduction of participatory tools (p. 13).”

Six elements define Clark’s (2005) Mosaic approach for engaging children in research: 1) a multi-methods approach that recognizes the plurality of children’s languages and mode of expression; 2) a participatory approach that positions children as experts and agents in their own lives; 3) a reflexive approach that includes children along with adults in co-constructing meaning; 4) an adaptable approach that can be used across a variety of institutions; 5) an approach that privileges a focus on children’s direct lived experiences rather than knowledge about them indirectly; and 6) an approach that is embedded into practice that provides a framework for listening to children and offers them the opportunity to be in charge of how their contributions are represented. According to a Mosaic approach, each tool forms a piece of the mosaic. While Clark’s Mosaic approach was developed to work with young children as researchers, it lent itself as an initial design metaphor for this research with elementary students. At the outset, I gathered a mosaic of tools to access students’ representations of plurilingualism
including: 1) reflexive drawing; 2) self portraits; 3) home and literacy digital photography, 4) plurilingual multimodal book-making; and 5) collage.

3.3.1 Reflexive Drawings

Drawing as method has been taken up increasingly in the field educational research (Theron, Mitchell, Smith and Stuart, 2011) and specifically in the context of Anglophone scholarship on literacy (Kendrick and McKay, 2009, 2011) and francophone scholarship on representations of plurilinguisme and language learning (Molinié, 2009, 2014). In this inquiry, I drew on Molinié’s (2009) work on *le dessin réflexif* as a way of having students express their understanding of what it means to be monolingual, bilingual and plurilingual. This drawing activity also allowed me to introduce the notion of plurilingualism, which was a new term for many of the children in Toronto-based schools. For this activity, I prepared a sheet of paper with four equal boxes and numbered them from one to four. (see Appendix 3: Creative Visual Tools) I directed students in the following way: 1) in the first box, draw a monolingual person; 2) in the second box, draw a bilingual person; 3) in the third box, draw a plurilingual person; and, 4) in the fourth box, draw yourself. Rather than having students create a single drawing such as Castoletti and Moore (2009) and Leconte (2009) who had students draw what happens inside the head of someone who speaks multiple languages, I asked students to represent the differences between monolingual, bilingual and plurilingual individuals and then to represent themselves according to the representational scheme they developed in their first three drawings. In keeping with my objective to help children become researchers of their own languages and pluri-literacies practice, I had students draw their visual definition of key terms and then to locate themselves as reflective researcher according to these definitions. This creative process of definition mirrors the initial stage in the qualitative inquiry process where researchers articulate the meaning they ascribe to key terms of reference and also locate themselves within their research. As students completed their drawings, they explained them to me in a brief research conversation. These short conversations occurred repeatedly throughout the classroom intervention. I audio recorded these brief conversations with a digital recorder that I kept with me as I circulated in the classroom during whole class activities. I also recorded notes in my journal or on post-it notes that were later included in my journal. (Post-it notes were more discrete and less cumbersome to write on while actively engaged with students.) Once all students had finished their drawings, I engaged students in groups of 2 or 3 in guided research conversations; typically these
conversations took place in the hallway or in another space outside of the classroom. During this research conversation, students presented their language portraits and their plurilingual drawings to one another and to myself. I asked questions to clarify my understanding and I invited students to ask questions of one another as well. I also asked them to draw comparisons between what was similar and different between their portraits and their drawings as a way of engaging them in a process of analysis and reflection.

3.3.2 Language and cultural self-portraits

At the outset of the study, I invited children to introduce themselves to me by creating language and cultural self-portraits that reflect their cultural and linguistic communicative repertoires. I developed the linguistic self-portrait conceptual tool for children based on Busch’s (2006, 2010) model for adult learners and teachers. I had experimented with Busch’s language portrait approach through a previous inquiry in Burkina Faso (Prasad, 2008; 2011), as well as through Dr. Diane Farmer’s SSHRC inquiry *Mobilités et transnationalisme : histoires d’enfants et de jeunes dans la rédéfinition de l’espace scolaire (2009-2012)* (Farmer, 2012; Farmer & Prasad, 2014; Prasad, 2014). Krumm (2008) and Martin (2012) provide additional examples of language portraits with children. In my adaptation of this activity for this study, students began by creating a paper collage as a background for their self-portraits. Students first associated a colour with each language or culture they considered to be a part of their lives. Then, they tore or cut pieces of coloured paper to represent proportionally their relationship to each language or culture; that is, a student might have used more of one colour to illustrate that he feels a stronger attachment to the corresponding language, or a student might use less of a colour to demonstrate her limited use of that language in her daily life. After completing their paper collage background, students cut out a black and white outline of their body generated in Photoshop from a personal individual digital photograph. This body silhouette served as map on which they located the different languages and cultures that play a role in their life. Students made choices regarding the colours they used to represent each language, as well as where they placed each language or culture on their body. This creative representational process encouraged students to reflect about the languages and cultures in their lives and to use colour and embodied metaphors to describe their feelings, use and relationship with each language and culture in their communicative repertoire. While students worked on creating their language and cultural self-portraits, I circulated around the classroom and engaged in informal “research conversations” with students while they were
working. I took notes on post-it notes or in my journal of my observations and students’ reflections. Once students were finished creating their self-portraits, we met in small groups of 2 or 3 students for semi-structured interviews or guided research conversations during which students shared with one another and with me their language biographies using their portrait to scaffold their narratives. In my conscious effort to see students as co-researchers in this inquiry, I describe these semi-structured group interviews with students as “guided research conversations” to emphasize our shared ownership for the discussions that unfolded. Rather than only me posing questions to students, I encouraged students to share in asking one another their own questions. I supplemented the discussion by asking questions or commenting to invite students to clarify their narratives and the meanings associated with various elements in their language portraits. In every activity throughout our school-university partnership, I encouraged teachers as well to create their own artifacts. In particular, teachers shared their portraits with me in a semi-structured interview that involved telling me their language biography. Instructions for generating body silhouettes and for creating self-portraits are included in Appendix 3.

3.3.3 Literacy Linguistic Landscape Mapping

After the creation of self-portraits and drawings, students used digital cameras to map the linguistic landscapes of their school and home. Following recent studies including Dagenais, Moore, Sabatier, Lamarre and Armand (2009) and Smythe and Toohey (2009), students first worked in groups to document through digital photography “reading and writing in any language or mode” at school. As co-researchers, students then analyzed photos by categorizing them according to themes they generated amongst themselves. In this way, students were engaged in the analysis of the visual data generated through photography, as well as in the documentation of literacy practices and linguistic diversity at school. Upon completing this group photography exercise at school, individual students borrowed digital cameras to photograph their reading and writing in any language and any mode in their home life environments. In the context of another research conversation with myself, students were invited to group their photos into self-generated categories. This contributed to the joint analysis of students’ home language and literacy practices. Finally, students compared photographs taken at school and photographs taken at home via a Venn diagram to reflect on similarities and differences between school literacy practices and home literacy practices. It was critical for students to have hard copies of photos to sort into themes and analyze: the act of manipulating visible indicators of language and literacy
once again allowed thinking to be made explicit.

Analysis of children’s syncretic literacies (Gregory, 2013) across both home and school environments also fostered reflection regarding how plurilingual teaching and learning could support children in drawing on the full range of their cultural and linguistic repertories in mainstream classrooms. Gregory, Volk and Long (2013) underline that “although tension is inherently part of the syncretic process, the emphasis is on ensuring harmony rather than discord and on creativity rather than destruction” (p. 312). In this way, children’s hands-on analysis of their home and school photos created space for them to identify and to recognize not only the languages and literacies in their lives but also those in the lives of their classmates. While photography supported identification and recognition of students’ diverse resources, hands-on analysis supported collaborative affirmation of the vast pool of shared resources at the disposal of the entire classroom community. Individual identification and collaborative affirmation of children’s diverse language and literacy resources then supported the creative mobilization of those resources through the creation of plurilingual and multimodal books.

3.3.4 Plurilingual Multimodal ‘Identity Text’ Creation

While students took turns borrowing digital cameras to take language and literacy photos at home, I worked with the classroom teacher to engage students in the creation of plurilingual multimodal identity texts. Cummins (2006) defines students’ “identity texts” as

> the products of students’ creative work or performances carried out within [the pedagogical space of the classroom]... insofar as students invest their identities in these texts (written, spoken, visual, musical, dramatic or combinations in multimodal form) that then hold a mirror up to students in which their identities are reflected back in a positive light. When students share identity text with multiple audiences... they are likely to receive positive feedback and affirmation of self in interaction with these audiences. (p. 60)

The parameters of students’ plurilingual identity texts were determined collaboratively with the classroom teacher and his/her students in relation to cross-curricular grade-level expectations. I encouraged teachers to have students work in groups to create plurilingual, multimodal books in order to facilitate students’ encounter with different languages with which they were not familiar. In each case, the end product was a printed and electronic illustrated book that included school language(s) and students’ home languages. In cases where students could not read or write in
their home language, children worked with family members, relatives or other community members to translate their texts. The books showcase students’ cultural and linguistic communicative repertoires as well as their creativity. Students were responsible for developing their stories and their illustrations and also for producing a recording of themselves reading their books out loud.

3.3.5 Collage

The final creative visual plurilingual artifact that students were asked to create was a magazine collage. I asked students individually to create a collage in response to the following prompt: How does it look and feel to be plurilingual? The only criteria for students beyond responding to the prompt was that they needed to cover their entire page; that is, they were not allowed to leave large spaces blank. This constraint was given for two reasons: 1) from an aesthetic point of view, photo collages are more visually appealing when the entire canvas is used, and by challenging students not to leave “white space”, they were led to build depth into their work by layering and overlapping images; 2) from a creative point of view, the requirement of covering their entire canvas challenged students to go deeper in their reflection. Students needed to use a variety of images to represent how they felt it looks and feels to be plurilingual in order to make use of the whole space. Because selecting one, two or even three images would not be sufficient to cover their canvas, students were challenged to go beyond their initial ideas to find multiple ways to express their plurilingualism. Butler-Kisber (2010) explains that in collage, “the creator seeks the fragments and glues them together to express a feeling or a sense of an experience or phenomena rather than a particular idea. She works from the ‘heart to the head’ and in this way permits ‘reseeing, relocating, and connecting anew’ (Mullen, 1999, p. 292)” (p. 104). Collage lends itself to supporting individuals in making their representations of language and plurilingualism tacit. The individual image fragments provide clues into personal associations with students’ experiences be(com)ing plurilingual.

For this activity, I provided students with magazine pages with a variety of images. After carefully cutting out their images, they overlapped, juxtaposed, and combined them to represent their thinking about their individual plurilingualism. Students’ collages resist a traditional linear written description. The evocative juxtaposition and layering of images invites multiple viewings and readings. Students attached unique, personal meanings to the images within their collages. They described their reasoning through a reflective research conversation with me and often with
1 or 2 of their peers. These conversations were digitally audio recorded at first. Towards the end of the study, I also started having students narrate their collages using the iPad application called, “Explain Everything”. This app allowed students to take a photo of their collage and then record their voices and hand movements pointing to various images as they talked. An example of one student’s video retelling about her plurilingual collage is accessible via the following link: http://www.iamplurilingual.com/collages.html

3.4 Research conversations with children

Students participated in “research conversations” throughout activities related to the plurilingual multiliteracies collaboration including their self-portraits, family language maps, photos of their home linguistic landscape and their collages. Research conversations were often spontaneous conversations that unfolded while students were working on the various plurilingual activities in this study. Some of the time, these conversations were captured on digital audio recording but at other times, classroom recordings were difficult to decipher because of background noise and competing conversations surrounding the child and myself. In such instances, my observation notes served to preserve the children’s reflections and insights, as well as my own. I also conducted guided research conversations with students. The group discussion format helped to mediate the power differential between the researcher and child participants (Soto & Swadener, 2005). Research conversations and group discussions provided more open-ended reflection on both the process and products of students’ creative multimodal plurilingual creation. I also interviewed the classroom teacher and willing parents to get their feedback on their children’s literacy engagement and development through the plurilingual multi-literacies intervention. Interviews with parents elicited their views on their children’s identity texts as well as students’ home literacy activities. Sample interview protocols are included in appendix 4: Sample Interview protocols.

3.5 Interviews with adults (teachers, administrators and parents)

As mentioned earlier, the language and education policies that underpin instruction across English, French immersion and French-language minority schools in Toronto, Ontario can be very different both in theory and in practice. In Canada, language policies and official bilingualism are mandated federally while education falls under provincial jurisdiction. A number of studies have examined how such a division has resulted in unequal access of CLD
immigrant and indigenous children to language resources in education (Mady, 2006, 2007; Majhanovich, 2010; Prasad, 2012; Ricento & Cervatiuc, 2010; Taylor, 2009). Teacher interviews along with classroom observation provided complementary data to understand how teachers enact language and education policies in their respective classrooms. In this regard, I focused not on the broad macro policies on official bilingualism set forth by the Canadian government, or education policies established by the Ontario provincial government, but rather on how these macro-level policies are instantiated in the micro-policies and practices of classroom teachers and school administrators. As Ramanathan and Morgan (2007) have argued, practitioners such as teachers can play a critical role resisting, subverting and challenging official macro-language planning and policy hierarchy. I approach the local classroom as a site in which official government policies and strategies are, in the words of Ramanathan and Morgan (2007) “directly experienced and sometimes resisted. And it is from these direct experiences and conflicts that relevant and creative innovations around policy arise” (p. 449). Classroom teachers and school administrators’ policies and practices facilitated and challenged students’ plurilingual practices within school space.

3.6 Data processing and analysis

Multiple sources of data were collected and generated throughout this inquiry. Figure 3.4 summarizes the various sources and counts. Freeman and Mathison (2009) explain that no matter the data source,

- data do not speak for themselves, data analysis acknowledges the interplay between the data and the researcher. Sometimes participants seem to agree on something or express a shared perspective. Other times the data have few connecting themes or contradictions are found in the data of one or more participants. Using multiple data sources may increase the likelihood of the latter scenario, but whether there is agreement, inconsistency, or contradiction the researcher bears the responsibility for finding a working hypothesis, perhaps theory, for making sense of these data. (p. 150)

In addition to the multiple data sources recorded in Figure 3.4, I also kept a researcher’s journal in hard copy in 3 notebooks and electronically saved as a Word documents depending on whichever mode was most convenient according to my location.
Table 3.2: Table of Data sources and counts

Clark (2008) advocates the importance of adopting a mosaic of methods when researching with children in order to get a fuller understanding of their beliefs and perspectives. To fully appreciate a mosaic, the viewer needs to step back so that s/he can see the whole picture rather than focusing on the small individual pieces of which it is composed. Accordingly, for this multiple case study where the objective is to undertake a meta-analysis of children’s plurilingualism across increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse school settings, I endeavoured not to analyze individual data but to examine data sets as a whole. In the remainder of this chapter, I describe how I prepared for and carried out a meta-analysis across school cases of children’s plurilingualism.

3.7 Transcription and analysis of audio recordings

Time constraints necessitated that I selectively transcribe digital audio recordings of research conversations, group and class discussions and interviews. Following Kaufmann’s (2011) advice to listen, even multiple times, to interview recordings, in order to wholistically and comprehensively unpack meaning, I re-listened to my audio recordings as a soundtrack for my reflection on each case study and in order to choose what I would transcribe. As I listened to the audio recordings, I tagged various points of recordings and noted my thoughts so that I could easily return to specific points even if I did not transcribe the entire recording. These notes supplement, my classroom observations and notes taken during the recording themselves. Because my focus was on understanding the creative visual multimodal data generated by students throughout this inquiry, I selected recordings based on the following criteria: 1) the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<td>audio recordings: research conversations, group/class discussions and interviews</td>
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<td>Full Transcripts</td>
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<td>Self portraits</td>
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<td>Plurilingual multimodal books</td>
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speaker(s) clearly articulates his/her thoughts about his/her plurilingualism; 2) the speaker(s) interprets a creative visual artifact in a surprising, unanticipated manner; 3) the speaker(s) discusses the role of creative visual methods in her/his reflective process. According to these criteria, I selected 60 research conversations and discussions with students to transcribe. These transcripts complement the analysis of visual data as will be discussed in the following section.

In addition, I decided to transcribe all teacher interviews because these reflective interviews were critical to unpacking teachers’ perspectives on their students’ plurilingualism, their classroom policies and in the end how they felt about their collaboration in this research. In addition, whereas I could more easily juxtapose student-generated creative visual data across school settings, teachers engaged in these “hands-on” research activities to varying degrees across the 5 schools so their final interviews in particular became an important data source that I could use to compare teachers’ reflections and practices across schools’ settings. My interviews with teachers serve as basis of confirming, nuancing and/or challenging my classroom observations and interpretations of students’ engagement in this inquiry and most critically in identifying the key elements in moving towards the development of plurilingual practice in schools. Teacher interviews, along with my classroom observations and reflections were analysed thematically. I listened and read through each of the transcripts and my own notes multiple times and with each reading, I highlighted themes that recurred across school cases. After I had finished highlighting recurring themes, I grouped into shared thematic categories. I noted what I saw to be contradictions between cases by writing X – the school case (e.g. X-FI (French immersion)) in the margin; between teachers and students perspectives by writing X-TS and between my classroom observation and teachers’ reflections by writing X-TCo). Finally, I indicated excerpts where I found myself surprised, wondering or with further questions by making an asterisk and an exclamation mark or question mark in the margin.

3.8 Visual data analysis

Students generated a wide variety of creative visual plurilingual artifacts throughout this research. Cummins (2006) has described this type of multimodal work as the creation of “identity texts”. This type of work could also be described according to Pahl and Rowsell’s (2010) conceptualization of ‘artifactual literacies’, or from Smythe, Dagenais and Toohey’s (2014) work as ‘production pedagogies’. These language and literacy scholars have examined the
potential for mobilizing students’ communicative repertoires in the classroom to deepen students’ investment in learning. The impetus to engage students in the individual and collaborative production of a variety of visual plurilingual artifacts through this school-university inquiry was two-fold: first as a researcher, I was interested in what their creative visual plurilingual artifacts revealed about children’s representations of their plurilingual practice; second, as an educator, I was interested in the relationship between students’ creation of visual plurilingual artifacts and their plurilingual awareness and their language and literacy practices more broadly. These two complementary interests align with what Banks (2001) has described as the internal and the external narratives of meaning. The content of the visual artifact – drawing, self-portrait, photos, collage – is the internal narrative or story. The context, and process resulting in the creation of the artifact is the external narrative or story. Freeman and Mathison (2009) underscore that in working with child generated data, “paying attention to both the internal and external narratives strengthens the analytical reach.” (p.148).

Because students produced their creative multimodal plurilingual artifacts in the context of an embedded collaborative classroom collaboration, it was important that students be able to keep their original artifacts. As such, each of their artifacts were photographed or scanned and saved digitally. I compiled three data sets for each of the five schools: 1) students self-portraits; 2) students’ drawings; 3) students’ collages. With each data set, students performed the initial analysis of their individual artifacts. Through our informal and guided research conversations students discussed both the internal meaning that they ascribed to their self-portraits, drawings and collages, as well as their reflection on their creative process and their feelings about their creative productions (external meaning). I made notes in my journal whenever possible without disrupting the flow of our research conversations. Subsequently, while re-listening to audio recordings, I annotated printed hard copies of students’ artifacts. Then, I performed an analysis across each data set of each school using thematic categories that emerged from students’ initial personal analysis. In Merriam’s (1998) terms, my analysis throughout this inquiry was both iterative and recursive. My analysis of one school case study informed my analysis of each subsequent one, as well as all previous ones. This preliminary case-by case analysis led to a meta-analysis across all 5 cases which is presented through this dissertation. Through my meta-analysis of each of these three creative visual data sets, my analytical objective became not only to develop an understanding of children’s shared representations of their plurilingualism but also
their constructions of difference.

Students’ school and home digital photographs were saved electronically according to student and school case. The sheer volume of photos generated by this research activity prohibited the formal analysis of individual photos for this dissertation. Students shared their photos with me in audio-recorded research conversations during which I asked students to group them according to their own personal categories that they wrote on post-it notes. With the support of a Venn diagram and the categories they had generated from their photographs, I asked students to work in groups to analyse what types of things they read and wrote at home and at school and in both spaces. Students negotiated which categories to put into each section of their Venn diagram.

(see Appendix 2: Creative Tools)

Figure 3.3: Venn diagram comparison of home and school literacies
Through this hands-on analysis of their photos, students began to articulate their understanding of both the formal and informal language policies that governed their home and school spaces. Students’ analysis contributed to my meta-analysis of language and education policies across English and French schools in Canada and France.

Finally, students’ plurilingual multimodal books were saved as electronic files and a printed copy of each book was also kept. For the purposes of this investigation of children’s plurilingualism, the process of creating plurilingual multimodal books is the focus of analysis. An analysis of each of the books produced by students is beyond the scope of this dissertation. The process of authoring and illustrating plurilingual multimodal books allowed students to mobilize the full range of their communicative repertoires in the classroom for academic purposes over an extended period of time and to reflect on their creative learning experience throughout the
creative publishing process. While the content of students’ books changed from one school case to another, the process through which they were produced was documented in my notes and refined to allow teachers and students to increasingly expand their plurilingual awareness through the publication process. Students, teachers and parents all discussed the process during informal and guided research conversations, and interviews. Photographs taken over the course of classroom collaboration, scans of students’ drafts, as well as the final products themselves serve as snapshots of the creative learning process in action. Verbal and visual data complement one another in the analysis of the plurilingual and multimodal publishing process. Taken together, these data are analysed to identify key elements that facilitate all students’ mobilization of their communicative repertoires and sharing of their cultural and linguistic resources in mainstream classes.

3.9 Representation and Dissemination
Knowledge dissemination has become an integral part of the research design process. Creative visual methods have from their genesis taken into account representational forms in that the creative process produces a final product. New Childhood studies have consistently raised questions regarding appropriate forms for representing research conducted with children. What is their role in the dissemination process and what forms of representation might best allow us to remain faithful to their voices and communicative repertoires? The multimodal and plurilingual nature of this data collection process led to the creation of a complementary website: www.iamplurilingual.com, (see Appendix 2: Complementary Research Website) The site name expresses the paradigm shift embodied through this research – that is, a vision of every child as plurilingual, and ever expanding their cultural, linguistic and multimodal communicative repertoires. The inquiry website is designed to provide a space through which children can share the creative visual and multimodal research artifacts they generated, as well as to offer a representational space in which to theorize what they reveal about children’s plurilingualism and the implications for teaching practice in contexts of heteroglossia.

In addition, the dynamic nature of virtual platforms such as websites, in contrast to a static largely text-based dissertation, lends itself to continuing this exploratory inquiry in collaboration with viewers of the website. The decision to create a website, as well as to write an academic dissertation grows out of my epistemological view that just as the research process was and is a
iterative process, so too must be the knowledge mobilization process: the inquiry website opens up space for actively co-constructing knowledge via the posting of comments and reflections by children, teachers, families and community members about the creative research artifacts and their subsequent use in other contexts to continue refining creative tasks.

Whereas this dissertation endeavours to unpack the creative reflective process that accompanied the creation of a wide variety of research artifacts, the website offers audiences direct access to the visual and multimodal plurilingual artifacts themselves. The traditional academic form of the doctoral dissertation and the alter(n)ative form of an inquiry website are both complementary and equally necessary in order to faithfully represent and disseminate the findings of this investigation of children’s plurilingualism with children themselves as co-researchers.

The following chapter discusses findings in response to the first research question regarding methods for engaging children as plurilingual co-researchers. I also analyze a selection of the plurilingual research artifacts generated by children throughout this multi-site inquiry as examples of each of the five methods children used to represent their plurilingualism. Children’s research artifacts are embedded directly throughout the chapters that follow. Throughout this dissertation, whenever possible, hyperlinks are embedded to allow complementary viewing children’s artifacts on-line at www.iamplurilingual.com. (see Appendix 2)
Chapter 4
Prismatic Reflections & Refractions:
children’s representations of plurilingualism through reflexive drawing

The following three chapters discuss findings in response to the first methodological research question: If we shift from doing research about children’s plurilingualism (adult-driven research paradigm) to engaging with children as co-ethnographers of their own plurilingual language and literacies practices (child-centred research paradigm), what would such a shift entail methodologically and what might it reveal about children’s plurilingualism? I begin by introducing the metaphor of the prism as a three-dimensional image that expresses the range of creative multimodal methods used in this inquiry with children to access their representations of plurilingualism. Then, in this chapter, I focus on students’ representations of plurilingualism through reflexive drawing, the first of five representational methods used across this creative multi-site inquiry.

This chapter focuses on analyzing children’s representations of monolingual, bilingual and plurilingual individuals through their reflexive drawings. I draw on three lenses of analysis to examine children’s drawings: 1) signs and symbols used to identify plurilingual individuals; 2) metaphors for plurilingual development; and 3) representations of self. Through my analysis, I highlight key themes regarding children’s plurilingualism that emerged through students’ artifacts and their reflections about their creative process. I finally reflect on the affordances and limitations of reflexive drawing as a creative method of inquiry with children.

Chapter 5 then takes up children’s creation of language and cultural self-portraits and their use of digital photography to map and analyse the language and literacies landscapes of their schools and their homes. Chapter 6 presents a sampling of students’ final plurilingual collages as a way of reflecting on the range of creative representational methods used throughout this inquiry to engage with children as inquirers of their plurilingual lives.

4 Prismatic Reflections: A plurality of representations

This research was exploratory in the sense that each classroom case was unique in how it unfolded and in how the tools were taken up by teachers and students. To the extent that teachers
felt comfortable, I encouraged them to appropriate the range of proposed representation tools to support their students in exploring, expressing and reflecting on their plurilingualism. In this way, I collaborated with teachers by offering tools with which to imagine what their classroom practice might look and feel like if they approached their teaching from a plurilingual paradigm, and I supported them as they tried the tools out for fit. It was exploratory research in that none of us knew what our collaboration would yield; we simply shared a desire to explore what could happen if we shifted paradigms, trusted one another and committed to listening to what children had to show and tell us about their experiences as plurilingual social actors. The flexible, iterative design was intentional because the impetus for this collaborative inquiry was twofold: first, to explore children’s representations of plurilingualism from their own perspectives; second, to explore if and how a plurilingual approach to language and literacy teaching could be taken up across the constellation of English and French schooling models present in Canada.

In retrospect, a dissertation could have been written on the first case study alone as an ethnography of children’s plurilingual practice in a French private school in Toronto. Several others might have been written on each individual case thereafter. While these research stories might have highlighted the possibility of plurilingual practice or a didactique du plurilinguisme within their respective school models, they would not have been able to provide a research-based starting point to look beyond and across school boundaries as a way of imagining more inclusive (language) teaching and learning in twenty-first century.

As described in the previous chapter, the design of this inquiry was inspired by Clark’s (2005) methodological metaphor of the mosaic and Cummins’ (2006) pedagogical metaphor of ‘identity texts’ being mirrors that reflect back plurilingual students’ identities in a positive light. My collaboration with teachers and children in generating research artifacts in the context of their learning communities helped me appreciate the value of these metaphors in recognizing and valuing culturally and linguistically diverse children’s creative ways of knowing as legitimate and authentic strategies of inquiry. As each successive school collaboration unfolded, however, I found myself wrestling with the adequacy of the mosaic and the mirror as explanatory frameworks for the creative, collaborative and inclusive plurilingual inquiry, teaching and learning in which we were collectively engaged.
The mosaic and the mirror both function as relatively flat, two-dimensional images. While a mosaic is made up of multiple elements joined together by mortar and grout, the tesserae remain separate and the final image is relatively flat and quite literally fixed. The individual pieces are glued into position and sealed into place. A bigger picture is certainly created from smaller pieces joined together but the smaller pieces never actually touch or intersect. Even though each piece contributes to making a new fuller collective image, they individually remain unchanged.

Similarly, the pedagogical mirror of an ‘identity text’ reflects back in an image of the learner as she is in a positive light. Cummins mirror metaphor was originally proposed in his pedagogic explanation of the power of “identity texts” to counter the traditional and dominant deficit construction of minority language learners (Cummins, 2011). The creation of identity texts was and continues to be a necessary first step in affirming students’ home languages. In light of the recent ‘Multilingual Turn’ or paradigm shift ‘vers le plurilinguisme’, I found myself wondering how the pedagogical practice of dual-language identity texts could be taken further in mainstream classrooms where the lives of ‘minority-language’ and ‘majority-language’ students intersect. Might plurilingual multimodal production allow us to move beyond minority and majority binary categorisations? While the value of a positive reflection of self at school cannot be underestimated for its power to affirm the individual learner and engage him or her in continuing to invest in learning at school, surely the end of schooling, particularly in increasingly diverse settings, must not be limited to helping children and youth see themselves positively as they are but rather to helping all students imagine and reflect on their potential futures and the unique personal contribution they offer to the building of an evolving inclusive plurilingual global community.

Over the course of my collaboration with teachers and students, I sought a dynamic, interactive three-dimensional metaphor that could represent holistically the way this multi-site and multimodal inquiry took shape as we moved from design to implementation. I sought an explanatory metaphor that could build on the affordances of the research mosaic and the pedagogical mirror constructed through identity text work – an image that would both challenge and inspire students, teachers and researchers to reflect on their own unique positionalities, while at the same time, allowing them to refract their perspectives through dynamic interaction within and beyond their social communities.
Richardson (1994; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) has offered the metaphor of crystallization as a central imaginary for postmodern inquiry. In contrast to two-dimensional research triangulation that assumes that there is a fixed point or object of study that can be triangulated, the crystal combines symmetry and substance with its infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multimodalities and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change and are altered but they are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns and arrays of casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose … we feel how there is no single truth, and we see how texts validate themselves. Crystallization provides us with a deepened, complete and thoroughly partial understanding. (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 963)

The crystal reflects the heart of creative qualitative inquiry. It acknowledges that its understanding is partial and at the same time affirms that even so, it offers deep insight that can speak powerfully both to the mind and to the heart.

Ellingson (2011) similarly describes crystallization as a research strategy that combines multiple forms of analysis and multiple genres of representation into a coherent text or series of related texts, building a rich and openly partial account of a phenomenon that problematizes its own construction, highlights researchers’ vulnerabilities and positionality, makes claims about socially constructed meanings, and reveals the indeterminacy of knowledge claims even as it makes them. (Kindle)

The crystal or prism moves the two dimensional mosaic and mirror into three-dimensional space. The faces of a prism are like the pieces of the Clark’s research mosaic – the tools, or rather lenses of inquiry that come together to form an inclusive reflective space. Unlike the mirror that reflects back an exact copy, however, the prism allows light to enter its three-dimensional space and once within, it refracts off the plurality of its faces before reflecting outwards a rainbow of colour and endless possibility. The prism offers an evocative metaphor for conceptualizing schools as potentially transforming spaces in which students, teachers and community members enter like light. Then, through dynamic interaction with one another, everyone’s resources are shared, perspectives are refracted and sharpened to produce a vibrant reflection of each member’s unique competence and potential.

As I engaged with teachers and students in this inquiry across five different school cases, each representational tool was honed to form a sharp edge of our collective research prism. The children’s representations of plurilingualism reflected their individual perspectives, and as they
shared them through research conversations with one another and in class discussions, their insights refracted and resonated within and across the five classroom cases. The prism evolved, both methodologically and pedagogically, as an explanatory three-dimensional image for and representation of this inquiry. The remainder of this chapter, as well as chapter 5 through 7, focuses on unpacking children’s representations of plurilingualism that were reflected and refracted through their engagement with a range of representational tools. Figure 4.1 offers a schematic representation of how the various tools came together throughout this collaborative, multi-site inquiry to form a research prism through which children investigated their own plurilingualism.

Figure 4.1: Schematic representation of collaborative inquiry as a research prism

4.1 Reflexive Drawings

The first representational activity that students engaged in was creating a sequence of reflexive drawings. Students were given a blank sheet of paper divided into four quadrants and I asked them to begin by thinking about the definition of three key terms: monolingual, bilingual and plurilingual. In each school, we discussed the meaning of the prefixes mono-, bi- and pluri-. Students across all five school cases readily identified that bi- means two as in a bicycle has two wheels, and a bilingual individual speaks two languages. Drawing on their knowledge of the prefix bi-, we worked backwards to define a monolingual individual as someone who speaks only one language. Students were more familiar with the prefix multi- for multilingualism rather than plurilingualism. When I drew students’ attention to the prefix pluri-, students recognized the relationship to plurality: plural in English and pluriel in French. Students came to understand the
term plurilingualism as an individual who speaks a plurality of languages or at least has a plurality of languages in his/her life.

I then asked students to draw a picture of the following: (1) a monolingual individual, (2) a bilingual individual, (3) a plurilingual individual; and, (4) to draw themselves. I purposefully left the instruction as open as possible. Students were given no further guidelines apart from the expectation that they showed through their drawings the difference between each term and that in their self-representation, they made clear how they saw themselves as a monolingual, bilingual or plurilingual. Because my ultimate focus was to understand how children understand plurilingualism in their own lives, in this initial activity, I asked students to draw individuals rather than different languages. (See Perregaux, 2008) Accordingly, the first strategy of analysis that I used in reviewing children’s drawings was to look holistically for recurrent signs and symbols that children used to represent plurilingualism on the individual figure. The next strategy of analysis was to look across the sequence of four drawings to understand how children saw the progression from monolingualism to plurilingualism. By asking students to create a series of reflexive drawings to represent monolingualism, bilingualism and plurilingualism, students’ schemata or metaphors of plurilingual development became visible. Finally, students used their own representational metaphors to draw themselves. Students’ self-representations generally abided by the schemata they had developed through their drawings; the exceptions were what became particularly interesting to analyze. The following section applies each of these three lenses of analysis across children’s sequential reflexive drawings.

Before proceeding to analysis of key themes, it is necessary to explain that over the course of each case study, students’ and teachers’ absences were inevitable from time to time. In some cases, these absences were related to students being removed from the classroom for remedial support and for extracurricular activities. Other absences were for personal reasons. Regardless of the reasons, however, if students’ artifacts were incomplete, they were excluded from analysis. The high rate of participation in each of the school cases allowed for the exclusion of incomplete artifacts while not compromising the integrity of the activity or analysis. Because I did not complete a quantitative content analysis of the artifacts, my qualitative analysis was less concerned with the number of students who completed reflexive drawings and more focused on the plurality of themes and images that surfaced through children’s drawings.
4.1.1  Key Themes from Children’s Reflexive Drawings

4.1.1.1  Real versus imaginary individuals

The first major theme to emerge through students’ reflexive drawings was the choice children made between representing real versus imaginary individuals in their drawings of monolingual, bilingual and plurilingual individuals. Across the four school cases in Toronto, at least one student in each class chose to represent the monolingual, bilingual and plurilingual individuals as people they knew. At the école française in Montpellier, France, none of the children drew real people they knew. In fact, as I was giving the instructions for the drawings, one of the students raised her hand and asked, “Mais madame, est-ce que ça existe une personne monolingue?” For students in this diverse class in Montpellier, it was difficult to identify people in their lives who were monolingual. This reaction to this initial activity signaled the presence of a paradigm of plurilingualism that was not only promoted by the school, but also resonated with the lived realities of its student population.

Another student who expressed difficulty in trying to think about what a monolingual person might look like, asked me how to say, “Bonjour! Je m’appelle …” in English. I replied, “Hello! My name is….” and she proceeded to produce the following drawing,

![Figure 4.2: A Hollywood Star as a monolingual individual](image-url)
Rather than depicting the monolingual individual as francophone, this student drew a picture of a Hollywood star relaxing on the beach. To her knowledge, she could not imagine a monolingual francophone. So, to the best of her ability, she transcribed my English translation as “Allo? My name ys Émi….” Her reference for monolingual individuals came from Hollywood and the United States “où il parlent anglais.” In her attempt to represent a real person, she draws an imaginary American figure as a symbolic representation of a monolingual individual. Section 4.1.1.2 analyses symbolic representations of imaginary monolingual, bilingual and plurilingual individuals.

Apart from their drawings of self, students’ drawings from l’école française all depicted imaginary people. The majority of students from the four schools in Toronto also drew imaginary people for the first three drawings and only drew themselves as real, named individuals. Thirty out of 87 student drawings included pictures of real people. The distinction between real and imaginary people became more marked when students explained their motivations for their drawings. In the following example, a student from l’école de langue française used thought bubbles to show the different languages spoken by each of the individuals in the four drawings. (see Figure 4.3: Sponge Bob as monolingual)

Figure 4.3: Sponge Bob as monolingual individual
The following excerpt from our research conversation reveals the student’s decision to represent the monolingual individual as Sponge Bob:

Élève:  Moi j’ai Sponge Bob Square Pants [dans le premier carré], il parle juste anglais.
Gail:  Ahh.
Élève:  Et mon frère, il parle deux langues; il parle anglais et français. Et j’ai un autre frère, il parle anglais, français et malien. Et moi je parle...Et moi je parle juste anglais et français.
Gail:  Okay. Et pourquoi tu as dessiné Sponge Bob comme personne qui parle une langue?
Élève:  Moi je sais pas quelqu’un d’autre qui parle une langue.
Gail:  Tu sais pas quelqu’un qui ne parle qu’une langue.
Élève:  Non.

Like the student from l’école française in Montpellier, this student from l’école de langue française in Toronto could not think of a real monolingual person. His reference for a monolingual individual came from Sponge Bob Square Pants – a popular cartoon character. So, we see here again in this student’s drawing of a monolingual individual, a representation of American popular culture as being monolingual and only anglophone.

Another student from the French Immersion school similarly chose to represent the monolingual, bilingual and plurilingual individuals as “people” he knew. (See figure 4. 4: The monolingual parrot) He labeled each picture with the name of the “individual”, the number of languages spoken, as well as a list of the specific languages spoken. He had started his drawings with his friend Brandon, the bilingual individual and his sister, the plurilingual individual who spoke Engles (English), Frances (Français), and Albania (Albanian). Because he could not think of someone in his immediate circle who was monolingual, he represented the monolingual individual as his parrot. He explained that parrots can be trained to repeat words like “Parrot wants a cracker,” as depicted in his drawing. It was not clear whether his parrot had actually been trained to repeat the phrase in English but for him, being monolingual would be “like a parrot that can only say one thing”. While the picture of the parrot is a reference to real member of his “family”, he literally personifies it as an imaginary monolingual Anglophone. The parrot evokes the sense that to be monolingual limits one’s ability to communicate and to engage in dynamic, authentic conversation.
Figure 4.4: The monolingual parrot

Representations of real bilingual and plurilingual people whom students knew personally emerged through students’ drawings across l’école privée, l’école de langue française, the French immersion school and l’école française. Students from the English school, however, tended not to draw people they knew. The concept of plurilingualism was more challenging for students at the English school because a significant number of them self-identified at the outset of our collaboration as monolingual. Even though they had begun taking French as a second language the year before this study took place, many students did not see French as a part of their lives or their repertoires. Similarly, a number of students whose families spoke languages other than English at home, also identified themselves as monolingual either because they did not “really” speak their home language – only their parents or grandparents did, or because they continued to see themselves as “ESL” kids and had not yet appropriated English as being part of their repertoires. In the former case, the self-identification as monolingual grew out of language loss and in the latter case, it grew out of a sense of lacking – or not yet, being proficient like their peers in the language of instruction. The juxtaposition of students’ representations of individuals through the symbolic imaginary in the case of the English school versus a tendency to represent individuals who were known in the cases of l’école privée, l’école de langue française, French immersion and l’école française, suggests that a paradigm of plurilingualism is more
comprehensible for children learning in French at school, while living perhaps in other languages at home and being exposed to yet other languages still in their wider communities. Whereas French is a minority language in the Toronto-based schools, French is the majority language in France but not necessarily a majority language across Europe or internationally. In addition, given that l’école française offered an hour of English and an hour of Occitan, a regional language, the language ethos of the school was one that promoted plurilingual development as a foundation for citizenship in Europe. The following section moves beyond analysing contrasting drawings of real versus imaginary drawings from specific school cases to a meta-analysis across drawings from all five schools, first of the symbols associated with the drawings of the plurilingual individual; and second of children’s metaphors or schemata for plurilingual development.

4.1.1.2  Meta-analysis of symbolic representation in children’s reflexive drawings

Two broad themes emerge through analysis of the symbols children used in their drawings of plurilingual individuals: plurilingualism as competence; and, plurilingualism as identity marker. Subsequently, five metaphors became clear across children’s representations relating to plurilingual development: time / age; family; education; travel; practice. Finally, across all of the drawings many affective associations surfaced. The affective dimension of children’s drawings will be taken up as a transition to discussing the affordances and limitations of reflexive drawings as a tool. Figure 4.5 provides a visual representation of themes that emerged through a meta-analysis of children’s reflexive drawings.
4.1.1.2.1 Plurilingualism as capacity

Children’s drawings represent plurilingualism as capacity in two ways: first, as the capacity of the individual to think and speak in a variety of languages; and then, as the relational capacity to communicate with speakers of different languages.

4.1.1.2.1.1 Plurilingualism as capacity to think in different languages

Although the instruction given to students was to draw a monolingual individual, a bilingual individual and plurilingual individual and themselves, many students chose to draw only the heads of individuals. Figure 4.6 provides four examples of plurilingualism located in the heads of plurilingual individuals. In the first drawing, the students drew three languages, Spanish, French and English, in the brain of the plurilingual individual. In the second drawing, the student labeled the brain of the plurilingual individual and puts different languages in separate
compartments. The third drawing shows the head of a plurilingual individual filled with “French, English and a lot more languages”. In this drawing, the languages intermingle rather than being kept in separate compartments. The fourth drawing shows the brain of a plurilingual individual with separate compartments for knowledge, languages and T.V. This student explained that for him, all languages were kept in one part of the brain. He also stored knowledge in a separate compartment and T.V. in yet another because he watched a lot of television.

![Figure 4.6: Reflexive drawings of plurilingualism on the head](image)

These four drawings reflect the various ways that students represented plurilingualism as the capacity to think in and with different languages. While all of the drawings relate to the same general theme – plurilingualism as the capacity to think in a plurality of languages, each particular drawing provides a nuanced representation of plurilingualism at the individual level.
4.1.1.2.1.2  Plurilingualism as ability to speak a variety of languages

Children’s depictions of the plurilingual individual also represented plurilingualism as the capacity to speak a plurality of languages, as well as to engage in a variety of relationships. Figure 4.7 shows nine examples of students’ drawings of a plurilingual individual: each of these drawings uses speech bubbles as symbols that represent plurilingualism as a communicative capacity, primarily expressed through speech. These nine examples are reflective of many students’ drawings across all five school cases.

Figure 4.7: Nine drawings of plurilingual individuals

While the general theme of plurilingualism as communicative competence is clear across these examples, a closer analysis further allows a number of subtler conceptualizations to be teased out. For example in the first row of three drawings, the first two children have drawn a girl’s head saying hello in four languages using four different speech bubbles, and then a boy saying
hello in three languages respectively. In the third drawing, however, the student adds the detail of three responding speech bubbles. That is, she has drawn a girl saying hello in English, French and Arabic, and then has drawn three speech bubbles each responding to their respective greetings. This added detail highlights that while some students focused on representing plurilingualism as the capacity to speak different languages, for others, the significance was not only in the ability to speak different languages but also the ability to be understood by others who speak those languages.

In the second row, we have again three plurilingual individuals. In the first two drawings, children used separate bubbles for separate languages, whereas in the third drawing the student draws one speech bubble for all three different languages. Again the distinction is a subtle one, but it provides visual insight into children’s varying conceptualizations of the use of the plurilingual individual’s communicative capacity. S/he can keep his or her languages separate, or s/he can code-switch or translanguage across the languages in his or her repertoire according to need and purpose.

The last row of drawings of plurilingual individuals represent mixed emotions in response to individuals’ plurilingualism. The first drawing depicts an individual explaining that he is plurilingual and speaks more than two languages; he says hello in three languages. In the background, there are two other individuals who respond by saying, “We finally understand you”. In this drawing, the plurilingual individual is depicted as having an inclusive communicative capacity to talk with others. The second picture is of only one plurilingual individual who speaks three languages as seen in the focal speech bubble: Spanish, English and French. In addition to his explanation that he speaks multiple languages, he explicitly acknowledges, “I am the best, I know the most languages, I rock, I can go to any country.” This student does not include other people in his drawing except the plurilingual individual by himself. The figure references that his plurilingual communicative capacity is an asset because it allows him to “go to any country.” Plurilingualism becomes a communicative capacity for travel. Finally, the last drawing shows a plurilingual individual who speaks three different languages. That they are used within the same speech bubble suggests that the individual can and does switch between the different languages. The result in this picture, however, is that his listener does not understand him. This reflexive drawing reflected this student’s personal experience because even though his mother spoke Hindi, he did not feel comfortable speaking the language
and as a result, he felt confused when she would speak to him using languages other than English. The first, second and third drawings in the last row present contrasting experiences of plurilingualism: while in the first two instances plurilingualism is represented positively for different reasons, in the final picture, we are confronted with what could be described as a negative experience of plurilingualism. As we will discuss later in further detail, reflexive drawing provides an opportunity for students to express their ideas, perspectives and emotions without necessarily needing to find the ‘right’ words to express their experiences or sentiments.

Another representation of plurilingualism as a capacity to speak different languages is evoked through drawings such as figure 4.8 in which a student represented a plurilingual individual by inscribing different languages on the figure’s mouth.

Figure 4.8: Mouth drawings: plurilingualism as capacity to speak different languages

In this picture, the student drew a girl who speaks French, English and Chinese. The three languages are inscribed on the mouth because she understands plurilingualism as the individual capacity to speak different languages. The second sequence of pictures contrasts the monolingual individual as having one mouth, the bilingual individual having two mouths, and the plurilingual individual as having three mouths. Through this sequence of drawings, the student tried to
represent her feeling that being able to speak different languages was like having more than one way of communicating or having more than one mouth.

4.1.1.2.2 Plurilingualism as identity

In addition to representing plurilingualism as an individual’s capacity to think and speak different languages, children represented plurilingualism as identity/ies: through cultural and/or national affiliations, as well as, through different persona they associated with different languages.

4.1.1.2.2.1 Plurilingualism as cultural / national identity/ies

Figure 4.9 provides three examples of children’s drawings of plurilingual individuals holding or surrounded by different flags while expressing through a speech bubble their capacity to speak different languages. Students commonly used flags to symbolize the languages spoken by the plurilingual individuals: rather than listing languages spoken in speech bubbles, the figure depicted in the first drawing says, “Je parle plusieurs langues”. In the upper drawing in the second column, the figure simply says “plurilingue”; and, the lower drawing, the figure says that she speaks English, French and another language that is designated by a squiggly line. Reading the flags in this drawing reveals that the third language is Japanese: because the student cannot write in Japanese herself, she uses a squiggly line and the Japanese flag. The lack of colour in the first drawings make it difficult to determine from the flags themselves which languages the figure can speak.

This move was intentional on the part of the student who drew them because he wanted to show from his perspective that a plurilingual individual could speak different countries’ languages. Flags serve as symbols of the national languages of different countries. At first glance, the presence of flags across students’ drawings could reflect the dominance of the “one nation-one language” ideology. That bilingual and plurilingual individuals are depicted holding multiple flags suggests however, that for these children who are growing up in an global age of transnational flows, there is no contradiction in claiming multiple nations as part of one’s cultural and linguistic identity.
Students’ drawings of figures holding flags suggest that is it possible for people to integrate multiple diverse cultural and linguistic practices in their lives and plural identities. In a few instances, children confronted visually the limits of the “one nation-one language” ideology when they wanted to include non-official languages such as minority languages or regional languages in their depictions of a plurilingual individual. For example, figure 4.10 shows a student’s representation of himself as a plurilingual using flags to symbolize the languages he knew. He started out by drawing the French, German, Vietnamese, and British flags and then was at a loss for a flag for Latin. He asked me what country spoke Latin as he searched inside the inside cover of a dictionary that had country flags listed. When I could not give him a specific country name, he simply wrote “Latin” on a white flag. Then, he proceeded to look for a flag for “Occitan,” a regional language in Southern France. Again, he could not find a corresponding flag in the dictionary and as a result, he created a partial imaginary flag. Through the act of drawing, students both expressed and confronted their representations of monolingual, bilingual and plurilingual individuals, as well as their beliefs about language and cultural / national identity. Because the reflexive drawings were carried out as a whole class activity, students had an
opportunity to share throughout the creative process, as well as at the end about their drawings and their reflections.

Figure 4. 10: Representation of languages spoken by a plurilingual student – when one language – one nation/flag fails

4.1.1.2.2.2 Plurilingualism as having multiple identities

In addition to representations of plurilingualism as identity through cultural and national affiliations, students also represented plurilingualism simply as having multiple identities. Figure 4. 11 provides two examples of students representations of plurilingual individuals as having multiple (language) identities. The first drawing depicts a plurilingual individual who has three identities as an English speaker, a French speaker and a Spanish speaker. Again the student uses speech bubbles to indicate the languages spoken by the individual figure. Instead of relating the speech bubbles to the figure directly, the speech bubbles are each associated to a smaller individual figure. The broken lines linking the three smaller individuals to the focal plurilingual individual are difficult to make out. But the student compared being plurilingual to having three (or more) identities, each one related to a different language because we do different things in different languages. The second drawing also reflects this representation of plurilingualism as having multiple identities. The student drew a girl with three talking heads above her. Each one has a speech bubble saying, “bla”, “bli”, “blo” respectively. The particular languages spoken are
not specified, rather the drawing renders visible the sentiment that the plurilingual individual can express herself in three distinct ways. She is one person with three possible language persona.

Figure 4.11: Reflexive drawings of plurilingualism as having multiple identities

4.1.1.3 Representational schemata for plurilingual development

Beyond the two general themes of plurilingualism as capacity and plurilingualism as identity, five different metaphors for plurilingual development emerge across children’s drawings: time / age; family; education; travel; practice.

4.1.1.4 Representations of plurilingual development over time

One of the recurrent schemata used to show progression from the monolingual individual to the plurilingual individual was age. Figure 4.12 shows three examples of children’s drawings in which the first monolingual individual is depicted as a baby. Children often reflected that babies are monolingual when they are born: they all speak the same language, baby language. Children across school cases expressed a common belief that all babies are born speaking a language common unto themselves regardless of the linguistic backgrounds of their parents or family members. Whereas many adults might not consider cooing and babbling as a language per se, from the perspective of children, the “langue du bébé” or baby talk was seen to be a meaningful
form of communication and self-expression. It provided the starting point for the plurilingual development.

Figure 4.12: Reflexive drawings of monolingual individuals as babies

In Figure 4.13, a student draws on the metaphor of age as a schema for plurilingual development. In his sequence of four drawings, the student drew his 3 year old baby brother as a monolingual who speaks “bébé”; his six year old younger brother as a bilingual individual who speaks English and French; then, his 39 year old mother as a plurilingual individual who speaks English, and two Indian languages, Hindi, an official national language and Kutchi, a regional language in Gujarat, India. In recounting his rationale for his drawings, he explained,

*Au début je pense, c'était un dur travail. Je pouvais pas penser très bien qu'est-ce que je devais faire. Mais après j'ai pensé l'âge. Puis mon frère [le bébé] qui parle seulement anglais. Ça serait bien. Ma sœur ... parle aussi français. Mais j'ai mis mon [petit] frère ... Mon père et ma mère parlaient même trois langues. J'ai mis ma mère. Et puis moi je parle toutes les quatre langues; pas beaucoup ces deux langues, le kutchi et le*
According to his metaphor of age, his self-representation should have depicted him at 9 years of age being able to speak 2 or 3 languages. What becomes particularly interesting for analysis, however, is his representation of himself, as a 9-year-old boy who appears to be thinking in French, English, Hindi and Kutchi.

**Figure 4.13: Representation of plurilingual development with age**

Even though he is younger than his parents, this student distinguishes himself by virtue of the fact that “j’étais né anglophone, je savais rien du français et mes parents savaient rien français.” With the support of his drawing, he describes that this parents’ families had immigrated to Canada when his mother was 4 and his father when he was 5 or 6 years old. His parents knew “seulement leur langage et puis ils ont appris l’anglais.” The student’s family spoke English at home and Hindi and Kutchi with his grandparents. At the time of this study, his grandfather was living with him but his other grandparents had passed away. He explained in the following way that he knew French because his parents had wanted him to learn another language:

*Mes parents toujours voudraient que je voudrais apprendre une autre langue. Donc premièrement, ils ont – ils m’ont mis dans un « daycare » anglophone. Après ça ils m'ont mis dans un « daycare » qui était moitié anglaise, moitié française mais c'était
plus anglais. Quand j’avais l’âge, ils m’ont mis ici [l’école de langue française]. Et pour les premières trois semaines, je pense, je savais rien en français. Après je savais – je commençais un peu à savoir le français. Et après ça, mon frère, c’était son tour de venir ici, l’année après c’était ma sœur et l’année prochaine, ce sera le tour de mon petit frère.

At the beginning of our guided research conversation, the student expressed that he was representing plurilingual development over time with age from birth to adulthood. Through his narration of his drawings, he highlights the progression of plurilingual development with age using his baby brother, younger brother and mother as respective examples. Then he sets himself apart because he counts four languages as part of his life: English, French and Hindi and Kutchi. By talking about his drawings, he comes to recognize that while age can be an important factor in plurilingual development, going to school can also help people learn another language.

4.1.1.5 Representations of plurilingual development linked to education and family

Not all children conceptualized plurilingual development as beginning at birth and developing into adulthood. Figure 4.14 provides another student’s sequence of drawings that reflects education and family as being key factors in plurilingual development. In this sequence of drawings, the student drew his grandmother as the monolingual individual because she only spoke Somali; then, he drew his grandfather as the bilingual individual because he spoke Somali and learned French at school; then, he drew his father as a plurilingual individual because his father could speak Somali, French, as well as English which he had learned when the family moved to Canada. Finally, the student drew himself as being plurilingual and being able to speak 4 languages: French, English, Somali and Arabic. He explained that he had started taking Arabic classes through his mosque. Children often cited that their family’s religious practices necessitated additional language and literacy practices. Many children across school cases referenced language classes organized for children and youth through their mosques, temples and churches.
This student’s explanation of his drawings helps us to see his association of education – both formal and informal – with plurilingual development. When we read the student’s drawings through the lens of his explanation, we see how his family’s plurilingual repertoire and resources have expanded as they have been passed down through the generations and with greater access to diverse forms of education. Whereas the boy’s grandfather had learned French at school, his grandmother had not had access to the same schooling and as such only spoke Somali. His father in turn had greater access to resources when the family had moved to Canada and consequently he had added English to the family repertoire. At last, the boy depicts himself as contributing a fourth language to the family repertoire, while at the same time enriching his own personal repertoire. Children’s depictions of family members in their drawings speak to the role of the family in supporting plurilingual development. This student’s representation of his grandmother as monolingual and him as plurilingual conveys visually the critical value of language maintenance in supporting family bonds and communication.
While this student’s association of education with plurilingual development is perhaps more difficult to see, many students did represent plurilingual development as being explicitly linked to schooling. Figure 4.15 provides two more examples of plurilingual development associated with formal schooling. In the first drawing, the student depicts a plurilingual individual by drawing an African student at an Anglophone university in Canada, taking classes in French. The student explained that she had the plurilingual individual raising his hand while saying in English, “I was born in Africa” to show that he spoke an African language as well as English and that he was taking French at a university. She felt that university could be a place where you could learn more languages than even French because she was already learning French in her French Immersion school. My initial reaction when I first saw this student’s drawings was that my presence in the classroom as a university-based researcher might have influenced her decision to represent the plurilingual individual at a university. But, in talking with her and other students about their drawings, I came to learn that a number of students in the class had parents who were professors or graduate students at one of the local universities. As such, students already had an awareness of university as a continuation of schooling for “old(er)” people.

The second drawing in Figure 4.15 depicts a plurilingual individual standing between three schools: école anglaise[e], école arabe and école de langue française. The student explained that he goes to school in French but that he has English class with the English teacher. So, if the figure was him, it should not have been an actual English school but an English class. Similarly, he explained that he went to Arabic classes on the weekend and again it was not a real “school” but it was like school because he learned Arabic there so he drew three separate schools for each language. While this student’s depiction of a plurilingual individual in the middle of three different language schools highlights his association between formal education and plurilingual development, it also makes visible the strict separation of languages in his schooling experience. Even though he recounts that he has English class in his école de langue française, he drew the English and Arabic school on the opposite side of the plurilingual individual. This opposition reflects his understanding of the school’s language policy that students and teachers only speak French in the school.
4.1.1.6 Plurilingual development through and for travel

In addition to time, family and education, children often made references to learning languages through and for travel. We have already seen in Figure 4.7 how children have conceptualized plurilingualism as the capacity to understand and speak to people in different countries. In Figure 4.14, we saw how a family’s migration had enriched their plurilingual repertoire. Figure 4.16 provides another example of children’s association of plurilingual development with travelling to different parts of the world. In this drawing, the plurilingual individual is visiting Paris with the Eiffel tower as symbol of the French language and context. The figure is wearing a T-shirt that says Toronto is # 1 in English to represent the fact that he can speak English and the figure himself is speaking Chinese. The student did not know Chinese but he knew that their writing was in characters so he created an imaginary Chinese character. A number of children drew landmarks in their drawings such as the Eiffel Tower, the Great Wall of China and the CN Tower to symbolize different languages. In this drawing, the student’s choice to locate his plurilingual individual in Paris highlights his conceptualization of the plurilingual individual as someone who can navigate different linguistic landscapes. His emphasis in this drawing is not on proficiency across all of the languages but rather on exposure and awareness. The student understood that if a bilingual Chinese-English speaking individual traveled to Paris, he would be surrounded by French and as a result, his experience would at least leave traces of the language in his life. For him, openness to travel and discovering other places included discovering new languages. Travel was a factor in the plurilingual development.
4.1.1.7 Plurilingual development through practice and training

In addition to travel, children expressed that practice and training in different languages helped individuals become plurilingual. In Figure 4.17, a student showed the progression from a monolingual individual, to a bilingual individual and then a plurilingual individual by successively adding muscles to the individual. The following is an excerpt of our conversation after he finished his drawing:

Gail: Tell me about pictures you drew… The monolingual, bilingual, and plurilingual individual and yourself.

Student: Skinny, with muscles, someone really muscular, and then me.

Gail: And why did you use muscles to show how many languages?

Student: …it was easy to draw.

Gail: It was easy to show?

Student: Yes and it compares well.

Gail: Can you explain a bit more what you mean?

Student: Well, it’s just the more languages you have, the more muscles you have.

Gail: And you have your picture of you. How muscular are you?

Student: Not very.

Gail: How many languages do you speak?

Student: Well I don’t know if I can legitimately go with three. I have two that I am learning and two that I can speak…

Gail: Well that’s pretty amazing. What are the two languages you speak?

Student: French and English of course.

Gail: And what are the two you are learning?

Student: I am learning Spanish and I’m learning Hebrew.
The student positions himself in his drawing as a bilingual individual with not very many muscles because he is hesitant about whether he can “legitimately go with three [languages].” He describes himself as being able to speak two languages (French and English), while still learning Spanish and Hebrew. His Spanish and Hebrew muscles were not yet fully developed; he still needed more practice and training. He went on over the course of our research conversation to describe to his classmate and I how his mother was an Anglophone who spoke French because she was from Montreal. They spoke English and French at home and he attended a French Immersion school. Because his family was Jewish, he was learning Hebrew through Hebrew classes. He really enjoyed them and thought that learning Hebrew was fun. He was also independently learning Spanish through a computer program that he enjoyed playing. He associated plurilingual development with building linguistic muscles and he felt that you become stronger, at least in the muscle of your brain by learning languages. In his picture, he added muscles to the whole body because it made the representation more clear. His explanation of his reflexive drawing helps us to interpret plurilingualism to be a positive strength. According to
him, building more muscles was desirable just as he desired to learn Hebrew and Spanish more fluently.

4.1.2 Affective dimension of plurilingualism and plurilingual development

Children’s drawings and narratives provide insight into the affective dimension of plurilingualism and plurilingual development. Figure 4.18 includes three different students’ drawings that reflect the emotional side of language learning that is often unaccounted for in the study of la didactique des langues. (see Piccardo, 2013). In the first sequence of drawings, a student drew a face with a large smile to represent the monolingual individual, a face without a smile or a flat mouth for the bilingual individual, and a face with a sad mouth for the plurilingual individual. The student explained that the monolingual individual was happy because he could understand everything in English; then the bilingual person was not very happy because he could be confusing to have to talk in two languages and to try to understand what everyone is saying; and then, the plurilingual person was sad because the student thought it would be even more difficult to have to speak three or more languages. He then drew himself with a smaller smile than the monolingual individual but not as sad as the bilingual individual because he felt it was difficult at times to have two languages but he was not always sad. He explained that he found it frustrating and confusing sometimes and he thought it might be easier in just one language. This student’s drawing makes visible his feelings of being bilingual and going to school in French. His father was French and his mother was Australian so their family life as well as his school life at l’école privée centered around negotiating between two languages. For him, the experience was clearly challenging. His self-representation as a bilingual individual who was “not always sad” attests to his resilience, as well as to his desire to be seen to as a ‘happy’ or successful bilingual. He wanted to be like the happy monolingual individual who understood everything. This student’s set of drawings was one of the few negative representations of plurilingualism. Whereas most of the children were happy and even proud to be able to depict themselves as bilingual or plurilingual, this student used his drawings to voice his struggle at home and at school. His drawings highlight the value of providing children with another mode of expression than through words. Through drawing - a visual mode, this student felt freer to express his feelings, and with the support of his drawings, he was able to express how he felt about his language development.
In the second drawing in figure 4.19, we see a depiction of a plurilingual individual waving hello, while saying hello in his head in three languages: English, French and Mandarin. In the background is a girl making a gesture to indicate that she thinks the individual is strange. The student explained that she felt that people who were monolingual think it is strange when they hear other people speaking different languages that they do not understand. Her picture reflects the ideology of monolingualism as norm: the plurilingual individual is seen to be a rather strange exception from the perspective of the monolingual individual. Nonetheless, the plurilingual individual is happy with himself as shown by the slight smile and the monolingual girl is depicted as being sad. The third drawing in figure 4.19 depicts a monolingual individual. There is little in the drawing itself to indicate what language she speaks or where it might be located (i.e. on her mouth, in her brain, etc.). Instead, the student wrote above the drawing that “[t]his girl is lonely”. She explained that if you were monolingual, you might be lonely because you could not communicate with others unless they spoke your language. The absence of speech bubbles or communicative signs in this drawing were intentional because the student wanted to show the isolation that a monolingual person could feel. She was in fact depicting her own experience as a relatively new student in the school, who did not speak English when she first arrived. At the time of the study, she was still receiving English as a second language support through a withdrawal from her class once a cycle. These three students’ drawings highlight the range of emotions that students experience throughout their language learning at school, at home and in their wider communities. The contrasting depictions of the emotions and values students associate with plurilingualism highlight the power of conducting qualitative research with children through a prism of creative methods: children’s reflexive drawings do not provide definitive ‘answers’ about their plurilingualism, rather they provide a diverse range of depictions of their representations of plurilingualism. All of their drawings are simultaneously true and partial. They give us insight into how children make sense of be(com)ing plurilingual and challenge us to listen closely in order to understand their representations.
4.1.3 Reflections on sequential reflexive drawing as a creative tool

Sequential reflexive drawing supported students as they made the abstract concepts of monolingualism, bilingualism and plurilingualism concrete. By drawing their definitions of key terms for our collaborative inquiry, students engaged in non-linear, visual reasoning and reflection before ever being asked to put their thoughts into words. In each school case, this initial creative engagement at the outset of our collaboration set the tone for our work together over the following 4 to 6 months. If I had interviewed students in groups at the outset of our collaboration to mitigate adult-child power relations, their verbal definitions of a monolingual
individual, bilingual individual and plurilingual individual would most likely have been very different than the visual definitions that they produced. Reflexive drawing opened up a non-linear space that reconfigured power relations from adult interviewer-child interviewee to that of creative expert – attentive audience. Instead of being an adult with a set interview protocol who controlled how, when and in what order questions were asked, I took on the role as an attentive audience for students’ creative work and expertise. Only the children themselves could explain their creative works and they controlled how to invite me into the figurative world of their representations. Unlike a formal interview that hinges on a bi-directional exchange of questions and answers, children’s drawings offer no set starting point or ending point. The initial invitation was always for the children to tell me about their drawings; they took on the role of creative expert to guide me through their work and to see their experience from their perspective.

In retrospect, the process of drawing definitions itself was a non-linear representational process that allowed students to develop and express their ideas on paper while not being concerned about how to structure them from start to finish. Students had the freedom to start with any of the four drawings they so chose and then to work backwards or forwards or diagonally to complete the rest of their drawings. At any point, they could go back and add details and, particularly for those children who drew in pencil, they could erase and start over. Drawing as a medium offered a less structured, less academic way of getting their thoughts and ideas down on paper. Children understood from the outset that there were no right or wrong drawings; and, their drawings were not going to be evaluated for marks. Their spelling and grammar did not count. The expectation was only that children engage in the representational process and then, once their drawings were complete, I listened actively to tease out interpretations and understanding.

Ultimately, students were asked to create a sequence of drawings that reflected the progression from a monolingual individual to a bilingual individual and then to a plurilingual individual. The process of creating a sequence of drawings served to scaffold students’ higher order thinking. Through their drawings, they developed representational schemata or metaphors for plurilingual development. As students developed their drawings, they were developing evocative images that then in turn allowed them to express their insights and perspectives about plurilingualism and plurilingual development.
That students created a sequence of drawings guided their reflection about the various terms individually and in relation to one another, as well as how the terms applied personally to them as individuals. As an exploratory way into the question of children’s plurilingualism, drawing scaffolded students’ thinking and reflection. This initial activity prompted students to think about how they positioned themselves as plurilingual learners and inquirers and served as the starting point for the next, more personal creative visual representation: the self-portrait. Chapter 5 takes up students’ creation of language and cultural self-portraits, as well as their use of digital photography to map and analyse the language and literacies landscapes of their lives.
Chapter 5
Prismatic Reflections and Refractions:
Representing cultural and linguistic landscapes
through self-portraits and digital photography mapping

This chapter focuses on the two research activities that followed students’ reflective drawing: self-portraits and digital photography mapping. While both representational forms drew on different media, they both shared a focus on mapping cultural and linguistic diversity. Children’s self-portraits engaged them in mapping their cultural and linguistic repertories on their bodies and through digital photography, students mapped cultural and linguistic diversity across the landscapes of their schools and their homes.

5 Language and Cultural self portraits

5.1 Reflecting on one’s language and cultural background: a personal landscape

The second research representation activity in which students engaged was the creation of language and cultural self-portraits. Whereas students’ drawings allowed them to make visible their conceptualization of a monolingual individual, a bilingual individual and a plurilingual individual, the creation of language and cultural self-portraits offered more creative reflexive space for students to represent their language biographies. Once again, children’s voices and perspectives were essential in the interpretation of their portraits because they ultimately were responsible for the representational choices made in their self-representations. Their creation of a self-portrait allowed them not only to represent their cultural and linguistic identities, but also to take on identities of competence (Manyak, 2004) as creative, linguistically talented plurilinguals who speak with authority about their experience. ‘Language biography’ is one of the three central elements of the European language portfolio used by many members of the European Union to support and encourage plurilingual development and a didactique du plurilinguisme.

The language biography has traditionally been a written personal biography. (see Dagenais, Armand, Walsh & Maraillet, 2007; Molinie, 2006; Schmidt &Finkbeiner, 2006). Creating a creative visual ‘language biography’ before a sharing of their personal narrative account of their language learning and language practices allowed students to make sense of their thoughts, memories and ideas by manipulating concrete materials (paper, glue, scissors, markers, etc.).
Busch (2010) explains that processes that influence language use tend to operate unconsciously and cannot easily be verbalized. The switch in mode of representation from word [spoken or written] to image [visual] helps to deconstruct internalized categories, to reflect upon embodied practices and to generate narratives that are less bound to genre expectations. While the logic of the word is characterized by a time-bound linear sequence, visual representation is characterized by space and simultaneity and requires attention to the ways in which the various components of the picture relate to each other.

Students used their visual self-portraits to scaffold their language biography narrative. The creative visual artifact provided cues to facilitate their narrative telling, as well as to provoke questions from other students and the researcher that might not have surfaced without the visual aid.

Figure 4.20 presents a sampling of students’ language portraits across each of the school cases. Each row provides four examples of students’ portraits from each school in the order that the cases were carried out from the bottom up: l’école privée, English school, French immersion school, l’école de language française and l’école française respectively. Taken together, the portraits visually portray the cultural and linguistic diversity that pervaded all five schools. Not a single student in any of the five schools created a self-portrait using only one colour; very few students represented themselves as only having 2 languages in their lives.

In the previous reflexive drawing activity, the student was asked to sketch a plurilingual individual. The portrait activity moved one step further and asked students to create a background for the portrait as a first step in reflecting about their relationship to the plurality of languages and cultures in their lives. In a sense, I was asking them to think about and represent the background, the backdrop or the landscape of their lives.

Whereas the appreciation of students’ drawings hinged to some degree on their drawing skill level, in this portrait activity, children were not asked to draw themselves but rather to colour a black and white image of themselves using body metaphors to develop associations between languages in their lives. The transformation of digital photos of students into black and white silhouettes provided an added layer of personalization for each student. (see Prasad & Dykstra,
2011) From the outset of the activity, they recognized their reflections.
Figure 5.1: Sampling of children’s portraits across 5 school sites

Across all five cases, I observed that students displayed even greater enthusiasm and attention to their creative process as they engaged in the production of their self-portraits. Students seemed more invested in creating their self-portraits, as opposed to their initial series of reflective drawings because their self-portraits were direct and personal reflections of self; the representational activity offered creative space to share their own personal stories. I was surprised and even a bit shocked that students and teachers were unaware of all the languages and cultural practices that were a part of students’ lives. Students in grades four to grade six had in many cases been part of their school communities for more than 5 years. Nonetheless, the cultural and linguistic resources that each student had to offer their communities had never been inventoried. One student reflected afterwards, “I don’t think that anyone knew that I spoke Swahili before you came, when we discussed all the languages [that are a part of our lives].” I worked with this student’s class from February through to June of an academic year. So, when she expressed that she did not think that anyone in her class knew that she spoke Swahili (and could read and write independently in the language as well), she revealed that students’ linguistic and cultural resources were simply not addressed in her class that year specifically, but also in general over her entire time at the school since Kindergarten. In the final interview with the classroom teacher, I asked the classroom teacher how the school had typically addressed its pervasive cultural and linguistic diversity. She responded with the following reflection: “It’s unaddressed, it’s become a norm and it’s just not addressed and I’m glad it’s being addressed right now [through our collaboration] because it makes me think how we can address it, because it’s something that does need to be addressed.” This teacher’s reflection signals the need for teacher education around teaching cultural and linguistically diverse students. Chapter 8 addresses how this collaborative inquiry informs teaching through the prism of students’ plurilingualism. Herein, I now present an example of how one student used her creative visual self-portrait to recount her personal language biography.

5.1.1 Yasmine: one student’s self-portrait and language biography

Figure 4.21 provides an example of Yasmine’s portrait. At the time of the study, Yasmine was in grade five at l’école privée. Her mother was Iranian and spoke Farsi as a first language; her father was French Canadian from Quebec. Yasmine started attending l’école privée in Kindergarten when her family moved to Toronto from Quebec. The principle language of
communication in her home was French.
Figure 5.2: Yasmine’s language and cultural self-portrait

On her portrait, Yasmine used blue to represent French. In describing her portrait, Yasmine was careful to distinguish between the French from France (dark blue) and the French from Quebec (light blue). The background of her portrait is mostly blue because she uses French most of the time at home and at school. The next two languages that she included were English (red) and Farsi (green). Yasmine had learned English with babysitters as a pre-schooler and then at school, and with some of her friends. She used Farsi with her grandparents on her mother’s side and to some extent with her mom and younger sister. Yasmine also represented her growing knowledge and interest in Spanish because her family had frequently travelled to Barcelona and her mother spoke Spanish as a result of living and working there for a period of time. At the time of the study, Yasmine had decided to take Spanish as her “third” required language at school in grade 6. Finally, Yasmine included a small part of her background in white to represent a memorable trip to Switzerland where she was exposed to the use of German. In terms of mapping her languages on her body, Yasmine put her languages mainly on her legs and feet as she believed that her ability to speak different languages allowed her to travel and move in different places more easily because she could communicate with other people in those places. In addition, she put French, English and Spanish on her hands because she interacted with those languages. On her mouth, Yasmine coloured French, English, Farsi and Spanish as she saw herself as a speaker of all four languages. Finally, Yasmine reserved her heart for her cultural identification as Iranian; she explained, “most of my family is from Iran”.

Yasmine’s self-portrait made visible her personal feelings and attachments to the different languages and cultures that she considered to be part of her life. Her portrait scaffolded her narration of her language and cultural autobiographies. After Yasmine had described her portrait to me, I had the opportunity to interview her mother. She explained from her perspective as a mother, how she saw her daughter’s language development and some of the family’s language and cultural practices. Yasmine’s portrait and her explanation of it reflected her strong attachment to Farsi. Her mother, however, expressed how she felt it was a losing battle to cultivate Farsi with her daughters at home:

My goal was to speak to [my daughters] in Farsi but I never got to do that. So we lost the Farsi [in our home] and as more time goes by it’s harder to implement such a thing. It seems to be sort of an effort all on my side to do it. It doesn’t feel natural to do it at home
with the setting now that we have with the kids and my husband [who doesn’t speak Farsi]. And if we try to do it, it’s like going on diet type of thing... you stick to it for two days or maybe a few hours and then it just goes away, right?

I feel it’s unfortunate ...but at the same time it’s not practical. Multilingualism would be fine, but now they have French, they have English and they’re going to start high school with some Spanish. We travel to Spain sometimes with them in summers so they know a little bit of Spanish …and very little Farsi.

[Yasmine’s younger sister] actually she’s very…she’s not interested in Farsi actually. She feels like it’s another country, not interested, not hip enough to learn such a thing. And I tried many things to sort of get them both interested. I don’t want to impose like a Saturday school for them …Toronto is a multilingual setting and multicultural, so it’s easy to find schools where they can actually get some Farsi. And I know colleagues and friends who do that with their kids. But I don’t want to force them. I tried other ways, buying videos of cartoons they know in Farsi but they’re not interested in watching them. So they think it’s something I imposed... like eat your fruit... or eat your vegetables. It’s harsh, it’s like, okay, Mom wants it but it’s not something I enjoy.

Yasmine’s mother’s reflection reveals her conflicted desire to maintain her family’s language practices and the challenge of doing so in a mixed marriage and in a country where that language is not a majority language. She compares the discipline of teaching her daughters Farsi to sticking with a diet and to making them eat fruits and vegetables. When we juxtapose Yasmine’s mother’s reflection against Yasmine’s portrait, we see contrasting representations between mother and daughter regarding family language practices. With her portrait, Yasmine explained, “The green is Farsi and it’s on my heart because it’s like part of my family and I like being Iranian.” Throughout our research conversations, Yasmine never suggested that she did not like learning Farsi, rather she expressed that it was very important to her because of her special bond with her grandparents and her mother’s side of the family. The contrast between Yasmine and her mother’s perspectives highlight the importance of engaging multiple actors in research, and in particular, the value of taking the time to understand, with the support of visual data, how children as actors see themselves and make sense of their worlds. Their contrasting perspectives also help us to appreciate how multiple contrasting perspectives can at the same time all hold true. Both Yasmine and her mother’s perspectives about the use and learning of Farsi in their family are valid, even though they do not squarely align. Contrasting perspectives create an opportunity to discuss one another’s different representations of language and language learning, out of which individuals can collaboratively move forward. Indeed, for Yasmine and her mother, this creative collaborative inquiry into children’s plurilingualism fostered their desire to work
together at home on developing Yasmine’s Farsi. At the end of the 6-month classroom research collaboration, Yasmine’s mother reflected on her work with Yasmine to translate into Farsi a story that she had written with a group of her classmates in English and French:

“We just sat and she was excited to see that it goes from this side to this side [right to left] and that I knew how to write it. [My kids] weren’t curious about this other language for a long time and the writing [in translation for this project] was like …it was a good thing and she was happy that I could actually do it with her…it kind of opened up the door a little bit. Like she now thinks she’s more interested… And I’ve got books from first grade Farsi so I may try a little bit more.”

Over the course of our classroom collaboration, Yasmine had a number of opportunities to show in different ways her connection to Farsi. Yasmine received positive affirmation from her peers throughout the project because they were interested in how she had learned Farsi and fascinated by the translation she had done with her mother. The multiple representational research activities, the positive feedback from her peers, the time spent with her mom working on her translation all came together to support her interest in Farsi. Her language portrait demonstrates that she had a positive representation and affective affiliation with Farsi. Yasmine’s generation of multiple creative research artifacts made her desire to learn Farsi visible to her mother. These tangible artifacts, as well as the time shared between mother and daughter in their generation, each contributed to her mother’s shift in representation of Farsi as her first language towards a cultural and linguistic heritage that she could impart to her daughter. Working together with Yasmine on a school project in Farsi affirmed to her mother, her ability to share her own language with her daughter:

“I thought that it was a great thing for me actually to see that I was still able to actually do it. And I realized I have writing that’s not just to grade six anymore, it has evolved somehow without me writing much in Farsi. It looks like an adult writing… it’s opened up some interest at home. I enjoyed doing it actually and I was pleased to know I still had some knowledge of the written language.

Reflections such as these highlight the potential role of the school in partnering with parents in supporting children’s plurilingual development. When parents see concretely through their children’s creative work at school that their home languages and the full range of their cultural and linguistic resources are valued, parents are encouraged in their efforts to support their children’s plurilingual development.
5.1.2 Reflections on language and cultural self-portraits as a tool

Before moving on to the next methodological tool for accessing children’s representations of linguistic and cultural diversity in their lives, I want to reflect on the creation of language and cultural self-portraits as an inquiry tool. Children’s language and cultural self-portraits contributed in a number of ways to helping students represent their culturally and linguistically diverse identities at school. First and foremost, the creation of language and cultural portraits allowed students the space to reflect creatively on cultural and linguistic identity and experience. In addition, by creating a colourful body map of associations with each of their languages, students developed rich language biographies that they narrated using figurative language including body metaphors and colour similes. Once all students, and in some cases teachers too, had completed their portraits, displays of the portraits provided the opportunity to recognize, value and affirm the linguistic identities of all members of their learning communities. Students’ cultural and linguistic abilities were further showcased in the classrooms when children shared their portraits with one another and collectively in class. In one class, the classroom teacher was so inspired by students’ portraits that we produced a short video with each student presenting their own portrait. Figure 4.22 shows a still shot from the class video.

Figure 5.3: Still shot from digital video presentation of students’ self portraits

In each school case, language and cultural self-portraits made visible plurilingualism as the shared norm. But even more than simply making plurilingualism visible, students’ portraits made
plurilingual development desirable. Each student’s language and cultural repertoire was unique; there were no two portraits that were the same. While working on their portraits, I heard students commenting to their classmates that they were impressed that they knew other languages. The portraits provoked children’s curiosity both about the language and cultural repertoires of their peers, as well as their own.

Within and across schools, I saw students overlapping their languages and cultures in their portraits to mirror their practice in their lives. The materials that students were given to produce their portraits certainly supported this type of layered reflection. I guided them through the process of first creating a paper collage background to scaffold students’ reflection on language and colour. While some students did create clear divisions and boundaries between the various languages and cultures in their lives, most students’ portraits reflect contact between languages, overlapping, and mixing of colours.

Next, the portrait as a tool supported students’ reflection on language use and language learning as being an embodied act. The activity encouraged reflection on the relationship between different languages and cultures and different parts of the body. The focus on the whole body and whole individual pushed children to move beyond simply thinking about language as something cerebral, learned at school or in a classroom towards thinking about language as (self) expression and as resource for engaging in their worlds. The metaphor of the heart recurred across students’ portraits and reflections. At times, it was used to reference students’ first language, at others it was used to reference aspiration for a heritage language lost. Like the reflexive drawings, the language and cultural portrait created space again for students to express the often unspoken, personal and emotional side of language learning and language loss. Body metaphors helped children articulate relational associations between and among languages in their lives. Whereas reflexive drawings were created to help students define terms for our inquiry in general, the language portrait provided time and space for more sustained, layered reflection about plurilingualism in their lives personally. In addition, the self-portraits were considerably more polished as an end product than students’ reflexive drawings. Teachers did not display children’s drawings but they hung students’ portraits up on bulletin boards, in hallways, and in the case of l’école française, students’ portraits became the illustrations for their collaborative plurilingual class book. While both tools created creative space for reflection, students’ portraits took on
more of an artistic composition quality. I will return to this distinction among creative methods at
the conclusion of this chapter.

5.2 Language and literacy mapping through digital photography

The next representational research activity engaged students in taking digital photographs at
school in groups and then at home individually. Students were given the following instruction:
“Take pictures of anything you can read and write in any language or in any mode”. As with
each of the previous activities, the instruction was intentionally left as open-ended as possible to
provide guidance regarding what the students’ might capture in their photos without limiting or
influencing them about what I as an adult, expected them to photograph. For the photography
exercise at school, their classroom teacher grouped them into six groups so that each one would
have a digital camera. They were advised that each member of their group could take a
maximum of 10 photographs. Students were expected to agree as a group about what they would
photograph. Once all their members had had a chance to take photos around the school and in
their classrooms, they returned their camera to me and I developed their photos. Figure 5. 4
shows a photo of a student taking photos with her group around the school.

Figure 5.4: Taking photos of “Things I can read and write in any language and any mode”
at school
Although I could have had students work with digital versions of their images, I wanted students to be able to sort and categorize the photos by theme. It was easier for students to carry out this type of analysis collaboratively in groups with hard copy prints of their photos that they could manipulate. They grouped photos by themes of their own choosing and labeled each group with a post-it note. Figure 5.5 shows students sorting their photographs into related themes and labeling them with a post-it note. Together as a whole class, we then generated a list of themes or categories across all groups to come up with a composite list of categories of things they were able to read or write in any language or any mode. This initial activity in groups helped to train students to use the digital cameras, as well as to help them develop a schema for taking photos at home.

Figure 5.5: Students sorting their school photos and labeling them by theme

While the same instruction was given to students when they individually borrowed a digital camera to take home for up to 3 nights, no limit was placed on the number of photos they could take. As a result some children took only three photos while others took close to 200 photos. Through their school and home digital photography, students took over 3000 photos. As such, an individual analysis of each student’s photos is beyond the scope of this dissertation. The importance of having students engage in digital photography at school in groups and then at home individually was that it helped them develop a key competence of an ethnographer: that of
observation, of looking closely and deeply at their context of study and of being able to make sense of what they have come to see. Digital cameras offered students new lenses through which to examine the literacies and the linguistic landscapes of their schools and their homes. Rather than taking pictures of people as this “selfie” generation is prone to do, within the context of this inquiry, digital cameras became research instruments. Students focused on photographing multimodal texts that made up the linguistic landscapes of their lives and with the benefit of printed photos, they were able to sort them, categorize them and reflect on the data they had gathered. As the researchers responsible for capturing each photo, the students took on the responsibility of attributing meaning to their photos. In *Another Way of Telling*, Berger and Mohr (1982) explain:

> In the relation between a photograph and words, the photograph begs for an interpretation, and the words usually supply it. The photograph, irrefutable as evidence but weak in meaning, is given meaning by the words. And the words, which by themselves remain at the level of generalisation, are given specific authority by the irrefutability of the photograph. Together the two become very powerful… (p. 92)

Digital photography served once again to allow children to be seen as experts of their worlds: they both chose what to photograph and then made meaning with their photographs by classifying them and comparing their school and home photos. Rather than me, as an outside researcher, taking photos around the school and within the school community in order to construct a visual sense of the types of things children could read and write both in and out of school, I gave the students the tools to represent through photography what they saw and made of their daily experience.

Whereas the previous two creative representational activities engaged students in creating one focal artifact, in this activity, I became less concerned with the photographs themselves and more interested in students’ analysis of them. Analysis occurred at many levels and in an iterative fashion: first, students analysed their school photos by sorting them into categories and creating a label for each group. In like manner, students individually sorted and labeled their home photos. Then using their school and home categories, students worked in groups to create a Venn diagram to show which categories were shared between home and school, and which categories appeared to be specific either to home or to school. Figure 5.6 shows students discussing where to put various categories.
The manipulation of printed photos, the use of post-it notes to label groups of photos and the use of the Venn diagram as a graphic organizer scaffolded students’ analysis of their photographs. Tactile forms of data and tactile approaches to analysis allowed a cognitive process to be made concrete for children as co-researchers. Once students had completed their Venn diagrams, we discussed the differences and similarities among each group’s diagrams and I engaged students in a class discussion regarding why such difference and similarities existed. What types of things were read and written at home and at school? What types of things were read or written only at home? Only at school? Why? What did students think and how did they feel about the “rules” or “policies” that we uncovered by examining the data they had generated through digital photography at school and at home.

Figure 5.6: Students sorting photo categories on their Venn diagram

While there were certainly particularities that arose across school cases, there were some very clear general conclusions that students drew through their guided reflection on the comparison of home and school photos. Figure 5.7 provides a meta-analysis across the five cases of the categories of texts that were associated with home, school and both sites. With the exception of l’école française, French was the only language that children overwhelmingly associated with school only. While many of the students’ at l’école française in Montpellier also spoke some
French at home, a number of them associated French largely as an “academic” school based language. (Only one of the students from *l’école de langue française* in Toronto used French almost exclusively at home, but she arrived at the school after the class had completed the digital photography activities and analysis). For the most part, students in Toronto associated French as a language that they learn only at school – whether in the context of immersion, official “first language” minority instruction or core French as a second official language. One student from *l’école de langue française*, explained the reason for his association of French as a “school” language in this way, “We speak French at school because it’s the only place that’s French here and our parents want us to be bilingual.” While this reflection comes from a student attending a French-language school, the sentiment was repeated across the English school, the French immersion and even the French private school. Learning (in) French offers a path towards bilingualism and the school was seen to play a vital role in its development.

**Figure 5.7: Meta-representation of students’ comparison of the things they read and write at home, at school and across both sites.**

English was seen across all school cases to be the one language that was shared between the school and the home. Due to its presence in the media and weekly instruction at school, students...
in France identified English as a shared language between school and home. Within the four Toronto-based schools, English was seen as the language shared between both home and school. Students’ home languages or “our” languages as they called them, were seen to be reserved for use at home. When asked about the differences in languages at school, at home and shared across both spaces, one student reflected, “we use English here [at school] because not everyone speaks the same language at home.” At first, this reflection suggests that the use of English as the language of communication and instruction at school was understood by children to be more inclusive than allowing everyone to use their personal home languages. Similarly, another student added, “if I spoke my language at school, no one would understand me.” This second reflection suggests that the message students had internalized about their home languages was that if they used them, they would in fact be excluded because no one would understand them. Unlike representations of French as an academic language that could support children’s bilingualism, students’ home languages were seen to be incomprehensible, and a hindrance to collective learning and mutual communication. English was recognized as the only language resource shared by everyone.

When we look at the categories of texts that students associated with school, home and shared across, they are very revealing of the kinds of literacies that children are engaged in at school and out of school. Under the rubric of “Things I can read and write at school,” students included photographs of writing on their classroom blackboard or smartboard, the daily agenda, classroom rules and jobs, anchor charts such as verb charts and proofreading marks, and their textbooks. In a number of the schools, students were not allowed to take textbooks home; they were for in-class reference only according to school policy because students might not return them otherwise. Then, under the rubric of “Things that I can read and write at home” students included a range of information and communication technologies including computers, tablets and cell phones, multimedia like TV (movies, cartoons and sitcoms), video games, CDs and even sheet music with instruments like pianos, keyboards and guitars. Students also had a tendency to photograph personal souvenirs from holidays or travel, likely in part because many of these memorabilia included writing in different languages. Nonetheless, the traces of their trajectories through photographs create the sense that these plurilingual children are not only reading alphabetic text outside of school, but they are and can be involved in the Freirian sense of reading their worlds. This notion of reading the world was also supported by the many
photographs that children took of food packaging. At times, children took pictures of their favourite foods from other countries that their families ate at home. Other children took pictures of Canadian food packaging to highlight their observation of text both in English and French. Finally, students took pictures of different types of printed texts that they read at home including recipe books, newspapers and most notably religious texts. When asked to account for the differences between the things they read and write at school and the things they read and write at home, students across all five cases alarmingly came to the same conclusion expressed succinctly by one child in this way: “at home we can be creative, but at school we have no choice.” Creativity and the freedom of choice (or the lack thereof) became common refrains of students as they compared their photos at home and at school and reflected on how they assigned categories to the different spaces. It seems disconcerting that the conclusion students came to through their analysis of their photographic data was that their home languages and their creative expression could not be shared at school. They recognized academic Literacy – traditional scholastic forms of reading and writing in prescribed ways, were valued at school even though their home lives were filled with multiliteracies in a plurality of languages. While students accepted this reality as defining their school lives, they welcomed the opportunity to imagine another way of doing school that would allow them to draw on their creative, cultural and linguistic resources. This photographic inquiry allowed students to see and name their lived experience and then to move forward to transform it. Chapter 6 will take up how I engaged children in plurilingual multimodal book production as a way of supporting teachers to teach through the creative prism of students’ plurilingualism. Before moving into the next chapter, however, let us reflect on digital photography as a language and literacy research instrument.

5.2.1 Reflections on digital photography as literacy mapping tool

From the outset, asking children to take digital photographs helped them move from being creative experts who could reflect on their personal experiences with cultural and linguistic diversity through drawing and portrait making to being active co-researchers and ethnographers of their lived reality. While many students had already taken pictures prior to this study, few of them owned digital cameras of their own. Students took on the responsibility of borrowing and returning the digital cameras with great care. Across the five schools, and all the collaborating students not a single camera was lost. In addition, when I asked students to take pictures, we reviewed the consent process that we had undertaken before beginning our collaboration.
Students were reminded that they could not take pictures of people for whom they did not have authorization in order to respect their privacy. We discussed that the purpose of taking pictures was not to photograph people but rather “texts” that they could read or write in different languages and different modes. Students took this responsibility very seriously. Indeed, taking digital photographs helped attune children’s attention to the linguistic and cultural diversity around them. They recognized that their worlds were not uniform or “monolingual” but rather they were made up of a plurality of cultures and languages.

Because students undertook to take pictures at school in groups before they each borrowed cameras to take home, students had collective training with a gradual release towards independent digital photography. The printing of photos allowed for hands-on analysis of language and literacy policies that governed school and home spaces. Through their photography and their analysis, students were supported developmentally and with data to question and to consciously move towards mobilizing their plurilingual repertories both at home and in school in order, ultimately to transform their classroom spaces.

### 5.3 Reflections on self-portraits and photography as creative inquiry tools

The creation of self-portraits and digital photography provide two different approaches to engaging children in mapping the cultural and linguistic diversity in their lives. Self-portraits challenged children to reflect on their personal language biography and by using their body silhouette as a map, they developed embodied metaphors to describe their personal internal cultural and linguistic landscape. Digital photography, by contrast, invited children to look afresh at the landscapes of their schools and their homes to recognize the linguistic and cultural diversity that surrounds them on a daily basis. The value added by adopting both of these tools was that children had multiple opportunities and multiple avenues for reflecting on cultural and linguistic diversity. The creation of self-portraits and digital photography scaffolded their observation internally and externally; this dual approach helped raise their awareness and their attention to their personal plurilingualism and that of their peers, as well as the multilingual contexts of their schools and their homes.

Another significant difference between students’ representations through their self-portraits versus their digital photography was the focus in the former on both the creative process and the
resulting product versus a focus more on the process – documenting the landscape – in the latter. That said, the process and the product are inextricable in creative inquiry: one informs the other in iterative, cyclical fashion. In the creation of the self-portraits, the process of layering their background and then using body metaphors to map their languages and cultures on their silhouette were critical to the realization of the final creative product – the self-portrait - and the narration of children’s language biographies. In the digital photography mapping, the creative processes became more significant than the photos themselves: students engaged in learning how to use the digital cameras; negotiating in groups which images to capture at school; and then moving on to individually and independently taking photos at home; followed by sorting and analysing their photos; and ultimately, reflecting on what they told them about the presence and power of different languages and cultural practices in different spaces. The products – or the photos – were indispensible, so much so that I printed them out so that students could physically manipulate them rather then leaving them as intangible digital images. The distinction between process and product is significant, however, because it raises a question regarding aesthetic quality in creative inquiry with children. Throughout this dissertation thus far, I have consistently described this inquiry as creative rather than artistic. This word choice has not been made lightly as I have reflected on the prism of inquiry tools that children took up over the course of each classroom collaboration. But we see in the juxtaposition of children’s self-portraits against their digital photography more clearly a distinction that can be made between inquiry products that succeed more artistically and those products that remain as visual data. Arts-based (ABR) and arts-informed research (AIR) have gained a wider following in educational research in recent years. Cole and Knowles (2008) cite eight qualities of “goodness” in arts-informed research: intentionality, researcher practice, aesthetic quality, methodological commitment, holistic quality, communicability, knowledge advancement and contributions. Table 5. 1 explains each of these qualities. (See Appendix 4: Cole & Knowles’ (2008) Eight qualities of “goodness” in Arts-Informed Research (AIR)) These qualities or criteria highlight the interwoven nature of the inquiry process and the inquiry product in AIR, as well as a keen attention to aesthetics and to transformation of social realities.

Reflecting on their self-portraits and their digital photography, children’s self portraits stand out more as arts-informed research representations. The creation of language and cultural self-portraits helped students to see and understand themselves as plurilingual in a holistic manner.
Their self-portraits were displayed as artworks of inquiry and they contributed to an understanding of language and cultural practices as embodied processes. Children’s digital photography demonstrated some of the qualities of AIR but due to the lack of emphasis on aesthetics, their products – the photos themselves - did not, in general, succeed artistically. Nonetheless, digital photography allowed students to examine the linguistic and cultural diversity around them using the creative method of photography, a mode that prioritized the visual over the verbal. This shift in mode allowed children to engage their social realities in a powerful way such that they were able to unpack both official and informal language policies that governed the landscapes of their lives. The process of mapping the linguistic and cultural diversity of their schools and their homes and analyzing the difference prepared them to respond both creatively and artistically through the final two research activities: their production of plurilingual and multimodal books and then their final reflexive plurilingual collages.

Students began producing plurilingual and multimodal books following their digital photography mapping of language and literacies at home and school. This creative experiential research activity engaged students to work in groups with peers who did not necessarily share the same language backgrounds in order to allow them all to discover new languages while at the same time gaining a deeper understanding of their own. The following chapter traces children’s collaborative production of plurilingual multiliteracies production across the five school cases as a way of supporting a cycle of plurilingual inquiry in the classroom.
Chapter 6
Prismatic Reflections and Refractions: Plurilingual Multiliteracies Production

This chapter traces collaborative plurilingual multimodal book production with students and their teachers across the five school cases. The design for students’ plurilingual multimodal book production was based on the original concept of creating dual-language “identity text” (Cummins & Early, 2011) work with language learners. The aim of collaborative plurilingual multimodal book production was to exploring the potential of creative plurilingual production as prisms that refract all students capacities as plurilinguals as they work in collaboration and their diverse cultural and linguistic resources are brought into intersection. The goal was to explore how children with different language and cultural backgrounds could share their resources as an experiential way of encountering and deconstructing their representations of plurilingualism and linguistic and cultural diversity in mainstream classrooms. I showcase herein one plurilingual and multimodal book from each of the collaborating school cases as a way of reflecting on plurilingual multiliteracies production for all learners across diverse school models. Plurilingual multimodal book production was taken up differently in each school case. At l’école de language française and l’école française, each class created one collective book. At l’école privée, and the French immersion school, students worked in pairs or in small groups to create a number of different books. At the English school, students worked individually or in pairs for the most part. A sample book was selected from each case based on the quality of the text, the illustrations and students’ articulation of their reflections about their plurilingual multiliteracies production.

6 Beyond the language classroom into the mainstream classroom

During each classroom collaboration, students engaged in a range of creative representational research activities including reflexive drawing, digital photography, self-portrait creation, collage and plurilingual multiliteracies production. The previous two chapters took up students’ drawings, self-portraits and digital photography. Each of these activities for the most part engaged children individually in representational activities followed by individual and collective reflection. This chapter now turns to look at student’s collaborative engagement in the
production of plurilingual multimodal books. Across the five school cases, students produced 32 plurilingual and multimodal books. Presentation and analysis of each book individually is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Rather in this chapter, I trace the development of students’ plurilingual multiliteracies production across the five participating school cases. Wherever possible, I took pictures and fieldnotes to document students’ and teachers’ practice. Much of the time, however, I was actively supporting students’ plurilingual multiliteracies production by helping them think through their translations and trouble-shooting design issues with illustrations and typesetting, etc. Our hands-on collaborative classroom-based inquiry often became messy and evolved in non-linear, and at times unpredictable ways. Because in most cases, students were working in groups to carry their projects to completion, the classroom configuration shifted from being teacher-directed to be much more student-centred. Classrooms were in general louder and at the surface appeared to be less structured than when students worked individually at their seats doing paper-and-pencil based activities. Each of the collaborating teachers reflected at various points during students’ production of plurilingual multimodal books that they felt like they were not “teaching” in the traditional sense in that the teacher was no longer the only source of Knowledge or Reference in the class. Instead students were co-constructing their own stories and their own understanding of how their languages worked together. One teacher in particular reflected in retrospect that “il me semble que je fais rien mais les élèves travaillent de tout manière.” He noted that teaching in this way required flexibility in design and in the implementation of projects so that students could successfully develop and demonstrate the necessary literacy skills required by the curriculum. From his perspective, the rewards for investing the time to set up the project and to carefully set up groups were that “on a réussi à faire ce qu’on doit faire toute l’année. On doit écrire, corriger, recommencer, presenter une copie propre, mais c’est complexe et souvent [les enfants] s’ennuient dans le processus.” Teachers consistently commented that many of their students did some of their best writing in the context of their plurilingual multiliteracies book production. Their attention even to details and to revising was strengthened because they anticipated with great expectation and excitement having their work published and read by and for real audiences.

6.1 L’école privée

At l’école privée, 9 different languages were part of the linguistic repertoires of the 11 students in the participating grade 5 class. The French and English teachers worked collaboratively to
group students in twos or threes to ensure that at least one group member spoke a language other than English and French. Students were then asked to create a “roman photo” that contained a mystery, a genre that they had been studying when I arrived in the class. To illustrate their stories, students took digital photos of themselves as the characters. We pooled laptops, ipads and a classroom computer so that students could type their own stories. Because students were accustomed to writing in cursive in French and printing in English, they decided that each language should be featured in a different font in the final copy. The sample pages below are taken from Madison and Nolwenn’s story, “Le Message / The Message / Zpravu,” in which two girls find a secret message and work together to decode it. The story was written in French, English and Czech. Madison’s mother spoke Czech and with the help of family members, Madison translated the story and recorded a reading of the story in Czech. After working together with Madison to create their book and seeing the books of the other groups, Nolwenn reflected that she was now looking forward to learning a third language in grade 6 because she could only speak two languages – French and English. Nolwenn’s reflection was echoed by many of students in the class who upon seeing and hearing the “secret” home languages of their peers, valued their own language skills in French and English and were motivated to continue expanding their plurilingual repertoires. As a researcher and former classroom teacher, I was struck by the fact that for the most part, these students had been with their grade cohort since kindergarten and yet even after spending 7 years in school together, they were taken by surprise to learn that they all spoke so many different languages. Their astonishment at the cultural and linguistic resources present in their classroom community underlined that even in a private school that prized itself on promoting excellence in language learning, students’ individual home languages were not readily recognized or utilized as resources for learning.

At the end of the project, the classroom teachers and myself organized a book launch and students invited their parents, family members and other community members to attend the celebration. Parents reported anecdotally that their children were much more excited now about writing both in French and English, as well as in their home languages. One mother, who had compared trying to teach her daughter her first language to forcing her eat vegetables, reflected on the process of helping her daughter translate her group’s story into Farsi in this way: “it kind of opened up the door a little bit, like she now thinks she’s more interested [in learning Farsi for
herself] and she might be…so I may try a little bit now.” Another parent underlined how valuable it is when teachers value children’s home languages:

“it’s also powerful when it comes from teachers because as a parent when you hold the mirror up to your child to say this is the wonderful gifted person I see you are, but it’s like whatever mom. I think they dismiss. I think they’re pleased on one level but you as a parent sometimes don’t have as much weight. But when an external person validates [your home language] it gives them a level of kind of thoughtfulness about themselves that they don’t necessarily get when it’s just a parent mirroring back… When it’s valued elsewhere it’s a solid reinforcement so it’s great.

Students’ and parents’ reflections on the creation of plurilingual and multimodal books highlighted the often untapped potential for home-school partnerships to support students’ plurilingual language and literacy development. Just as teachers rely on parental support for students’ academic engagement and achievement, parents also value teachers’ affirmation for children’s home language and cultural literacy practices. When teachers and parents work together, children benefit by developing an understanding of how languages can work together than against one another.

![Sample pages from a plurilingual book at the French private school](image)

Figure 6.1: Sample pages from a plurilingual book at the French private school

### 6.2 English School

At the English school, 17 languages were spoken by 28 students. Students were asked to write an
Is/Not Poem based on one of Cecil’s (1997) literacy scaffolds for poetry writing. The grade 5 classroom teacher preferred that students work on their plurilingual texts individually or at most in pairs rather than in groups. As a result, students produced 16 different dual-language books in English and one other language. The teacher made an exception to allow three students to work together to produce a seventeenth book in three languages: English, Hindi and Swahili. Out of the class of 28 students, 6 students did not speak a language other than English at home; these students were encouraged either to partner with another student in the class who had a language other than English as a home language, or to use French as the second language. This class had received 45 minutes of French-as-a-second-language instruction each day beginning in grade 4 so the option to translate their poem into French presented an authentic opportunity to work bilingually. Unfortunately, it was difficult to foster collaboration between the mainstream classroom English teacher and the FSL teacher; both teachers seemed to feel that it would be difficult and time consuming for the core French teacher and the mainstream classroom teacher to support each other’s work with students in this project or in regular day-to-day academic work. The school subscribed to the common “two solitudes” approach (Cummins, 2007) for French-as-a-second-language instruction where French was reserved for French class and English for the rest of the day. The FSL teacher was reluctant to help students translate their poems into French particularly because he discouraged translation between languages and felt that using an on-line translation tool or dictionary to produce their text in French gave students a false sense that “they could do things in French when they’re not really doing it properly.” The English teacher explained that she had never actually thought about planning for cross-linguistic transfer between English and French with the French teacher and that in terms of language, her expectations centred around “developing academic language [in English] and preventing the use of profanity in the classroom.”

Despite the limited collaboration among teachers in terms of planning instruction and the reluctance to have students work in groups, students responded positively to the process of creating dual-language multimodal books in a variety of their home languages. The following excerpt from a research conversation with two students following the project highlights the value added by opening up a space in the classroom where students who were “fluent” in English, could also use their home languages to extend their academic work:
Gail: When you were working on your books, you wrote in more than one language. How did it feel to be using more than one language?

Student 1: Well it felt... I felt kind of proud because other people know what language I speak now.

Student 2: Yeah … I feel the same because everybody knows now. I look like I’m Filipino but sometimes people ask: Am I Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese? But I say, “No, no, but I’m Filipino.” So now they know. I feel proud that I know Tagalog.

Some students noted that it took them some time to adjust to using their home language at school for an academic purpose. For example, one student reflected that “it felt kind of awkward because you mostly speak English [at school]… I think we stay in school more than we stay at home. So we don’t speak our language [any] more, only with our parents in the evening, every day. So it felt kind of hard … but [my friend] and someone else helped me write it down.” Despite finding it challenging to translate his poem at first, when he received a printed copy of his book, he expressed that he was excited to share his book with his parents because they would be proud of him. Then he added, “You know, I never liked reading or writing [at school] before, but now I think I like it.” This student’s reflection speaks to the power of collaborative multimodal projects like this one to increase students’ literacy engagement. By opening up the classroom space and encouraging students to draw on the full range of their cultural and linguistic repertoires, students began to see both their peers and themselves in new ways: they recognized the cultural and linguistic resources of their peers, as well as their own; and, they had the opportunity to understand practically how they could draw on their full range of their communicative repertoires to help them produce work that was reflective of their whole selves.

Figure 6.2: Sample pages from a dual-language book at the English school
In retrospect, the defining difference in this school case was that collaboration amongst both teachers and students of different language backgrounds was limited. Across all of the other school cases, students worked collaboratively in groups with students of different language backgrounds. (Collaboration had in fact been proposed as an initial condition for inclusion as a school case study). At the English school, however, as the inquiry unfolded, the teacher preferred that students work individually or with share language backgrounds. The juxtaposition of the English school case with the other school cases highlighted that students across the other school cases displayed a much greater interest in the languages and cultural resources of their classmates. Although students at the English school were curious about their classmates’ books, they did not experience the need to truly encounter and engage in working with languages outside their personal repertoires. If the goal of plurilingual multiliteracies production is not only to value students’ home languages and to enable them to draw on the linguistic resources for academic purposes, but also to build a more open and inclusive classroom community and to support students in expanding their plurilingual repertoires, then the English school case was truly only a partial success. The contrast between students’ dual-language books at the English school and the plurilingual books that were produced in other school cases highlights the potential for plurilingual multiliteracies production to support children’s plurilingual multiliteracies development, as well as, to support all students’ metalinguistic awareness and the development of their competence as plurilingual social actors (Coste & Simon, 2009).

6.3 French Immersion school

At the French Immersion school, 11 languages were spoken by the split class of 20 grade 5 and 6 students. According to curriculum mandates, students received about 50 percent of their instruction in French and 50 percent in English. The classroom teacher taught his students both in English and French. Students worked in groups of 4 or 5 and each group included at least two of the students who spoke a language other than English or French. As such, at least four languages were represented in each book: French, English and at least two different home languages. The theme of students’ writing was to describe Toronto according to the five senses. In this way, the teacher integrated reviewing science curriculum expectations while at the same time working on language and literacy expectations in English and in French.

The teacher worked with the whole class to structure the book around each of the five senses: How does Toronto look? How does Toronto smell? How does Toronto feel? How does Toronto taste? How does Toronto sound? Every student wrote answers to each of the five questions. Then
working in their groups, students who spoke a home language other than English or French worked with their parents to translate all of their group’s text into their home language. In this way, all students had the opportunity to encounter their own contributions to the book in “new” languages. This process of translating every group members’ descriptive sentences into each of the languages shared by group members proved to help students bond. Students routinely commented to me when I was in class that they were particularly thankful for the students in their groups who spoke different languages because they appreciated discovering their peers’ languages and they recognized the contribution it made to their collective book. This repositioning of students who spoke additional languages as students with resources to share rather than linguistic challenges to overcome was mutually beneficial for children who spoke the languages of instruction (English and French) as well as the students who spoke other languages at home.

In addition, the classroom teacher reflected in retrospect that by asking students to write in their home languages, the project created a reciprocal opportunity for students to work in French at home with their parents:

if [students were] getting help from their parents or they’re talking about their home language, they may not just be doing that through English; they might have also been doing that through French, and I think that is something that they wouldn’t have necessarily done before. So I think this [project] brought French home to the parents in a way that is not necessarily easily done… from a literacy point of view, parents were so excited to bring their native language or their first language [into the school], but for me, I was really excited that [the project also] brought French home in a different way.

This teacher’s reflection underlines how plurilingual multiliteracies production served to build bridges not only across linguistic divides and but also between students’ families and the school. His recognition that plurilingual multiliteracies production may have not only supported children’s plurilingual development but also that it may have further scaffolded children’s use of French at home with their parents in a meaningful way opens up a new area of exploration for plurilingual multiliteracies production.

Dual-language books have often been regarded as beneficial for English language learners. This French immersion case study points to the potential for plurilingual projects to support students’ literacy practice both in their home languages, as well as in French. Moreover, this project
further facilitated the engagement of parents who do not speak French in supporting their children’s literacy development at school. This insight also underscores the idea that teaching through the prism of children’s plurilingualism does not require teachers to teach in languages they do not know but rather allows and encourages students to draw on the full range of their linguistic repertoire to ultimately support their learning in and understanding of the language of instruction.

Figure 6.3: Sample pages from plurilingual book at the French Immersion school

6.4 L’école de langue française

At l’école de langue française, 15 languages were spoken by a split grade 4/5 class of 29 students. The entire class worked collaboratively to produce one book that included all students’ home languages. The classroom teacher asked students to write out one of their favourite recipes from home. The recipes were written in French in alignment with the French curriculum expectation for students to produce texts in a variety of genres. Students then wrote a poem in French following a template that asked them to describe their feelings around their chosen recipe. Students translated their poems into English at school with their English teacher and then subsequently into their home languages with family members and other community members. A
number of students in the class had more than one home language. By creating one collaborative class book, the combined cultural and linguistic resources of the entire class were shared by all of the students. Many students made new connections with one another when they discovered that they shared a common home language. The resulting book, “Venez manger avec nous: une collection de nos poèmes plurilingues et nos recettes préférées en français” includes students' poems in 15 different languages, as well as their recipes and illustrations. Students sought the help of family members, as well as teachers on staff who shared their home languages in order to help them translate and typeset their poems. Because the classroom teacher spoke Arabic and a number of class parents had access to scriptural fonts in their first languages, we were able to use them in the publication of the book. Again, this added polish to the final product and contributed to the teacher, students and their families taking pride in their collaborative work. We recorded students reading their poems in all of their languages and students received a copy of the book and a CD with the mp3 recording of each them reading their poems.

Apart from using English during English class, this project was the first time that students had permission to work with languages other than French at school. When the students received the published copies of their book along with the mp3 recording, they asked if they could listen to the entire book. As they listened attentively to the recording, the students shared smiles and looks of pride amongst themselves and with the teacher and myself. At the end of the readings, they gave themselves an enthusiastic round of applause and one student asked if they could have their classmates sign their book since they were now authors. The classroom teacher and myself were moved by the desire of all of the students to make sure that they did not leave anyone out of the book signing, even students who the teacher reported often remained at the periphery when students did group activities. This organic expression of inclusion by and for all students highlights the potential for collaborative plurilingual work to support the recognition and valuing of all students cultural and linguistic resources as a way of supporting literacy engagement as well as building an inclusive classroom community.
6.5 L’école française in Montpellier

At l’école française in Montpellier, 17 languages were spoken by 27 students. One of the particularities of the school in Montpellier was its designation as a “bilingual” school. This designation meant that students received one hour of instruction in English each week and one hour of instruction each week in Occitan, a regional language for Languedoc-Roussillon in southern France. The collaborating classroom teacher taught Occitan for the whole school and she was also fluent in English, even though she was not the designated English teacher. She was aware at the outset of the project that a number of her students spoke different languages at home other than French. She identified herself as a plurilingual speaker of French, English, Occitan, Spanish and Finnish.

Building on the successful aspects of the four Toronto cases, we decided to create one collaborative multilingual and plurilingual book for the entire class. The classroom teacher
decided to have students write a paragraph about their physical description because she had been teaching physical attributes in Occitan and had been working on paragraph form in French. She scaffolded students’ writing by listing the characteristics that she wanted students to describe. Students used their Occitan notebooks to aid them with the vocabulary for writing their paragraph in Occitan. We brainstormed as a class the vocabulary that might be required for their writing in English. As with the other school cases in Toronto, students asked their parents and other family members to assist them with their translations in their home languages. When we started recording students’ readings in French, Occitan, English and their home languages, the classroom teacher and I observed that students had more difficulty reading their paragraphs in Occitan and English than they did in writing them. The teacher remarked that just as much attention is given to reading and writing in French, the traditional approach to language instruction in the school was also based on children learning to read and write in Occitan and English. For her, one of the outcomes of collaborating in this project was recognizing the importance of working on oral production as a support for students’ literacy development and their communicative confidence.

The classroom teacher also noted that all of the students had included a variety of numbers in their paragraphs such as their ages and their birthdays. Because students had often written their ages and birthdays in numerals rather than in words, they often hesitated when reading them aloud. Following Auger’s (2006) model, *Comparons nos langues*, and to promote reading fluency, we decided to create a chart with all of the numbers from one to ten in all of the languages that students were capable of writing. The teacher let the children who knew how to write in different languages write the words on the board and teach the class how to say the numbers. Over the course of creating these number charts, students spontaneously began to make observations comparing similarities and differences across languages. They noted, for example, that Occitan was very similar to Spanish and Italian. They also recognized that Turkish and Albanian used accents like in French but not necessarily in the same way; and Arabic used a scriptural font instead of the Roman alphabet. With the observations came many questions: Why are some languages almost the same? How did some of the children learn these different languages? Why do you read from right to left in Arabic but left to right in the other languages? Through this comparison of number words, the classroom teacher was able to highlight how students could draw on the languages that they already know in order to help them in French or
to learn other languages. She was also able to help students build their metalinguistic awareness and to help them appreciate the importance of following the rules or conventions of a given language. While students across all of the school projects had serendipitously and sporadically made observations across the different languages used in their respective books, the intentional creation of a comparative table of numbers in 8 languages allowed for all students to develop their plurilingual and metalinguistic awareness irrespective of the number of languages they spoke. Whether a child spoke only French at home or whether s/he spoke different home languages did not matter. All of the linguistic resources in the class were made available to all of the students in the class as a resource for their learning. Whereas the principle underlying language awareness programs has traditionally relied on exposing students to languages that they do not know, these classroom case studies suggest that in an age of transnational mobility where schools are increasingly filled with students who speak different languages at home than the language of instruction in their classes, teachers can draw on students’ diverse communicative repertoires and build an inclusive community in which these cultural and linguistic resources can help all learners develop greater metalinguistic awareness and foster openness towards other languages and cultural practices. Once again the focus on comparing concepts across students’ languages contributes to developing a more child-centred approach to language teaching and learning rather than a teacher-centred approach that sets up the teacher as the (only) language

Reference. When drawing on students’ linguistic repertoires, students become the experts and the teacher takes on the role of guide and listener in order to draw students’ attention to how the language of instruction intersects with children’s diverse repertoires.
Figure 6.5: Samples pages from plurilingual book at the French school in Montpellier
6.6 Reflections on Plurilingual Multimodal Production in the mainstream classroom

The flexible design of this multi-site study allowed the classroom teacher and I to adapt the plurilingual multiliteracies production according to the curriculum already in place in each classroom. The priority was to support teachers in teaching their programme through a plurilingual approach, rather than proposing additional work separate from the curriculum. As a result, the content of the books and the grouping of students and languages was different in each school; lessons were learned through both the successes and the challenges encountered through each school case and they were then in turn used to refine the plurilingual and multimodal book-making process of each subsequent case. Taken together, the five school case studies suggest that in this present age of transnational mobility where plurilingual learners are the norm rather than the exception, we can build on Cummins and Early’s (2011) model of the creation of “identity
texts” by CLD learners towards adopting a plurilingual approach to mainstream teaching that is inclusive of and beneficial for all learners. Whereas the mirror has been the metaphorical image associated with the pedagogical notion of the “identity text” that repudiates a deficit construction of minority-language learners, the prism offers a metaphor to describe collaborative creative plurilingual multiliteracies production in 21st century classrooms. While a mirror uses light to reflect back an identical two-dimensional image of a learner, the three-dimensional prism refracts light into an infinite rainbow. Likewise, while dual-language identity text creation powerfully supports the affirmation of plurilingual students’ cultural and linguistic resources, plurilingual multiliteracies production in the classroom offer teachers, students and their families the opportunity to collaborate in academic work that allows all of its contributors to both experience first-hand and imagine what the world could look like if we pooled our communicative resources to address issues and challenges together inclusively rather than remaining isolated by our differences.

Once we had completed digital audio recordings of students’ books and they had received their printed hard copies, I engaged students in guided research conversations to reflect on the book-making process. Their reflections highlight three key braided strands of our book-making collaboration: 1) polished production; 2) multimodal expression; and 3) plurilingual exchange.

6.6.1 Polished production

During his final research reflection about his experience working together to create a plurilingual book in three languages, one boy expressed, “When I was writing this book, I learned that two minds full of imagination can do something big and creative.” His comment is representative of many other students across the five school cases who also reflected that working in groups allowed them to produce something that they could not have done individually. He and his partner authored their book in French, English and Russian. He spoke Russian at home with his parents and he was able to work with his mother on the translation of the story in Russian. His partner was much stronger in French and his parents helped the boys with their French translation. His partner described the translation process as a treasure hunt “because we knew how to say this word in English, but we didn’t know how to say it in French so we sort of had to find the best way to say it.” The boys learned that they could not translate word for word but rather for meaning and as a result, the writing process became a treasure hunt for the best way to convey their ideas.
The following excerpt from my research conversation with both boys about their reaction to their plurilingual multimodal book-making highlights the impact of production and authentic audience:

Gail: Now that you see your book and you know that you’re going to get a copy of it and it’s going to go up on the class blog, how does that make you feel?

Student 1: It feels really cool.

Student 2: I feel like I’m a superstar.

Gail: Can you explain why?

Student 1: Because it’s, we made, a book... that could be published... we’re authors.

Student 2: Because like everybody’s going to read your book and it’s not like you just make it, you keep it to yourself. Now you have people going on the school blog listening to it and reading it. That’s really exciting.

Student 1: And like normally I would make a book it would only be like a piece of paper with a paper clip and this is actually like...

Student 2: I just go on my computer, type a little and then... but I can’t photocopy, I just keep it there and it lies there away. Usually I don’t finish. But this, this is complete book...

Student 1: It’s in color.

Student 2: It’s more than I ever dreamed of.

Student 1: It’s like a book that we just bought.

Student 2: ... I actually wish it would be published and people would get to read it. They would buy it in the stores, that is the kind of thing I would want next.

Gail: Why is that important to you?

Student 2: Well because I want to have other...

Student 1: To be famous.

Student 2: I don’t really...well so maybe it should be actually in the store, people will want to buy it because they’ll see it’s interesting because ...it’s not for the money, it’s for the people actually reading it.

During our research conversation, the two boys enthusiastically recounted how the production of real, printed book in colour made them feel like superstars and authors. Their pride and excitement is almost palpable as they interrupt one another and complete one another’s sentences. They highlight how much they valued the potential for sharing their story with a real and broad audience. It is important that their work is not “like you just make it, you keep it for yourself.” While they find the idea of being “famous” authors “very cool”, they were motivated “not for the money, it’s for the people actually reading it.” This desire for their story to be read and to be listened to through the digital version on the class blog underlined their feeling that their school work, and their written work in general did not have any real impact in the world nor any real audience. According to the second boy, when he writes stories, he types on his computer and he “just keep[s] it there and it lies there away. Usually I don’t finish. But this, this is complete book.” The reality that their book would be published and have real audiences motivated the boys to persevere through to the completion of
their plurilingual multimodal book. Indeed, given that I spent 4 to 6 months with each collaborating class, students remained engaged in their plurilingual work for a lengthy and sustained period of time. The promise of being published for an authentic audience supports the recent shift in language and literacies research towards conceptualizing literacy not only as social practice but also as production (Dagenais, Toohey & Shulze, 2014). Active creative engagement in production sustained students’ interest and particularly their attention to detail and revision throughout the writing process.

6.6.2 Multimodal expression

It became apparent over the course of the project that both the printed version and the digital version of students’ books played an important but different roles in students’ plurilingual multiliteracies production. Books were printed initially by an on-line print-on-demand business and then subsequently by a local printer, SnapDragon in Toronto. The proliferation of digital platforms have made the costs of self-publishing much more affordable. Whereas the costs of printing individual copies of students’ books for each of the student authors, teachers and the school library where covered by a Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship (SSHRC) and a Weston Doctoral Fellowship, I was mindful of classroom and school budget constraints for teachers who would take up a plurilingual approach to their teaching in the long range. There are a number of options for DIY (do-it-yourself) hard copy book-making with children available on the website for this inquiry: www.iamplurilingual.com. In addition, I sought out free platforms for creating digital plurilingual e-books that would allow us to combine both print with oral audio recordings of students’ reading their stories. Most of students’ books were published through www.issuu.com - through which individuals can upload pdf books for free. Again, a number of other options are provided on the research website.

Given that we live in a digital age, I was somewhat surprised by the great value that children, parents and teachers alike all accrued to their printed books. I thought that perhaps the digital versions of students’ books might provide the same sense of accomplishment that the printed books evoked and henceforth eliminate the need to print hard copies. The value-added of the digital versions of students’ books seemed to come from the way technology facilitated sharing of students’ work with larger, global audiences. For example, at l’école privée, we created a class blog during the project and students’ books were uploaded with digital audio recordings. One of the unanticipated outcomes of the class blog was that students’ family and friends from around the world began to leave comments on students’ books in their home languages. Figure 6. 8
shows a screenshot from the class blog that includes comments from one student’s family in Serbia. The class blog allowed family and friends both locally and globally access to children’s plurilingual multiliteracies productions. We had not anticipated that people would leave comments on class blogs and websites, nor that they would do so in their home languages. This serendipitous development further helped to value students’ home languages within the classroom and school. The two comments posted in the screenshot in Figure 6.8 were from the students’ grandmother and family friend. As with all of the children across each of the schools, he was very excited and proud that his book had received comments from people who were meaningful to them. In class, he asked if the others had seen that his grandmother had read his book and left a comment. The other students had certainly noticed but they could not read the comment in Serbian. Consequently, the boy translanguage the comment by reading it in his head in Serbian and explaining it in French to his class. This example of what Garcia (2013) has described as “translanging” reinforces the idea that teaching through the prism of students’ plurilingualism does not necessarily mean that teachers are teaching students’ home languages but rather that they can draw on them to support their learning and participation in class ultimately in the language of instruction. Home language use was intended to scaffold students’ expression and achievement in the language of instruction.
Figure 6.8 Screenshot of Elaine and Mirko’s story with comments in Serbian on class blog
Another parent reflected on the value of having both a printed and a digital accessible copy of students’ books in this way:

As for the book, we have family in town, in South-America, Spain and in France. Our family speaks the three languages in the book. I liked the project, it was fun, if it was to continue at [l’école privée] (which I hope it will), I would give more information at the start of the project, what will be accomplished ie: this lovely book etc. It brought us together on those nights that we had to translate and review, it was all new to [our son] as he usually speaks directly the language(s) but never had to "translate" per se. It gave him a new perspective.

The truth is that I prefer print copies, I read online books all the time but having a book between your hands is irreplaceable, especially one that was in part created by a family member is much more valuable and would not be the same in an online form. I have shared the blog with family members suggesting that they go and hear the story as well as post comments on the blog...The stories on the blog being read by the children is certainly a plus. Both his grandparents have already gone to the blog and heard him, very moving given that they have not seen him in a year! Having said that, they are not aware that I have requested printed copies, that I plan for both my husband and son to dedicate [with an inscription] ... they will love it, an electronic book cannot and will never be the same.

This parent’s reflection, along with many of the sentiments voiced by other parents, teachers and children underlined the importance of the multimodal dimension of plurilingual multiliteracies production. The modality of print, along with digital modalities – text-based and audio-based, each contributed to the value of this inquiry experience for students and their families.

6.6.3 Plurilingual exchange

At the conclusion of plurilingual multimodal book production in each of the schools, students expressed great pride in their productions and a sense of achievement as published authors. The publishing of their books in print gave them the concrete sense that they had become real authors and the on-line publication of their books meant that they were real authors with real potential to reach a wide, authentic audience. Publication marked a powerful shift in students’ self-positioning from the outset of our collaboration. While I did not have a single student in the first activity who drew themselves as a monolingual, many students tentatively represented themselves as emergent bilinguals. Their drawings revealed that they did not position themselves as monolinguals but they were equally unsure about positioning themselves as plurilinguals. At the outset of the study the term “plurilingualism” was new to both teachers and students. While there has been a growing awareness of the CEFR in Canada, the language ethos of the nation has
historically been constructed around official bilingualism in English and French rather than around the rich “unofficial” linguistic diversity that pervades the country. Students’ collaborative plurilingual books actively engaged students in working with their plurilingualism as both a personal and collective learning resource and their books in turn served as inclusive representations of their plurilingualism at work.

Because all of the collaborating classes were mainstream classes, many of the students who spoke different languages at home equally had a strong proficiency in the language of instruction. Still for these students, who might be seen as culturally diverse but not necessarily as “language learners” in mainstream classrooms, they expressed a deep appreciation for being able to include their other languages in their academic work. One student put it this way, “I think it was good for me to work on [this plurilingual book] because no one knew that I can speak Swahili before. It’s like now they know me for real.” Her reflection underlines the importance for students to feel like their whole identity and all of their cultural and linguistic repertoire can be utilized and showcased in their work. Another student commented similarly, “My [plurilingual] work makes me feel original. I am the only person in the class who can read and write these three languages and that makes me special… I’ve learned that there are stories inside everyone.” Rather than seeing her diverse linguistic repertoire as a sign of difference, this student came to appreciate her communicative repertoire as a sign of originality and her creative writing as a expression of her inner self. Another student explained that she was unable to write in Urdu in script so she wrote the Urdu translation for her group using the English alphabet. As a more recently arrived student, she recounted that “it felt kind of happy [to write in Urdu] because I was like in Canada my first time writing Urdu. In Pakistan you had to write it so good and when I came here I forgot and it was my first time writing in Canada. So I was pretty happy, I was writing my own language.” Again we see here in her reflection that she feels a strong attachment to her “own language” and that the affective benefit of having students pool their linguistic resources to produce collaborative plurilingual work scaffolds their integration and inclusion within the classroom community because they are seen as resources. For students who arrive at school already literate in their home languages, working plurilingually can both support their language maintenance and the transfer of their knowledge to the language(s) of instruction. It seems obvious that students should not leave school with less than that with which they start. Nonetheless, this student’s comment highlights how quickly students can lose access to home
language and literacy practices. Students who only spoke the languages of instruction (English and French) were encouraged through their group work to expand their linguistic repertoires. In some cases, these students expressed a commitment to working harder to develop their proficiency in the languages of expression and in other cases, students expressed a desire to add or learn additional languages as they grew up. Collaborative plurilingual multiliteracies repositioned all students as life-long language learners and enabled students to experience the benefit of developing an ever-expanding plurilingual repertoire.

6.7 Towards a cyclical spiral of plurilingual inquiry

From the outset of this multi-site inquiry, I was mindful for the need to adapt and adopt methods to support children in making their perspectives, and their representations visible – not only for them personally as plurilingual learners but also for wider audiences including their school communities, policy makers and university-based researchers. My classroom experiences as a language and literacy teacher had taught me that children and youth have insight into their experience that they are willing to share with trusted adults when given the time, space and tools to do so. With each of the creative research activities that I designed to be part of this inquiry, I sought to ensure that children were supported in making their representations of plurilingualism visible by providing them with the time, creative space and creative tools necessary to succeed. Recall that in our first activity students drew representations of a monolingual individual, a bilingual individual and a plurilingual individual and then they drew themselves. The initial drawings provided an opportunity to define our terms of inquiry and for students to position themselves according to their visual definitions. While I did not have a single student draw him or herself as monolingual, many students tentatively represented themselves as bilinguals. Their drawings revealed that they did not position themselves as monolinguals but they were at times unsure about positioning themselves as plurilinguals when discussing their drawings. At the outset of the study the term “plurilingualism” was new to both teachers and students. While there has been a growing awareness of the CEFR in Canada, the language ethos of the nation has historically been constructed around official bilingualism in English and French rather than around the rich “unofficial” linguistic diversity that pervades the country (Haque, 2012). The sequential reflexive drawings helped students understand the concept of plurilingualism and opened up a discussion about the various languages that were a part of students’ lives. Subsequently, students were guided through the process of creating their language and cultural
self-portraits. Their portraits served as visual “identity texts” very true to Cummins and Early’s (2011) definition as the portraits reflected back positive holistic self-representations of students as plurilingual individuals. Students in turn used their visual texts to scaffold their narration of their language biographies using colourful embodied metaphors. After their creation of their self-portraits, students worked in groups and individually to document linguistic diversity and multiliteracies – including both different languages and different modes of expression in their school, as well as in their home communities. This personal and collective language and literacies mapping through digital photography aligned with linguistic landscape activities taken up in the work of Dagenais, Toohey, Sabatier, Lamarre and Armand (2007), Toohey and Smythe (2009). The process of documenting and analyzing language and literacy diversity in their social environment prepared students to draw on their personal and collective language resources and literacy practices through collaborative plurilingual multiliteracies production. The production of plurilingual multimodal books allowed students to engage in an inclusive experiential exchange of their plurilingual resources through their academic work. Another way of describing collaborative production would be as the intentional expansion of children’s linguistic repertoires through purposeful interaction. Across all schools, children shared at least two languages of instruction – English and French. Students at l’école française also shared Occitan as a language of instruction. With the exception of the English school, where the classroom teacher was reluctant to have students work in groups, children were intentionally grouped with other children of different language backgrounds so that all children would have an opportunity to expand their linguistic repertoires. Every student’s linguistic repertoire was valued because each student was able to bring his or her resources to their group work. Figure 6.7 reflects the cyclical spiral of plurilingual inquiry that developed as students engaged in each of the creative research representational activities. Rather than representing the process as a flat linear one, the spiral of circles is intended to reflect both the cyclical spiral of plurilingual inquiry that was carried out in each successive school case through this multi-site study, as well as the need to repeat the cycle as a continual spiral in classroom practice. That is to say, the cycle of plurilingual inquiry is not one that ever comes to completion but rather repeats or spirals, deepening with each cycle.
Figure 6.7: Cyclical spiral of plurilingual inquiry

Through each of the school case studies, students began a cycle of plurilingual inquiry by (1) self-positioning themselves through their reflexive drawings; then, they created language and cultural self-portraits as an expression of plurilingual (2) self-representation; next students documented and analysed languages and literacies in their social environments as a way of (3) awakening or raising their awareness to linguistic diversity and one another’s linguistic repertoires; then (4) engaged in inclusive experiential exchange of their plurilingual resources through plurilingual multiliteracies production. The following chapter discusses how each school case study was brought to a close by engaging children in creating a final reflexive collage at the conclusion of our 4 to 6 month collaboration. Students’ collage both wrapped up our formal school-university partnership while at the same time initiating a new cycle of plurilingual inquiry as children re-positioned themselves as creative plurilingual social actors.
Chapter 7
Prismatic Reflections and Refractions:
Collage

This chapter examines collage as a method of inquiry and representation of children’s plurilingualism. Over the course of each classroom collaboration, children engaged in a series of creative plurilingual inquiry activities to help them share their representations of plurilingualism and give voice to their lived experiences as plurilingual children. As a way of wrapping up our 4-6 month school-university collaboration, children created a final collage in response to the prompt: How does it look and feel to be plurilingual? This chapter begins by retracing how collage became a central metaphor for this multi-site plurilingual inquiry. After theorizing plurilingualism as collage, I showcase a number of children’s collages for two purposes: first, to analyse the representations of plurilingualism that children’s collages evoke, and second, to analyse the collages as works of scholartistry. Cahnmann Taylor (2008) situates Neilsen’s concept of “scholARTistry” within language education research in the following way:

ScholARTists…incorporate tools from the sciences and the arts to make new, insightful sense of data during and beyond the research project. New insights and questions take precedence over a desire for absolute answers to educational and linguistic questions. The use of accessible, vernacular, and aesthetic language and image, are used explicitly to reach beyond the academy to larger, more diverse audiences and to engage in what Barone (in press) called ‘truly dialogical conversation[s] about educational possibilities’ (p. 23). (Taylor, 2008, p. 247)

While creating artistic works of inquiry and scholarship have gained acceptance in qualitative inquiry and in particular in educational research, artful scholarship has in general remained reserved for adult researchers. Thus, I conclude the chapter by reflecting on collage as a particularly well-suited method of inquiry and representational form for creative plurilingual multimodal inquiry with children and youth.

7 Collage

7.1 An arts-informed method of inquiry

Each of the research activities that children engaged in throughout our collaboration prioritized non-linear engagement and creative, divergent expression. Through their drawings, their self-portraits, their photography and their plurilingual multimodal bookmaking, we encouraged
students to take on identities as creative experts and researchers of their own lived experience as plurilingual children. Collage as a method of inquiry supported students in representing their experiences of coming to position themselves as plurilinguals, of recognizing and paying greater attention to the cultural and linguistic diversity in their worlds, and of engaging in inclusive plurilingual multimodal production with their plurilingual peers. Figure 7.1 provides a schematic representation for understanding plurilingualism as collage. In the twenty-first century, we have seen a resurgence of collage as a democratic art form: collage is by definition an accessible art form. Collage draws on existing, readily available inexpensive materials, images, print, and found papers; it does not require the artist to master skillful techniques of drawing or painting but rather s/he draws on basic skills such as cutting and pasting often acquired in childhood. The endless availability of source material coupled with the fact that collage hinges on endless possibilities of rearrangement allow even the novice artist to enter into the fluidity of collage as artistic practice and expression. American collagist Jonathon Talbot has described in his own practice that “unlike painting or drawing, collage offers artists the opportunity to easily add and remove, arrange and rearrange the elements of their work. This makes it the ideal medium for exploring ideas” (p. 172). Collage offers an alternative view of the world in which scale and boundaries are blurred; the individual parts come together to make one seamless whole in which it is not clear where one image stops and another begins. In creating a collage, the artist creates a view of an alternative world, a (re)imagined dream-scape where anything becomes possible. Collagist Cristina Clarimón similarly describes the imaginary of collage in the following way, “collage opens up a world of impossible associations. It tolerates and even encourages uninhibited thinking” (p. 186).

Personally, as a researcher, when I relax into the creative process of gathering, layering, (re)combining and juxtaposing images, I am able to make new connections and allow ideas to surface that are substantively different than when I try to hold things together in a rationale way in the classroom or in my office. The basic principle of collage resonates with the development of a plurilingual linguistic repertoire: collage allows the artist to weave different pieces of images into a unified whole and the building of a plurilingual linguistic repertoire supports the individual in bringing together all of his or her linguistic resources to create a complex and seamless communicative repertoire. The creative gathering, layering, (re)combining and juxtaposing of different languages and different registers by the individual allow him or her to express himself
or herself holistically. Collage and plurilingualism as forms of creative self-expression offer a space for risk-taking, experimentation and the growth of new ideas and perspectives. At the same time, there does come a point of fixity in the creation of a collage where the artist commits to gluing down images within the frame of the final production. Similarly, at the point of production, whether it be oral and written, the plurilingual individual commits him or herself creatively to using specific linguistic conventions to express his or her message. Collage like plurilingualism is not a free for all. They are both fluid processes that result in constrained, cohesive production.

**Plurilingualism as collage**

![Diagram of Plurilingualism as Collage](image)

**Figure 7.1: Schematic representation of plurilingualism as collage**

Arts-informed researcher Lynn Butler-Kisber (2008; 2010) has proposed three ways of approaching collage as arts-informed inquiry: 1) collage as reflective process; 2) collage as a form of elicitation; and, 3) collage as a way to conceptualize ideas. In this multi-site inquiry, we used collage as a form of inquiry in all three ways. The process of creating their collages allowed students to both reflect on their lived experience as plurilingual children and to conceptualize more broadly what it means to be(come) a plurilingual social actor. Children used their collages not only to reflect back on our 4 to 6 month collaboration but also to conceptualize or imagine holistically the potential of expanding their plurilingualism over the course of their lives. Children’s finished collages also served as an elicitation tool to access their perspectives and
feelings about plurilingualism both through their presentation of their collages in class and within the context of research conversations.

7.2 Collaging with children as arts-informed researchers

As we turn to look at children’s collages and key themes that emerged across them throughout the remainder of this chapter, we see a range of artistry displayed through the plurilingual worlds that they created. Unlike the previous research representation activities undertaken by children over the course of this inquiry, many of their collages display a sophistication that made their creative representations indistinguishable from professional photo collages. Children’s reflexive drawings, self-portraits, and photography succeeded as creative elicitation tools but when juxtaposed against students’ final collages, it became evident that the aesthetic quality of these earlier representations did not compare with the artistry of students’ collages. Students’ sustained attention to their plurilingualism at both individual and social levels over the course of our 4 to 6 month collaboration no doubt scaffolded the deep reflection that surfaced through their collages. Through the medium of collage, children were in turn able to make visible their representations of plurilingualism with an adult-like sophistication. They drew on existing images and appropriated them to express their perspectives about being plurilingual through the creation of fictional worlds that were simultaneously true to their experience. The complex visual reflection of children’s reality and plurilingual imaginary through collage epitomizes a prismatic approach to researching creatively and artistically with children and youth. Each collage reflects a different child’s complex understanding of him or herself as a plurilingual social actor and when juxtaposed with one another, they attest that no one individual has the corner on truth, knowledge or experience. Rather the 76 collages created by children as creative research representations of their plurilingualism form a prism that refracts and reflects a rainbow of interpretations of what be(com)ing plurilingual means to and for children. In this multi-site inquiry, through which I sought to engage children as co-researchers of their plurilingual lives, collage offered us the medium through which children could not only reflect on and represent their experiences as children but even more powerfully to share their narratives with a compelling sophistication that beautifully articulates the need to support children’s plurilingualism as a foundation for their learning at school and their development as global social actors in the 21st century.
7.3 Key themes from students’ plurilingual collages

An individual analysis of each of the 67 collages that students’ completed across the five case studies is beyond the scope of this dissertation. A fuller selection of students’ collages can be seen at http://www.iamplurilingual.com/collages.html, as well as a video narration in French of one students’ collage that was captured through the ipad application “Explain Everything”.

In this section, I highlight three key themes that emerged across the children’s collages: 1) representations of a plurilingual imaginary; 2) representations of the affective dimension of language learning and language use; and 3) representations of individual plurilingualism as more than linguistic skill. For each theme, I selected a sampling of three student collages to share. Across the large pool of student collages, other collages certainly could have been included. Once I had eliminated collages that were incomplete, I tagged collages with emergent themes. Herein I highlight the three key recurrent themes that emerged across students’ collages. I chose three collages as examples of each theme in order to highlight the diversity of ways children represented each theme. After this initial discussion of key themes, I move on in the following section to analyse more holistically five students’ individual collages.

7.3.1 Representations of an aspirational imaginary

Through the layering of different images with different scales, children’s collages depict dreamscapes that evoke the sense of plurilingualism and plurilingual development being about possibility and aspiration. Figure 7.2 provides the first triad of three students’ collages. In the first collage, the student combined the images of a moon, a watch, a series of books, a map and an ocean. He explained that the moon reflected the idea that learning another language is “like a whole new world”. He included a map similarly to show that being plurilingual allows you to explore new places. Be(com)ing plurilingual allows you to discover new places by travelling (ocean) and by reading more and learning more (books). The clock reflected the time that is required to learn a language and to develop a plurilingual repertoire. Through his collage, this student provokes reflection on plurilingualism as a passport to the discovery of new worlds, places and knowledges. His collage reflects his own experience growing up as a plurilingual child, as well as it projects his aspirational beliefs about be(com)ing a plurilingual citizen of the world.
In the second collage, the student layered images to create a dreamscape of plurilingualism as an imagined paradise. For her, being plurilingual meant that she could travel and discover new countries and within them find a paradise. Her plurilingual collage reflects her positive view of her experience learning a new language when her family immigrated to Canada from India in order to build a new life for themselves in North America. When I juxtaposed her actual living conditions in a highly diverse low-income neighbourhood in Toronto, lacking in green space with her picture of a backyard paradise with extra flowers added and the inscription “a world of new colors and designs” as a representation of what plurilingualism means to her, it became clear how collage can allow people to explore their ideas and represent them visually in powerful ways. Her collage provides an imagined yet true reflection of be(com)ing a plurilingual child who had recently arrived in Canada.

Finally, the third collage was created by a student who experienced significant difficulty at school. She was withdrawn into a remedial class for at least half of the day, every day in order to address gaps in her schooling. When we look at the three students’ collages in Figure 7.2, it is difficult to decipher any difference in students’ mastery of academic literacy and language proficiency. Instead, with the three collages, side-by-side, we see three aesthetically pleasing, cohesive and evocative representations of plurilingualism. This third collage stands out for its representation of plurilingualism as a dreamscape or an ideal imagined world due to the careful combination of different images that create depth while defying scale. The students explained that she included the airplane to represent how travel to different countries allows people to learn different languages. Then, she also included lots of living things – animals and flowers, along with the word “LIVING” at the bottom of the collage (but not seen in the image because it was not glued down fully). Her point, however, was that plurilingualism is about being alive and living; after all, “you have to live to learn languages”. In order to show plurilingualism as being an active, evolving process, she draws on images that help to create a vibrant, lively space where plurilingual individuals could sit around a table and comfortably exchange their thoughts, ideas and feelings.

Taken together, these three collages each provide representations of plurilingualism as aspirational processes that help individuals explore and create new possibilities for themselves and others.
7.3.2 Representations of the affective dimension of language learning and language use

In addition to depicting plurilingual aspiration, children’s collages also provided them with the opportunity to highlight the affective dimension of language learning and language use. Figure 7.3 presents a second triad of students’ collages.

In the first collage, the student largely used natural images to depict her feelings and perspective about plurilingual development. We see two focal images: the first a mother owl and a baby owl and second a woman cuddling her puppy. These two images reflect the child’s insight that plurilingualism develops by nurturing our languages, often through caring relationships. She described the significance of the flowers layered on top of a nature scene with a rainbow by
explaining that the “flowers are learning a new language, like a flower growing, little by little, and then it finally blooms, just like you finally bloom in a new language.” She also included other animals like the creature swimming and the bear walking across the water to show the diversity of languages possible in different places. What strikes me in her arrangement is that she combines all of her different nature images to convey the essential message of the need for plurilingual individuals to be nurtured in their language development. Her soft-spoken explanation of the need for nurture brought to mind the importance for children to feel a sense of linguistic security in their language learning. Her two very different depictions of nurture through a mother and a baby owl, as well as a woman and her dog further suggest that nurture, and attention to the emotional side of language development is important for both the development of family languages (mother-baby owl), as well as foreign languages (person-dog).

In the second collage, the student explained that she included the car because plurilingualism allows individuals to travel. She put it up in the blue sky because plurilingualism not only allows local travel in your neighbourhood but also “traveling to another country like an airplane.” The windows were included to show how plurilingualism provides different perspectives and ways of seeing the world because “a whole new world could be outside your window.” Finally, watery blue background “is for freedom; you can go anywhere you want when you are plurilingual without worry. Like the fish are blending in, so I can blend in wherever I go.” When I asked her to continue talking to me about how languages allow you to blend, she explained, “like you won’t be considered like an outsider because you know the language.” Once again, we see through this collage a representation of the affective experience and benefit the student associates with her plurilingualism. She appreciates that her plurilingualism allows her to feel included as she moves about in different spaces both local and global. She values her sense of being an insider rather than being an outsider. Her reflection once again underlines the emotional side of inclusion and exclusion in language learning. Through metaphoric imagery, this student used collage to allow her experience and perspective to surface.

Finally, in the third collage, the student explained that “I put the fireman with the fire due to the fact that it takes energy and braveness to be plurilingual. And then, I put a clock due to the fact that you need lots of time to be plurilingual. And I put a car because it’s like a new journey and I put a beach because it’s relaxing to learn a new language.” I asked the student to elaborate further about how being plurilingual requires an individual to be brave and he explained that
“sometimes people are shy to learn a new language and if you have courage like a firefighter, you won’t be scared.” He then went on to say that “to learn a new language, at the end it becomes relaxing because you don’t have to study anymore.” This child’s collage highlights how be(com)ing plurilingual can paradoxically be both scary and relaxing. The image of the firefighter underlines the risk-taking involved in learning languages while the beach in the background shows the promise of being able to feel at ease in a language over time.

This second triad of collages provides a sampling of the diverse ways that children used collage to express their feelings and reflections on the emotional aspects of language learning. We both see and hear through children’s collages and their narrations that their emotional experience and cognitive process associated with language learning cannot be separated. This recurrent theme highlights the need for greater attention to be directed to the affective dimension of language learning in both teaching and research.

7.3.3 Representations of individual plurilingualism as more than linguistic skill

The third recurrent theme across students’ collages was the representation of individual plurilingualism as more than linguistic skill. Students’ collages make visible children’s conceptualization of the notion of linguistic repertoire as more than a sum of its parts. Through diverse images, language is depicted not only as letters, words but also as cultural practice and a form of personal development and self-expression. Figure 7.4 presents a third triad of students’ collages. In the first collage, the student used a large image of a snowflake to reflect the idea of a linguistic repertoire. She knew that every snowflake is unique and she felt that the languages that people have in their lives make them unique. Through her arrangement of fragments of text printed on red paper, each in different directions, she continues to develop the idea of an individual’s linguistic repertoire allowing them to interact in different ways and to branch out like the snowflake in different directions. The other two images she includes are images of comfort from a warm cup of tea (right) and people bowing down in prayer on a rug (left).
Figure 7.4: Third triad of students’ collages

Across students’ collages and in our research conversations, many students associated their plurilingual development as being tied up in their religious practice. Images of prayer rugs, churches and sacred text recurred across students’ collages as signs that for many children their plurilingualism is mutually supported by their religious practice.

In the second collage, the student included a picture of a lizard because there are “lots of lizards and in Miami, we speak Spanish and also English. And I picked the Montreal Canadians shirt and the Montreal Canadians hat because in Montreal we speak French there.” For this student, his plurilingualism was related to his experiences living and travelling in different cities. Whereas when we move from place to place, we cannot always bring everything with us, languages both allow us to move into new places and they also allow us to hold on to our memories of all the places we have been. His insight about how plurilingualism helps us sustain our memories and relational networks is best understood through his choice of the dog wearing a Santa suit. He explained that “Santa Claus has to travel around the whole world and he has to ask the kids in different languages what they want.” For this boy, Santa Claus personified plurilingualism at its finest as Santa was not only able to read children’s letters in different languages but he was able to respond and deliver the hearts’ desires of children around the world each Christmas.

I chose to include the third collage in this triad even though the words in the top right corner are difficult to make out. In the original, they read, “Hey, This is about you!” In essence, that phrase reflected the student’s feelings about plurilingualism. Her plurilingual repertoire was not simply about her linguistic skill and proficiency in different languages but rather holistically that about the people who allowed her to develop those languages (married couple) and the endless
possibilities and pathways that she saw her plurilingualism opening up for her. Her collage includes two different stair cases – each leading to different places, as well as a giant skyscraper that is miniaturized in scale next to a stair case leading up to heaven. The images she brings together once again evoke the sense that through her collage about her plurilingualism, she was focused on building an aspirational dream-scape that underlined that building a plurilingual repertoire was less about the different languages in her life and more about her sense of be(com)ing plurilingual as she moved forward. Developing her plurilingualism provided a way for her to construct an aspirational holistic identity that would allow her to reach new heights over the course of her life.

This third triad highlights the diversity of ways in which children represented plurilingualism as more than linguistic skill in a number of languages. Through the use of specific images such as the snowflake and the Santa Claus dog, children express their understanding of plurilingualism as a repertoire of linguistic resources and cultural practices that become interwoven in their identities. Their creative arrangement of multiple images to create one final collage further underlines how various elements in one’s plurilingual repertoire allow for new and/or deeper understandings and competencies to emerge as connections and relationships form and come together as the different elements of one’s repertoire are brought together.

These three triads of students’ collages reflected diverse representations of children’s plurilingualism drawing on a wide range of images. In presenting each triad, I focused on how children themselves interpreted their collages and examined their intentions for each of the images as a lens for understanding their perspectives on plurilingualism.

### 7.4 Five examples of students’ plurilingual collages

In the following section, I move on to showcase five individual collages that stood out across the body of students’ collages. I selected these five collages to analyse in greater depth as children’s works of scholaristry. Through this multi-site inquiry with children as co-researchers, collage allowed me to initiate a classroom-based form of scholaristry that challenged us to combine both rigor and artistry into our reflexive inquiry in a way that scaffolded the representation of our research in a more accessible and perhaps even more credible way to reach wider audiences both within and beyond the academy. Each of the first three collages succeeded as sophisticated, evocative works of art. Their composition reflects an attention to the aesthetic representation on
the part of each child – so much so that it might be difficult to believe that these collages were created by 9 to 11 year old children. Indeed, the aesthetic quality of the collages allowed students to take on identities as scholarartists who offered a significant contribution to the study of children’s plurilingualism through their reflection and representations. Recall that collage has been widely described as a democratic art form because of the accessibility of its source materials and because it depends on the basic skills of cutting and pasting that even young children can master (Butler-Kisber, 2010). While collage traditionally depends on carefully cutting, arranging and layering materials, the end product in this inquiry once the collages were digitally scanned, printed and framed was uniformly flat. Following the advice of arts-informed researcher Lynn Butler-Kisber, I scanned children’s collages in order to be able to include them as digital images in this dissertation and on-line through the complementary research website. I also printed children’s collages and framed them so that they could be displayed in classrooms and hallways. The process of scanning and colour printing flattened the seams between the layers of images and gave all of the collages a polished finish. The flattening of collages in this way seemed to be a metaphor for the democracy of collage in that it ultimately resulted in a leveled or flat terrain in which the perspectives of children could be seen and heard with the same respect that has traditionally been reserved for adults – particularly in the realm of scientific inquiry. As a way of concluding our collaboration, the democracy of collage as a mode of inquiry allowed children to contribute powerfully to a discussion of children’s plurilingualism that has been traditionally reserved for adult researchers, educators, parents and policy-makers. Children’s collages make the argument that plurilingual children should be seen and heard.
Figure 7.5 showcases Nolwenn’s collage. She began by finding five images that she felt represented her understanding of what it means to look and feel plurilingual. The clock represented the commitment of time to learning a new language, as well as how your plurilingualism may change over time. Then, she used the image of the two suitcases to show how being plurilingual can allow you to travel. In fact, she herself had moved to Canada when she was in grade two and at the time of the study, she was in grade 5. Whereas she had been receiving ESL support for the previous 3 years, at the time of the study, she had joined the mainstream English class in her school. Her family’s relocation had challenged her to expand her linguistic repertoire. Next, she included a picture of a door with several windows. Her lived experience learning English demonstrated to her how learning other languages opens doors of opportunities and after working on writing a plurilingual book, she expressed a clear desire to continue learning new languages because she did not want to only have two languages. She wanted to be able to explore new worlds. As such, she included a striking image of a butterfly because she had studied how butterflies migrate long distances. In addition, the image of the butterfly resonated with her because it represented the transformative process of metamorphosis.
that she associated with learning a new language. She explained that you could feel like a caterpillar when you do not understand a language but when you learn the language, you then feel like you can fly like a butterfly. Finally, she included a very delicate picture of a spider that is spinning a web. The spider and its web were metaphors for a plurilingual individual and his or her linguistic repertoire. As we learn new languages, we added to our linguistic repertoire just as a spider spins its web. Through her collage, Nolwenn was able to communicate her complex understanding of what it means to be plurilingual and through found images, she was able to make her representations visible. But, Nolwenn’s collage stands out among the body of students’ collages not only for her deep reflection and articulation of her thoughts but also because of the artistic composition of her ideas. After selecting the images she wanted to use and meticulously cutting them out, she set to work to find a background image that would tie her collage together. The only constraint that I gave students in the creation of their collages was that they not leave any white space between images. As such, she found a blurry image of fall leaves and again this image spoke to her experience of blurring languages or translanguaging across English and French as she adjusted to a new school in a new country. She carefully layered images on top of her background in order to create one cohesive collage. Nolwenn’s collage demonstrates her holistic attention to the method of collage, the question of inquiry and a commitment to the aesthetic quality of her work. For these reasons, her collage is striking and provokes views to enter into her understanding of plurilingualism.

Figure 7.6 presents Max’s collage. Unlike Nolwenn, Max struggled with composing his collage in an aesthetically pleasing way. He was deeply engaged in the process of finding images but he found cutting with precision much more difficult. He placed great importance on selecting his images and in his excitement, he glued his images down before thinking about how he would fill the rest of the whitespace. As I observed him moving through the process of creating his collage, his process struck me as being akin to a scientific research process that is very concerned with collecting data and with analyzing it but loses its rigor when it comes to represent its findings in a compelling way for a wide audience. When Max brought me his collage with five images glued down, I reminded him that the one constraint was that we wanted all white space to be covered. Because he had already glued down his images, he then set to work at thinking of a way to present his five images in a more cohesive way. He did not want to start over – either by finding new images or cutting out the images he had already glued down a second time. So, he decided
he would pull the collage together by layering in pieces of green paper. He considered green to be a vibrant colour that would help showcase the images of plurilingualism he wanted to highlight. His strategy worked - not only aesthetically but also metaphorically for the way linguistic repertoires are made up of layers of different languages, as well as different registers of languages. The various different green fragments speak to the many different registers of language that individuals use as they navigate through their lives. His images then speak to the different languages in his repertoire. He chose the Egyptian woman praying “because I don’t know how to pray in, like for example, English or French but my grandmother taught me how to pray in Russian so if I hadn’t known Russian I wouldn’t be able to pray.” Interestingly, he chose an ancient image of a Egyptian woman praying not because he followed any type of Egyptian religious practice but rather because he related to her posture of prayer and his own experience praying in Russian with his grandmother. Our understanding of his interpretation of his choice of image gives us insight into his plurilingual repertoire and its significance in his life.

He then described his reason for including the cowboy boots: “it’s like the way we can travel, like I walk to different places, talk to different people.” He, along with many other children, represented that travel to and in new places is facilitated by one’s plurilingualism.

Next, the lightning bug was for “enlightenment. Knowing more languages, it helps me see more and better. And the golden thing [when the lightning bug lights up] it helps me see things, like it helps me see bigger and better.” We see and hear through his explanation of his choices of images that collage has helped him develop metaphors for explaining his plurilingualism. For him, developing his plurilingualism was a way of enlightenment. The owl also represented wisdom to him and it reflected how his plurilingualism makes him “feel smart”. Finally, the old watch was a reference to the role of time in both expanding one’s linguistic repertoire, as well as allowing language loss and revitalization. Once again rather than choosing an actual clock or watch image (of which there were plenty available because of the types of magazines that were at children’s disposal as source material), Max gravitated towards using an old watch that reminded him of a sunken treasure. The golden colouring made it look more valuable.
Max’s collage came together differently than Nolwenn’s but both ultimately became compelling works of scholartistry. Max required more support along the way in order to pull his piece together but he willingly took the suggestion to improve his work and applied himself to finishing his collage with a striking result. The scaffolding I offered along the way could be likened to the mentorship provided to an emerging scholar in process of editing a scientific or academic research manuscript. When engaging children in research, collage lends itself not only to providing children space to reflect on, and conceptualized their ideas – but it also lends itself to the risk-taking and revision required in rigorous inquiry.
Figure 7.7 showcases Sophie’s collage. Like Nolwenn’s collage, Sophie’s thoughtful choice of images, meticulous cutting and careful layering give her collage a sense of polish and sophisticated depth. She explained that she had selected the watch “because we need the time to learn different languages.” For her, plurilingualism was a process rather than a product, a continual be(com)ing or expanding of one’s repertoire. Next she included the spaceship to show that being plurilingual allowed you to explore new worlds and to both set and achieve goals in language learning. She continued on to describe her choice of a wolf because it was a symbol of strength and she felt being plurilingual made her strong: “J’ai de la force pour la vie.” She included the camera to show that you need lots of memory to learn and remember all the different languages you encounter. The camera was also a reminder that when you travel to different countries that speak different languages, you take photos to preserve the experience. The mother and the baby whale in the top left corner and the bird balancing on one leg were both intended to reflect the support required to be(come) plurilingual. The baby whale learns to swim and find his way through the water by learning from his mother and the bird must balance amidst all of the things around him, drawing support from his leg to balance. She used two different images to convey the different types of support needed by the plurilingual individual. Finally, she included a coin to reflect that different countries have different types of money and often have different languages. For many of the children involved in this inquiry, facility to travel was an important asset of plurilingualism. Images of modes of travel, souvenirs of travel and symbols of different countries recur in abundance. Looking across students’ collages then, the development of a plurilingual repertoire might ultimately be understood as a map of the travels and trajectories of one’s life.
Like Nolwenn’s and Max’s collages, Sophie’s collage succeeds as an example of scholartistry because of her holistic attention to the methodological aspects of collage, the aesthetic quality and her interpretation of her work. These pieces also stand out not only because they clearly supported children in reflecting, conceptualizing and articulating their perspectives but also because they draw in viewers attention as sophisticated representations of children’s plurilingualism. Each collage invites multiple viewings, readings and interpretations. As works of inquiry, they succeed at engaging diverse audiences – children and adults alike.
The next two collages succeed less well aesthetically but still offer a well-developed reflection on the part of the child who created them. Figure 7.8 presents Nitesh’s collage. The images he included in his collage demonstrate his thoughtful reflection about his plurilingualism but he might have invested more time into his combination of images to create a stronger sense of cohesion. He described his collage in this way:

I have soil due to the fact that for soil I think that when I learn a different language it feels like I’m in a different land. And like I have the car on the clock, that’s because when I learn a new language time drives by. The graduation picture, it feels like I earned something when I learn a new language…What’s valuable is that you get to learn something brand new that you don’t know. And you feel like you’ve done something that matters, that I learned something meaningful.

He offers compelling insight into why his plurilingualism is important to him. I was particularly struck by his explanation of his graduation picture. He associates learning a new language as an accomplishment that “matters”. What a contrast from the representations language teachers’ often have of students who struggle through their learning. Nitesh explained that he valued the challenge of learning a new language at school (French) even though it was hard for him. He felt like if he succeeded at learning French he would feel like he achieved something as significant as graduation. His choice of image speaks powerfully to the need for teachers to understand and build on the motivations of their students in their language teaching and learning. How might Nitesh’s French teacher’s understanding of the value Nitesh placed on learning French influence his representation of Nitesh as a struggling (third) language learner? Through his collage, Nitesh was able to share his motivation and struggle as a language learner. Images gave him the words with which he could verbalize his experience. Even though he might not have invested as much care in the creation of his collage as other students in this inquiry, his collage served as a powerful elicitation tool for him to voice his perspective. Just as Max needed support to craft his final collage, Nitesh’s collage might be seen as a draft that could be revised and modified to include each of his images while paying attention not to leave holes or whitespaces between images. For this purpose, Nitesh would have benefited from more time during the creative process.
Figure 7.8: Nitesh’s collage

Figure 7.9 presents Marie-Eve’s collage. Her collage resembles more closely the type of collage work down in classrooms as part of school assignments across the curriculum. Less attention is given to layering and fusing images together to create one cohesive representation.

Figure 7.9: Marie-Eve’s collage

As with Nitesh’s example, however, her collage reveals a sophisticated degree of reflection as a 10 year old girl about her experience of be(com)ing plurilingual. Her lack of attention to the aesthetic constraints given for this research representation activity resulted in a final collage that
reflects her creativity but is less sophisticated aesthetically. She was one of the students across all five case studies who brought a seemingly limitless number of ideas about her plurilingualism to her collage. Listen to her retelling in her own words in French:

Video 7.1: Marie-Eve’s narration of her collage

A video narration of her collage is available at: http://www.iamplurilingual.com/collages.html

Marie-Eve’s intentionally selected each of her images as a metaphor for her plurilingualism. The diverse range of her images highlights her creative reflection on her language learning and use through her collage. She responded to the instruction that the collage needed to fill up the entire page by using multiple small images. She did not, however, follow the constraint that there should be no white space in the final production. That she left white spaces between images creates the sense of fragmentation rather than a sense of integration and cohesion that came through in the collages of Nolwenn, Max and Sophie. Compared to Nitesh’s collage in which only small white spaces appear, Marie-Eve left many white spaces or cracks between images because the way she cut out her images and possibly because she focused on including many small images rather than weaving together fewer larger images. The contrast between the first three individual examples and the latter two collages highlights the distinction between
scholartistry as inquiry and representation and the use of creative methods in researching with children. Both forms of inquiry offer the opportunity to work with children as co-researchers but scholartistry further provides children with the opportunity to share the products of their inquiry with diverse audiences and to be recognized both as creative researchers and as artists in their own right.

7.5 Future directions

If we return to the cyclical spiral of plurilingual inquiry proposed in Figure 6.7, we can look at children’s collages as initiating a second cycle of plurilingual inquiry. Whereas the first cycle engaged children as co-researchers of their plurilingualism through the use of creative methods, this second cycle might be seen as moving deeper in the use of creative visual methods towards arts-informed research and scholartistry with plurilingual children. In the first cycle, students were asked to create a sequence of drawings from a monolingual, a bilingual and a plurilingual individual and then to position themselves according to their representational schemata. In the second cycle, students were asked to create a collage in response to the prompt: How does it look and feel to be plurilingual? The creation of their final collage presented the opportunity for students to “self-position” themselves anew as plurilingual scholartists and to launch a new cycle of plurilingual inquiry in their schools. What might the self-representation and social awareness of linguistic diversity look like in? this second cycle of plurilingual inquiry? What possible creative plurilingual arts forms or projects could be initiated to allow children as scholartists to engage in inclusive experiential exchange and representation? These questions seek to help us think about plurilingual inquiry as a foundation of teaching in the 21st century rather than isolated activities or a separate curricular programme. What can the five case studies undertaken through this multi-site inquiry teach us about teaching and learning creatively through the prism of students plurilingualism?

In most of the cases, teachers reflected at the conclusion of our school-university collaboration and also reported back in the subsequent year(s), that they had indeed taken up and adapted our plurilingual inquiry into their teaching. The following chapter analyses teachers’ final interviews and field notes taken across the school cases to propose a framework for teaching through the prism of children’s plurilingualism.
Chapter 8
Teaching through the Prism of Students’ Plurilingualism

This chapter moves on to present findings related to this study’s pedagogical research question: If (mainstream) teaching were to be based on a plurilingual paradigm rather than a monolingual one, what would it mean for classroom practice? What would be the advantages and the constraints of such an approach? This chapter offers a thematic analysis of teacher interviews and fieldnotes from my extended collaboration with classroom teachers in English and French schools in Toronto and Montpellier to engage in teaching their existing mandated curriculum through a plurilingual approach.

8 Five key elements for teaching through the PRISM of students’ plurilingualism

One of the motivations for conducting a multi-site inquiry across five different schools in Toronto and Montpellier grew out of the recognition of the cultural and linguistic diversity that has come to pervade all schools in an age of transnational mobility. While separate efforts have been made in different ways within each different school model, no coordinated effort has been undertaken in Canada across school models to help mainstream English and French classroom teachers recognize and build on children’s plurilingualism as a foundation for learning and citizenship in the globalized 21st century.

The complementary case study conducted in Montpellier, France allowed me to work with Dr. Nathalie Auger at the Université Paul Valéry, as well as to join her in working with the “Diversity in Language of Schooling Learning : Supporting teacher education” (MALEDIVE) project with the European Modern Language Centre. Over the past 15 years, the European Modern Language Centre in Graz, Austria has coordinated various research programmes through its partnership with the Council of Europe that have investigated plurilingual approaches to teaching and learning from a pan-European perspective. Projects such as “Majority language instruction as basis for plurilingual education” (MARILLE) and “Diversity in Majority Language Learning” (MALEDIVE) have brought together experts from across Europe not only to advocate the need to prepare teachers to support students’ plurilingualism across Europe but also to develop and evaluate resources to for doing so.
The multi-site inquiry reported through this dissertation was an exploratory investigation of children’s plurilingualism across various different school models as a foundation for a long-term research programme that could seek to support English, French-language and French immersion public schools, as well as the myriad of private schools, to shifting towards a plurilingual paradigm for teaching and learning in Canada.

In addition to many informal conversations with teachers as our classroom collaboration unfolded, I interviewed teachers at the end of my time in each school. According to their preference, I interviewed teachers individually or in groups. I analysed interview transcripts and field notes for recurring themes across teachers’ reflections about our classroom collaboration to engage children as co-researchers of their own plurilingualism. I asked all of the teachers the same general questions: first, I asked to them to recount how they saw our collaboration had unfolded, how they felt about the 4-6 month project, what they had learned about their students, themselves and their teaching, if or whether they would continue this type of work with their students and if so, how and why. Teachers elaborated their answers to varying degrees but in general the same guiding framework was used for each of the interviews.

I discuss herein the 5 key elements that emerged and recurred across case studies as being essential for supporting teaching and learning through the prism of students’ plurilingualism in mainstream classrooms: 1) a view of all students as Plurilingual; 2) inviting and fostering collaborative Relationships among students, teachers, parents and the wider (global) community; 3) an Inquiry-based approach to language and literacy teaching and learning; 4) prioritizing time and Space for creative expression; 5) encouraging Multimodal meaning-making. Figure 8.1 provides a schematic representation of the 5 recurrent elements. I then conclude the chapter by discussing the results of fostering a situated collaborative creative plurilingual inquiry-based approach to teaching in general across English and French school models. Figure 8.1 provides a schematic representation of the five elements of teaching through the prism of students’ plurilingualism.
A view of all students as Plurilingual

Fostering collaborative Relationships among students, families and the wider (global) community

An Inquiry-based approach to language and literacies teaching across the curriculum

Prioritizing Space for creativity and Multimodal meaning-making

Figure 8.1: Proposed framework for teaching through the prism of students’ plurilingualism

8.1 A view of all students as Plurilingual

Almost twenty years ago, Genesee and Cloud (1998) argued that “[l]inguistic and cultural competence will be the mark of the well-educated citizen of the 21st century. If we are to meet the social and economic challenges of the new millennium, we must take bold initiatives to put language and cross-cultural competence front and center in basic education... Education that seeks to expand all students’ linguistic and cross-cultural competencies provides a common set of educational goals. We have educational [immersion] models reaching these goals. Now we need the vision to provide basic education that encompasses language and cultural diversity”(p. 64-65). Genesee and Cloud’s argument made an important contribution at the time towards understanding that multilingualism was becoming the new norm in schools and that in response, basic education – mainstream teaching and learning – would need to be re-envisioned. Twenty
years later, it is clear that plurilingualism has indeed become a defining feature of mainstream classrooms rather than the exception.

In this multi-site inquiry, the first two representational activities undertaken by children were reflexive drawings and language and cultural self-portraits. These activities made visible the plurilingual reality of mainstream classrooms today and they highlighted that children can creatively illustrate their representations of plurilingualism. In their drawings and portraits, not a single child represented himself or herself as monolingual; and, across the five school cases, children developed a diverse range of metaphors to describe their understanding of plurilingualism and their reflection about themselves as plurilingual individuals. Teachers were involved to varying degrees in how these first two activities were carried out with students. After completing the self-portrait activity, all of the teachers expressed how much the activity helped them and their students become mindful of the cultural and linguistic resources available to the class as a community. The French Immersion teacher reflected on the value of helping students see themselves as plurilingual from the very outset:

It’s been a great six months. I mean for me how I saw this whole process was ...it was very structured and ... I saw the logical steps to it, which was great because at first you got the students to see themselves in a different light, see themselves as [plurilingual] learners and you were able to get them to think and explain how they understood all of that and you know how they represent themselves as language learners. So with that art activity that you did with the image of themselves and they had to associate different colors with language. I like how you brought art in. So it just gives them another way to sort of articulate their language experience. But it was sort of gradual and I appreciated that sort of gradual release of responsibility where at first they had to see themselves and then do that art activity.

For him, the creation of creative visual self-portraits marked an important point of departure for our collaborative inquiry. From his perspective, “the art” was woven into the inquiry process and facilitated a “gradual release of responsibility” whereby students developed their thoughts and were able to express their reflections both visually and then in words. The teacher at l’école de langue française further underlined how creating language and cultural self-portraits supported inclusion in the classroom: “c’est vraiment valorisant pour les élèves. Ça leur a permis de se sentir inclus avec tous leurs bagages.”

Across the five schools, students’ self-portraits allowed both teachers and students to recognize everyone as plurilingual – individuals with an ever-evolving repertoire of cultural and linguistic
communicative resources. An understanding of all people as plurilingual enables us to put aside linguistic labels of difference such as English language learner, allophone and minority language speaker. Instead, plurilingual teachers and students are able to come together to contribute to the growth of a rich and dynamic collective class repertoire of linguistic resources and cultural practices that in turn can form a foundation for cultural relevant and linguistically inclusive teaching and learning for all.

Students agreed that encouraging students to draw on their home languages helped build an inclusive classroom community and benefited all learners by allowing everyone to share in each other’s linguistic and cultural competencies. One student at l’école française reflected in this way: « Moi, j'ai trouvé que le projet [plurilingue] c'est plutôt bien parce qu'on pouvait faire montrer aux autres toutes les langues qu'on connaissait, qu'on parlait à la maison... Je n'avais jamais utilisé mes langues à l’école et même mes copines, elles ne savaient pas que je parlais plusieurs langues. » Across all of the schools, our plurilingual collaboration marked an important shift in teachers and children’s awareness of the rich diversity of languages present in their classroom. By working in groups on their plurilingual multiliteracies book production, the French immersion teacher, in particular, observed that one student displayed a new found respect for Arabic and his group members… I think it really just brought everyone together. I think every group had a moment like that where somebody saw or was exposed to something new that they hadn’t seen before and you know this was an opportunity for them to think about that new language. There’s two boys that can speak and write in Hebrew who were in different groups so there were some interesting combinations of students for sure, with Arabic, Hebrew, Polish, Serbian. One of the students that sort of stood out to me was [Milena] because I was really impressed by the fact that she wrote her own Serbian, and it’s funny because I was showing one of the teachers this morning who speaks and writes Serbian, and she was making some comments on the written part, and it just stood out to me that she wrote herself...how amazing is that that she was able to provide that to her group!

Although it might seem counter-intuitive at first to group students with different language backgrounds together, the French immersion teacher’s reflection highlights that in fact “it really just brought everyone together.” If we start from a position that understands that all students are evolving plurilinguals, then engaging students in collaborative plurilingual multiliteracies production provides them with an authentic occasion to work with their
languages while at the same time learning to work in collaboration. Their classroom experience thus comes to mirror the diverse reality of the world beyond the classroom and prepares them to engage as plurilingual global citizens in the 21


8.2 Fostering a Relationally inclusive atmosphere

In addition to starting with a view of all children as plurilingual, the second recurrent element was the intentional fostering of a relationally inclusive atmosphere in order to facilitate plurilingual work in the classroom and beyond. In his interview, the French immersion teacher continued on to explain that in his classroom:

> everyone is coming from such a unique place that we really focus on our similarities because it’s a positive way to bring everyone together and I think we embrace our differences but we’re all very alike at the end of the day. And I mean I think is what was really great about this [project] is because even though [students] may speak a different language at home or they’ve been exposed to different things, you know, they still had to come together, work as a group, create this wonderful book and in the end it’s not… just a different language, it’s a different way [of learning and working together] …I think a lot of the students were really surprised about how many languages there really were; there was like fifteen languages or something in my class. I mean I was shocked. I knew there was a lot of languages but I wasn’t really aware...I was thinking maybe 8…So I liked and appreciated the group dynamic to it because I think at this age... I mean at any age it’s really important to be able to collaborate and negotiate and to bring language into that, it was really interesting. I thought that was really great…

This teacher’s reflection highlights how having students work in groups to share their linguistic resources supports building an inclusive classroom community by helping students’ to value their own linguistic resources and recognize those of others as assets for their collaborative plurilingual multiliteracies production.

In addition to fostering inclusive relationships among students, teachers also observed how including students’ diverse linguistic repertoires in the classroom further helped to include parents in students’ learning and accomplishment. The English school teacher reflected that she was “sure, especially for those students that do speak another language at home, probably they ran home with tremendous excitement wanting to share the book with their parents. Not only because of what they created, the fact that it’s published, but the fact that it’s written in their
language … was really valuable.” At l’école française, the teacher noted that parents expressed their sense of being valued and integrated into the school when we celebrated the book launch for the class’ collective book, “La tresse des langues”. The high attendance rate on the part of parents at the final celebration was in itself an indication of the impact of the project: each student had at least one parent attend the celebration and the school staff indicated that for some families it was the first time that the parents had entered the school. The same elevated level of participation was seen across all the schools when teachers organized a community book launch.

Given that parents and family members had invested in helping their children with translating their stories, it was understandable that they too felt a sense of ownership in their children’s work. In the case of l’école privée, one student’s grandfather had written out the Hebrew translation of her story and mailed it back to her by post. We then scanned it in order to include it in her group’s book. The girl have been taking Hebrew classes and enjoyed learning the language so she really wanted to include a Hebrew translation in her group’s book. Because her parents could not write in Hebrew, they faxed the story to her grandfather who was very pleased to be able to contribute to his granddaughter’s book. Rather serendipitously, he was visiting Toronto at the time of the book launch and joined his granddaughter and her parents for the celebration. This type of inter-generational relational bonding provides a positive contrast to the language loss that has often been reported among language learners when schools discourage parents from using their first language at home (Wong-Fillimore, 2001).

The French immersion teacher further highlighted how parental collaboration was in fact essential in order to include students’ home languages:

I really can’t emphasize how neat it was to have the parents provide some of the language for students. Maybe students spoke [a different] language at home but they couldn’t write it, so the parents were really involved and I really like that idea too. I try to get parents involved as much as I can because when the parents are on board, I think student success comes that much more easily… sometimes the parents want to be involved but that’s not necessarily always the case. So I think this project gave parents an opportunity that I might not have provided them with normally… I like how it was another way for parents to be involved and participate in my class. That was really great.

The teacher recognized that by encouraging students’ to draw on the languages in their respective repertoires, they also drew on their parents’ support. Parents accepted the invitation to
participate in the project because it provided an alternative way for them to be involved in their children’s development of literacy expertise. Parents did not necessarily need to be proficient in either of the languages of instruction but rather their child facilitated the process of translanguaging in order to collaboratively produce a story translation in their home language(s). In this way, plurilingual multiliteracies production positioned children as creative plurilingual social actors at school and at home: they brought their home languages into their classrooms and the languages of instruction home. Collaborative plurilingual work served to blur the boundaries between home and school and lowered the thresholds so that parents and children could navigate both home and school spaces with a degree of safety, security and respect.

8.3 An Inquiry-based approach to language teaching and learning

With each successive school case, we moved towards adopting an increasingly explicit inquiry-based approach to language teaching and learning. In the first school case at l’école privée, the English and French teacher worked collaboratively to draw students’ attention to commonalities and differences between English and French. This comparison occurred spontaneously during the revision of students’ stories in English and French. As reported in Prasad (2013), both the English and French teacher drew on authentic examples from student writing to illustrate that students needed to translate meaning rather than directly word-for-word. In addition, the teachers were able to show students where in their writing they were borrowing grammatical constructions from their first language be it English or French. For example, one group wrote first in French, “Ils font leur chemin…” They originally translated this sentence roughly word for word into English as, “They make their way to…” By comparing the French and English sentences, the French teacher was able to highlight for the students how they had written their French sentence while thinking in English rather than formulating it in French more authentically as “Ils marchent vers…”

By writing in more than one language, students came to appreciate that different languages (and cultures) have different modes of thought and expression. Students also became aware of different conventions of print. In Farsi, students recognized that the script should be read from right to left rather than left to right like in English and French. This realization prompted further discussion of the directionality of print. Some students who were taking Mandarin classes at the
time were able to share that some languages are also read vertically. Finally, the English and French teacher were able to capitalize on opportunities to teach for cross-linguistic transfer, to recognize *les faux-amis* in French and English, as well as to highlight shared cognates – or words that share the same root. For example, in one group’s story the students wrote first in French, “*Regarde Max, nous ne sommes pas des imbéciles!*” When translating their story into English, they wrote “Look, Max, we’re not imbeciles!” The two boys who wrote this story developed a complex text in French and in English in part because they were able to borrow *les vrais amis* in French and English to elevate their diction across both languages.

As another example of teaching for cross-linguistic transfer, we were able to use the book covers of students’ printed proofs to review capitalization rules in English and French. Figure 8.1 and Figure 8.2 show examples of a part of corrected proof of one group’s book cover and a photograph of a review lesson on capitalization using the titles of students’ stories in French and English.

![Figure 8.1: Corrected book cover proof](image)
Whereas in French, titles are not capitalized apart from the first word, in English key words in titles are capitalized. We moved beyond title capitalization rules to further compare English and French capitalization rules of the days of the week and the months of a year. In a post-interview, the English teacher reflected that she had recognized the importance of making connections between the two languages in her instruction. The French teacher further underlined that this did not mean he had to teach in English, but that he could briefly make reference to English in order to draw on students’ prior knowledge and linguistic competencies to scaffold their learning.

By drawing students’ attention to how languages worked, teachers encouraged students to become language inquirers – to pay close attention to how and why the languages in their repertoires were similar and different, and to draw on this metalinguistic awareness to support their academic work. Rather than teaching grammar in isolation, teachers raised students’ awareness to differences between languages and asked them to make observations and inferences about the significance of differences and similarities. The teacher at l’école de langue française observed similarly that “ce qu’ils apprennent en anglais m’aide avec eux en français et vice-versa. Ce qu’ils apprennent avec moi ça les aide en anglais.” Although she noted that she did not
systematically plan instruction in coordination with the English teacher, she appreciated that it was beneficial for students to make connection across languages because in her experience,

les enfants font les liens explicites que : « Bon, je fais la même chose en lecture en anglais et en français » ou... beaucoup de fois ils vont te sortir : « Oh, on l’a fait avec [le prof d’anglais] » Alors beaucoup de fois tu vas savoir qu’ils ont une compétence quelque part. Tu vas te rendre compte, ça te facilite la tâche, tu vas passer plus vite sur la notion que si elle n’a pas été faite.

By working with students’ plurilingualism and purposefully training students’ to observe closely the languages in their repertoires, teachers recognized that they could support students in developing a paradigm of plurilingual inquiry across their learning. Engaging children in plurilingual multiliteracies production and creative representations of plurilingualism supported children in developing an inquiry-based view of language learning.

Teachers across the four Toronto-based case studies variously took advantage of serendipitous moments for teaching for cross-linguistic transfer. It was clearly easier to draw students’ attention to similarities and difference among languages when students worked in groups and encountered one another’s languages. With the exception of the English school, in each iteration of students’ plurilingual multiliteracies production, we expanded students’ working groups to include more and more languages. By the final school case in Toronto, at l’école de langue française, we included all students’ languages in one collective class book. Subsequently, at l’école française in Montpellier, we went one step further than seizing spontaneous opportunities to teach for transfer to intentionally inviting children to approach their languages with an inquiry-based perspective inspired by Auger’s (2006) approach for comparing languages. As recounted earlier, we created charts comparing number words from one to ten in all of the languages that students could write independently, as well as the word(s) for thank-you. Figure 8. 3 provides two examples of students contributing to the number charts. While this activity clearly provided an opportunity to value students’ home languages, it equally provided a purposeful occasion for all students to become language inquirers. Even before the classroom teacher asked students to make comparisons among languages, we could hear students whispering about similarities and differences amongst themselves. As each word in each language was added to a number chart, the teacher asked
the student who had written the word to teach the class how to pronounce it. Again, this provided an opportunity to value the linguistic resources of children who often had been reluctant to participate in class, and it also helped the entire class to consciously experience what it is like to speak and read in different languages. The classroom teacher took on an identity as a language learner alongside her students.

Figure 8.3: Photos of students adding words to comparative charts in their own languages

She did not let the fact that she did not know all of the languages prevent her from including them in the classroom. In fact, she readily displayed her confusion, surprise and delight as she learned how to read, write and say the number from one to ten and thank-you in the languages of her students. I noted in my field notes that the classroom teacher’s willingness to herself become a language inquirer, to position herself as a plurilingual learner like her students, set the tone for students’ engagement. They were curious, along with their teacher, about the different letters in Albanian and Turkish that looked unfamiliar and they giggled along with her as she tried to repeat sounds that were foreign to her. In these moments, students experienced the joy of playing with languages and the pleasure of expanding one’s linguistic repertoire.

The classroom teacher reflected at the end of the project that she felt that creating the table of numbers that included students’ home language marked a shift in the atmosphere of her classroom. She noted that students expressed greater confidence, risk taking and experimentation in both their language learning and sharing in the classroom community. For example, during a
celebration of one student’s birthday, she invited students to sing “Happy Birthday” in their own languages. She was surprised by the number of students who eagerly sang in their first languages in front of the entire class. The rest of the students actively joined in as they learned the words. For one student, in particular, the classroom teacher said it was a turning point. Up until her participation in our plurilingual inquiry, this student had been reluctant to participate in French in class and in birthday celebrations by singing in Albanian. On this occasion, the rest of her classmates eagerly encouraged her to sing for them and to the teacher’s delight, she accepted. As she sang “Happy Birthday”, her classmates joined in and it was evident from her glowing and their applause that she both with her head and her heart that she was a valued part of her class. This classroom vignette highlights the ripple effects of inviting children’s languages into the classroom. In this case, the child who was celebrating her birthday felt special, as did the children who sang in their home languages, and the children who joined in with the chorus. By the end of the singing, the children were not just celebrating one student’s birthday, they were celebrating the richness of their classroom community.

The classroom teacher reflected on her learning through our collaboration in this way:

Si je refais un projet comme ça [plurilingue], je partirai plus sur la comparaison des langues ... parce que c’est concret pour eux. Tu vois...ils ont besoin de concret – de partir des choses simples, les nombres, merci, c’était rigolo pour eux dans notre tableau... enfin, les choses simples qu’ils puissent comparer dans leurs langues, dans la notre, les choses qu’ils connaissent déjà dans leurs langues... ce que j’ai appris c’est l’importance de travailler plus sur la comparaison des langues, et pas cloisonner, de moins cloisonner des choses, mettre plus l’accent sur les liens et surtout de travailler beaucoup plus l’oral, encore même si avec 29 élèves, c’est très difficile, mais bon, voilà. Donc, s’il y a deux choses que je vais retirer de ce projet, c’est qu’il faut travailler la comparaison comme passerelle entre les langues et l’oral, c’est vraiment important pour les enfants.

Through her collaboration in this inquiry, the classroom teacher came to appreciate the value of comparing languages and helping children make connections between languages in their repertoires. Her experience creating a comparative table allowed to her experience first-hand how helping children make explicit connections between what Perregaux has called the “déjà-là” – the prior knowledge and resources that children bring to their learning – to the “au-delà” can support all learners in developing their metalinguistic awareness and their sense of belonging within the classroom community. As one child in the class expressed,” Comme la dernière fois,
quand on a fait [la comparaison] des nombres ... on s’est rendu compte que les langues ont toutes un aspect du français, ou je pense que c’est le français qui peut-être s’est inspiré par d’autres langues. Enfin, en tout cas, toutes les langues se sont inspirées des autres.” Through explicit comparison of languages, students began to understand the concept of the intercomprehension among languages. In order to develop the practice of teaching through the prism of students’ plurilingualism, comparison across languages is one strategy that teachers can use to support children in becoming language inquirers across the curriculum.

8.4 Prioritizing **Space** for creative expression

The fourth element that emerged across school cases for teaching and learning through the prism of students’ plurilingualism was the need to make space for students to express themselves creatively. Initially, creative visual methods were adopted for this collaborative plurilingual inquiry in order to scaffold children’s engagement as co-researchers of their plurilingual lives. Indeed, creative visual methods supported children in making their representations of plurilingualism concrete. As each research activity was undertaken across each school case, it became clear that students’ plurilingualism and creativity were interwoven. Students’ produced sophisticated scholartistry because they were given time and space to develop their thoughts and ideas creatively before expressing them in conventional academic forms such as writing a reflection or giving an oral presentation. The arts have often been seen as expendable supplements to the core curriculum. Yet this inquiry with children highlighted that they thrive when given the opportunity to express themselves creatively and they can do so with a degree of sophistication that has largely been overlooked, if not ignored amidst calls to focus on academic content. Prioritizing space for creative expression implies that rather than including artistic expression as an add-on to an academic project that it is incorporated into the design. Indeed, plurilingual multiliteracies production necessitates creative collaboration and engagement by students’ pooling their cultural and linguistic communicative resources to create something greater than any one individual could produce alone. Children’s plurilingualism is at its foundation based on their creative navigation between, across and among languages in their repertoires.
During a final research conversation with two students at l’école française in Montpellier, they explained how the room to be creative during our collaborative plurilingual inquiry fueled their engagement and their growth:

élève 1: Le projet était plutôt rigolo... je l’aime bien...
élève 2: Ça nous fait travailler sur toutes nos langues et du coup, c’est sympa pour les enfants...Oui, on a travaillé mais d’une autre manière que normal, de faire la conjugaison qu’on n’aime pas.
élève 1: Si, on a travaillé d’une autre manière, une manière beaucoup plus agréable qu’en classe, je l’avoue ...c’est mieux.
élève 2: Si, moi aussi bien que j’adore l’École, c’était mieux!
Gail: Pourquoi c’était plus agréable?
élève 1: Mais, parce que tu n’es pas collé sur une chaise à faire tes exercices.
élève 2: Voilà, t’es pas collé. Bon, t’es collé mais pas pour faire des exercices, c’est-à-dire à travailler tout seul, et faire “Arrrrr ! Je n’arrive pas. C’est quoi la réponse?” Alors que là, il n’y a même pas de réponse au travail, c’est chacun son idée...
élève 1: En plus, c’est de l’art plastique et vu que pour moi, personnellement, j’adore les arts plastiques ... ça me donne plus d’idée, que j’aime, que quand on fait des exercices de conjugaison,
élève 2: Moi aussi, j’adore l’art plastique et grâce à ce projet, on a pu vraiment laisser, dévoiler nos talents.
élève 1: Surtout notre imagination. J’adore ça.

These two students expressed how their creative plurilingual work helped them develop their ideas. They underlined that in this type of work there was no singular correct answer but rather that the purpose was to develop one’s own ideas and to demonstrate one’s fullest creative capacities. Without saying it directly, their reflection gets at the core of teaching through the prism of children’s plurilingualism, that is to allow children to use all of the resources in their communicative repertoires to express themselves fully rather than to limit children only to using the language of instruction to respond to formulaic, decontextualized tasks like conjugating verbs. Another student from the initial school case at l’école privée put it this way, “I learned [by creating our plurilingual book] that there are stories inside everyone.” Teaching through the prism of children’s plurilingualism necessitates a rethinking – or perhaps, more aptly, reimagining what teaching and learning could look like when we start with a view of the child as a creative plurilingual inquirer.

The French immersion teacher further underlined the value of creating time and space for children to process and develop their thinking creatively:
I liked that [our collaboration] was over six months actually because you know you can’t really rush through something like this, so I felt that was important. And I think the kids, because this was such a process and they really enjoyed it, I think they are able to reflect that much more over this whole process… I really liked the incorporation of the arts throughout and I think that’s great for this age group. It’s great for any kid because they all love art, but your art activities were very specific and very like thoughtful and well planned out and I think they really appreciated that because it gave them another outlet to explain and interpret their feelings around their whole language experience and the languages that they know, the languages that they are learning, the languages that their parents may know, that they may or may not speak or you know, whatever their experience is. So I think… because the students in my class aren’t necessarily always able to articulate what it is that they are trying to say so I think the art really encouraged that and I really saw that.

This teacher’s reflection poignantly highlights how the design of our collaborative inquiry integrated the arts progressively and systematically rather than as a superfluous add-on to simply make the inquiry process enjoyable for children. Fostering students’ creativity was not the icing on the cake but rather the leavening agent that allowed children to produce works of substance. He identifies first that we did not rush children through their creative process, and then by offering students time and space for artistic or creative expression, “it gave them another outlet to explain and interpret their feelings.” It is important to underline not only that the teacher recognized that we did not rush students through the various stages of our collaborative inquiry, but also that he valued the process. Through his experience collaborating in this inquiry, he came to appreciate that teaching through the prism of students’ plurilingualism relies not on a series of one-off plurilingual activities but rather on developing a sustained cyclical spiral or process of plurilingual inquiry involving self-positioning, self-representations, social language awareness and inclusive experiential exchange.

8.5 Valuing Multi-modal meaning making and representation

In the previous section, I described how students’ creativity came to be seen as inseparable and interwoven with their plurilingualism. The final element of teaching through the prism of students’ plurilingualism was a valuing of multi-modal meaning-making and representation. Over the course of each school case, multimodality was braided with students’ plurilingualism and creativity as one cord of three strands.
The teacher from *l’école de langue française* reflected on students’ collaborative plurilingual multiliteracies production in particular in the following way:

> c’est une source de fierté pour eux, surtout quand ils vont recevoir le livre et le CD. Ah oui, ils l’attendent avec impatience... Ça va les marquer à vie. Ça va les marquer à vie parce que ce n’est pas tous les jours qu’ils vont vivre comme ça. On peut faire des activités mais de faire quelque chose de vraiment professionnel et d’avoir quelque chose avec des couleurs et un CD et un livre avec une couverture et tout ça, c’est une première pour eux puis ils peuvent en parler pendant longtemps dans leur vie.

Her reflection underlines that students’ production of the book “*Venez manger avec nous*” along with the recorded CD was a significant accomplishment in the lives of the plurilingual children in her class. They were unquestionably proud of what they had collectively produced. It would be difficult to separate their pride according to the separate elements that made up the book: children’s drawings, plurilingual poems and the recorded CD. Instead, taken together, the braiding of their plurilingualism, creativity and multimodal production result in a sense of accomplishment that the teacher expressed would stay with them for life.

The French immersion teacher similarly expressed that

> the end result was …fantastic for the students to be able to put together a whole book with four or five different languages per book. They worked together, the art is beautiful, it’s just…it’s amazing. It’s nothing short of amazing… they appreciate and realize that because this is all of them. Like they did this themselves …they invested so much in this project. That’s exactly how you get such a beautiful result. When the kids feel ownership over it and they feel so invested in it. That was great. That’s not easy to do..... and for them to understand that they have the knowledge and the power to create as opposed to just consume…that’s huge with literacy. And look what they came up with, these are full books!

Towards the end of his reflection, he narrows in on the idea that students’ plurilingual multiliteracies production in the form of beautiful multimodal books was powerful precisely because students moved from being consumers of media to being creative plurilingual producers of knowledge. Students’ reactions to their plurilingual multimodal books further underlined how their collaborative engagement in exploring and representing their plurilingualism had helped them become creative plurilingual social actors. Let me borrow the words of one student who said, “You know it really inspires me….I’m just inspired to see what I’ve been capable of doing and now that I know how to do this,… I can do it
[again] with my own books.” Or, another student who shared, “I think this [book] is great because there aren’t many books with my language in it here.” She too not only appreciated having a book in her own language, but she came to see herself as a real author with resources to share with her classmates at school and beyond. Students, teachers and parents reactions to students’ plurilingual multiliteracies production was overwhelmingly positive within the context of our collaborative inquiry. So why not teach this way?

8.6 Resistance

Given the positive feedback from teachers, students and their parents, I asked teachers to speculate on why teaching in this way seems to meet with resistance, particularly from mainstream classroom teachers. The response I got was repeatedly linked to a lack of inspiration, ideas and examples. As one teacher explained:

Faute de temps, j’imagine. Faute d’idée aussi; on n’a jamais eu cette idée. Puis faute d’énergie aussi parce que ça demande du temps et de l’énergie aussi pour le faire. J’ai toujours besoin de l’énergie de quelqu’un d’autre. Comme toi, tu fais du travail, c’est de l’énergie que tu rapportes à mon groupe, à l’école et puis c’est de la valeur ajoutée à notre enseignement à l’école. C’est pour ça que j’étais ouverte à te recevoir. Même si au début je ne comprenais pas c’était quoi, j’ai dit : « Okay. On prend ça. Ça ne risque pas de nous nuire. C’est l’ouverture. Il faut quand même, je pense qu’il faut être ouvert à ce qui se passe à l’extérieur aussi. Il ne faut pas qu’on soit un ilot isolé comme école mais il faut avoir des partenaires dans la communauté.

As you read this teacher’s reflection, you can almost hear her fatigue. Her sense of being overburdened was echoed by teachers across school cases. In another school case, the two teachers expressed that working collaboratively required time and the good will of teachers. They reflected in retrospect that they had in fact succeeded in carrying out the project because they had both committed to me in addition to one another: “it was easier because you were there so we were kind of, I think, that we were working on it, and because there was a third party, because we knew that when you needed to come in, we had deadlines to keep it moving along.” They recognized that in working together, “tu réfléchis mieux, tu travailles moins mais avec un meilleur résultat parce qu’on travaille ensemble, c’est un travail réparti avec les forces et les expertises de chacun”. However, they felt that the lack of time for collaborative planning and reflection hindered this type of work. Lyster, Collins and Ballinger (2009) have similarly drawn
attention to how challenging collaboration particularly among language teachers can be to implement because of a lack of time provided in teachers’ schedules for meeting together.

To return to the previous teacher’s reflection, she expressed that she had accepted to collaborate in this inquiry not really knowing what she was getting involved in, but rather in faith that it would not harm her students and hopefully would bring at the very least more energy to her class. She identified that one of her survival strategies was recruiting help from the community and not seeing her classroom as an island. Both her desperate sense of need along with her openness to drawing on community resources as they presented themselves prepared her to invite me into her classroom for our extended plurilingual collaboration. What made the project succeed was really her commitment to building partnerships with the community and her recognition of the value of children’s plurilingualism:

\[c’est bien d’avoir une identité franco-ontarienne, mais aussi l’identité de tes ancêtres, de tes racines, de ta culture. Parce que langue ça vient avec la culture, ça vient avec aussi la religion et l’identité. Alors tu vois, s’il ne peut pas communiquer avec ses grands-parents, ses cousins qui sont de l’autre côté de la mer, ça va être une perte aussi. Je me dis que l’enfant, c’est beau qu’il soit francophone et qu’il soit anglophone, je suis pour ça. Mais je ne suis pas pour qu’il perde son identité première. Moi-même, je suis arabe. Le français, ce n’est pas ma première langue. Alors ça serait dur pour moi d’oublier l’arabe, le cacher puis dire, okay, je vais vivre juste en français et en anglais. Je ne peux pas. Parce que si j’enlève l’arabe, j’enlève mon identité, j’enlève mes racines, j’enlève plein de choses. Puis tu vas te sentir comme adopté qui n’a pas de parent. Il ne sait pas d’où il vient.\]

Her reflection highlights the importance of her personal experience as a plurilingual individual and an acute awareness of the immeasurable loss of losing family languages. Even so, teachers’ individual plurilingualism was not a guarantee in and of itself for them to recognize the potential benefit of including students’ languages in the mainstream classroom. It was not a condition for participating but in fact all of the collaborating classroom teachers were plurilingual with high levels of proficiency across a number of different languages. Their preparedness to include students’ home languages within the classroom space was equally related to their representations of plurilingualism.

In the English school, where the classroom teacher spoke a different language at home with her family than the language she used for instruction at school, explained in her final interview that,
I was away for a lot of the sessions that took place. I took advantage of the fact that there were days I needed to take off and so I just kind of coordinated it with the days that you were going to be there. I do recall just little snippets though. I remember having some students just experience a sense of pride and their wanting to share with me just what they’d done but I also found that there were students who almost appeared shy or more reserved about using their native tongue. At the grade five level, though I’ve found students saying ‘O, I’m not very good speaking [my first] language.’ There were a few of my [newly arrived] students who were a little more willing and I could see that they were very excited about the experience.

She, like the other collaborating teachers was challenged by the multiple competing demands of teaching. While she had invited me into her classroom to work with her students, she was often away from the classroom while students worked with me and her student teacher on research activities. As a result, she missed not only carrying out the activities collaboratively with students, but also she did not develop a coherent sense of progression of the project as it unfolded and she also was not present for the distribution of students’ final printed books. Her reflection on the project revealed her belief that teaching through the prism of children’s plurilingualism was more beneficial for newly arrived language learners, rather than for all students in mainstream classes because she felt that by the junior grades, students were much more self-conscious about using their home languages at school. She was much more oriented towards challenging students to develop academic language; she felt this was a greater priority for students who did not necessarily have exposure to academic English outside of school. Thus, whereas teachers across the other four school cases developed an appreciation for how a plurilingual approach to teaching and learning could be both academically, socially and emotionally beneficial for all students over the course of our collaboration, it became evident that such an understanding emerged from witnessing the positive impact of both the process and products of students’ collaborative creative plurilingual inquiry. The contrast between the English teacher’s reflection and the other four school cases is extremely valuable in that it reveals that in order to for mainstream teachers to develop a sustainable practice of teaching through the prism of students’ plurilingualism, they must first have a vision for how students’ plurilingualism can enrich both teaching and learning in their mainstream classrooms. Just as students can be engaged in making their representations of plurilingualism visible through a cycle of plurilingual inquiry, so too teachers can benefit from reflecting on their own linguistic repertoires and deconstructing their representations of plurilingualism.
8.7 The prism of plurilingualism: a new paradigm for inclusive teaching and learning

This chapter opened by laying out the five elements that emerged across the five case studies as providing a foundation for teaching in mainstream classrooms through the prism of students’ plurilingualism. As seen through teachers’ final interviews, teaching through the prism of students’ plurilingualism, however, first necessitates a paradigm shift to conceptualise plurilingualism as a foundational resource for learning and growing inclusive communities in the 21st century. Teachers from the four out of the five school cases developed an appreciation for their own plurilingualism and the plurilingualism of their students as they actively collaborated in scaffolding their students’ creative investigation of their own plurilingualism. In this way, teachers’ hands-on experience of teaching and learning through the prism of their students’ plurilingualism through this inquiry challenged them to take into account their children’s cultural and linguistic resources. These creative qualitative school case studies allowed teachers to experiment with and imagine what teaching plurilingually could look like in their classrooms. Their experience, in turn, challenged them to then appropriate such an approach into their teaching practice beyond our formal school-university collaboration. Not only did the prism of research activities involved in this inquiry allow children to make visible their representations of plurilingualism, they also allowed teachers to risk creatively including the full range of children’s cultural and linguistic repertoires in their classrooms. The result was that teachers, students and their families experienced that it is indeed possible to learn and teach in mainstream classrooms in ways that are both culturally responsive, linguistically inclusive, creative and academically rigorous. Rather than seeing any of these dimensions in opposition, teaching through the prism of students’ plurilingualism ultimately offered teachers an inclusive way of both integrating and refracting children’s diverse resources to support the learning of their entire community of learners.
Chapter 9
Conclusion

This final chapter summarizes the central argument advanced through this dissertation and acknowledges its limitations. I consider the implications of shifting towards a plurilingual paradigm in the field of language learning and teaching with particular attention to the implications for research, teaching practice and policy. Finally, I point to two lines of inquiry that grow out of this dissertation relating to creative methodologies in applied linguistics research and plurilingual teacher education and development.

9 Plurilingual education for all?

This multi-site inquiry has examined children’s diverse creative representations of their plurilingualism across five different school models. As indicated that the outset of this dissertation, the impetus for engaging with children across a variety of English and French schools was in part because linguistic diversity has come to pervade all of them and yet there has not been a coordinated effort to begin to understand and co-construct a framework for supporting children’s plurilingualism as a foundation for their learning and development as citizens of the 21st century. The overarching question that guided this research asked what plurilingual education could look like for all learners across a range of schools. It asked teachers, students and their families to join with me for an extended length of time to creatively risk exploring children’s plurilingualism through diverse representational media and to re-imagine what classrooms could look like if teaching and learning were to be based on a plurilingual paradigm.

9.1 Towards a Didactique of Plurilingualism for Linguistically Inclusive Schools

The central argument of this dissertation has been that the multi-faceted prism of children’s plurilingualism offers not only a resource but also a foundation for children’s learning individually and collectively within their classrooms – irrespective of the language(s) of instruction. Chapter 4 through chapter 7 drew on a wide range of representational methods including reflexive drawing, self-portraits, digital photography, multimodal bookmaking, and collage to allow children individually and collaboratively to mobilize their creative plurilingual
communicative repertoires to showcase their representations of plurilingualism through the production of creative and artistic research artifacts.

Children’s research artifacts illustrate the diverse range of their representations of plurilingualism. Perhaps one of the most significant contributions of exploring children’s representations through creative and artistic multimodal media was that while many of the artifacts highlighted positive representations of plurilingualism and linguistic diversity, students artifacts also afforded them time and space to explore and to express powerfully the affective dimension of language learning that is not often voiced in classroom. Children’s artifacts and reflections on them remind us as educators and researchers that language learning is not only cognitively demanding but also an emotionally and socially charged process. In addition, children’s research artifacts served as tangible representations of their plurilingualism that in turn scaffolded our research conversations. The presence of a research artifact during our conversations helped children verbalize their reflections and they helped me, as an adult, enter into their world by asking questions related to their artifacts. Students’ creation of research artifacts allowed them to take on positions of authority as creative experts and I took on a position of attentive audience. This repositioning was perhaps more challenging for me as an adult than for my co-researchers, because there were admittedly occasions when I found myself confused and even skeptical of children’s artifacts and reflections. For instance, when one student first showed me his collage, I thought he had misunderstood the prompt for the collages. As I had observed him flipping through images and cutting out a picture of a dog wearing a Santa Claus costume, I felt discouraged that he had missed the point or was not taking his collage reflection and representation seriously. I was humbled by his explanation because he had been focused on the question the entire time and had in fact found a particularly appropriate image to express his understanding of plurilingualism: he explained that Santa Claus was the best example in the world of a plurilingual individual. He explained that Santa must know all of the languages in the world because children around the globe write to him to tell him what they would like for Christmas and he listens to them and responds by delivering the right presents. This exchange was one of the many that humbled me as an adult researcher working with children as I realized that even in my effort to try to make children’s plurilingualism visible, my own “adult” and “rational” filters risked me not hearing recognizing the profound understanding children have of their own experiences.
Creative multimodal methods scaffolded children’s engagement in this inquiry as co-researchers of their plurilingualism. The cyclical spiral of plurilingual inquiry that developed in and across school cases highlighted the value of approaching plurilingual inquiry with children both as process and as production. From self-positioning through reflexive drawing, to self-representation through self-portraits, to awakening and building plurilingual awareness through digital photography mapping, to inclusive experiential exchange through collaborative plurilingual multiliteracies production, and then back to self-positioning as plurilinguals through collage, children engaged deeper and deeper in reflection through each research activity and as a result produced increasingly sophisticated representations of their plurilingualism. As children worked through the various stages of this collaborative plurilingual inquiry, they came to recognize one another’s cultural and linguistic resources, as well as their own. In cases where children were able to pool their linguistic resources for collaborative plurilingual multiliteracies production, students and teachers alike came to appreciate that students produced work that showcased the full range of their individual and collective communicative repertoires and simultaneously challenged them both creatively and academically. It is precisely the multifaceted dimension of students’ creative collaborative plurilingual multiliteracies production that makes the metaphor of prism such a poignant image for conceptualizing a didactique of plurilingualism for linguistically inclusive schools.

Teaching through the prism of students’ plurilingualism necessitates that we shift from teaching from a monolingual paradigm that keeps languages strictly separate to a plurilingual paradigm that recognizes that individuals are continually in the process of expanding their plurilingual repertoires over the course of their lives and students’ plurilingual repertoires are the foundation for their learning and growing as students and citizens in the 21st century. Through a meta-analysis of the five case studies, it became evident that teaching through the PRISM of children’s plurilingualism begins with a sustained and purposeful inclusion of students’ Plurilingual communicative repertoires in the classroom but is further supported by four other elements: the fostering of collaborative Relationships among students; teachers and families and the wider global community; an Inquiry-based approach to langage and literacy teaching and learning; prioritizing time and Space for creative expression; and encouraging Multimodal meaning-making.
9.2 Limitations

While this collaborative research has benefited many children, their families and their teachers in opening up their classrooms to include the full range of their linguistic repertoires, this study is not without limitations. One of the limitations was that even though this creative qualitative inquiry engaged over 100 children as co-researchers who generated over 300 representational artifacts, only one classroom in each type of school model could be included in this multi-site study based on limitations of time and resources. In this regard, this multi-site inquiry was exploratory in nature. I engaged with only one classroom from each of the following school models: an English class, a French immersion class, a French-language class, a private French/English class, and a bilingual class. There are many variations of classes within each school model so it is difficult to generalize from each singular class in each school model across all classrooms in their respective models. At the same time, what did become clear across all five cases was that it is indeed possible to support plurilingual multiliteracies production and plurilingual inquiry in each of the schools as long as there was coordinated collaboration among teachers, families and students. The success of the individual case studies within this multi-site inquiry provides a basis for advocating for more systematic research to be undertaken to test and refine the framework for teaching and learning through the prism of students’ plurilingualism proposed in this dissertation.

A second limitation was the challenge of engaging children in the dissemination of our collaborative research based on constraints around the school year. In most school cases, we celebrated a book launch with students and their families where children were able to present their multimodal books, collages and reflections about our collaboration. In the case of the English school and the French Immersion school, our classroom collaboration and plurilingual multimodal bookmaking took longer than the initial projected length of time. As a result, there was not enough time to organize and host a formal book launch and dissemination of our research collaboration with families at the school. Students still received copies of their books and their artifacts to share with their families but we lost out on sharing with the collective wider community and perhaps even more significantly, students did not have the final affirmation of their work from external sources to which students in others cases had responded so powerfully.
The third limitation of this study is related to researching with children as co-researchers. Although this inquiry endeavoured to prioritize children’s voices and representations of plurilingualism, the study was nonetheless designed and directed by myself, an adult researcher. The next step in exploring children’s plurilingualism from their perspectives would ideally involve students in designing and leading their own plurilingual inquiry to address questions of concern to them in school and in their communities. Moving towards child-led plurilingual inquiry could be one of the directions to explore in future research.

9.3 Implications

9.3.1 Methodological implications

This multi-site inquiry endeavored to engage children as co-researchers through creative multimodal methods. Children’s rich, diverse and sophisticated representational artifacts generated through this study highlight the potential for creative and multimodal methods to complement traditional methods in language and education research. In particular, collage emerged as a powerful representational medium for children to use in developing and expressing research perspectives with a high degree of sophistication. Although image-based methods have not been an obvious choice for applied linguistics research, the prism of methods used in this inquiry suggests that expanding our methodological repertoires along with our plurilingual repertoires may support us in making our research more accessible for children and youth to engage with us as co-researchers and for the wider public in general.

9.3.2 Pedagogical implications

This multi-site inquiry across five different school models also suggests that a didactique of plurilingualism can support building inclusive schools while preparing students to become plurilingual citizens of the 21st century. Through this inquiry, teachers’ experiences working with their students co-researching their plurilingualism allowed them to explore what teaching through the prism of their students’ plurilingualism could look like in practice. All of the teachers who actively collaborated in our plurilingual inquiry came away with practical ideas and reflections about how they could adopt a linguistically inclusive approach to their teaching. Teachers’ reactions in this inquiry underline the need for further teacher education and
development across English and French schools in order for teachers to shift from teaching from a monolingual paradigm to a plurilingual one.

9.3.3 Policy and research agenda implications

As linguistic diversity pervades English and French schools across Canada, this exploratory study provides a starting point for advocating for a larger scale, systematic coordination of research and policy concerning teaching through the prism of students’ plurilingualism across Canada. While language policy and education policy fall under the mandates of different levels of government, the coordination of policy and research mandates could go a long way to support both teachers and students as they learn and grow together in increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. In addition, if languages are indeed recognized as key resources in a knowledge-based economy, then investment in policy and research regarding supporting children and youth’s plurilingualism will also contribute to the broader mandates to prepare students to become active plurilingual citizens of the 21st century.

9.4 Future directions

In conjunction with the implications of this research, two major lines of inquiry grow out of the contribution of this dissertation moving forward: 1) the inclusion of visual and multimodal methods in applied linguistics and language and literacy research; 2) plurilingual teacher education and teacher development, particularly for mainstream classroom and subject teachers.

9.4.1 Visual and multimodal methods in applied linguistics and language & literacy research

This multi-site study prioritized creative non-linear multimodal methods for engaging children in language and literacy research. Drawing, photography, multimodal book-making and collage scaffolded children’s reflection on and representations of their plurilingualism. Cahnmann Taylor (2008) has advocated the need for applied linguistics researchers to explore what arts-based approached to inquiry can lend to our fields of inquiry: researchers in language education cannot lose by acquiring and applying techniques employed by arts-based researchers. We must assume there is an audience for our work; one that longs for fresh language and imagery to describe the indescribably emotional and intellectual experiences in and beyond language education contexts” (p. 253). Creative and artististic approaches to language and literacy inquiry further offer to level
the research terrain such that culturally and linguistically children, youth and adults can engage alongside university-based researchers, each sharing their unique skills and competencies on a level playing field. Creative visual and multimodal methods blur the boundaries of what constitutes language and open the way to understanding a diverse range of representations and practices. To embrace creative visual and multimodal methods does not necessitate that we do away with our training as applied linguists who pay close attention to language and their contexts, rather creative methods ask us to add them to our repertoire of methods that we can draw on according to need and purpose.

9.4.2 Plurilingual teacher education and development

In this multisite inquiry, the five different school case studies unfolded differently with each classroom teacher. The engagement of the classroom teacher in each case study set the tone for the research collaboration and the degree to which students’ languages were not only recognized as personal resources but also as community resources that could both deepen and expand all students’ learning. When teachers invited students to bring their languages to school and to use them purposefully in the generation of plurilingual research artifacts and collaborative plurilingual multiliteracies production, teachers experienced firsthand how they could practically mobilize their students’ plurilingual communicative repertoires in their teaching and learning. This firsthand experience seemed to be essential for teachers to be convinced that including students’ languages in teaching and learning could indeed be beneficial for their entire community of learners. Practical experience inspired not only the participating teachers, but also many of their colleagues to take interest in developing a didactique of plurilingualism in their schools. This need for a personal experience with a didactique of plurilingualism highlights the great need for inclusive plurilingual teacher education and teacher development. The reality is that many teachers and teacher candidates have not experienced such an approach through their schooling experiences so to many it may seem unnecessary, if not completely foreign. It is difficult to embrace a paradigm shift unless you first recognize its value and the need of doing so. If we want teachers to develop a didactique of plurilingualism, they need scaffolded experiences through school-university partnerships that will support them as they explore and experiment with teaching through the prism of their students’ plurilingualism. In this way, reciprocal school-university partnerships offer both teachers and university researchers the opportunity to collaborate in developing plurilingual inquiry in mainstream classrooms. It should
be underlined that just as this inquiry engaged with mainstream classroom teachers, subject specific teachers in areas such as math, science, history and geography should also be included in plurilingual inquiry and teacher development. This dissertation underlines that a didactique of plurilingualism can enrich teaching and learning across the curriculum for all learners as students pool their plurilingual communicative resources for the benefit of their entire learning community.

Although this multi-site inquiry spanned five schools, more than 100 students and a broad and diverse range of children’s plurilingual research artifacts, it was only an exploratory starting point. The findings of this creative plurilingual inquiry lay the foundation for a long-term research programme on creative methods in language education scholarship, as well as plurilingual teacher education and development. Why is a programme of plurilingual research needed as we continue to move forward through the 21st century? In the words of post-colonial author V.S. Naipaul (1980), “We make ourselves according to the ideas we have of our possibilities” (p. 152) Imagine what our classrooms would look like if we began to teach through the prism of children’s plurilingualism rather than limiting them to only using the language of instruction to mediate their learning and relationships at school. Might they learn to be more inquisitive, more open and more inviting towards individuals who speak different languages and in different registers? Might they come to see people not in terms of their difference but rather in terms of the diverse repertoire of resources they bring to enrich their communities? Drawing on this multi-site collaborative plurilingual inquiry in English and French schools in Toronto and Montpellier, we can dare to believe that continuing to support plurilingual research and teaching will equip teachers and children not only to imagine but also to build a more inclusive plurilingual global society.
References


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communautaire? *Revue des sciences de l'éducation*, 34(2), 377-398. doi: [10.7202/019686ar](http://dx.doi.org/10.7202/019686ar)


A. Mohanty & M. Panda (Eds.), *Social Justice Through Multilingual Education*. Toronto: Multilingual Matters.


Appendices
Appendix 1: Be(com)ing a plurilingual researcher

*Negotiating My Identities* (2009) is an arts-informed e-book that I created as a personal identity text while I was designing this inquiry. It weaves poetry, prose and photography as an autobiographical reflexion on the experiences and dimensions that have shaped my life.

![Negotiating My Identities](image1)

**Figure A2.1: Negotiating my Identities: e-book**

*Daddy’s Secret Surprise* (2011) is both a printed book and an e-book that I created as an example of plurilingual multimodal production prior to beginning data collection. The illustrations were created as photo collages and the multilingual text was written in English, French, Hind and Japanese to reflect the languages and cultures that have shaped my family’s life.

![Daddy’s Secret Surprise](image2)

**Figure A2.2: Daddy Secret Surprise: a plurilingual story: e-book**
Be(com)ing Plurilingual (2011) is a photo collage I created in response to the research question, “How does it look and feel to be plurilingual?” I created this collage as a reflexion on my own plurilingualism, as well as to determine how I would introduce the final collage reflection to students who partnered in this inquiry.

Figure A2.3 : Be(com)ing plurilingual: a personal collage
Appendix 2: Complementary research website

I am plurilingual! Je suis plurilingue!

Take a look through a plurilingual prism...

Welcome to I am plurilingual / je suis plurilingue! This website is a companion work-in-progress to Call Prasad’s doctoral dissertation on children’s plurilingualism in English and French schools.* To give you a glimpse of the type of creative plurilingual work that students, along with their teachers and family have engaged in with me over the last three years, here are a sampling of the plurilingual multimodal texts created with students across a variety of school sites in Toronto (Canada), Montpellier (France) and Sète (France)**. Click on them to view the entire e-book or click on the audio player below to listen to a recording of students’ readings. To learn more about this inquiry, click on The Study to find more examples of students’ creative work, click on Students as co-researchers, and, to explore resources for developing creative plurilingual practice in research and in teaching, consult the list of publications, presentations and gallery under About the Researcher. You might also check out the Inspiring Practice blog. Your comments, questions and reflections are welcome!

Collaborative plurilingual multimodal texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Le tresse des langues:</th>
<th>Les jours de la semaine:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a plurilingual book in French, Occitan, English</td>
<td>a plurilingual book in French</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure A1.1: Screenshot of website www.iamplurilingual.com
Appendix 3: Sample Research Consent Forms and Oral Assent Script

Subject: Information and Consent Letter for Education Professionals including Administrators, Classroom Teachers & Language Teachers (ESL/ FSL / English)

Dear Madam / Sir:

As a doctoral candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto, I am pleased to be conducting a comparative study in Toronto’s English and French schools called *Constructing Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Pluri-literate Identities*. This project is supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). This study grows out of my previous research in French-language schools, as well as my own classroom experience teaching English Language Arts and English as a Second Language. This study focuses on elementary students’ (ages 9-12) views of and experiences with linguistic and cultural diversity, along with their (plurilingual) literacy practices. For this comparative study, I will be working with students as co-researchers in at least one class in an English school, a French immersion school and a French-language school.

The External Research Review Committee (ERRC) of the TDSB has granted approval for this study. The ERRC approval letter is attached to this information and consent letter.

Three sets of questions guide this study. First, how do culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students conceptualize their identities in Ontario’s English, French-immersion and French-language schools? Second, how do prevailing language policies influence how CLD students’ develop literacy expertise at school in English, French-immersion and French-language classrooms? To what extent does the classroom enactment of such polices impede and/or enable CLD learners to fashion pluri-literate identities? Finally, how does the implementation of transformative multiliteracies pedagogy through expanding students’ language awareness and their creation of plurilingual identity texts effect CLD students’ engagement in literacy activities?
This study will enhance our understanding of elementary students’ views of plurilingualism and experiences with cultural and linguistic diversity in their respective schools. This research will explore how students can be encouraged to draw on their plurilingual repertoires and pluricultural resources to enrich their learning and build more inclusive learning environments for all students. It will inform decision makers when developing inclusive education policies and research-based literacies practice.

Working in collaboration with classroom teachers, I wish to carry out various research activities that will engage student participants as co-researchers of their cultural and linguistic experiences, as well as their literacy practices. **These activities can be linked to Ontario curriculum and implemented as part of the regular instructional program.**

If you accept to participate in this inquiry, I will work with classroom teachers as well as interested respective language teachers (ESL / FSL / English) and their students to facilitate a collaborative transformative multiliteracies classroom intervention in which students will be encouraged to draw on their cultural and linguistic resources as they engage in a number of activities to demonstrate their literacy expertise. Observation notes and photographs will be taken in order to document students’ language and literacy practices. I would also like to audio / video record in-class activities for research purposes and video clips may be used for future academic presentations and publication of the research. Participants will have an option to preview photographs and video clips prior to use in a presentation or publication. I anticipate that the classroom activities will take place over approximately 8 weeks per school as agreed by the teacher, administration and school board and at a time indicated by the school.

With each participating class, I wish to do a number of visual arts-informed exercises in-class followed by group discussions (recorded on digital audio tape). (e.g., creating cultural and linguistic self-portraits; mapping family language use, photography of language and text in the school and at home). Students’ creative works will be photographed or recorded digitally in order that students may keep their original works. I also wish to interview small groups of students involved in the study (groups of two or three) for 20-30 minutes (recorded on digital audiotape). The interviews would take place during class time in a known location within the school.

Although I prioritize the perspectives of children in this inquiry, I also wish to speak with a school administrator, participating classroom teachers, language teachers (FSL / ESL / English)
and parents to complement this research. Adult interviews of approximately 30-40 minutes (recorded on digital audiotape) will occur at a convenient time and place for the participants.

**With respect to administrator and teacher interviews, I am particularly interested in understanding the language policies at work and literacy practices employed in the classroom.**

Your involvement is free and voluntary and nothing will done without your consent. This study will have no impact or repercussions on student participants’ grades. As with all participants, you are free to participate or not in this study without negative consequences. In addition, once you or another participant provides consent, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences, in which case, any data collected from your participation up to that time may be destroyed.

Because this research prioritizes the views and voices of children, I seek to credit them with authorship for the artifacts that they contribute such as their self-portraits, family language maps and identity texts. In order to ensure privacy, however, participants will have the choice of changing their names or only using first names in published documents and presentations of this research. The names of parent interviewees and participating school facilities will be kept confidential. The recordings will be transcribed and read exclusively by myself as researcher, my dissertation committee, and the persons transcribing the audio recordings. All transcriptions are identified by code rather than by a person’s name. Audio recordings are destroyed once the project is finished. All data collected is stored electronically in password-protected files, and hard copies will be stored in locked filing cabinets for a period of 5 years. Raw data is available only to the project researcher, dissertation committee members, and transcribers.

Despite these precautionary measures, there is a risk that a participant may recognize themselves in the oral or written communications given by the researcher. Participants may also benefit from having an opportunity to be involved in university-level research.

Please feel welcome to contact me by phone at (647) 893-0878 or by e-mail at gail.prasad@utoronto.ca, or my supervisor, Prof. Normand Labrie (416-978-8440, or nlabrie@oise.utoronto.ca), any time for more information on the study.
As well, any information or complaint about the ethical conduct of the study may be addressed to the Research Ethics Officer at the University of Toronto whose coordinates are listed below.

Office of Research Ethics, University of Toronto  
McMurrich Building, 3rd floor  
12 Queen's Park Crescent West  
Toronto, ON M5S 1S8  
E-mail: ethics.review@utoronto.ca  
Phone: 416-946-3273

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Gail Prasad OCT, MA  
PhD Candidate  
Second Language Education  
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education  
phone: (647) 893-0878  
Email: gail.prasad@utoronto.ca
Education Professional Form

I agree to work with the doctoral candidate researcher during the study entitled Constructing CLD Pluri-literate Identities, acknowledging that privacy is assured specifically by changing all adults’ and school facilities’ names and by using student participants’ first names only or by changing participants’ names in all study reports and oral and written communications associated with the project according to participants’ preference:

Yes: ___  No: ___

I agree to allow the doctoral candidate to take photographs of in-class activities and to audio / video record activities for research purposes.

Yes: ___  No: ___

I agree that photographs and video clips may be used in future academic presentations and publications of this research.

Yes: ___  No: ___

I wish to preview photographs and video clips that include myself prior to use in presentations or publications.

Yes: ___  No: ___

I agree to be interviewed:

Yes: ___  No: ___

If yes, phone number: ____________________________

e-mail: ____________________________

I wish to receive a copy of the Study Report: Yes: ___  No: ___

Name: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

Signature: ____________________________

Address (if you wish to receive a copy of the Study Report)
Subject: Information and Consent Letter for Parents / Guardians

Dear Parent / Guardian:

My name is Gail Prasad and I am a PhD Candidate at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto. I am currently conducting a comparative study in Toronto’s English and French schools called Constructing Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Pluriliterate Identities. This project is supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). This study focuses on elementary students’ (ages 9-12) experiences with different languages and cultures, along with their literacy practices at school and home. It is guided by the main question: how do culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students construct their identities in Ontario’s English, French-immersion and French-language schools?

The External Research Review Committee of the TDSB has granted approval for this study. The school Principal has also given permission for this study to be carried out in your son/daughter’s school.

Over the course of the next 6-8 weeks, I will be working with your child’s teacher to carry out classroom activities linked to the Ontario curriculum in which students will have the chance to use their different language and cultural backgrounds in their reading, writing and artwork. Activities will include creating cultural and linguistic self-portraits, designing a family language map, photographing languages and text in the school and authoring “identity texts”.

I would like to record my visits to the class and the activities that I do with students, along with their creative works. I am writing to request your permission to include your child in photos and audio/video recording. These photos and recordings will be used for research purposes and may be included in conference presentations or academic publications to share the achievements of this study with other teachers or researchers. You will have the option of previewing any images and video clips before their use for presentations or publications.

As part of my research, I wish to interview students in groups of 2 or 3 following visual arts and literacy-based activities. Student interviews will take about 20-30 minutes (recorded on digital audiotape). Sample questions include: What did you find interesting about creating your self
portrait? What did you like most about creating your “identity text”? How do you feel about using other languages in your work at school? The interviews will take place during class time in the school.

I would also like students to photograph their reading and writing practices at home over a period of 3 nights. I will lend students a digital camera for this purpose. I would like to interview students after they complete the home photography activity. These interviews will take approximately 10 minutes and will be digitally audio-recorded. During the interview, students’ photos only will also be video-recorded.

I would also like to speak with you about your child’s reading and writing, as well as the languages used at home. If you agree to be interviewed (approximately 30 minutes and recorded on digital audiotape), I will arrange with you a time and place that is convenient to meet.

Your involvement and your child’s involvement is free and voluntary and nothing will be done without your consent. This research will have no impact on students’ grades. In addition, once you provide consent, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. If you choose to withdraw, any data collected from your participation may be destroyed.

Because this research involves students’ creative works, I seek to credit them with authorship. (e.g. self-portraits, family language maps and identity texts) In order to ensure privacy, however, participants will have the choice of changing their names or only using first names in published documents and presentations of this research. The names of parent interviewees and participating school facilities will be kept confidential. All data collected will be stored securely and will only be available to me, my PhD committee members, and individuals transcribing audiorecordings.

Please indicate on the attached form whether you permit your son/daughter to take part in this research. Please check YES or NO for each of the items. Please feel welcome to contact me by phone at (647) 893-0878, or by e-mail at gail.prasad@utoronto.ca; or my supervisor, Prof. Normand Labrie (416-978-8440, or nlabrie@oise.utoronto.ca), any time for more information on the study.
As well, any information or complaint about the ethical conduct of the study may be addressed to the Research Ethics Officer at the University of Toronto, McMurrich Building, 3rd floor, 12 Queen's Park Crescent West, Toronto, ON M5S 1S8; E-mail: ethics.review@utoronto.ca; Phone: 416-946-3273.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Gail Prasad OCT, MA

Doctoral Candidate, University of Toronto
Parent / Guardian Form

I __________________________ (parent or guardian name) agree to allow my child __________________________ (child’s name) to participate in the research study, Constructing Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Pluri-literate Identities, being conducted by Gail Prasad, a doctoral student at the University of Toronto.

I specifically give permission for my child to participate in group interviews following art and literacy activities. (20-30 minutes, digitally audio-recorded):

Yes: ____    No: _____

I specifically give permission for my child to borrow a digital camera to take photographs of his reading and writing at home for a period of three days, followed by an interview. (approx. 10 minutes, digitally audio recorded and photos only will be video recorded):

Yes: _____    No: _____

I specifically give permission for my child and his /her work to be included in photographs, as well as audio and / or video recordings of classroom activities for research purposes.

Yes: _____    No: _____

I specifically give permission for my child and his /her work to be included in photographs, as well as audio and / or video recordings of classroom activities for academic presentations and publication.

Yes: _____    No: _____

I would like to preview images from the audio/videotaping and digital photographs of my child before they are included in conference presentations and/or academic publications:

Yes: _____    No: _____
In order that my child receive authorship acknowledgement for his/her creative works used in this research, I wish my child’s first name only to be used in all reports and all oral and written communications associated with this project:

Yes: ____

No:_____ I wish my child’s name to be changed all reports and all oral and written communications associated with this project:

I agree to be interviewed: Yes: ____ No:____

I wish to receive a copy if the Study Report: Yes: ____ No:____

Name: ___________________________________________ Date: __________________

Signature: _________________________________

Address (if you wish to receive a copy of the Study Report) ________________________________
Student Oral Assent Script

I want to talk to you about a research study I am doing. A research study is a way to learn information about something. I would like to learn more about what children think about the different cultures and languages that are part of their lives and how they help them to learn and work at school. I am asking you to join the study because I think what you have to say can help us make schools into places where all children feel valued.

If you agree to join this study, you will be asked to participate in a number of activities that will help you tell about the languages and cultures that are part of your life. I will ask you to complete a survey about the languages and cultures that are part of your life and the ways you use your skills reading and writing at the beginning and again at the end of this research project. I will also ask you to participate in short interviews with one or two of your classmates. When I am in your classroom, I will be observing as you work on a variety of projects and I will take notes so that I remember what you do in class.

The things you tell me during interviews and when you complete surveys will be kept private. You will get to keep the work you do during this research project. During this research project, I may ask to photograph or record your work so that I can share examples with others. If you don’t want me to use your name when I share your work, I will use a made up name instead.

You do not have to join this study. It is up to you. You can say okay now, and you can change your mind later. All you have to do is tell us. No one will be mad at you if you change your mind.

Before you say yes to joining this study, I will answer whatever questions you have.
Amendment to CONSENT LETTER

Subject: Information and consent regarding project website for Education Professionals including Administrators, Classroom Teachers & Language Teachers (ESL/ FSL / English)

Dear Madam / Sir:

As you know, the students in your class have been engaged in a variety of creative activities that showcase their plurilingual abilities. They have put a tremendous effort into their work. I am writing to ask your permission to include students’ work on a project website which will be available at: www. –website address--. Parents and students are being asked for their specific permission to display student work on the website and their work will only be included if all parties agree. Participants will still have the option of using their first names as identifiers or using pseudonyms. The website, as with all academic publications and presentations, will indicate clearly that participants’ first names or pseudonyms are used according to their preference.

The purpose of this website will be both provide as space in which students can share their work with family members and a broader audience, as well as to share this research with other teachers, education professionals, researchers and the broader public who may be interested in plurilingual approaches to school instruction. I hope this website will make this research more accessible and foster dialogue about issues regarding cultural and linguistic diversity in schools.

Please complete the following form. Please feel welcome to contact me by phone at (647) 893-0878, or by e-mail at gail.prasad@utoronto.ca; or my supervisor, Prof. Normand Labrie (416) 978-8440, or nlabrie@oise.utoronto.ca, any time for more information on the study.

As well, any information or complaint about the ethical conduct of the study may be addressed to the Research Ethics Officer at the University of Toronto, McMurrich Building, 3rd floor, 12 Queen's Park Crescent West, Toronto, ON M5S 1S8; E-mail: ethics.review@utoronto.ca; Phone: 416-946-3273.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.
Sincerely,

Gail Prasad OCT, MA
PhD Candidate
Second Language Education, OISE
phone: (647) 893-0878
Email:gail.prasad@utoronto.ca

Education Professional Form

I agree for my students’ work from the research project “Constructing Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Pluri-literate Identities” to be included on the project website: www. — website address—

Yes: _____ No:_____

Name: _______________________________________________________

Date: ________________________________

Signature: _____________________________________________________
Subject: Information and consent regarding project website for parents / guardians

Dear Parent / Guardian:

As you have previously given your consent for your child to participate in the research project “Constructing Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Pluri-literate Identities”, you child has engaged in a number of creative works to showcase his/her plurilingual abilities. S/he have put a tremendous effort into their work. I am writing to ask your permission to include child’s work on a project website which will be available at: www. –website address--. Participants will still have the option of using their first names as identifiers or using pseudonyms. The website, as with all academic publications and presentations, will indicate clearly that participants’ first names or pseudonyms are used according to their preference. Viewers will not know who has chosen to use their first name or a pseudonym.

The purpose of this website will be both provide as space in which students can share their work with family members and a broader audience, as well as to share this research with other teachers, education professionals, researchers and the broader public who may be interested in plurilingualism and education. I hope this website will make this research more accessible and foster dialogue about issues regarding cultural and linguistic diversity in schools.

Please complete the following form by indicating yes or no for each item. Please feel welcome to contact me by phone at (647) 893-0878, or by e-mail at gail.prasad@utoronto.ca; or my supervisor, Prof. Normand Labrie (416) 978-8440, or nlabrie@oise.utoronto.ca, any time for more information on the study.

As well, any information or complaint about the ethical conduct of the study may be addressed to the Research Ethics Officer at the University of Toronto, McMurrich Building, 3rd floor, 12 Queen's Park Crescent West, Toronto, ON M5S 1S8; E-mail: ethics.review@utoronto.ca; Phone: 416-946-3273.
Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Gail Prasad OCT, MA
PhD Candidate
Second Language Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
phone: (647) 893-0878
Email: gail.prasad@utoronto.ca
Parent / Guardian Form

I specifically give my permission for the creative works my child created during the research project “Constructing Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Pluri-literate Identities” to be showcased on the researcher’s website – [ website address ]

Yes: _____    No: _____

In order that my child receive authorship acknowledgement for his/her creative works used in this research, I wish my child’s first name only to be used in all reports and all oral and written communications associated with this project and in the project website:

Yes: _____

No: _____ I wish my child’s name to be changed all reports and all oral and written communications associated with this project.

Name: ___________________________________________ Date: __________________

Signature: __________________________________________
Student assent script re: website

As you know, we have been working on a number of creative projects for my research on children’s plurilingualism. You have worked really hard on the activities and I would like to share them on my website about this project. The website will be a place that your parents, other family members and friends can view your work and it will also let other teachers, researchers and the public know about the work we have been doing. You and your parents will have a choice whether we use your first name with your work or whether we use a pseudonym. If you do not want your work to be included on the website, you can tell me and I will not include it.

I will answer any questions you have about the website or any further questions about this research.
Appendix 4: Ethical Review Approval Letters

PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 26433

May 17, 2011

Dr. Normand Labrie
Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
OISE/University of Toronto
252 Bloor St. West
Toronto, ON M5S 1V6

Mrs. Gail Prasad
Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
OISE/University of Toronto
252 Bloor St. West
Toronto, ON M5S 1V6

Dear Dr. Labrie and Mrs. Prasad:

Re: Your research protocol entitled, "Constructing Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) Pluri-literate Identities"

ETHICS APPROVAL

Original Approval Date: May 17, 2011
Expiry Date: May 16, 2012
Continuing Review Level: 1

We are writing to advise you that the Social Sciences, Humanities and Education Research Ethics Board has granted approval to the above-named research study under the REB’s delegated review process. Your study has been approved for a period of one year and ongoing projects must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

All your most recently submitted documents have been approved for use in this study.

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.

Please ensure that you submit an Annual Renewal Form or a Study Completion Report 15 to 30 days prior to the expiry date of your study. Note that annual renewals for studies cannot be accepted more than 30 days prior to the date of expiry, as per federal and international policies.

If your research has funding attached, please contact the relevant Research Funding Officer in Research Services to ensure that your funds are released.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your project.

Yours sincerely,

Dean Sharpe, Ph.D.
Research Ethics Board Manager–Social Sciences and Humanities

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ETHICS
McMurrich Building, 12 Queen’s Park Crescent West, 2nd Floor, Toronto, ON M5S 1S8 Canada
Tel: +1 416 946-3273 • Fax: +1 416 946-5763 • ethics.review@utoronto.ca • http://www.research.utoronto.ca/for-researchers-administrators/ethics/
PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 26433

February 24, 2012

Dr. Normand Labrie
DEPT OF CURRICULUM, TEACHING & LEARNING
OISE/UT

Gail Prasad
DEPT OF CURRICULUM, TEACHING & LEARNING
OISE/UT

Dear Dr. Labrie and Gail Prasad,

Re: Your research protocol entitled, "Constructing culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) pluri-literate identities"

We are writing to advise you that a member of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board (REB) has granted approval to an amendment (Received February 17, 2012) to the above-referenced research protocol under the REB's delegated review process.

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 research.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Schneider, Ph.D.,
C.Psych
REB Chair

Dean Sharpe
REB Manager
PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 26433

May 3, 2012

Dr. Normand Labrie
DEPT OF CURRICULUM, TEACHING & LEARNING
OISE/UT

Gail Prasad
DEPT OF CURRICULUM, TEACHING & LEARNING
OISE/UT

Dear Dr. Labrie and Gail Prasad,

Re: Your research protocol entitled, “Constructing culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) pluri-literate identities”

ETHICS APPROVAL

Original Approval Date: May 17, 2011
Expiry Date: May 16, 2013
Continuing Review Level: 1
Renewal: 1 of 4

We are writing to advise you that you have been granted annual renewal of ethics approval to the above-referenced research protocol through the Research Ethics Board (REB) delegated process. Please note that all protocols involving ongoing data collection or interaction with human participants are subject to re-evaluation after 5 years. Ongoing research under this protocol must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

Please ensure that you submit an Annual Renewal Form or a Study Completion Report 15 to 30 days prior to the expiry date of your protocol. Note that annual renewals for protocols cannot be accepted more than 30 days prior to the date of expiry as per our guidelines.

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. If your research is funded by a third party, please contact the assigned Research Funding Officer in Research Services to ensure that your funds are released.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Schneider, Ph.D., C.Psych
REB Chair

Dean Sharpe, Ph.D.
REB Manager
PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 26433

May 31, 2013

Dr. Normand Labrie
DEPT OF CURRICULUM, TEACHING &
LEARNING
OISE/UT

Gail Prasad
DEPT OF CURRICULUM, TEACHING &
LEARNING
OISE/UT

Dear Dr. Labrie and Gail Prasad,

Re: Your research protocol entitled, "Constructing culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) pluri-literate identities"

ETHICS APPROVAL

Original Approval Date: May 17, 2011
Expiry Date: May 16, 2014
Continuing Review Level: 1
Renewal: 2 of 4

We are writing to advise you that you have been granted annual renewal of ethics approval to the above-referenced research protocol through the Research Ethics Board (REB) delegated process. Please note that all protocols involving ongoing data collection or interaction with human participants are subject to re-evaluation after 5 years. Ongoing research under this protocol must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

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Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Wakefield, Ph.D.
REB Chair

Dean Sharpe
REB Manager
PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 26433

August 21, 2013

Dr. Normand Labrie
DEPT OF CURRICULUM, TEACHING & LEARNING
OISE/UT

Gail Prasad
DEPT OF CURRICULUM, TEACHING & LEARNING
OISE/UT

Dear Dr. Labrie and Gail Prasad,

Re: Your research protocol entitled, "Constructing culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) pluriliterate identities"

We are writing to advise you that a member of the Social Sciences, Humanities, and Education Research Ethics B has granted approval to an amendment (Received August 19, 2013) to the above-referenced research protocol under the REB's delegated review process.

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 research.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Wakefield, Ph.D.
REB Chair

Dean Sharpe
REB Manager
PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 28890

May 5, 2014

Dr. Normand Labrie
DEPT OF CURRICULUM, TEACHING &
LEARNING
OISE/UT

Mrs. Gail Prasad
DEPT OF CURRICULUM, TEACHING &
LEARNING
OISE/UT

Dear Dr. Labrie and Mrs. Gail Prasad,

Re: Your research protocol entitled, "Fostering equity and inclusion through arts-infused learning"

ETHICS APPROVAL

Original Approval Date: May 9, 2013
Expiry Date: May 8, 2015
Continuing Review Level: 1
Renewal: 1 of 4

We are writing to advise you that you have been granted annual renewal of ethics approval to the above-referenced research protocol through the Research Ethics Board (REB) delegated process. Please note that all protocols involving ongoing data collection or interaction with human participants are subject to re-evaluation after 5 years. Ongoing research under this protocol must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

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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. If your research is funded by a third party, please contact the assigned Research Funding Officer in Research Services to ensure that your funds are released.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Wakefield, Ph.D.
REB Chair

Dean Sharpe
REB Manager
PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 26433

May 15, 2015

Dr. Normand Labrie
DEPT OF CURRICULUM, TEACHING & LEARNING
OISE/UT

Gail Prasad
DEPT OF CURRICULUM, TEACHING & LEARNING
OISE/UT

Dear Dr. Labrie and Gail Prasad,

Re: Your research protocol entitled, "Constructing culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) pluri-literate identities"

ETHICS APPROVAL

| Original Approval Date: May 17, 2011 |
| Expiry Date: May 16, 2016 |
| Continuing Review Level: 1 |
| Renewal: Data Analysis Only |

We are writing to advise you that you have been granted annual renewal of ethics approval to the above-referenced research protocol through the Research Ethics Board (REB) delegated process. Please note that all protocols involving ongoing data collection or interaction with human participants are subject to re-evaluation after 5 years. Ongoing research under this protocol must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

Please ensure that you submit an Annual Renewal Form or a Study Completion Report 15 to 30 days prior to the expiry date of your protocol. Note that annual renewals for protocols cannot be accepted more than 30 days prior to the date of expiry as per our guidelines.

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Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Wakefield, Ph.D.
REB Chair

Dean Sharpe
REB Manager

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Appendix 5: Sample Creative Visual Tools

1. Reflexive Drawing Instruction: Use the four boxes to draw a monolingual individual (1), a bilingual individual (2), a plurilingual individual (3) and yourself (4).

![Figure A5.1: Reflexive Drawing Template](image)

2. Language Portrait Digital Creation in Photoshop Elements

Application in Photoshop:
under “Sketch” filter:
choose “Photocopy” *

![Figure A5.2: Language Portrait Silhouette](image)

*Adjust for darkness and detail. Students then cut out their silhouettes.
3. Home and School Language and Literacies Photo Comparison Venn Diagram

Figure A5.2: Venn Diagram for comparing categories of language and literacy photos taken at school and at home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of AIR</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intentionality</strong></td>
<td>AIR has both an intellectual purpose and a moral purpose. AIR representations are intended “as opportunities for transformation, revelation, or some other intellectual and moral shift” (p. 66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Researcher practice</strong></td>
<td>The researcher is present in the AIR “text” or product. His or Her presence is felt, seen and experienced through his or her explicit reflexivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aesthetic quality</strong></td>
<td>While the central aim of AIR is knowledge advancement rather than the production of fine art, “the quality of the artistic elements of an AIR project is defined by how well the artistic process and form serve the research goals” (p. 66). Attention to aesthetics is essential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodological commitment</strong></td>
<td>AIR attends to the defining elements of AIR: “principled process, procedural harmony and attention to aesthetic quality” (p.66). Attention to both the process and the product are necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Holistic quality</strong></td>
<td>Unlike conventional research that tends to be more linear and distanced, AIR products “are imbued with an <em>internal consistency</em> and <em>coherence</em> that represents a strong and seamless relationship between purpose and methods (process and form)” (p.66-67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communicability</strong></td>
<td>AIR must maximize its accessibility to diverse audiences. Its representation (products) is intended to have an evocative quality and a high level of resonance with its audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge advancement</strong></td>
<td>The knowledge advanced through AIR is <em>generative</em> rather than propositional. Knowledge claims must therefore be made with “sufficient ambiguity and humility to allow for multiple interpretations and reader response” (p. 67).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contributions</strong></td>
<td>Rigorous AIR has both “<em>theoretical potential</em> and <em>transformative potential</em>”(p. 67).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A6: Cole & Knowles (2008) Eight qualities of “goodness” in Arts Informed Research (AIR)