“In Unknown Languages”: Investigating the Phenomenon of Multilingual Acting

by

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Abstract

Despite the growing presence of multilingual theatre in large multicultural cities like Toronto, research on stage multilingualism remains at the nascent stage, particularly in English Canada. Using the Practice as Research methodology, as proposed by Robin Nelson (2013) and the principle of interdisciplinarity (Repko 2012) this dissertation investigates stage multilingualism that does not use translation. Specifically, it focuses on multilingual actors, multilingual dramaturgy, and multilingual audiences. The artistic practice at the centre of the study involved 25 professional and amateur performers, both mono- and multilingual, who were engaged in a six-week creation period of devising scenes in their dominant, non-dominant, and unfamiliar languages. The devised scenes were later compiled into a multilingual show entitled “In Sundry Languages” and performed twice to a multilingual audience.
This study first offers an analysis of the actors’ phenomenology of performing in various languages, as captured in the actors’ journals, the researcher journals, and the researcher’s post-performance interviews with the actors. Second, it reveals the specifics of the dramaturgical devices of “In Sundry Languages” through the show’s script and video recording. Finally, through a qualitative analysis of 182 post-performance audience surveys, the study shows a vast diversity of audience responses to the presence of multiple languages on stage.

Using Sara Ahmed’s queer phenomenology (2006) as its theoretical framework, the study conceptualizes untranslated stage multilingualism as a queer object which has the potential to cause re-orientation (or queering) of the subject, especially a monolingual subject. It also investigates how and why certain multilingual subjects (both actors and audiences) may challenge dominant monolingual frameworks, relying on a clear distinction between one single mother tongue and additional languages. Finally, the study proposes multilingual dramaturgy as “diversity work” (Ahmed 2014), confronting the monolingual paradigms of Toronto’s mainstream theatre.
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CHAPTER 1

“In Unknown Languages”: Situating my Research

Le besoin d’être mal armé.  

Samuel Beckett

The “Characters”

In a recent encounter with a Lebanese theatre actor living and working in Paris, I learned the story of his experience rehearsing his first French play with a French director and how that experience led to major confusion. To appreciate the story, the reader needs to know that the Lebanese actor could easily pass for a native speaker of Parisian French, as he had a truly exceptional command of this language because it used to be taught in Lebanese schools as a mandatory second language. His story went as follows: the actor was rehearsing a French play and was excited about how well the rehearsals were going. The French director also seemed very pleased with the Lebanese actor’s passionate performance. What was bothering the actor, though, was that the director would occasionally make one particular gesture: a fast repeated forward jerk of his closed right fist. It was a gesture that a French person would have only interpreted as encouragement for a better performance or for keeping the performing energy on. Nothing could be further from the interpretation that crossed the Lebanese artist’s mind. After

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1 From Thomas Kyd’s Spanish Tragedy. Hieronimo: “Each of us must act his part // In unknown languages, // That it may breed the more variety” (2007, p. 78).

2 Famous Beckettian word-play: “the need to be ill-equipped” also sounds like “the need to be Mallarmé”, referring to the major French symbolist poet. Here Beckett speaks of his need to write in languages other than English, his first language. I would argue that this statement also speaks to the potentiality of being free from the constraints of one’s first language, a question I address more explicitly in Chapter Three.
seeing the gesture several times, out of frustration, the actor stopped performing and stared blankly at the director. This instigated another, even more forceful hand movement. After a while, the parties had to put the rehearsal on hold to clarify what had caused the confusion. It turned out that in the Lebanese context, a very similar gesture of keeping one’s forearm in a horizontal position and making repeated forceful fist movements forward would mean nothing but an invitation for immediate sexual intercourse. Seeing such a gesture in the middle of a rehearsal was certain to give the Lebanese artist pause and, if nothing else, a lot of food for thought.³

This light anecdote is not meant to be another story of a cultural shock, cultural clash or cultural exchange, as one might expect. The reason I provide it here is because it succinctly, and yet, clearly, introduces all the main characters of my thesis research. First, there is a multilingual and multicultural actor performing in his second language, which he knows well enough to pass for a native speaker. Second, there is a director or “the ultimate spectator” who, just like a regular spectator would, observes the actor’s performance and co-constructs meanings with the actor. Third, the interaction is taking place in a theatrical context where two or more people are gathered to work on a production. Fourth, there is language, culture, body language, and their complex interaction—accompanied, as mentioned, by the co-construction of meaning, executed by the doer and the observer.

It is within this complex intersection of languages, cultures, body, and acting that I have situated my study. Its focus is a multilingual actor—a performer who needs to use various languages on stage, including tongues that may not necessarily be their ⁴ first and/or strongest. More specifically, I am interested in investigating the role of embodiment in the process of performing in different languages.

³ Unfortunately, I never learned the director’s side of the story, even though it is probably safe to assume that the situation had puzzled him as much.

⁴ Throughout my dissertation, I use the pronoun “they” rather than he or she when gender is unspecified.
The need and inspiration for this study comes from various sources: personal, political, scholarly, and aesthetic, all of which I will briefly discuss below. I believe all such sources need to be identified and exposed, not as a mere exercise in self-reflection, but as a means of contextualizing this research project and clarifying its ontology.

Research Context(s)

The personal.
First, allow me a paragraph to introduce myself and my personal investment in this topic. The concepts and practices of multilingualism and multiculturalism were an essential part of my upbringing, as I was growing up in a number of large cities, including, for instance, my birthplace—Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan—a 2,000 year old, multicultural city inhabited by various ethnicities: Uzbeks, Tajiks, Tatars, Turks, Koreans, Russians, Ukrainians, Jews, Greeks, and Armenians to name a few. Being an ethnic Armenian, I grew up constantly immersed in that incredibly diverse environment as well as in the difficult process of learning of the history of my own family, marred by multiple atrocities of the genocide of 1915, the year when my great grandparents had to flee their home country, the Persian Empire, in search of sanctuary. My Iranian Armenian great grandparents, whom I had the luck to know very well, spoke at least four languages: Armenian, Farsi, Turkish, and even Assyrian. When they later found themselves in what at that point was called the Russian Empire, they also had to learn its imperial language—Russian, and so did their children and the children of their children, despite the fact that they were technically Iranian citizens. During the Soviet Union era, when Joseph


6 While citizenship can mean multiple things, here I only imply that my great grandparents and their children were not in possession of a Russian or Soviet passport.
Stalin’s witch-hunt of 1937 came to pass, because of their “Iranian-ness,” my family were exiled to the steppes of Kazakhstan as official “enemies of the nation.”

Whether in exile or anywhere else, my family had an understanding that we were first and foremost Armenian, and occasional, though rare, visits to Armenia helped support and reinforce that self-identification and kept our heritage language alive. And yet, our ‘Armenian-ness’ was often overshadowed by a pressing desire to pass for the “Other”—someone whose first language and culture were “more official”, i.e., had a higher rank in the state-ordered hierarchy of languages and cultures (for more on language ranks see Blommaert, 1996).

Growing up mostly in Uzbekistan, Ukraine, and Russia, I learned to share this unquenchable desire, which only exacerbated as I reached adulthood and moved to other countries: the UK, the USA, and finally, Canada. At some point, I started to self-identify as Canadian, which oddly happened even before I was sworn in as a Canadian citizen and the Queen’s subject. More importantly, I also had to learn to ‘be’ Canadian, or rather—since I was residing in Toronto, a Canadian Anglophone, just as well as I had learned to pass for a Russian. I also learned to disappoint those who would automatically assume that I was monocultural and/or monolingual. Consequently, I excelled at deflecting questions such as “Where are you from?” (From five different countries. But at the moment—from Canada.), “What’s your mother tongue?” (Armenian is one of them, but currently it is not my dominant language, nor the

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7 “The enemy of the people” (враги народа—vragi naroda) was an official term in the early USSR. Introduced by Lenin, it was used by Stalin to define certain ‘elements’ of the Soviet society who could allegedly bear any potential threat to the ideology or structure of the Soviet state, whether that threat was real, or, as in most cases, imagined. The year 1937 marks the apex of the “witch-hunt” with thousands of people being prosecuted, arrested, exiled and/or executed often without any proper legal process. A lot of the arrests, conducted by the infamous KGB, were based on unconfirmed reports done by regular citizens: co-workers, neighbours, friends, and even family members (see, for instance, Antonov-Ovseenko (1994)).

8 One of the peculiarities of the Canadian citizenship ceremony is the Oath to the Sovereign and Canada pronounced both in English and French: “I swear (affirm) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second Queen of Canada Her Heirs and Successors and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen” (Retrieved from http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/discover/section-01.asp, original punctuation observed).
language I live in) or “What language do you dream in?” (All of them. Sometimes simultaneously.).

In addition to all this wonderful and confusing complexity, my two main passions and, luckily, occupations—theatre and teaching—have always put very high demands on my language skills as well as my non-verbal behaviour, for the pressure to look, talk and walk like the linguistic “Other” was quite high. I have also observed how a lot of people coming to Canada from non-English or French speaking countries ‘failed’ to adopt the linguistic and non-linguistic repertoires of ‘the Other’, or at least to sufficiently approximate the ‘Other’s’ behaviour, both linguistically and non-linguistically, in order to fit in in their new environment—a ‘failure’ that would often put them in a disadvantaged position. I empathized with such people and I felt the need to help them. It was that need that eventually piqued my scholarly interest and it led me to doing research first in second language (L2) acquisition and later in theatre studies.

The scholarly.

Having taught English as a foreign/second language for more than twenty years to both children and adults in four different countries, including Canada, I have noticed that there are certain areas of L2 language/culture learning that always take precedence (for instance,

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9 As an example of pressure that is put on Canadian immigrants, one could think of the idea of francisation (i.e., making someone like a ‘francophone’), a government funded course offered to newcomers to Quebec. The course comprises not only language instruction, which is by definition an act of altering one’s thinking and perception, but also a significant cultural element that instructs immigrants on the history, traditions and customs of their new country/province. The cultural element is expected to help with the newcomers’ integration into the mainstream francophone society. The English version of francization in Ontario—LINC (Language Instruction to Newcomers) is only a milder version but it also implies teaching ‘the Canadian way’ while observing the complexity of multiculturalism.

10 The concept of the ‘Other’ has a long history in Western philosophy, specifically in the works Hegel, Husserl, Sartre, de Beauvoir, Said, among many others. Here I am using the ‘Other’ in the phenomenological sense, which emphasizes the intersubjective positionality of the ‘Other’, one’s perception of the “Other” that manifests itself through one’s body and one’s senses.
grammar and vocabulary) while others are commonly marginalized, if not completely ignored. Those areas include the expression of emotion, intonation, gesture, and facial expressions, as well as other means of communication that work in conjunction with the language and can significantly modify linguistic meaning. Yet, it is through the combination of all the communicative systems that human beings interact with each other, not through the linguistic sign only. There have been recent attempts to include the multiplicity of communicative systems into the theory of linguistics (Harris, 1998), as well as efforts to understand what role gesture plays in L2 learning (Gullberg, 1998; McCafferty & Stam, 2008). Despite this, L2 pedagogy typically shies away from addressing the full spectrum of non-linguistic means of communication and their interplay with the “pure” linguistic sign. The results of such exclusionary pedagogy are especially evident in adult education: adult L2 learners, even those who are learning English at very advanced stages, are not taught to employ the full range of communicative systems. Such limited command of communicative means may negatively affect how the learner’s proficiency in English is perceived (Ney, 1990). In Canada, a country with a growing immigrant population presently coming mostly from non-English or French speaking countries, the issue of not teaching the complexity of communication systems is particularly vital. In my previous research (Babayants, 2011), I questioned whether Stanislavsky-based acting might be an effective mediational tool\(^{11}\) for language learning, only to discover that the connection between learning a language and acting was much more complicated than I had originally thought. Furthermore, it was disheartening for me to learn that some acting techniques and exercises produced an immediate counter effect on my participants’ L2 speaking skills (Babayants, 2011, pp. 59-61). It became obvious to me that a further, more comprehensive enquiry into the relationship between second language acquisition

\(^{11}\) Mediation is a central concept in Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, which postulates that it is through mediation that humans can regulate themselves and each other. Mediational tools are “powerful means of mediation”, which “are comprised of symbols, diagrams, numbers, music, art, and the like” (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014, 8) as well as material instruments (sticks, shovels, pens, computers, etc.). In sociocultural theory, language, among other things, would be seen as a symbolic mediational tool. It is through mediational tools that acculturation happens.
and embodied practices, such as acting, would be necessary, which eventually led to the inception of this particular research project.

**The political.**

To introduce the political reasons behind this project, I would like to allow myself another brief diversion of a theatrical nature. In his classic one man show *Fronteras Americanas* (Verdecchia, 2013/1993), most recently remounted in 2012 at Toronto’s Young Centre for the Performing Arts, Guillermo Verdecchia, a celebrated Canadian artist, at one point stops his performance and asks for the houselights to come up. Then he, or rather his character, invites the audience to take an evaluative look around. After everybody has taken a gander, he states, with a cunning smirk on his face, that theatre audiences in Toronto, a city which is often touted for being the most multicultural city in the world, generally happen to be almost exclusively white. His character was neither surprised nor amused, and neither was his audience, at least not the night I saw the show: in fact, Verdecchia’s character’s comment produced only a few uncomfortable laughs, while it seemed as if most members of the public were largely bemused by it.¹² Leaving aside the audience (who, indeed, looked homogeneously white and upper middle class) and their reaction, I would like to extend Verdecchia’s character’s comment to the linguistic situation in Toronto theatres. Verdecchia’s character could have easily said: “we are in one of the most multilingual places in the world, yet, its theatre is almost 100 % monolingual and is primarily in English.” Indeed, despite Toronto’s almost overwhelming multilingualism, multilingual productions in the city are rare and the language constantly dominating on the Toronto stage is most certainly English.

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¹² The context of Verdecchia’s performance is of huge importance here. The 2012 version of *Fronteras Americanas* was offered as part of the *Soulpepper* 2011-2012 season. *Soulpepper* is a well-established Toronto-based repertory company that focuses mostly on the production of western theatre classics of the late 19th-20th century. Unsurprisingly, *Soulpepper* caters mostly to white middle-class audiences mainly consisting of baby-boomers, who continue to support the company’s work and healthy financial situation through yearly subscriptions. Experimental, contemporary or highly political work is extremely rare on the *Soulpepper* stage.
In fact, one may argue that little has changed since this 1995 article explaining the dominance of English in Toronto theatre:

One of the first alternate theatres to appear in Toronto during the height of Canadian nationalism in social and cultural life, the Tarragon Theatre was founded by Bill Glassco in 1971 with the goal of achieving "production excellence for contemporary Canadian plays, in order to build an appreciative audience" (Johnston 150). Although the Tarragon has consistently pursued its policy of presenting Canadian work, it could be argued that its understanding of the word "Canadian" has been rather narrow until quite recently. This is perhaps explained by the history of the theatre, founded during the years in which to be "alternate" meant to be "national", that is, Canadian, and in which a lack of awareness about cultural diversity in the arts (despite the fact that the policy of Multiculturalism was released also in 1971) resulted in "Canadian" theatre in Toronto being largely English Canadian. In the following decades, the "alternate" theatres – Tarragon, Passe Muraille, Factory Lab and Toronto Free, for instance – came to be part of the establishment of Canadian theatre, if not because of their economic structure certainly because of their institutionalization of English Canadian culture.

It is hardly surprising that more than twenty years after this publication, theatre artists and researchers continue to lament the state of Canadian multicultural and multilingual theatre (e.g., Ortuzar, 2012). Some exceptions certainly occur. For instance, the French Canadian theatre, specifically the Quebecois theatre and its most prominent director Robert Lepage have been producing a significant amount of bilingual (e.g. La face cache de la Lune; Project Andersen) as well as multilingual productions (e.g. Lipsync; Playing Cards, Spades) for years. Within the Toronto context, occasional productions by ‘bi-cultural’ companies, such as, for instance, Toronto’s Aluna Theatre or Fu-Gen: The Asian Canadian Theatre, may also occasionally utilize two languages in their work. The work of such companies, however, still remains very much on the fringes of Toronto’s professional theatre circuit. It is especially puzzling given that Toronto’s multilingualism itself seems to have been enjoying a front row seat in the local, provincial and national discourses for quite a long time.

Let me emphasize that when speaking about multilingual productions I do not include shows that use a ‘foreign’ or ‘second’ language simply for the purposes of occasional linguistic
alienation or parody. The appeal of this well-known technique is clear and has been discussed in theatre research:

Il n’en demeure pas moins qu’assister à une pièce de théâtre où se parle un langage étrangère constitue une expérience de défamiliarisation pour le spectateur, et peut-être d’autant plus lorsque ces idiomes son enchâssés dans une pièce en langue nationale. Isolés, ces fragments énigmatiques attirent l’attention et éveillent la curiosité, à la pensée qu’ils produisent nécessairement des frottements de sens, des croisements de cultures qu’il nous revient d’interroger.

It is goes without saying that attending a theatre play where a foreign language is used creates an experience of defamiliarization for the spectator, which is especially strong when foreign expressions are inserted in a play in the official national language. When they happen in isolation, such enigmatic episodes capture our attention and pique our curiosity due to certain semantic tensions and cultural intersections that we are offered to examine (Thibault, 2013, p. 42).13

In a way, this technique, despite its potential ‘enigmatic’ quality, has the unfortunate power of reinforcing the discourse of monolingualism and the assumption that everybody speaks and understands the same language, which is normally the official or/and most dominant language of the country or region. Obviously, it also assumes that nobody has any command of that “other language,” which guarantees the temporary linguistic defamiliarization14. Those

13 Unless noted otherwise, all translations from French are my own.

14 It is important to mention that the ‘defamiliarization technique’ could also be reversed, as it was done in Thomas Ostermeier’s production of An Enemy of the People (En folkehjende), as presented by Berlin’s Schaubühne at Montreal’s Festival Transamérique in 2013. When in the middle of the show, the characters open up the floor for the audience to ask questions to Doctor Stockmann, the protagonist, who discovered that the town’s healing baths were not any longer safe, the discussion occurs entirely in French, i.e., the language shared by the audience, while the rest of the play is performed in German—an assumed ‘foreign’ language for Montrealers. It is done in order to generate a warm feeling towards the politicians (town’s mayor and his people) that are managing this public forum. The politicians can speak the language of the audience (in Montreal’s case—French). In turn, Doctor Stockmann remains downstage and silently observes the French Q&A, which signifies that the audience does not share his language: neither the national one (German), nor the professional one (the language of science). The genius of this technique lies in the discrepancy between what is desired and what is offered: the audience want to be distanced from the politicians; in fact, the audience wholeheartedly desire to support the doctor, i.e., the only man who has the heart to speak the truth. This makes the reversed defamiliarization both troubling and interesting. Peculiarly enough, in Toronto’s replica of this production, directed by Richard Rose and presented at the Tarragon theatre in 2014, that interesting linguistic conflict was completely absent due to the mere fact that the play was performed in the majority language—English.
who, by some surprising coincidence, have the ability to understand that “foreign” language may well experience what Sara Ahmed calls “queer feelings” (Ahmed, 2004), except they will be ‘linguistic queer feelings’. Ahmed speaks of “the everydayness of compulsory heterosexuality” but it seems that this concept could be easily extrapolated to “the everydayness of compulsory monolingualism” or even worse—“compulsory monoculturalism”—a perspective that can vary from being simply annoying to damaging. Here is what Ahmed writes about the ability of such moments to injure:

No matter how 'out' you may be, how (un)comfortably queer you may feel, those moments of interpellation get repeated over time, and can be experienced as a bodily injury; moments which position queer subjects as failed in their failure to live up to the 'hey you too' of heterosexual selfnarration (2004, p. 147).

Living up to somebody else’s “hey you too” is never easy, whether it is living up to somebody’s sexuality, gender perceptions, linguistic and/or cultural identity. It is especially difficult when somebody else’s “hey you too” is not just part of a general assumption, but also part of a much larger institutionalized discourse. One might express a bit of doubt here: is monolingualism/monoculturalism politically institutionalized in officially multicultural Canada? Even though some striking examples, such as the recent tightening of the Quebec language laws, or the obvious discrepancy between Pearson-induced bilingualism and Trudeau-induced multiculturalism immediately come to mind, I will refrain from a longer discussion on the subject, leaving it to political scientists and sociologists. Instead, I would like to make a fairly clumsy transition here to return to Verdecchia’s play, written long after the policies of bilingualism and multiculturalism gained legal power in Canada. I would like to offer a proposition that if monolingualism/monoculturalism were not institutionalized, there would not have been a need for Fronteras Americanas or Verdecchia’s autobiographical narrator-character that was not able to fully identify himself as Canadian. In her analysis of Fronteras Americans, Gomez, whose article I quoted above, takes a much stronger stand on the issue:

Elsewhere I have argued that all aspects of Canadian life, but most obviously the arts, have been affected by what I have called "the ideology of Multiculturalism", an apparently liberal discourse of "integration" of and respect for all cultures underneath
which lies a reality of acculturation into a mainstream. My main argument in this
discussion has been that this ideology was established and is continuously recreated by
both the official and the popular use of the terms "cultures" and "ethnic groups" to
describe the different inhabitants of Canada. In my work I have attempted to analyze
how Canadian cultural policy as well as the work of minority artists in Toronto is
affected by the subtle workings of this ideology of acculturation. Whether they
reproduce it or attempt to consciously subvert it, they are bound to be framed by it,
and often they comply with it and challenge it at the very same time (1995, p. 26).

This position certainly strikes a chord with me and explains the need for theatre
practices that will aim to disrupt the situation of assumed monolingualism/monoculturalism
that still dominates Toronto theatre. Even though the impact of such disruption might be
minimal, it is important to state it clearly from the very start that this research is partially fed by
a political (and very likely, utopian) notion of embracing multilingualism and embracing
multilingual actors and spectators with all the complexities that they can potentially bring to the
table.

The aesthetic.

This finally brings me to the aesthetic aspirations grounding my project. How can
multilingualism be staged, performed, experienced, and understood (or misunderstood)? How
can a multilingual actor (re)present multilingualism in an aesthetic space such as theatre?
Having experienced both prolonged alienation while watching shows in languages I could not
understand, and having seen single-sided portrayals of multilingual speakers on stage,
frequently expressed through quirky ‘foreign’ accents, which are in turn often based on acting
clichés rather than any phonological reality, as a theatre director and researcher, I personally
also find it difficult to give multilingualism centre stage without resorting to a number of tools
already well-known to theatre artists. Such tools deserve a brief introduction, which I offer
next.

In my recent research trip to three distinct European theatre centres, Moscow, Berlin,
and Paris, as well as to one of the largest international theatre festivals in the world – Avignon
Festival, I focused on productions that embraced bi- or multilingualism on one level or another. While the majority of theatre I saw was indeed monolingual and employed the ‘defamiliarisation’ technique mentioned above, even in such kind of theatre I was able to notice a few important tendencies that seemed related to my research subject.

First, economic reasons as well as demographic situations caused by the “extreme diversity” of large multicultural centres are pushing theatres, especially internationally recognized companies, to offer surtitled/subtitled performances on a much grander scale than ever before. Slowly but steadily, well-established theatres are translating their repertory productions from local language(s) into the language(s) of their target group of spectators. A good example of that is Berlin’s Schaubühne, whose repertoire now includes 4-5 surtitled performances a month, granted that they all happen to be in colonial European languages, mostly, in English, French and Russian. What is also worth noting is that the surtilted productions offered are not necessarily representative of a corresponding language-culture, for instance, Hamlet is presented in Russian and French. Similarly, one of Russia’s most celebrated troupes, Fomenko Studio, a state-owned theatre company with a very large and diverse repertoire, has also recently decided to offer performances with surtitles in various languages, specifically English, French, and German. Fomenko Studio is the first company in Russia to have made such a bold move, considering that unlike Berlin, Moscow is still much less integrated in the western (or specifically, Western European) cultural context. A different

[15] Here and below I use the term ‘defamiliarization’ in the sense explained on p. 9. Thus, it should not be associated with Brecht’s Verfremdungseffekt, which is also often translated as defamiliarization.

[16] This information is available on the English website of the theatre: http://www.schaubuehne.de/en/seiten/uebertitel.html


[18] In 2013, The Moscow Times reported: “Subtitles for a handful of Fomenko’s most popular productions are already available in French and English, including “Family Happiness,” “Three Sisters,” and “War and Peace.” “Wolves and Sheep” is available in French, “Three Sisters” in German. The goal at present is to make all of Fomenko’s productions available, after which the remainder of the theater’s offerings will be fitted with translated subtitltes, both printed and spoken” (Freedman, 2013).
strategy is chosen by Berlin’s Maxim Gorki Theater, which presents a roster of mono and multilingual productions (some with very little use of German) involving multilingual actors. All Gorki productions are accompanied by subtitles in English only—a clear nod to the power of the international lingua franca.

Second, bilingual companies, similar to Toronto’s Aluna Theatre, are becoming more common in large multicultural centres that attract artists from all over the world. Berlin, being a European multilingual cultural hub, has a growing number of bilingual productions where the second language is normally (but not exclusively) English. Both experimental theatre companies such as Gob Squad, which is essentially a binational troupe (British and German), and companies that are considered paragons of traditionalism, are creating bilingual productions. For instance, the Berliner Ensemble’s Peter Pan, billed as Robert Wilson and Coco Rosie’s Peter Pan, is performed in English and German: Coco Rosie’s songs are sung in the original language (English), while all dramatic scenes are performed in German. What is more interesting is that, at some point in the show, the very sound of the English language becomes a dramaturgical device: Peter Pan’s creators decided to have one line—“with perfect gentile diction”—uttered not only in English but also in perfect British RP. As the dramaturge of the production claims, that particular line comes straight from J.M. Barry’s

19 Gorki’s multilingualism can be seen as part of the company’s mandate to focus on various encounters between people, cultures, languages. The English webpage of the theatre contains a word from the artistic directors of the theatre: “Are we once again living in a society in transition? The question inevitably arises when we are faced with a permanent crisis in economy and politics, a crisis which results in even more severe social and cultural conflicts in our societies. [...] The Gorki is for the whole city, and that includes everyone who has arrived in the city in the last few decades, whether in search of asylum, whether in exile, whether they be immigrants or simply people who grew up in Berlin. We invite you all to a public space in which today’s human condition and our conflict of identity will be reflected through the art of making theatre and watching theatre, in order to contribute to a thorough and patient debate about living together in today’s diverse world. How have we become what we are? And who do we want to be in the future? In short: who is “we”? (Langhoff & Hillje, 2016).

20 Received Pronunciation—the penultimate BBC or Queen’s English accent, stripped of any regionalisms or ‘impure’ pronunciations.

21 The interview with Dietmar Böck, one of the two dramaturges of Peter Pan, took place on July 2, 2013 as part of the Digital Dramaturgy research trip led by Prof. Antje Budde (University of Toronto).
original and is kept in English solely due to the unique auditory beauty it carries. Interestingly, no subtitles are provided for this line or for any of the songs performed in English.

A more peculiar and perhaps complex situation I observed at the Avignon festival, or rather—festivals. The Avignon-Off (commonly known as Le off), which positions itself as a ‘fringy’ antiestablishment hub for emerging, experimental, and non-elitist theatre, had almost no bilingual or multilingual productions in 2013—the year I attended the festival. Instead, Le off’s advertised 900 performances catered mostly to the French speaking audience, with very few exceptions. In contrast, the majority of the ‘elitist’ Avignon Festival (Le festival d’Avignon) shows were presented in two or more languages. What made it more peculiar is that only three productions of the Avignon Festival explicitly advertised their use of multiple languages, while others chose not to give any ‘linguistic warning’ in the festival programme. This probably speaks to the fact that stage multilingualism is becoming less of a novelty, at least at large international festivals.

For my particular research purposes, I only focused on productions where actors had to speak their additional (second, non-dominant) language or languages, thereby challenging the monolingual assumption. I observed this kind of “challenge” in a few shows, all of which used French surtitles whenever any other language was introduced.

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22 There were, of course, a few productions coming from countries outside of the francophone world that were performed in languages other than French. However, they were of no interest to me, as they did not employ linguistic diversity but instead simply provided French surtitles, just like many foreign language shows of the main Avignon festival.

23 The three Avignon shows that were advertised as multilingual included Todo el cielo sobre la tierra (el sindrome de Wendy) by Angélica Liddell, Hate Radio by Milo Rau, and Place du marché 76 by Jan Lauwers. In addition, the productions of Remote Avignon and La porte du non-retour employed pre-recorded audio guides in English or French, akin to wireless multilingual audio guides used in most major museums nowadays; however, the shows themselves were only available in a monolingual format: either in French or in English.

24 Various economic reasons may be at play here: large international festivals might want to attract both international audiences, specifically tourists, and local audiences. The presence of various languages, but specifically, English as the international lingua franca, might be making shows in other languages more accessible and more appealing to a broader international audience.
The most multilingual—at least, in terms of the number of languages used—was Jan Fabre’s *Le Pouvoir des folies théâtrales* (*The Power of Theatre Follies*), which was in essence a reconstructed version of Fabre’s original production of *Le Pouvoir* staged in 1983. Fabre’s four-and-a-half hour tongue-in-cheek endurance test, aiming to challenge and eventually exhaust his performers (and audiences) both physically and emotionally, was replete with a similarly exhausting repetition of many major events that shaped the history of the Western theatre: from Wagner’s first production in Bayreuth to—and here one really has to marvel at Fabre’s presumptuous humour—*Le Pouvoir des folies théâtrales* itself. The text used in the production was utterly simplistic and excruciatingly repetitive; it was also presented in random languages, often looped in a very particular way, for instance: 1876 (delivered in German), 1876 (in English), 1876 (in Dutch), 1876 (in French), 1876 (in German), 1876 (in English), etc. After a few loops like that, the date would suddenly be supplemented with the actual event: 1876, Richard Wagner, *Das Rheingold*, Bayreuth. Once the audience had heard the same date, the name of the event and its authors multiple times, they were able to retain that information, no matter in what language or accent it would continue to occur throughout the show. The languages, as well as native versus non-native accents, were used sporadically, as almost all performers, who were trained dancers rather than actors, would have to vocally deliver a date or an event in any of the languages. There was no specific body language associated with the languages in question, instead the performers religiously adhered to Fabre’s mechanistic choreography while uttering their lines in a very precise, rigid manner. In other words, their body performance was neither language-based nor culture-specific. Notably, Fabre only uses European languages, which, along with surtitling, also helped with the show comprehension thanks to significant similarities in the phonology of dates and proper nouns in the languages used.\(^{25}\)

\(^{25}\) Other multilingual productions where actors spoke their second language included *Rausch* (*Intoxication*) written by Falk Richter, directed and choreographed by Falk Richter and Anouk van Dijk. *Kabaret Warszawski* (*The Warsaw Cabaret*), directed by Krzysztof Warlikowski. *Rausch* was a rich mix of English, German and French, where German and French were spoken by native German and French speakers, while occasional passages in
Just like Fabre’s four-hour long spectacle, other multilingual productions where actors spoke various languages including their second languages, were all examples of what Hans-Thies Lehmann (1999) calls post-dramatic theatre, in the sense that their dramaturgy was not rooted in a dramatic text. The only exception was the play Hate Radio, billed as “the re-enactment of an RTLM genocide radio show” (Hate Radio, 2012) and written by Milo Rau, a Swiss playwright who often employs multilingualism in his plays. Just like the original “Hate Radio”, the Rwandan RTLMC26 radio propaganda channel, the “re-enactment” was performed in various dialects of French and Kinyarwanda, where the latter was accompanied by French surtitles. As in many other shows, the actors of Hate Radio only spoke the languages they were completely fluent in: either their mother tongues and their language of schooling—French, which is one of Rwanda’s official languages.

Hate Radio, as well as many of the above mentioned productions of the Avignon Festival, was part of the touring circuit of large international festivals—many of which share a similar roster of co-produced performances (Schryburt, 2014); some of those productions, including Hate Radio, were performed in Canada—at Montreal’s Festival transamérique. Interestingly, while Avignon offers subtitles only in French, the assumed lingua franca of the Avignon Festival, Montreal’s Festival Transamérique often (but not always) offers subtitles in Canada’s two official languages. In turn, Moscow’s International Chekhov Festival only offers subtitles in Russian, the only federal language of the officially multicultural and multiethnic Russian Federation. Clearly, various political and economic factors could be at play here, as well as the sociolinguistic makeup of the festivals’ audiences.

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26 Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines.
The questions of the growing popularity of multilingual productions in global multicultural urban centres and international theatre festivals as well as the choice of languages of translation (surtitling), lie outside of the purview of my research. The brief production review I provided above (admittedly very limited by its geographical focus\(^{27}\)) shows that multilingual theatre is currently on the rise in various urban centres and at large international theatre festivals. Yet, surtitling remains the most common tool for dealing with stage multilingualism. Surtitles are also used to promote both mono and multilingual work of well-known theatre companies (as showed in the example of Berlin’s Schaubuhne, Gorki, and Moscow’s Fomenko Theatre Studio). Overall, it seems that it is usually post-dramatic theatre, especially dance-theatre, that employs stage multilingualism more actively. Post-dramatic theatre also provides more space for non-native speakers to perform in their second languages as well as experiment with the separation of the spoken text from the conventions of body language.

It is these ideas, thoughts, concerns, and aspirations that originally nourished my research project—a case-study involving a group of mono- and multilingual performers developing a multilingual production in which the performers explored the complex intersections between language and body through artistic practice. The participants along with the researcher-practitioner devised a new theatre production while working in and with multiple languages, learning from each other, and at the same time studying the very process of learning to perform in languages different from their first (or dominant). The production was eventually presented to a multilingual audience, who were later invited to reflect on their perception of the stage multilingualism in post-performance surveys.

\(^{27}\) A much more substantial review of Canadian multilingual productions is provided in Chapter Two.
This practice-based project was not in any way meant to be an objective exploration devoid of personal, socio-political or aesthetic motivations. It was an exploration undermined, and at the same time enriched, by the wealth of personal thoughts and ambitions and situated within my own development as a theatre scholar, theatre director, and educator. It was also being devised within a larger socio-political framework, specifically at the Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance studies at the University of Toronto, the largest Canadian university located within the largest multilingual and multicultural urban centre in Canada.

A serious limitation of my research is also related to the larger sociopolitical and sociolinguistic framework: while the project did aim to be as multilingual as possible, the language choices made in our creative work were determined by the competences and interests of the project participants (see Participants in Chapter Two). The project participants were only familiar with settler languages; hence, no Indigenous languages were involved in our creative process. This is, of course, a grave concern given that the colonial history and the current endangered status of most Indigenous languages in Canada (see Ball, 2009).

Given the practice-based nature of my case-study, these important contexts and limitations are something that I feel the need to acknowledge from the very start and will continue acknowledging throughout my writing.

**Conceptual Framework: Language, Body, Acting, Spectating... and Interdisciplinarity**

Now that I have briefly positioned the “characters” and the contexts of my research, it is important to specify its ‘playground’, the conceptual and disciplinary framework within which this project is going to develop. First of all, I would like to place the principle of *interdisciplinarity* as one of the foundational ideas undergirding my research. In *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory* (2012), Allen Repko explains:
Interdisciplinarity [...] studies a complex problem [...] by drawing on disciplinary insights [...] and integrating them. By employing a research process that subsumes the methods of the relevant disciplines, interdisciplinary work does not privilege any particular disciplinary method or theory (p. 20).

Following Repko (2012), I understand interdisciplinary research as research drawing from multiple disciplines and converging theoretical and practical frameworks of those disciplines for the purposes of understanding a phenomenon that cannot be reduced to one discipline only. Subsequently, the results of an interdisciplinary study should be expected to contribute to each of the individual disciplines involved.28

Repko posits that there are two forms of interdisciplinarity: instrumental and critical (p. 22)—both are important for my research study. Instrumental interdisciplinarity, according to Repko is “problem-driven” and requires an integration of contributing disciplines. Given that my research looks at the “problem” of untranslated stage multilingualism and engages actors learning to perform in various languages, I will attempt an integration of the following disciplines: theatre studies (theories/practices of acting, dramaturgy research, spectatorship research), linguistics (cognitive and applied), and education (learning languages, learning acting, and learning in general). The relationship between these disciplines is expected to produce insights that might not necessarily be visible without some significant interdisciplinary convergence.

The other form of interdisciplinarity—critical interdisciplinarity—“interrogates the dominant structures of knowledge and education with the aim of transforming them, while raising epistemological and political questions of value and purpose” (Klein, 2010, p. 30).29 While acknowledging that those advocating critical interdisciplinarity tend to push against the

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28 Repko (2012) also explicates the difference between interdisciplinarity and its counterparts: multidisciplinarity (that “studies a topic from the perspective of several disciplines at one time but makes no attempt to integrate their insights” (p. 20)) and transdisciplinarity (concerning “that which is at once between the disciplines, across different disciplines, and beyond all disciplines” (p. 21)).

29 This side of interdisciplinarity, I address in Chapter 2, where I discuss the philosophical framework of my study.
idea of instrumental interdisciplinarity, Repko suggests that a combination of both forms is both possible and necessary and will lead to a “more comprehensive understanding” of practical problems and theories (p. 23).

Following the principle of interdisciplinarity, the five sub-sections below introduce the interdisciplinary concepts that serve as focal points of my research: language (first and second), body, mimesis, actor, spectator. These concepts are introduced through five interdisciplinary “connections,” which also provide a brief literature review.

**Connection one: body and language.**

Let me emphasize here that even though I have used the term ‘body language’ earlier in my writing, from this point on, I will have to abandon it entirely because of its misleading nature. It is indeed an ‘everyday’, rather than a scientific concept, mainly due to the presence of the word ‘language’ in it, which implies a strong similarity between language as a linguistic entity and language as a bodily entity. It may suffice as a convenient everyday metaphor but, as scholars have pointed out, body language is not one unified form of ‘language’ but a continuum of different types of gesture (Kendon, 1988), where the ones functioning in the closest alignment with spoken language (or actual language) lack most linguistic properties. David McNeill (1992, 2000, 2005), who has been studying the relationship between language and gesture, recognizes that spoken language and gesture are part of one system of communication. At the same time, he characterizes gesture as a radically different mode of expression as gestures are “global, synthetic and never hierarchical” (2000, p. 139). Here is how Rick Kemp, who first applied McNeill’s theory to the theory of acting, explains McNeill’s proposition:

In understanding a sentence, we start with the lower level words, whereas in gestures, we start with the overall concept portrayed by the gesture. Consequently, a gesture is a symbol – it is global in that the whole is not composed out of separately meaningful parts. Rather, the parts gain meaning because of the meaning of the whole (Kemp, 2012, p. 65).
In addition to that, gesture (with the exception of sign language) also lacks such properties of language as “standard of form” and “systematicity,” which has huge implications for the term ‘body language’, or more precisely, for its ultimate inadequacy and irrelevance.

The terminological problems persist, however. While McNeill uses the term ‘gesture’ and its cognate ‘gesticulation’, which means a specific type of gesture that constantly accompanies language, Rick Kemp (2012), whose primary interest is the craft of acting, makes use of a much broader concept—non-verbal communication (NVC), even though he occasionally and, in my understanding, rather accidentally, equates it to gesture.

Another term that is commonly used is embodiment, which in itself represents an attempt to theorize the relationship between body and language. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) posited a somewhat simplistic connection between language and body by postulating that mind is body, hence, all language is technically embodied. A more nuanced framework has been recently proposed by Jordan Zlatev, also a cognitive linguist. First, Zlatev defines language as “a consciously supervised, conventional representational system for communicative action and thought” (Zlatev, 2007, p. 5). Second, he puts the concept of mimesis at the centre of the language-body relationship.

Mimesis stems from the Aristotelian tradition and, while it can have multiple interpretations (e.g., see Potolsky, 2012, Diamond, 1997), Zlatev is only concerned with the

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30 Linguist Jordan Zlatev explains: “A characteristic feature of language that has not been discussed is one that is perhaps most often mentioned in discussions of the “uniqueness of language” in respect to other human and animal systems of communication – to the extent of forgetting those listed above – namely, the systematicity of language (Saussure 1916; Deacon 1997). It is true that this is an essential feature of language, and something that, for example, distinguishes language from gesture (McNeil 1992; Senghas, Kita & Özyürek 2004). It should be pointed out, however, that this concerns not the “syntax” of language alone, but its general capacity to express an unlimited number of meanings, both in the sense of content and speech acts” (Zlatev, 2007, 11).

31 It is important to understand that gesture does not preclude the movement of the head, torso, legs and feet. David McNeill points out: “It [gesticulation] is made chiefly with the arms and hands but is not restricted to these body parts – the head can take over as a kind of a third hand if the anatomical hands are immobilized or otherwise engaged, and the legs and feet too can move in a gesture mode” (2008, 5).
concept of bodily mimesis, which he briefly defines as “the volitional use of the body for constructing and communicating representations” (Zlatev, 2006, p.5). In relation to language, Zlatev argues that not all language is embodied; however, he also adds a caveat stating that “public linguistic symbols are ‘embodied’ in the sense that part of their meaning is constituted by underlying mimetic schemas” (2006, p. 30). Mimetic schemas, Zlatev’s own term and a cognate of bodily mimesis (Donald’s term), has a much longer history as a concept: for instance, Zlatev finds a similar conceptual entity related to bodily behaviours that are acquired through “representative imitation” in Jean Piaget’s theory of child development. According to Zlatev, mimetic schemas are exactly what Piaget calls ‘symbols’, as they “constitute body-based, pre-linguistic, consciously accessible representations that serve as the child’s first concepts” (Zlatev, 2006, p. 5).

This ‘pre-linguistic’ aspect of mimesis is very important as it once again cautions against simplistic connections between language and body. In the end, “mimetic schemas ground, but do not constitute linguistic meaning” (Zlatev, 2006, p. 32)—they are a precursor to humans’ linguistic ability and part of a larger phylogenetic evolutionary process. Here is how Ikegami and Zlatev present the relationship between mimetic schemas within a larger framework—a framework of life, which, as they would argue, works on both the ontogenetic and phylogenetic levels:

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32 Zlatev’s much longer definition also includes the properties of bodily mimesis, as they appear in the evolutionary order: “Bodily mimesis: A particular act of cognition or communication is an act of bodily mimesis if and only if: (1) It involves a cross-modal mapping between proprioception and some other modality (Cross-modality); (2) It consists of a bodily motion that is, or can be, under conscious control (Volition); (3) The body (part) and its motion are differentiated from and understood to correspond (either iconically or indexically) to some action, object or event. (Representation); (4) The subject intends for the act to stand for some action, object or event for an addressee. (Communicative sign function)” (Zlatev, 2006, p. 24). The last property of bodily mimesis is optional, according to Zlatev, as only some forms of mimesis fulfil it: “pantomime does, but imitation does not” (2006, p.25). Thus, Zlatev calls it triadic mimesis. Zlatev draws parallels between Donald’s evolutionary theory (1991) and Tomasello’s sociocultural approach (1999), arguing that it is the triadic imitation or mimesis, i.e., a uniquely human ability to understand and appropriate communicative intentions, that allowed for the cultural development of Homo erectus. Triadic mimesis needs to have properties 1-4 and is uniquely human, while dyadic mimesis, which animals are capable of too, possesses only properties 1-3.
The premises of my own research are situated within the top two parts of the pyramid and the complex relationship between them. The relationships between body and language, sometimes called *embodiment*, are extremely complex. Some embodiment can signify NVC means, which are directly related to linguistic meaning; NVC means can enrich, modify or even fully replace linguistic meaning, as I showed in the example of the French-Lebanese encounter at the beginning of the chapter. Those NVC means are extremely diverse by themselves, as Kendon’s classification of gestures shows. The other side of embodiment is constituted by body movements that simply “ground” language but do not express any linguistic meaning—they are
learned before language and become part of what is perceived as our “natural” body movement (while, of course, it is acquired, just as language is). In addition, it is important to remember that body and language while being radically different from each other (hence, the inadequacy of the term body language) operate together as part of one larger communication system.

**Connection two: bodily mimesis and the actor.**

Zlatev’s view on bodily mimesis (i.e., his understanding of “embodiment”) presents a fruitful ground for an exploration of the relationship between bodily mimesis and language. It is particularly valuable for my research purposes because it inadvertently connects both language and mimetic schemas with the craft of acting/theatre.33 Gabriele Sofia, a researcher working on the intersection of theatre and neuroscience, argues that a trained actor, no matter what acting tradition s/he comes from, always needs to learn to create an ‘artificial body schema’, which will require both a ‘fragmentation’ and ‘reconstruction’ of everyday neuromotor routines (2013a, p. 78). Sofia relies on Shaun Gallagher’s definition of the body schema as “a non-conscious system of processes that constantly regulate posture and movement – a system of motor-sensory capacities that function below the threshold of awareness, and without the necessity of perceptual monitoring” (2005, p. 234).34 Gabriele Sofia emphasises that “the body

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33 As theatre scholar Joachim Fiebach points out, in most world traditions (not only western), the theatre (and I would argue acting), is “regarded as a mode of representing something different from the presenter’s actual existence—the creation of the Other, or mimesis” (Fiebach, 2002, p. 20).

34 Here, one may notice a seeming contradiction between Zlatev’s postulate about bodily mimesis as being consciously accessible (Property 4, see p. 22) and body schemas, which Gallagher deems unavailable to consciousness. Indeed, as originally proposed by Head and Holms in 1911/1912 and developed throughout the 20th century (including Gallagher’s interpretation), body schema, as opposed to body image, is seen as not accessible to consciousness. However, neuroscientists also explicate this through the accessibility of a conscious effort that can activate the body schema: “If the behaviour monitored through the body schema does not necessitate conscious control, it is not reducible to a mere reflex either. Such behaviour can indeed be precisely modulated according to the conscious intentions entertained by the agent rationally and consciously. For instance, if a subject holds out his or her hand to reach a glass of water to drink, the subject’s hand forms a rip adept in size to this goal automatically and in an anticipated way” (Legrand, 2010, p. 167).
schema also regulates the pre-reflective organisation of the whole body towards a precise goal” (2013, p. 77)—an extremely important remark for actors. It has been noted that only goal-directed actions change the actor’s bodily behaviour in a very particular way that makes it ‘watchable’, ‘believable’ or ‘engaging’. Stanislavsky’s school, for example, emphasises the role of ‘zadachas’ (задачи)—problem-resolving, solution-oriented intentionalities that reorganize the actor’s bodymind and create the required ‘organicity’ (органичность) of their physical behaviour. “Zadachas” work because the body schema “operates so that several body mechanisms cooperate at a pre-conscious level” (Sofia, 2013a, p. 77)—having a goal shapes the body schema in particular ways.

Having identified goal-directedness as an important feature of action, Sofia adds that simply having a goal is not enough. Most of the time, actors know in advance what is going to happen on stage and what kind of behaviour their characters are expected to demonstrate, hence, his/her body schema cannot operate only on the pre-reflective, or what Gallagher has called the “non-conscious,” level. Actors need to regulate their “body schema at a higher level than usual”—something that they learn through numerous acting exercises. Sofia calls the main principle that is used in these exercises fragmentation. After providing examples of fragmentation coming from Stanislavski (zadachas – tasks), Meyerhold (otkaz-posyl-stoika) and the Kabuki theatre (yo-ha-hyu), Sofia quotes Eugenio Barba, who gave the necessity of fragmentation a somewhat poetic explanation:

Exercises are small labyrinths that the actors’ body-minds can trace and retrace in order to incorporate a paradoxical way of thinking, thereby distancing themselves from their own daily behaviour and entering the domain of the stage’s extra-daily behaviour (Barba, 1997, p. 128).

After fragmentation comes reconstruction, i.e., putting together the disparate fragmented movements into, using Stanislavski’s term, a “through line” of stage behaviour.
Reconstruction leads to a creation of the artificial mimetic schema, which a professional actor’s bodymind would employ as standard, that is—standard for the stage performance.

Fragmentation and reconstruction are certainly very crude terms but they offer clear pedagogical principles for the creation of an artificial schema. I would like to emphasise though that I do not mean to equate the process of bodily mimesis as it happens in children (Piaget’s symbols) who are acquiring their first language-culture to the actor’s processes of fragmentation and reconstruction. Obviously, children’s and actors’ mimeses do not necessarily occur for the same purposes or within the same circumstances; in fact, I would argue that every single case of mimesis is immeasurably complex and utterly unique. What bears relevance to my line of argument, though, is that it might be possible through fragmentation and reconstruction to develop new mimetic schemas (artificial or not) in adults. This, of course, may take time, effort, and dedicated exercising.

**Connection three: bodily mimesis and the spectator.**

Bodily mimesis would make very little sense if it was not part of an act of communication. While it is certainly a visceral and deeply personal bodily experience, it is always intersubjective and always open for external interpretation. It comes as no surprise then that the art of theatre, which relies so much on bodily mimesis, is “a system that cannot be understood by analysing either the actor or the spectator outside of their mutual relation” (Sofia, 2013a, p. 71).

It also comes as no surprise that intentionality seems to be central to the spectator’s experience of the bodily mimesis. Research in neuroscience confirms that spectators demonstrate a particular reaction to goal-driven mimetic actions, as opposed to ‘meaningless’

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35 By professional actor I mean any actor that has undergone extensive professional training that included both fragmentation and reconstruction.
or pure ‘symbolic’ actions (Rizolatti & Sinigaglia, 2010). In relation to theatre, a 2008 study (Lui et al, 2008) showed that actors performing goal-driven mimetic actions, such as knocking on an imaginary door, activate “the parietal sector of man’s mirror neurons” (Sofia, 2013b, p. 183), whereas other types of miming do not.  

Sofia specifies that intention is not “linked to the single act, but is a precise quality of the kinetic melody of an either acted or observed action” (2013b, p. 184). In Sofia’s argument, actors have the ability to suspend a kinetic melody, for instance, by creating ambiguity in regards to each action’s intention. That suspension prompts a specific motor neuroresonance that eventually creates a shared space between the actor and the spectator. Sofia writes: “We can hypothesize that every shared action between the actor and the spectator determines at a pre-conceptual and pre-linguistic level the direction of the spectator’s ‘making sense’” (Sofia, 2013b, p. 188).

Sofia’s argument, despite being remarkably clear and supported by copious neuroscientific data, stops at this very point. He does not venture beyond the pre-conceptual and pre-linguistic level. This is also where things become interesting for me and my study. It is the dialectics of the exchange between the one creating pre-linguistic kinetic melodies coupled with linguistic material and the one responding to them that takes centre stage in my research study.

It is interesting that in many text on acting written by , there often exists the character of a teacher or a teaching guru (sometimes merged with the idea of a guru-director) that provides continuous feedback to the actors and assesses their work as ultimately good or bad.

36 Admittedly, this kind of research is still at its nascent stage and understanding what exactly this specific activation of mirror neurons means and whether or not it would occur in various cultural (and especially, cross-cultural) contexts is yet to be seen.

37 Interestingly, the concept of kinetic melodies was originally proposed by Alexander Luria, one of Lev Vygotsky’s colleagues and students, and it appears to be indispensable for the theory of acting.
Stanislavsky, for instance, uses a fictional character Tortsov to be the ultimate judge of his student actors’ work:

Marya was returning home and on the way found an abandoned baby… […] She jumped and ran with it, swaddled it, kissed it, adored it, forgetting that she was dealing with a piece of wood wrapped in a tablecloth.

But suddenly the young child stopped reacting to her games. Marya looked at her a long time trying hard to understand the reason. The expression on her face changed. The more her bewilderment and terror were reflected in it, the more she concentrated. She laid the young thing carefully on the sofa and drew back. When she was a certain distance away, she froze in tragic bewilderment. That was all. Nothing more. But how much truth, belief, naïveté, youth, charm, womanliness, taste, genuine drama there was in it. […]

‘There you have artistic truth!’ Tortsov exclaimed enthusiastically when Marya went offstage. ‘You could believe everything she did, as it was all experienced and taken from genuine life as lived, not wholesale, but with discrimination, using only what was necessary. No more, no less. Marya knows how to observe, she can decry the beautiful and has a sense of proportion. That’s an important quality’ (2008, p. 193).

Leaving aside the predictably difficult discussion of what Stanislavskian “truth” might be and of his clearly patriarchal views, I would like to pose a different question: Why is the character of Tortsov absolutely necessary to understand that very “truth”? Is it simply a stylistic attempt to use ‘Socratic dialogue’ to make the narration more engaging and less didactic?

I have a firm belief that Tortsov’s position actually reinforces the ultimate necessity of the observer—be it an acting instructor, a show director, a dramaturge or a spectator. Since conscious access to body schemas is impossible and, in fact, any conscious attempt to control them has a potential of producing a stilted—or in Stanislavsky’s terms non-organic—body performance, actors need to affect their body schema indirectly (by focusing on intentionality, for instance). As I pointed out before, actors need training in order to create an artificial/performative body schema—and during that training there always seems to be a need for an external observer—in crude terms, someone who will be experiencing the works of their body schema as affective (or not). The observer has both an innate biological mechanism of mirror neurons and an arsenal of cultural codes that function in conjunction with the mirror
neuron system. The observer’s look—a look from the outside—seems indispensable for the appreciation of the workings of the body schema. Hence, a study that looks at how actors’ work with and in multiple languages (and by extension various NVC systems) also needs to include the perspective of those of who observe the actors’ work.

**Connection four: bodily mimesis and second/foreign language.**

So far, when speaking about language I implied one’s first language (L1), also often referred to as mother tongue.\(^{38}\) This subsection looks at how bodily mimesis as an essential acting mechanism could be applied to second language (L2) learning.

The idea of learning and practicing a foreign language through embodied performance in that language is anything but new. It is interesting, for instance, that the phenomenon of the late medieval Latin school play, a dialogue-based piece of questionable quality, written by schoolmasters, emerged out of the need to practice spoken Latin, which was not yet a dead language at the time (Child, 1912, p. 21). Latin was obviously the students’ and scholars’\(^{39}\) second (or third) language and the lingua franca of Europe’s clergy and educated elite in those days, hence, spoken competence in Latin was still valued, and needed to be practiced.

In modern scholarly literature, the idea of applying Drama to teaching second languages has been in circulation for about thirty years (see, for instance, Mailey & Duff, 2002; Stern, 1980; Smith, 1984; Burke & O’Sullivan, 2002; di Pietro, 1987); however, actual applications of this idea to practice as well as to theoretical approaches behind it vary enormously. For example, in scholarly literature in the English language, there has recently

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\(^{38}\) Here I purposefully equate L1 (or indeed L1s) to one’s mother tongue (or indeed, tongues), i.e., a language different from L2 (or any other additional language) learned after L1. In Chapter 2, I propose a framework that suggests moving away from the simplistic L1-L2 binary, which is frequently used both in scholarly and public discourse.

\(^{39}\) Admittedly, mostly male students’ and male scholars’.
been an almost overwhelming explosion of studies exploring the intersection of theatre and L2 learning through Process Drama—a technique where the teacher takes on a character and leads a class through a scenario of events in which students, who could also adopt a character, prescribed or otherwise, will have to make participatory choices (see, for instance, Kao & O’Neil, 1998; Kempston, 2012; Stinson, 2012, to name a few). Another prominent strand of research puts forward the value of rehearsals and performance production in the target language. Theatre production allows for both sufficient L2 input and L2 output, which sets it aside from Process Drama where the question of L2 input does not get sufficient attention (e.g., Babayants, 2011; Raquel, 2013). In turn, the output allowed in script-based productions seems quite rigid and lacking agency, which sets it apart from linguistic output as it happens in real life.

There has also been a resurgence of studies in French that tend to be more interested in various ways of including the gesture as well as body in general in the L2 learning process. For instance, Jean-Rémi Lapaire (2013), who relies on McNeill’s ideas of connecting language, gesture and thought (2005), makes a case for using co-verbal gestures when teaching a foreign language, specifically L2 grammar. Following the same lines, Joelle Aden (2013) suggests a much broader framework deriving from the works of French neuroscientist Alain Berthoz (2004). Aden places empathy, i.e., “un espèce de potentialisation entre un point de vue égocentré [...] et un point de vue allocentré”⁴⁰ (2013, p. 120), in the centre of language acquisition. She also argues that pre-verbal training, i.e. the training of the body, can help with the development of empathy and subsequently foster L2 learning. Such studies come closer to the line of research that I am conceptually subscribing to, even though I am personally more interested in the very procedural workings of bodily mimesis, whether or not it might be caused by empathy.

⁴⁰ “The space of potentiality” between the egocentric and the allocentric points of view.
In general, L2 researchers have only recently begun to see the language learning process, in particular the acquisition of oral communication skills in L2, as mimetic (McCafferty, 2008). A few studies (Haught, J., & McCafferty, 2008; Carkin, 2010; Raquel, 2015) point out the potential usefulness of the Stanislavski System for L2 pedagogy, possibly because the mimetic connection is more strongly pronounced in the Stanislavskian training. However, researchers also tend to inexcusably reduce the Stanislavsky System to only one of its components—the actor’s empathy for the character s/he has to perform and specifically to one particular technique—Emotional Memory (related, but not equal to, Affective Memory in Stanislavski’s own terms). In my previous study (Babayants, 2011), I argued that certain ‘empathy-based’ techniques of connecting with a character performed in a L2 might hinder, rather than promote, mimesis. As part of the implications and further research directions, I suggested that Stanislavski’s Method of Physical Actions (Stanislavski, 2008) and, perhaps, Michael Chekhov’s technique could be worth exploring, as those techniques allow actors to achieve “realistic” performance not through empathy and emotional substitution (Emotional Memory) but rather through careful observation, building a logical line of actions, exploring the character’s behaviour through études, and paying meticulous attention to the physicality of verbal and non-verbal actions.

Following that direction, this study opens the possibilities even further: it attempts to move beyond the use of one particular specific acting technique and invites the participants to explore various ways of creating body schemas through mimesis and coupling them with the target language. A starting point in this exploration could once again come from Zlatev’s propositions:

Mimetic schemas can serve as the basis for the acquisition of language in two ways: (a) they constitute the first form of (conscious) internal representation and help lead to the “insight” that others have internal models – a prerequisite for communication intentions, and (b) they constitute pre-linguistic concepts (2007, p. 325).

With these two points in consideration, it is possible, for example, to envision the development of acting exercises that through observation lead to a creation of artificial schemas originally coming from a different language-culture. For instance, one can imagine developing
practical explorations such as these may be a fruitful way to explore the workings of bodily mimesis in L2.

**Connection five: second/foreign language and theatre.**

Since the development of a multilingual theatre practice is at the core of my study, it is important to make one final connection and have a brief look at how multilingualism has been conceptualised in theatre research.

In his comprehensive account of the use of multiple languages in theatre practice, Marvin Carlson describes the linguistic situation in contemporary theatre as follows:

Although the major theatre urban (and theatrical) centers of the modern world are becoming increasingly multilingual, the major theatres in many of these cities remain essentially monolingual, reflecting the dominant or official language of the city (Carlson, 2006, p. 48).

Carlson also notes that there is, however, an observable rise in multilingual (or in Carlson-Bakhtin terminology—‘heteroglossic’) productions which challenge the conventions of the dominant monolingual theatre and question the established cultural and linguistic power structures. In addition, following a semiotic tradition in theatre studies, Carlson asserts that a foreign language on stage is almost always seen as a basic signifier of cultural identity, due to which a foreign/second language is mostly used in the interest of verisimilitude. Similar positions could be found in more recent work on stage multilingualism (e.g., Weinstein, 2002; Thibaut, 2012): in short, if a character speaks a language that is perceived as foreign by the audience, this feature automatically adds realistic credibility to his/her positioning as an ‘outsider’ or ‘the Other’.

A shortcoming of the semiotic tradition is that it prevents the authors from even considering the actor’s experience of performing in multiple languages as worthy of research. Furthermore, it also grounds semiotic research within a problematic paradigm that assumes...
“one character-one language” as a norm and provides semiotic judgements based on that assumption. Ascribing such a position to the spectator is particularly problematic, especially when a play is presented in a multilingual global city and to a multilingual audience. Multilinguals, whether they are actors or spectators, have a particular relationship with each of their languages. Their judgements can appear very different from a more traditional perspective that a. assumes a single native language; b. treats the mother tongue as the primary cultural signifier, and, c. considers any additional language as an acquired, foreign, hence, inferior, cultural signifier. It goes without saying that all such perspectives originate within a monolingual (and monocultural) bias. They also deliberately or inadvertently reinforce that bias.

In response to such positions, which are pervasive and common not only in the theatre and theatre studies, linguist Aneta Pavlenko provides a powerful first-hand account of a complex relationship a multilingual person can have with their languages:

The words of my native language, Russian, brim with intimacy and familiarity. They are permeated with memories of my childhood and youth, friendships and intimate relationships, happiness and disappointments. For me, Russian has no neutral words—each one channels voices, each one inspires feelings. Yet it is also a language that attempted to constrain and obliterate me as a Jew, to tie me down as a woman, to render me voiceless, a mute slave to a hated regime. To abandon Russian means to embrace freedom. I can talk and write without hearing echoes of things I should not be saying. I can be me. English is a language that offered me that freedom, and yet it is also my second language, whose words—in the unforgettable terms of another fellow bilingual, Julia Kristeva—make us strangers to ourselves (Pavlenko, 2005, p. 22).

Pavlenko’s position sheds light on the complexity of bilingual perception and her own struggle with the concept of “self” that is deeply associated with her native language. Interestingly, her position still grounds itself in the monolingual paradigm, as it comes from a position of one mother tongue—in her case, Russian. One can only imagine the levels of complexity if this grounding is different, for instance if a person forgets his/her mother tongue and switches to a

41 I discuss all those aspects in more detail in Chapter Two in the subsection Lineage of Similar Practices.
different dominant language, or if a person grows up with two or three first languages simultaneously—and all of this while living in a multicultural and multilingual place where languages other than his/her own first (or second) might (or might not) be dominant. While it might seem like a hypothetical fantasy, it is in fact a given reality for many inhabitants of large urban centres of the modern world.

Evidently, the sociolinguistic makeup of each urban centre as well as the global situation of learning various languages, especially languages of power and economic value, need to be considered when discussing stage multilingualism. Linguist Anne Pauwels (2014) explains:

The centrality of language and communication in the new economy highlight the commodification of language: language undoubtedly has market value. As the new economy is played out in a global market place, the language or languages that give(s) access to this global arena are perceived as highly desired linguistic capital. Currently, English clearly dominates this market place but languages like Chinese, Spanish, and Arabic are becoming major players and languages like French, Russian and German still play some role in trans-global and at least trans-regional communication. Nevertheless, English is regarded as the global language, at least for the time being. The status of English as global lingua franca has had major effects of the LL [language learning] scene: English has become the language most widely studied as second, third or ‘foreign’ language” (pp. 44-45).

Pauwels adds that there are more than one billion English language learners in the world (p. 45), which is more than native speakers of English. Non-native speakers of English constitute the majority, which may not be the case with any other language. Evidently, the status of the English language is currently different from any other language on the planet—an important factor to bear in mind when analysing the use of English on stage—in the countries where English is an (or the) official language and in the countries where it is the language of schooling or the most common second or foreign language to be acquired.

The local sociolinguistic context matters even more. While Toronto’s linguistic makeup is also dominated by English, the latest population census, conducted by the federal
government in 2011, indicated that 1.8 million Torontonians also speak an “immigrant” language,\(^{42}\) which constitutes the majority of Toronto residents. As I demonstrate in Chapter Two, despite the overwhelming presence of multilinguals, Toronto theatre employs multilingualism on very rare occasions only.

With regards to the study of multilingual theatre, sociolinguistic research as well as research on language learning may contribute significantly to the understanding of both multilingual actors, multilingual dramaturgy, and multilingual audiences. This conclusion once again underscores the need for an interdisciplinary approach to the topic of multilingualism in theatre.

By using Repko’s interdisciplinary approach, this study looks at multilingual actors (its main focus), multilingual audiences and the possibilities of untranslated stage multilingualism. The thesis structure reflects how the study was conceived and carried out. Chapter Two presents the philosophical framework, outlines the methodology and introduces the participants of the practical exploration of the study. Chapters Three, Four and Five present and analyse collected data, while Chapter Six discusses limitations of the study and implications for further research.

\(^{42}\) “Immigrant” language is a problematic term because it does not apply to English or French (both are languages of European settlers too) but also because it is confusing: an immigrant from France could technically speak an immigrant language at home—French, but because it also happens to be Canada’s official language, it cannot be considered an immigrant language.
CHAPTER 2
Research Methodology: Multilingual Dramaturgy as a Queer Phenomenological Practice

To make things queer is certainly to disturb the order of things.

Sara Ahmed, Queer Phenomenology

Multilingual Dramaturgy as Context-Specific Practice and Research

Dramaturgy, a term coined by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1721-1781), is probably one of the most common, and at the same time most confusing, concepts in theatre studies (see Luckhurst, 2006). In the Anglophone tradition, it usually refers to “literary managers” (dramaturges) of theatres, but as post-dramatic, devised, dance and other less conventional forms of theatre claim more and more territory on the contemporary theatre landscape, a broader understanding of dramaturgy seems to be developing—a thorough, informed attention given to artistic choices and their effect on the overall structure of a theatre work within a specific sociocultural context. The authors of the New Dramaturgy, Katalin Trencsényl and Bernadette Cochrane, write: “Dramaturgy, having been freed from its historical association with Aristotelian poetics or considered only as an attribute of a dramatic text and/or textual analysis, gradually reconfigured itself by the late twentieth century, and has become synonymous with the totality of the performance-making process” (2014, xi). In a way, contemporary dramaturgy possesses a dualistic nature: it retains the analytic research aspect (traditionally, but not necessarily, rooted in text analysis) and it represents a very practical ‘know-how’ that configures a performance conceptually and aesthetically. It is not a unidirectional process that simply applies research, literary or otherwise, to practice—it may well abstract aesthetic rules and/or patterns from the very practice of constructing a performance. Dramaturgical practice and research are in a
dialectical relationship where creative discovery emerges at the intersection of theoretical inquiry and practical exploration.

What counts as ‘multilingual’ in multilingual dramaturgy? As I showed in Chapter 1, multilingual productions, while not being a new phenomenon, are currently on the rise, especially at major international festivals, such as Le Festival d’Avignon (France) or Le Festival transamérique (Canada). Nevertheless, the conceptual lens typically employed to carry out, as well as understand, stage multilingualism is still very much rooted in the monolingual modernist perspective. It is often jarring to see how an additional language is expected to be perceived and treated as foreign whilst actors and audiences are almost invariably seen as monolingual and monocultural beings. For instance, Debra Caplan, who contributed a chapter on multilingual dramaturgy to the recently published Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy (2014), conceptualizes the job of a multilingual dramaturge as one close to a translator and/or a cultural mediator, i.e., someone who interprets a ‘foreign’ culture for the representatives of a ‘home’ culture, who are assumed to be monocultural and/or monolingual. Caplan reflects upon her own experience of directing and dramaturging a bilingual production of a Yiddish play at Harvard University and her process of providing linguistic and cultural mediation for the actors in order to reach authenticity. She assumes a realist representational aesthetic framework and, consequently, argues that “in the case of a multilingual production, questions of authenticity come into even sharper focus” (2014, p.144).

Caplan also attempts to develop a future “toolkit” for multilingual dramaturgy, in which she includes the four following guidelines:

Dramaturgy is a mode of translation
Strategize foreignness
Cultivate awareness

Caplan draws from her own experience of working on one specific play produced within a specific set of stage conventions for a very particular audience and within a very specific
sociocultural milieu— in her case, an American “Ivy League” English speaking university. While within a certain cultural and linguistic milieu, such as Harvard, Caplan’s “toolkit” might be relevant and appropriate, it also seems to be predicated on conventions of theatre realism and the assumption of a common mono- and unilingual base shared by the audience and the actors; in other words, both the actors and the audience are expected to treat any other language but English as foreign.

It is interesting that presently even the most commercial theatre does not necessarily see multilingual dramaturgy through the translation lens that Caplan adopted for her own production. In the most recent reincarnation of West Side Story, premiered in 2009 and directed by the author of the original libretto, Broadway veteran Arthur Laurentz, the “Sharks”—the New York street gang comprised of first generation immigrants from Puerto Rico—would speak and sing both English and Spanish and no simultaneous translation of the Spanish lyrics or lines were provided. West Side Story’s producers cast bilingual actors (English and Spanish speakers) to perform the “Sharks”. The decision to turn the monolingual libretto into a bilingual libretto could be construed as a mere gimmick, perhaps necessary for a revival, or a meaningful act of either empowerment or disempowerment. For instance, unlike their monolingual counterparts (the Jets), the Sharks were suddenly able to demonstrate that they could easily switch between linguistic and cultural codes: the ‘immigrants’ became bilingual instead of being simply English speaking with an ‘accent’. At the same time, as one of the touring production critic’s mentions, the Spanish lines “lose more in the irony of making the Puerto Rican characters less intelligible to much of the audience” (Berson, 2012). Admittedly, the bilingualism of this revival production can also be seen as an ingenious marketing step aiming to bring more bilingual New-Yorkers and tourists, specifically espanophones, to the theatre.43

43 For a more detailed analysis of Laurentz’ experimentation with the show’s bilingualism as well as the complexity and controversy around it, see Herrera (2012).
Whether or not the dramaturgy of *West Side Story* was constructed with Spanish or bilingual speakers in mind, it is clear that even mainstream producers and theatre creators are currently experimenting with stage bilingualism. It is also clear that bilingual (notably English and Spanish only) performers are beginning to gain importance in the mainstream Broadway theatre. Their presence and their experience are no longer ignored. In the end, it is in large urban multilingual and multicultural centres where a space can be found for dramaturgical experimentation with multilingualism. This, of course, can be done with or without pandering to a specific cultural or linguistic community and without assuming the inherent monolingualism of its audiences and actors.

In sum, multilingual dramaturgy is *space- and time-specific* ‘know-how’ that configures a theatrical performance conceptually, aesthetically, and linguistically. The problem is that it is commonly approached by practitioners from a conceptual, linguistic, and aesthetic paradigm of monolingualism. Such an approach could be seen as an innocuous practice; however, as I will argue below following Sara Ahmed’s queer phenomenology, it actually represents an exclusionary framework that supports existing power structures and misrepresents those who do not fit the standard monolingual (as well as monocultural or mononational) paradigm and, as a result, glosses over, or silences, diversity. Enforcing such a paradigm could be particularly damaging and even dangerous in the multilingual and multicultural context of large urban centres, such as Toronto.

**Philosophical Lenses: Making Phenomenology Queer**

Originally conceived by Edmund Husserl, phenomenology concerns itself with the study of human experience. While phenomenological schools of thought may differ from each other

44 Another notable example of a highly successful bilingual show would be the musical *In the Heights* (opened on Broadway in 2005).

45 For a comprehensive account of the development of Husserl’s phenomenological ideas, see Zahavi, 2003.
quite significantly, Daniel Johnson suggests that there are a few shared characteristics of the phenomenological method:

[...] it takes a unique epistemological position as its foundation in “bracketing off” the question of objective reality and seeking to grasp the modes of experience or “givenness” of the world. Rather than claim that reality exists independently of perception (objectivism) or, conversely, that it exists solely within the mind (subjectivism), phenomenology demands rigorous attention to “the things themselves.” This position invites a revision of the history of philosophy and encourages us to question how certain metaphysical conclusions have been arrived at in the course of history. The point is not whether the world exists outside or inside the mind but how we can experience an outside or an inside in the first place (p. 68).

In other words, the phenomenological lens demands a critical attention to the “structure of our inside and outside experience.” What is more important for my study is not to approach and interpret multilingual experiences through a lens that is relevant to a monolingual experience. In this regard, I will argue that a very specific interpretation of the phenomenological approach is needed for the understanding of such experiences. Below I contend that Sarah Ahmed’s queer phenomenological framework is a useful epistemological tool to push against the limiting and potentially misleading monolingual interpretation of a multilingual experience.

To introduce the relevance and importance of Ahmed’s queer phenomenology, I will now allow myself a small diversion. In 2015, a powerful cinematic experiment conducted by director Miroslav Slaboshpitsky became an immediate sensation at major European film festivals: Slaboshpitsky directed *The Tribe*, a feature film about a bleak Ukrainian boarding school for the deaf—a place rampant with bullying, prostitution, sexual abuse and violence. However, it was not so much the content of the film that captivated the audiences but rather the unconventional way Slaboshpitsky chose to present it: in *The Tribe*, all conversations between characters are conducted exclusively in sign language with no voiceovers or subtitles provided. In fact, the whole 132-minute film, while having a masterfully crafted soundtrack, does not contain any linguistic utterances and manages to carry out a fairly complex plot. A viewer unfamiliar with sign language is invariably faced with a number of difficult choices: endeavour
to decipher the meaning of the gesture signs, ignore them entirely, focus on body language exclusively, approach the meaning making from a larger context or resist inferring meaning all together. A viewer familiar with Ukrainian sign language would certainly have a very different selection to make. From the start of the film, as soon as Slaboshpitsky’s technique becomes clear to the viewers, they are expected to make decisions directed towards the unorthodoxy of the technique used in the film. In other words, the subject (viewer) will have to get orientated toward the unorthodox art object—the lengthy silent/non-silent film with a fairly elaborate storyline. The subjects themselves can vary: some—arguably the majority of viewers—may have full hearing, some may be hearing impaired, some might live with a complete loss of hearing. Each subject’s orientation towards the film will be different as well. This process of orientating towards a queer object, is a complex bodily experience that requires a thorough description and understanding. What is equally important is that this process can be experienced very differently by a queer subject and by a non-queer subject.

What constitutes a queer subject and a queer object? How do subjects become queer and how do they orientate themselves towards queer objects? Why is this process of “orientating” important? How should the queer orientating be described and interpreted? How can all this be relevant and important for the study of multilingual subjects and their encounters with multilingual objects, such as theatre performance, for example? To answer these questions I will turn to Sara Ahmed’s proposal on the merger of phenomenology and queer theory, as well as applications of this merger to what Ahmed calls diversity work (2014).

In her Queer Phenomenology (2006), Ahmed draws from the works of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, as well as a number of feminist philosophers, to indicate that our perception is not a function, but rather an orientation (or direction), towards objects. Ahmed’s primary interest is sexual orientation. While there may be some perceived difference between

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46 This focus on “orientation towards the object” is very different from a more conventional semiotic approach which dominated theatre studies up until the end of the 20th century. Unlike phenomenology, semiotics is interested in the sign per se, rather than the bodily experience of accepting, rejecting or interpreting the sign.
orientating and orientation, Ahmed explains that both have similar roots, where the latter is often seen as a more legitimate term. She quotes Rictor Norton, who questions the meaning of the term ‘sexual orientation’ as a scholarly or scientific concept. Norton writes:

Because the term ‘orientation’ is now common in legal and psychiatric discourses, we think of it as a scientific word. But of course it is merely a directional metaphor drawn from magnetism and navigation, which has gradually superseded the directional metaphors used prior to the 1970s; inclination, deviant, pervert, invert, taste, tendency, bent, drive (2002, p. i).

Ahmed takes Norton’s point further: “The transformation of sexual orientation into “a species” involves the translation of “direction” into identity” (2006, p. 69). For Ahmed, “it is not simply the object that determines the “direction” of one’s desire; rather the direction one takes makes some others available as object to be desired” (2006, p. 70). The key metaphor here is direction—reorientating that one needs to do towards an object. Interestingly, Ahmed does not use the term ‘identity’ (as in lesbian or gay identity, for instance)—instead she prefers to conceptualize identity as a set of repeated orientations that form a deceptively stable perception, which in turn begins to be read or understood as one’s identity (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** The Process of Orientating.

To provide a telling example, Ahmed reflects on her own experience of “becoming a lesbian,” i.e., ceasing her sojourn with a heterosexual partner in her ‘home’ locale, moving to a foreign place, reorganizing her life (and body) and beginning a ‘new life’—queer life—which in her case means living with a lesbian partner. She also reveals the tremendous amount of work that “becoming” requires: both on the bodily (or personal) and social levels:

47 Ahmed’s own term, which follows the Heideggerian classic of ‘dasein’ and Judith Butler’s idea of ‘turning’ (Ahmed, 2006, p. 15).
I left the “world” of heterosexuality, and became a lesbian, even though this means staying in a heterosexual world. For me, this line was a lifeline, and yet it also meant leaving the well-trodden paths. [...] It is certainly desire that helps generate a lesbian landscape, a ground that is shaped by the paths that we follow in deviating from the straight line. And yet, becoming a lesbian still remains a difficult line to follow. The lesbian body does not extend the shape of this world, as the world organized around the form of the heterosexual couple. Inhabiting a body that is not extended by the skin of the social means the world acquires a new shape and makes new impressions (2006, pp. 19-20).

Ahmed continues her argument by explaining that becoming orientated is a complex and often tedious process that starts with disorientation. Once a queer subject rejects being part of the invisible and compulsory heterosexuality, s/he has to go through disorientation, which is a process of parting with the repetition that essentially forms one’s perception. The familiar will have to be rejected in order to become re-orientated. Ahmed takes her argument even further and proposes disorientation as an important, though not obligatory, political stance for those who see themselves as queer subjects:

In calling for a politics that involves disorientation, which registers that disorientation shatters our involvement in a world, it is important not to make disorientation an obligation or a responsibility for those who identify as queer. This position demands too much (for some, a life-long commitment to deviation is not psychically or materially possible or sustainable, even if their desires are rather oblique), but it also “forgives” too much by letting those who are straight stay on their line. It is not up to queers to disorientate straights, just as it is not up to bodies of color to do the work of antiracism, although of course disorientation might still happen and we do “do” this work. Disorientation, then, would not be a politics of the will but an effect of how we do politics, which in turn is shaped by the prior matter of simply how we live (2006, p. 177).

In Ahmed’s view, orientation and disorientation are not, and should not be limited to sexual orientation. While Ahmed starts with sexual orientation, in Chapter Three of her Queer Phenomenology she investigates how race, specifically, mixed race, could be seen through the same philosophical lens. In her most recent volume, On Being Included (2014), she expands the queer phenomenological framework, focusing exclusively on race and how it is perceived in institutionalized settings. Being queer for Ahmed is not about being lesbian, even though being lesbian is also an inherent part of queerness—it is about orientating one’s body against (or in
her own lingo—“around”) the “compulsory”, be it “compulsory heteronormativity” or “compulsory white race.”

Essentially, Ahmed proposes a resistive framework to understanding a queer subject. Following another feminist scholar, Teresa de Lauretis, she pushes against Freud’s psychoanalysis and its attempts to understand “queerness.” When analysing homosexual desire, Freud treats it as a “problem” whose origins could be revealed through a psychoanalytic “tracing back.” Ahmed challenges Freud on the presentation of homosexual desire within the “straight line” (or “normal”, heterosexual desire) and argues that the “straight line” is what shapes the very tendency to go astray” (2014, p. 79). Hence, to achieve a new or simply different understanding of one’s desire, we need to remove the “straight line.” Just like feminist scholars challenged classical phenomenology as a philosophy inherently operating from the position of a male body, Ahmed asserts that typically a “homosexual subject” [...] gets read as having got lost on the way “toward” the “other sex.” According to Ahmed, reading a “black” or “a mixed race” subject as the one who “lost” their whiteness is equally problematic. Analogously, a monolingual subject with one mother tongue invariably signifies “the straight line,” while a multilingual subject should be perceived as “going astray” from the “normalcy” of monolingualism.

Ahmed suggests following Judith Butler’s reframing of the widely accepted and, hence, compulsory, coordinates which inadvertently and invariably shape one’s perception. Butler writes about a “field of heterosexual objects” produced by compulsory sexuality (1997, p. 21). Ahmed adds:

Heterosexuality is not then simply an orientation toward others, it is also something that we are orientated around, even if it disappears from view. It is not that the heterosexual subject has to turn away from queer objects in accepting heterosexuality as a parental gift: compulsory heterosexuality makes such a turning unnecessary (although becoming straight can be lived as a “turning away”) (1997, p. 90-91).

Ahmed reflects on how within the world of compulsory heterosexuality, i.e., where heterosexuality is assumed, a queer subject can easily disappear. Once again, she refers to her own experience of “disappearance,” as she describes a humourous encounter with her new
neighbour who automatically assumes that Ahmed’s partner must be heterosexual by asking in passing “Is it your sister or your husband?” Ahmed shows how it is “the ordinary work of perception that straightens the queer effect: *in a blink, the slant of lesbian desire is straightened up*” (p. 96). A queer subject can be disappearing multiple times a day through the workings of the human perception guided by “compulsive heterosexuality.” Subsequently, queer phenomenology, as opposed to the classic phenomenology of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, needs to concern itself with phenomenological frameworks that make a queer subject disappear. In other words, queer phenomenology needs to have an “inverted” look—a critical understanding of its own phenomenological coordinates.

Here, I would like to make a crucial pivot to multilingualism and multilinguals to elucidate how Ahmed’s resistive framework can re-conceptualize the perception of multilingualism and multilinguals. First, I would like to argue that multilingual subjects can, although are not obliged to, demonstrate queer orientations. As I mentioned above, in Ahmed’s view, orientation and disorientation are not and should not be limited to sexual orientation. Ahmed extrapolated “queerness” upon the concept of “orientalism” and investigates how race, specifically, mixed race, could be seen as queer, while being white would be similar to “compulsory heterosexuality”:

> The alignment of race and space is crucial to how they materialize as givens, as if each “extends” the other. In other words, while “the other side of the world” is associated with “racial otherness,” racial others become associated with the “other side of the world.” They come to *embody distance*. This embodiment of distance is what makes whiteness “proximate,” as the “starting point” for orientation. Whiteness becomes what is “here,” a line from which the world unfolds, which also makes what is “there” on “the other side” (2006, p. 123).

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In fact, Sara Ahmed points out that although Merleau-Ponty did not use the term *queer phenomenology*, he did include “queer moments” in his *Phenomenology of Perception*. However, for Merleau-Ponty, “the queer moment, in which objects appear slantwise and the vertical and horizontal axes appear “out of line,” must be overcome […] because they block bodily action: they inhibit the body such that it ceases to extend into phenomenal space.” (Ahmed, 2006 p. 66)
Following Ahmed, I propose to extend the metaphor of queer orientation from sexual orientation (which is a metaphor itself) to a multilingual speaker. What might make such extrapolation possible?

As I showed in Chapter 1, we often live in the world of commonly assumed and often institutionalized or, in Butler’s terms, “compulsory”, monolingualism and our perception is normally framed by the monolingual lens, which “trains” one to assume the dominance of the mother tongue (in most cases ONE single mother tongue) and to treat L2 as an ‘additional’ and typically subordinate language—the language of the Other. Just like with “racial otherness”, L2 is there to “embody distance” (Ahmed’s term). L2 is not something that belongs to an L2 speaker, it is a language, and with it a culture and a body that a non-native speaker is not expected to ever possess. Instead, we are expected to be oriented towards our L1 and L2 in very specific ways. Moreover, that kind of orientation can be institutionalized (and internalized) through, for instance, endless questionnaires, forms, censuses we have to complete throughout our lives. 49

Ahmed writes: “It is through the repetition of a shared direction that collectives are made” (2006, p. 117). This is how communities are formed, this is how the perception of race is conceived and this, I would argue, is how the monolingual (and/or monocultural) beliefs are being instilled in individuals and society at large. Due to this “compulsory” monolingualism (or more precisely “mother-tongueness”), a multilingual can choose to “come out” as multilingual or pretend to exist even temporarily within the monolingual framework, just like Ahmed “came out” of her ‘home culture that was ostensibly heterosexual’ and reoriented herself as a “lesbian.”

49 For example, the Canadian population census only recently began to differentiate between the concepts of “mother tongue” and “home language”; however, it still considers knowledge of other languages (presumably one’s L2s) irrelevant, unless those languages are English or French—the official languages of the country (Linguistic Characteristics of Canadians, 2011).
Personally, I have faked being a monolingual on multiple occasions simply by using languages I can speak with no marked accent. I have also learned to occasionally “come out of the closet” and confront the monolingual perception by showing that it is not at all applicable to my perception of the world or of myself. Ahmed insists that a queer subject is not a heterosexual subject who lost his/her way. Similarly, a second or additional language speaker (or a multilingual/multicultural subject) is not a monolingual (a mother tongue speaker) who lost ‘his/her way’ by speaking in his/her “wrong” language. Queering such a monolingual perception instead of perpetuating it may allow queer linguistic and cultural subjecthood to “come out of the closet.”

To illustrate this point, I can refer to my own quotidian, i.e., repeated, multilingual experience, that constantly shapes my life and my perception: I am writing this dissertation exclusively in English; later I will be speaking to my mother in Russian and Armenian, then to my sister in English and Russian, and to my partner in French. In addition, I am regularly asked to perform or emcee a performance in English or French. In many instances, I will be mixing and meshing languages because all my common communication partners share at least two of my languages and because I can. Eventually, I will go to bed to sleep and dream—and cannot possibly predict in what language or accent my dreams might happen. My languages are shaped by the experiences they are applied to, and my perception is shaped by my languages and my repeated experiences. I am not one or the other: I am not English, Russian, French, or Armenian, nor am I a hybrid—instead, I am in the continuous process of being orientated towards communication systems (verbal and non-verbal) and cultures. What makes me a queer linguistic (and cultural) subject is not the fact that I can speak different languages but rather that I do not, in Ahmed’s metaphoric parlance, “flow into the world” (2006, p. 139), specifically the world of assumed monolingualism where people are only themselves when they speak their mother tongue. I have gone through disorientation (in fact, disorientations) and re-orientated myself towards four of my languages as “MY” languages, rather than the languages
of the ‘Other’, the repetition of that orientation allowed me to self-identify as a multilingual speaker, not a speaker of L1 with two or three additional languages.\(^{50}\)

I believe that, in order to understand multilingual speakers’ orientation towards their languages and their multilingualism, we need queer phenomenology. Ahmed writes “I called for a phenomenology of “being stopped,” a description of the world from the point of view of those who do not flow into it (2006, p 140).

That is not to say that all multilinguals share the same perception as I do. Some multilinguals “may imagine themselves to remain steadfastly monolingual, discounting their multilectal\(^{51}\) and multiregister competences” (The Douglas Fir Group, 2016, p. 26). In other words, multilinguals may often adhere to the dominant monolingual positionality without ever attempting to entirely “switch the framework” and get disoriented to enter a different state of perception, which could either be their personal choice, their lack of confidence in their L2(s), a mere absence of affordances, or a mixture of these and other factors.

For example, such non-queer positionality permeates the 2015 special issue of Theatre Research in Canada/Les Recherches théâtrales au Canada entitled Theatre and Immigration, where a number of articles deal, both directly and tangentially, with the issue of multilingual actors. For instance, Diana Manole’s Accented Actors: From Stage to Stages via a Convenience Store presents a case study that primarily looks at the experience of Nada Humsi, an Arab Canadian actor. Hamsi in her phone interview with Manole expresses a very strong monolingual positionality towards her L2 accent:

I am an actress—I can play a tree, a bird, an old woman. I didn’t care at all about my accent. Never wanted to learn the Canadian accent because I am above that. I know that you can’t make an American speak Arabic like an Arab: you can’t make a Russian

\(^{50}\) It is certainly important to acknowledge here that my family and personal history, my education, my language aptitude, as well as my own agency, among many other factors, affected my “orientations” towards each of my languages. It is clear that those affordances are not applicable to each and every case of multilingualism.

\(^{51}\) Multilectal: a speaker capable of using two or more dialects of the same language.
speak English like and Englishman; you can’t ask a tulip to become a jasmine (Manole, 2015, p. 270).

It is worth noting that both Hamsi and Manole fail to acknowledge the inherently ‘multilingual’ nature of Arabic in the modern world. Arabic is one of the few languages that exist within the situation of diglossia—a perpetual state of two recognized varieties functioning simultaneously: Classical or Quranic Arabic (the language of schooling in Arabic speaking countries) and local Arabic, or more precisely Arabics (the language of communication for most Arab speaking people). Diglossia—arguably, a weaker form of heteroglossia—is essential to anyone who was educated in an Arabic-speaking place. Moreover, as recent research shows, the literary variety of Arabic is processed by native speakers of Arabic similarly to how L2 is usually processed by L2 learners (Nevat et al., 2014); thus, in a way, any educated native speaker of Arabic is simultaneously an L2 speaker of the same language.

In other words, one’s L1 can also be one’s L2. More importantly, it is troubling to hear disparaging remarks about language from an actor—a person for whom voice, language and accent can be essential tools of expression. How would we react if a professional actor said “I am above body. Body doesn’t matter.” and then ignored body all together?

The point I am trying to make here is that Humsi embraces the mother tongue valorizing ideal quite uncritically: for her, L2 is always L2—the language of the Other that one cannot fully master; hence, “you can’t make an American speak Arabic like an Arab.” In fact, it is exactly the same non-queer positionality that allows mainstream Canadian theatres to only see her as an “Arab” and, hence, not hire her and many other L2 speaking actors for roles that require an “unmarked accent.” Following Humsi’s logic: just as an American cannot be Russian, an Arab cannot be Canadian.

Such positionality, while widely accepted and commonly assumed by both mono- and multilinguals, flies in the face of some recent linguistic research on multilingualism. For example, Arlene Moyer, the author of the most recent and most comprehensive study on L2 speakers’ accented speech cites copious linguistic and neurolinguistic research that indicates that accents are not a pre-given, non-changeable characteristic, only dependant on one’s mother
tongue, nor are they a necessary result of acquiring L2 after the so-called “critical period” (childhood and adolescence), challenging the common belief that children are necessarily better than adults at the ultimate attainment of an L2 accent. Moyer writes: “In terms of the quality of L2 input and use, accent has been shown to correlate significantly to the consistency of one’s contact with native speakers and L2 use across multiple domains (family, home, school, work, etc.). Many socio-psychological factors are significant as well, including concern for pronunciation accuracy, sense of identity in L2, motivation, and positive attitudes toward the target-language culture” (2013, pp. 18-19).

More importantly, the monolingual positionality espoused by both Humsi and Manole locks a subject within a clearly delineated and unchangeable duality: L1 and L2 (or L1 culture and L2 culture), where L2 can only be the language of the Other. Manole concludes her article about “accented actors”—that is to say “accented in L2 only”, as their ability to produce marked and unmarked accents in L1 is conveniently overlooked — by pointing to the fact that “accentedness” disrupts “mainstream” and challenges “prejudices”:

The suspension of disbelief on a visual and, more and more often, a sonic level attests to the ability of actors and audience in accented theatre to break through inherited prejudices and contribute to the acceptance of linguistic diversity. Hopefully, this attitude will be increasingly echoed in everyday life in the world and in Canada, as Lee Maracle envisions: “Eventually, there will be no mainstream. We’ll be like this country: little rivers and streams that will join each other” (271).

While the presence of accents and “accented actors” does have potential to disrupt the “mainstream,” what is significant for my argument is that “a marked” accent does not yet make an “accented actor” a queer subject. Rather, it is the way a subject orientates towards language (and culture) that matters, not the ability to speak a language or to produce (or not to

52 Even studies that recognize maturational constrains on L2 accent acquisition admit that among many other factors language aptitude may be particularly significant for L2 accent acquisition in adults. For instance, Granena and Long (2012) found a statistically significant correlation between L2 pronunciation and aptitude for adult L2 learners. (p. 331)

53 I would argue that it also has a potential to reinforce it.
produce) a mainstream accent. For instance, in the same volume, Cynthia Asperger, a Canadian Croatian actor, voices similar concerns as Humsi does about her “slightly” accented English (pp. 320-328); however, she also makes a point that upon her return to Croatia she willingly immerses herself in the mainstream Croatian realist theatre where she is, of course, perceived as a non-accented actor and where she has a chance to play ‘mainstream’ female roles from the Western canon of plays. Similarly, when she is back in Canada it is the mainstream Anglo-Canadian realist theatre that seems to attract her—in other words, she has little desire to orientate herself towards language and theatre as a queer subject. She longs for the world of “compulsory mainstream.”

Keeping in mind that a subject may or may not experience queer orientating, how can I apply queer phenomenology to the study of multilingual dramaturgy? And why is it relevant? One of the ways stage multilingualism has been studied is by placing the linguistic sign, as a completely abstract depersonalized entity (following Ferdinand de Saussure’s concept of “langue”) at the centre of one’s research. This is the conceptual framework commonly used by both theoretical linguists and theatre scholars.

A completely different way to approach multilingualism is to look at it more holistically, i.e.,

A. without removing language from its user, i.e., the human being that is using (through speaking, listening, reading or writing) multiple languages for different purposes
B. without reducing the language to its linguistic component and without removing the non-verbal component of the human communication system (see Chapter 1).

The phenomenological approach focuses on the subject, i.e., the users of the language and their perception, and rejects the centrality or independence of the linguistic sign. Within the theatrical realm, the subjects would be both actors and audience members, where both roles are fluid and can be reversed at any point. Their perception of the ‘language experience’, i.e., the way they orientate themselves towards various languages (and the NVC systems working in
conjunction with languages) is what becomes the object of research, not the languages themselves.

Studying an actor’s perception through a phenomenological lens has been recently advocated by a number of researcher-practitioners, for instance, Phillip Zarrilli (2011), who offers a compelling example of documenting his own phenomenological process of performing in Beckett’s *Ohio Impromptu* through journals. What escapes Zarrilli’s view, though, is the potential queerness of certain subjects (actors) and how they can go through disorientation and orientation differently from non-queer subjects.

Instead of simply documenting the actors’ perception of performing, as proposed by Zarrilli, I will be looking for the “unsystematised lines of acquaintance” (Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, 2005, p.198) or points of queer directionality, their repetition or absence of repetition. Such points are important not only to shake the ‘mainstream’ through giving presence to ‘the uncomfortable’ (queer) but also, to find alternative paradigms that can help those who do not belong to mainstream, or do not inhabit new categories instead of coercing them into inhabiting the categories that they cannot inhabit by nature, by nurture, or by choice. As Sarah Ahmed puts it: “A queer phenomenology might turn to phenomenology by asking not only about the concept of orientation in phenomenology, but also about the orientation of phenomenology” (2006, p. 3).

Queer phenomenology is not only about the subjects, it is also about a queer object. In a theatre context, an acting subject becomes part of an object—a theatre performance, which means the object itself needs to be addressed. This is where I would like to return to Slaboshpitsky’s film *The Tribe* to help exemplify what it means to be a queer object and why it is important to analyse the object, too. Let us accept that the mainstream film industry largely shapes our perception and our need for spoken language in a feature film. By sheer volume, films with spoken language vastly outnumber those that do not use speech. *The Tribe*, then, with its speech-free soundtrack and ostensible use of sign language, becomes queer, as it carries a potential to produce a disorienting effect which will require the viewer’s re-orientation: in
fact, it will require everyone’s re-orientating. Hearing viewers, not familiar with sign language, will face a number of choices for re-orienting themselves. Alternatively, I can also imagine viewers who are hearing and familiar with sign language—multilinguals par excellence. Their re-orientation process will be different, as they will have to take in the soundtrack as well as the sign language. Another possibility—a viewer with a complete loss of hearing will not have access to the soundtrack and additional cues that are there to contradict or complete the sign language. One way or another, a queer object challenges both queer and non-queer subjects by provoking a disorientation, which prompts those subjects to consider various new directions, or, in Ahmed’s terms, “orientations.”

In a world where the majority of theatre production is monolingual, multilingual dramaturgy has the potential to become a *queer object* (or part of a queer object—a multilingual performance) challenging the monolingual perception of both actors and audiences. This queer object is not to be taken for granted—just like the queer subject it requires to be present in a queer phenomenological study.

Overall, I contend that the queer phenomenological framework proposed by Ahmed is an epistemological key to understanding multilingualism and multilinguals. Its focus on queer subjects (in my case—actors and audience) and a queer object (stage performance), as well as its inverted focus on itself has a potential to illuminate how the existing ‘monolingual hegemony’ may exclude those who do not “flow into it.”

Additionally, queer phenomenology parallels the aims of critical interdisciplinarity. As I explained in Chapter One, critical interdisciplinarity does more than simply integrate different disciplines for solving practical problems: “Rather than building bridges across academic units for practical problem-solving, critical interdisciplinarians seek to transform and dismantle the boundary between the literary and the political, treat cultural objections relationally, and advocate inclusion of low culture” (Klein, 2005, pp. 55-58). I suggest that both queer phenomenology and critical interdisciplinarity aim to push against dominant forms of knowledge.
Methodology: Practice as Research

In her latest book *On Being Included* (2014), Sara Ahmed posits an interesting turn on the generation of knowledge through phenomenological practice: she specifically looks into diversity work in institutionalized settings, conceptualizing diversity work as a phenomenological practice (she uses practice and praxis interchangeably). Ahmed writes:

Diversity work does not simply generate knowledge *about* institutions [...] it generates knowledge of institutions in the process of attempting to transform them. We could also think of diversity as praxis, drawing on a Marxist understanding of the point of intellectual labor: as Marx argues in *Theses on Feuerbach*, Philosophers have only interpreted the world differently but *the point is to change it*’’ ([1845] 2009: 97; emphasis added). Drawing on this radical tradition, Paulo Freire defines praxis as ‘‘reflection and action upon the world *in order to transform it*’’ ([1970] 2000: 51; emphasis added). I want to offer a different way of thinking about the relationship between knowledge and transformation. Rather than suggesting that knowledge leads (or should lead) to transformation, I offer a reversal that in my view preserves the point or aim of the argument: transformation, as a form of practical labor, leads to knowledge (p. 173).

It is this interesting twist on Marx’s eleventh thesis that I took as a guiding point for my own phenomenological study. It is not that I inherently knew and understood multilingual dramaturgy, which one may argue can be a diversity practice in itself, rather it is through the practice of experimenting with multilingual dramaturgy and experiencing this ‘know-how’ that I was attempting to generate knowledge.

My approach to discovering and investigating the ‘know-how’, which is multilingual dramaturgy, draws from Robin Nelson’s practice as research (PaR) methodology, which advocates “liquid knowing,” as opposed to hard facts (2013, p.60). While traditionally PaR was seen as qualitative\(^{54}\) (for instance, see Gray, 1996, p.15), Nelson sides with Brad Haseman’s

\(^{54}\) Carole Gray writes: “The main methodology is responsive, driven by the requirements of practice and the creative dynamic of the artwork. It is essentially qualitative and naturalistic. It acknowledges complexity and real experience and practice - it is ‘real world research’, and all ‘mistakes’ are revealed and acknowledged for the sake
position, which qualifies PaR as a “third species of research” standing “in alignment with, but separate to, the established qualitative and quantitative research traditions” (Haseman, 2010, p.150). In his Manifesto for Performative Research Brad Haseman writes:

In general terms, quantitative researchers are not much interested in the phenomena of human practice. [...] Similarly, mainstream qualitative researchers established research strategies that informed research on practice, and the whole panoply of observational methods developed for qualitative and quantitative research bear testimony to this positioning of practice as an object of study, not as a method of research (2006, p.100).

While Haseman is being very cautious when demarcating borders between qualitative and performative practice research (or by the same token—PaR), he, nevertheless, positions the latter as a separate strand of research activity, which can come about through verbalization like qualitative research, but, more importantly through other “forms of nonnumeric data” that are different from the “discursive text” (2006, p. 101). This multidimensionality of data modes, in which research results can manifest themselves, can provide a very specific and essentially unique kind of insight in the ‘know-how’, which is different from what may come from a word-based presentation and the analytic search for patterns. It is this multidimensionality of the artistic creation that allows both Haseman and Nelson to place the practice itself as essential and the writing of it as complementary.

Positioning practice at the centre of one’s research, perhaps, does not seem as unorthodox or problematic in 2016 as it probably did when PaR was only seen as an emergent methodology (at least in the Anglophone world) and, yet, one might argue that certain variations of PaR have always been a dominant methodology for many artist-theoreticians. In theatre, one can think of a number of prominent eastern and western practitioners whose practices resemble, to greater or lesser extent, PaR. Prominent names such as Zeami Motokiyo,
Konstantin Stanislavski, Michael Chekhov, Bertolt Brecht, and Jerzi Grotowski come to mind. Each of those artists had his own often erratic, lengthy and confusing trajectory of the development of thought and practice—with a stronger emphasis on practice (for understandable reasons). Their writing is inseparable from their artistic work, and neither is a mere representation of the other. It is important to acknowledge, though, that all the theatre practitioners mentioned above were not researchers per se and came from different traditions and histories than PaR. At the same time, it is worth noting that scholars are currently beginning to interpret the works of some of those artists as phenomenological research (see, for instance, Johnston, 2011).

Similarly, Nelson sees PaR’s theoretical foundations as rooted in phenomenology, specifically in the phenomenological school of thought that focuses on perception and embodiment. PaR aims to uncover or, in Nelson’s terms, “evidence” embodied knowledge:

‘Embodied’ knowledge would appear to be subjective (extremely close-up in contrast with science’s aspiration to a distanced objectivity). But it is now argued that all thinking is inexorably embodied. Thus there is a tension (though not a contradiction) between the idea above that the world is constructed through language and the notion that thinking is to some extent physical, formed in the bodymind (Nelson, 2013, pp. 56-57).

While Nelson advocates the subjectivity and tacitness of embodied knowledge, he also calls for methodological rigour in PaR and clearly delineates the differences between artistic practice and artistic research. He writes:

[…] the relation between practices and any accompanying writing to articulate and evidence the research inquiry involves more than willingness, or otherwise, of practitioner-researchers to write complementary commentaries. It is a question of relations between different modes of knowing which, though in dialogue in my model

55 The primacy of practice is important here, and so is its positioning and timing: there is a popular tale of Stanislavsky getting very angry with his former student Michael (Mikhail) Chekhov who had dared to publish his very first explanation of the Stanislavsky System of actor training based on Stanislavsky’s teaching. Once Stanislavsky learned about the publication, he got very cross with Chekhov and insisted that his exploration was far from over and his system was far from complete, hence, any publication of it was untimely, premature, and essentially misleading (Mel Gordon, 1987).
are subject to commensurate criteria of validity but which might affirm each other by way of resonance (p 58).

Nelson also proposes a course of action for PaR researchers that involves specification of research inquiry, setting a timeline for the project, building in moments of critical reflection, documenting a process capturing moments of insight, locating the practice within an existing lineage of practices and relating the inquiry to a broader debate (p.19).

Following Nelson’s PaR framework (2013, p. 29), my research practice was divided into the following steps:

1. Specification of research enquiry, timeline for research practice, ethical review (January 2013-February 2015)
2. Identification of the “lineage of similar practices” within the relevant locale: in my case, Toronto-Ontario-English Canada-Canada (June 2013-December 2014).
3. Artistic Practice: recruitment of participants, practice implementation and evidence collection with the embedded moments of “critical reflection”. Concurrent writing (March 2015-June 2015).
4. Post-practice analysis and complementary writing relating my praxis to a broader academic and artistic discussion (July 2015-August 2016).

Essentially, as my practice was unfolding, the artist-researcher (myself) was fully involved in the artistic process and was creating a written ‘notation’ of the practice ‘in-situ’ and from the perspective of the ‘organizer-artist-researcher’.56

Formulating Research Inquiry.

56 Here I purposefully avoid the term ‘director’ as it may imply a conventional mode of theatre production where a clear hierarchical positioning of the director is observed and advocated.
Research inquiry is Nelson’s term denoting the focus or theme of one’s PaR. Nelson explains: “I prefer the term ‘research inquiry’ to ‘research question’ since questions may imply answers
and the kinds of work typically undertaken in the PaR PhD context, while they yield findings,
do not typically produce solutions to problems in the mode of answers” (2013, p.97). Since
practice in PaR is not positioned to prove or disprove a theory, it is not set to answer “research
questions” but rather explore an area of inquiry through artistic means in order to generate new
knowledge—the essence of academic research. Consequently, according to Nelson, PaR starts
with formulating a general research enquiry—an entry point into the “liquid knowledge,”
which is expected to emerge in the process of practice.

With that in mind, I formulated my research inquiry as a combination of three co-dependent objectives:

1. To explore the possibilities and limitations of embodied multilingual dramaturgy
   through constructing (and reflecting upon the process of construction) a devised
   performance which would be thematically and aesthetically centred on
   multilingualism.

2. Within the framework of the devised multilingual performance, explore the
   mono- and multilingual actors’ processes of performing (and/or learning to
   perform) in more than one language.

3. To investigate how Toronto’s multilingual audience perceives the multilingual
   nature of this devised performance.

At the centre of my research is an attempt to give multilingualism centre stage without
resorting to the techniques that emerged within the monolingual paradigm, i.e., temporary
defamiliarization or immediate direct translation and its typical corollary: sub- or surtitling (see
Chapter One). In other words, my dramaturgical exploration attempted to find ways to
approach language by “queering” the hierarchy implied by monolingualism as well as by
including body in the process of understanding language. This exploration of stage
multilingualism took place in the context of Canada’s largest city, Toronto—allegedly, one of
the most multicultural, and by corollary, multilingual urban centres of the world—which undoubtedly affected the contingent of the project participants (both performers and audiences) as well as the aesthetic choices made by the creative team. 57

My exploration adopted the framework of devised theatre. I followed Bruce Barton’s definition of ‘devised theatre’, which conceptualizes devised work as “an approach to theatrical creation and performance for which text is not accorded primary or ‘sacred’ status” and in which “the elements of visual and aural presentation, as well as the work’s engagement with narrative, equally emerge out of a set of processes that are based in interdisciplinarity, movement, improvisation, physical discipline and the set of creative instruments understood, and experienced, as instinct and intuition” (2008, p.1). This devised theatre paradigm was deemed the most suitable for my research inquiry, as it

a) opened up space for various sources of initial material without attributing to the playwright’s text any exclusive power, and, at the same time, without excluding the possibility of using a written text as an initial source;
b) brought to the fore physical (body) experimentation;
c) entailed collaborative work and allowed each participant to have significantly more dramaturgical input than in more conventional director-driven text-based theatre projects.

57 It was clear to me from the very onset of my research process that I would have to make an extra effort to draw both multilingual participants and audiences to this project. According to the 2011 Statistics Canada census, 49% of Torontonians speak an L1 different from English. Moreover, Statistics Canada identified more than 160 mother tongues spoken in the Greater Toronto Area: https://www1.toronto.ca/city_of_toronto/social_development_finance__administration/files/pdf/language_2011_backgrounder.pdf. Nevertheless, while it may be easier to find in a multilingual and multicultural urban centre like Toronto, multilingualism of both theatre actors and theatre audiences cannot be assumed. Hence, my calls for participants, both core and secondary, emphasized multilingualism as an important, even though not required, ability that participants should demonstrate or at least be interested in. Both calls for participants went out to various L1 communities in Toronto.
Essentially, while the show’s material was culled from various sources, not one text, the devised process and performance also provided space for each of the participants to become multilingual dramaturges, as well as give specific attention to physical experimentation (body).

**Identifying a lineage of similar practices.**
In this section, I will trace how multilingualism is treated in contemporary Canadian theatre in order to see how Canadian theatre creators approach stage multilingualism and whether or not they see multilingual dramaturgy as an instrument to queer the dominant monolingual framework. In other words, I am interested in the practices that do not follow Debra Caplan’s conceptualization of multilingual dramaturgy (see p. 37), as a clear dichotomy of the ‘familiar’ and ‘foreign’, L1 and L2, “Us” and “the Other”. I will keep a broad focus and include multilingual productions in both French and English Canada, with a special emphasis on the work originating in Toronto.

My first acquaintance with multilingual Canadian theatre was Robert Lepage’s *La face cachée de la Lune* (The Far Side of the Moon), performed by Lepage himself. The production presented an impressive mélange of Canada’s official languages: English and French. Both languages seemed to enjoy a significant amount of stage time and no clear hierarchical positioning could be ascribed to either. Generally speaking, multilingualism, while perhaps not being Lepage’s primary concern as opposed to, for instance, digital dramaturgy and scenography, occupies a very prominent space in his works. His later productions such as *Lipsync* and *Playing Cards: Spades* can be regarded as the epitome of stage multilingualism as both go far beyond Canadian bilingualism and utilize multiple languages (admittedly mostly European) throughout the length of the performances. The signature feature of Lepage’s multilingual dramaturgy is the wealth of techniques he uses to integrate linguistic translation into the complex scenography of his shows. In addition, since most of Lepage’s shows are now touring productions (with most touring major international festivals throughout the world), the range of the techniques, as well as the choice of languages, can depend on where the piece is
performed. Here, for instance, is how Louise Ladouceur presents Lepage’s broad range of
dramaturgical techniques used in his production of *Cow-boy poétré* as presented in two
different Canadian provinces:

**Table 1.** Robert Lepage’s dramaturgical techniques of translation (Ladouceur, 2008, p. 54).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spectacle pour public franco-albertain</th>
<th>Spectacle pour public montréalais</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Texte source écrit :</td>
<td>Texte cible écrit :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- franglais</td>
<td>- franglais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- anglais</td>
<td>- anglais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texte source oral :</td>
<td>Texte cible oral :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- franglais avec accent albertain</td>
<td>- franglais avec accent albertain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- franglais avec accent québécois (joual)</td>
<td>- franglais avec accent québécois (joual)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- anglo-canadien de l’Ouest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Texte cible scénique (avec procédés et supports scéniques)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- deuxième annonceur francophone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- traduction préenregistrée</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Chantal ou « rodéo clown » pour traduction simultanée</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- panneau, projections, surtitres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While technically diverse, this whole set of techniques still falls under Caplan’s
category “dramaturgy as a mode of translation”—linguistic translation that is. Evidently, while
multilingualism in the form of linguistic diversity may be a staple feature of Lepage’s stage
work, his multilingual dramaturgy seems to remain within the limits of translation. Lepage’s
characters typically use the languages that are associated with ‘their’ home culture and, in rarer instances, when speaking in L2 that would have a marked accent: for instance, a Québécois person would be speaking Québécois French and accented Canadian English, a Mexican would be speaking Mexican Spanish and accented American English. Lepage’s sub- and surtitling, while often being cleverly integrated into a fine scenographic structure rather than being an additional burden on the spectator’s eyes, tends to provide an immediate translation of anything uttered in a language other than French, in case the show is performed in French Canada, or English—in English Canada.\textsuperscript{58} Similarly, while Lepage’s actors often comprise an international and multilingual collective, in his productions they usually perform mostly in their L1—thus, indicating a very conventional treatment of multilingual characters on stage.

Lepage’s approach belongs to a long lineage of Québécois productions where L1 is used as a reaffirmation of a cultural/linguistic identity, while multilingualism is used to nod at the unavoidable necessity to adopt the language of the Other—which in French Canada, and especially Quebec, has been seen as an act of oppressive assimilation. While characters might be multilingual, normally, only one language would be used as a marker of their cultural identity, which gives the representation of bilingualism a very particular structure. Marvin Carlson identifies David Fennario’s \textit{Balconville} (1979) as “the best-know example of a classic Canadian bilingual play: the play “dealt with two neighboring families, one primarily French-speaking, the other primarily English-speaking, and with the relationships between them and to the larger political system” (49). While \textit{Balconville} comes from an English Canadian (English Quebecois) playwright, it, similarly to many other works coming from French Canada, uses multilingualism primarily to reflect the reality of French Canadian existence that often requires mastery of Canada’s two official languages (less commonly—three or more languages),

\textsuperscript{58} The choice of language can also be related to the politics of each specific place where the show is performed. For instance, \textit{Needles and Opium} was performed at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa in both English and French. Following the official policy of bilingualism, the English and French versions of the show were shown on alternate dates. Subsequently, only the English version was offered in Toronto, Montreal only saw the French one.
especially for those who live in larger urban centres or in communities with a significant anglo- or allophone population. Therefore, the use of two languages serves the purposes of verisimilitude within the same predication of realism. Consequently, depending on the dramatist’s intent they will be, according to Caplan’s framework, either “strategizing the foreign” or “cultivating awareness” or doing both at the same time.

In English Canada, the situation with multilingual productions appears far less inspiring. Cassandra Silver asserts: “English-Canadian drama very rarely employs polyglossia because Anglophones very rarely have cause to push back or resist against oppression or assimilation by other linguistic communities. French-Canadian theatre, on the other hand, often employs English as a second language for exactly those reasons” (2010, p. 9-10). Silver continues her analysis by discussing French Canadian plays that experiment with multiple languages such as, for instance, Réne-Daniel Dubois’s Ne blamez jamais les Bedouins (Never blame the Bedouins), which includes lines in Arabic, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish, as well as English and French.

In one of his recent articles, Marvin Carlson takes a broader angle and looks at the Anglophone theatre in general, admittedly—more in the UK and the USA than Canada. He asserts that the lack of multilingual—or as he calls it “heteroglossic”—theatre in Anglophone countries is related to the lesser status of the director. Specifically, he contrasts Anglophone theatre with the director-driven theatre in continental Europe:

In both England and the United States, theatre is dominated by the actor and the playwright. Directors are far less influential and, especially in the major theatres, are much less inclined than their continental counterparts to experiment with distinct departures from the traditional mode of psychological realism. Thus directors like Frank Castorf, Kren Beier, Tadeusz Kantor, Ariane Mnouchkine, or Branko Brezovec, all of who have utilized heteroglossia extensively in their work, have no equivalents in the United States or England, either in reputation or in richness of experimentation. (p. 226)

Whatever the reason for the general absence of multilingual theatre in the Anglophone world might be, Toronto, being the cultural, business and industrial centre of English Canada, seems to be in line with the theatre monolingualism too: in fact, it rarely allows space for a
dramaturgy outside of Caplan’s framework. Even finding snippets of stage multilingualism and, especially, multilingual dramaturgy in Toronto proves to be a frustrating experience. There are certainly a few examples of theatre presentations happening in different languages at different times and for different audiences: for instance, Rick Miller’s *Bigger than Jesus* (2005) was performed by the author in English, French and German—the three languages Miller is proficient in. Such examples would be similar to Lepage’s shows such as *Les Aguilles et l’opium* (*Needles and Opium*), which was played mostly in French in Montréal and mostly in English in Toronto, in both cases by the same actor—Marc Labrèche. In cases like that, the choice of languages is not so much predicated by the dramaturgy of the production, but more so by the majority language of the community to which the show is presented. Since English is Toronto’s majority language, most productions are presented in English, even though originally they might have been conceived in another language.

That is not to say that languages other than English do not occur on Toronto’s professional stage but then again, they often appear for short instances of estrangement and, simultaneously, cultural authentication, as, for instance, Ins Choi’s theatre mega-hit *Kim’s Convenience* (2012), a story about a typical Toronto Korean-run convenience store. In *Kim’s Convenience*, the Korean language, being the L1 of some of the main characters, is used extremely sporadically with no translation provided. The use of Korean between characters representing first generation Korean immigrants on stage, who also speak heavily accented English, is very much characteristic of realist productions, which are predicated on the concept of verisimilitude—or in Caplan’s terms, “authenticity”. While working for verisimilitude, in *Kim’ Convenience*, short verbal exchanges in Korean might have also provided a sense of estrangement for the audience of the Soulpepper company where the play was presented.59

59 *Kim’s Convenience* was originally developed as a workshop at fu-GEN Theatre, led at that time by Nina Lee Aquino. Later, its full version was presented at the Toronto Fringe Festival where it was noticed by the Soulpepper theatre company, which eventually included the show into their subscription. In 2014, due to its huge popularity, *Kim’s Convenience* embarked on its first national tour. Here I am describing the version of *Kim’s Convenience* produced by Soulpepper.
And, at the same time, this minimal and occasional presence of untranslated Korean serves as a sign of profound cultural and emotional connection between the father (Appa) and the mother—a typical couple of Korean convenience store owners. Unsurprisingly, none of the Korean exchanges contain any significant plot-advancing information for the audience—*Kim’s Convenience* was clearly made with the English speaker in mind.

In English Canada, even theatre companies and theatre festivals that identify their mandate as producing work of “culturally diverse artists” do not normally attribute equal time to two or more languages on stage. Such companies, while promoting diversity, do not always opt for multilingualism. What is more common is a very specific kind of bilingualism: the use of one of Canada’s official languages plus the heritage language (usually one) of the artists involved. This approach has been used by Toronto’s Aluna Theatre in their production of *la comunión* (English and Spanish) and to a much lesser extent, Fu-GEN’s theatre company in their play *Banana Boys* (English and Chinese). Much more linguistic variety could be found in Theatre Replacement’s *Box Theatre* (Vancouver)—a collection of six one-person shows where actors coming from different ethnic and linguistic groups spoke two languages: English and their heritage language. However, in all such productions, just as in all the other works discussed above, there were still no attempts to disrupt the conventionality of language-culture ascription. The actors still spoke only the languages they were fluent in: one by being “an ethnic/linguistic” representative of a “foreign land” and the other one—the official language of the country (English). The only exception to this rule that I have personally witnessed was the production of *Tribes* by Nina Raine (a Theatrefront Production in association with Canadian Stage and Theatre Aquarius, 2014), where one actor had to learn a new language—the American Sign Language—in order to be able to perform a character who was experiencing a

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60 For instance, the Toronto Fringe Festival follows the Canadian government guidelines in defining “culturally diverse artists”: “As per the Toronto Arts Council and the Ontario Arts Council, **culturally diverse** includes individuals identifying as Aboriginal and people of colour. **Aboriginal** includes Métis, Inuit, Status and Non-Status. **Person of Colour** includes individuals of Asian, African, Aborigine, Caribbean, Latin American, and African descent etc., as well as mixed ethnicity” (Toronto Fringe Festival Webpage, 2016).
gradual loss of hearing and at the same time falling in love with a congenitally deaf person. In order to prepare for such a role, the actor had to take classes in the ASL to become familiar with the language on the experiential level in order not to simply produce a superficial imitation of gesture-signs used in the ASL.

In addition to this occasional stage use of languages other than English, there are companies that inscribe performance in other languages into their mandate—Yana Meerzon applies the term “exilic theatre” (also “immigrant theatre”) to broadly describe their work (Meerzon, 2015, p. 185). Here, I can identify two distinct categories. First, there are companies working exclusively in languages other than English: Le Théâtre français de Toronto, which performs a yearly repertoire of French and French Canadian plays, would be a prime example of this type of work. Similar companies exist in Farsi, Russian, Serbian, and other languages. Monolingualism and adherence to a single linguaculture, usually the artists’ own heritage culture, appears to be an important feature of their mission, which makes their work much less interesting for my research purposes. Another category is represented by companies that attempt to unite multilingual actors (primarily, first and second generation Canadians) in order to produce more diverse work than the majority of mainstream theatres: for instance, Ottawa’s Broken English Theatre and Montreal’s Teesri Duniya. The latter started as a South Asian company and has progressively become more and more multicultural and multilingual, producing work in English, French, Urdu and Hindi, which “focuses on minority issues, builds solidarity among minorities, and promotes an increasing dialogue across cultures” (Teesri Duniya Website, 2015). Naturally, companies like Teesri Duniya tend to emerge primarily in large urban centres—places with significant immigrant populations who feel underrepresented in the mainstream English or French art scene. Another interesting aspect of the artistic

61 As an immigrant city, Toronto also has a large number of amateur collectives who produce work for audiences that share a language other than English or French. Those productions are also typically monolingual and outside of the scope of my research.

62 Teesri Duniya: ‘third world’ in Hindustani.
mandate of companies like Teesri Duniya or Aluna theatre in Toronto is that they aim to produce unorthodox and experimental work different from the mainstream, while one-language theatre companies, like le Théâtre français de Toronto, seem to gravitate to more conventional western and text-based dramaturgies. Despite these differences, the use of multiple languages in one single production appears extremely rare in the work of both.

Finally, there are a few noteworthy examples that use two or three languages in one production and do not fit the two categories outlined above. For instance, Andrew Kushnir’s *Wormwood* premiered at Toronto’s Tarragon theatre in 2015. Here is how the playwright himself explains *Wormwood’s* trilingualism:

The play is trilingual: English, Ukrainian and Russian. It’s set in Zaporizhia, a city in Ukraine I visited in 2011. This is south-eastern Ukraine (not terribly far from the current conflict zone in Eastern Ukraine). It was a heavily Russified part of the U.S.S.R. – which is to say great efforts were made to convert the region into a more culturally Russian part of the union. When I traveled there, my Western “Diaspora” Ukrainian language was often misunderstood. In many cases, I engaged with Ukrainians who could only speak Russian – which I expected, but nonetheless found destabilizing. It made me wonder the extent to which language defines a nationality. As is said in the play “In this country, language is not the full story.” Surely the person who was born and has lived their whole life in Ukraine, no matter their language, is more Ukrainian than I am. As a dramatist, I wanted to plant a protagonist in this complex environment – I wanted him to feel more Ukrainian at times (or a different version of Ukrainian) than the locals. I wanted him to be out of the loop when people spoke Russian (a language I have difficulty understanding though it sounds similar to Ukrainian). I wanted to plunge the audience in a comparably disorienting place. I think the multi-lingual aspect of the play also points up how much we can infer from intonation. And at times, how little we can infer from tones that may be unfamiliar to us here in the West. What are Ukrainian or Russian “tones”? I don’t think the multilingualism will at all frustrate the audience. I think it will evoke the feeling of traveling to some other part of the world and rolling with its un-Canadian feel. There is pleasurable mystery in it (Interview with Andrew Kushnir, 2015).

Kushnir uses languages and dialects to bring complexity to the “western” and “diasporic” views of what it means to be Ukrainian and speak Ukrainian. While most of *Wormwood* is English, he leaves a fair amount of Russian and Ukrainian untranslated—to invoke a sense of ‘pleasurable mystery’ through linguistic defamiliarization.
Another interesting exception that attempts to queer the monolingual framework, and which is critically acclaimed and praised for its innovation, is the *Four Horsemen Project*. It was developed and produced by the Toronto-based *Volcano Theatre* in association with *Crooked Figure Dances* and *Global Mechanic*. The Four Horsemen refers to the Toronto group of poets who developed the so-called “sound poetry”—the type of poetry where the focus is solely on the sound and rhythm effects produced by words, both existing and made-up. In the show programme, Ross Manson, the artistic director of Volcano Theatre and the show dramaturge, explains how the show came about:

On August 5th, 2000, Stuart McLean broadcasted a piece of sound poetry for four voices on CBC radio called Allegro 108. We were having a coffee together when we tuned in. We stopped talking. This was one of the most arresting, musical and innovative arrangements of text for the human voice that we had ever heard: percussive, pitched speaking ingeniously arranged. The piece was so good, so radically different from anything we’d heard, that we both assumed it was: A) brand new and B) created elsewhere. We waited to hear who these cutting edge artists were, and what country they were from. Stuart MacLean came on at the end saying, “Well, you won’t find that one anymore.” He’d been playing a thirty-year-old vinyl recording made by a group of experimental poets from Toronto called The Four Horsemen (Show programme, 2014, p. 2).

*The Four Horsemen Project* presented a clever and somewhat ironic assemblage of sound poetry, video projections and choreography working together on different levels. Adding complexity to the piece, the creators also employed a significant amount of multilingualism. When I saw the production in 2014 at the Young Centre for the Performing Arts, one of the four actors, Naoko Murakoshi, a Japanese Canadian performer, would intermittently insert non-poetic lines in Japanese. The lines were not translated in English, no subtitles or information about them were provided in the programme and the non-Japanese speaking members of the audience were exposed to lengthy chunks of Japanese, full of emotion, body language and body expressivity (Naoko Murakoshi is a trained dancer) and connecting with Murakoshi’s performance on the non-verbal, musical, rhythmical level. Interestingly, this is exactly how the audience was invited to connect with English words too: the very use of English sound poetry constantly overlapping with the melding of choreographed NVC and occasional dance made
traditional language processing (meaning making) impossible and almost unimportant. It was a playful engagement with the rhythm of the sound and body that came forth in the production: it was the breakages and peaks of that rhythm that constituted its dramaturgy. Such an approach certainly presents a more nuanced multilingual dramaturgy, not one drawing from the tradition of immediate translation. In fact, The Four Horsemen project managed to challenge even the monolingual audience members’ relationship with their own language—English—disrupting meaning-form connections of the language and juxtaposing them with body movements and ‘dancing’ video projections, which were form and content disruptions in their own right. In a way, for the English speaking audience, English is intended to become partially ‘foreign’ for the whole duration of the show, which reduces, if not nullifies, the necessity to ‘negotiate the foreign’. Conversely, it is the music of the language and body that comes forth, hence, there appears to be little need in Caplan’s “dramaturgy of translation” in regards to the English and Japanese.

Another important project where actors, both professional and non-professional, had to perform in their L1 and L2 was Polyglotte, created by Olivier Choinière. Polyglotte premiered at le Festival Transamérique (Montreal) and engaged a cast of mainly non-professional actors—recent and well-established immigrants to Canada. “Based on the 1960-70s educational LPs, Polyglotte Method of French Conversation [...], intended for the new immigrants learning their second language” (Meerzon, 2015, p. 185), Polyglotte did not really give its immigrant actors much space to use their L1s and L2s on stage. Most of the actors’ lines were from pre-recorded interviews—perhaps, a directorial attempt to deal with the actors’ non-professionalism. The immigrants’ lines were juxtaposed with the official government discourse about Canada that newcomers are commonly exposed to upon their arrival to the country. Both French and English were used extensively with no translation provided, and it seems that the creators of the show expected the audience to understand both official languages, which is very common in Montreal, especially for the French-speaking theatre goers, who seem to be Festival Transamérique’s main audience. The actors’ L1s (unless they were either English or French) were used very sporadically. Overall, Polyglotte still presented an interesting paradigm: the
immigrant languages versus official bilingualism and cultural diversity versus the expected bilingual ‘English- and French-ness’ of Montreal (and Canada in general).

Other examples of such playful engagement with L1 (and L2) happening outside of the framework proposed by Caplan come from contemporary French Canadian theatre which has learned to acknowledge the diversity of its public and begun integrating purposeful non-translation into their work. According to Nicole Nolette, who has produced the first in-depth study of multilingual theatre in Canada, this playful attitude towards translation—non-translation—is something that has been gaining momentum in French Canadian theatre for quite a while. In her recently defended thesis (2014), Nolette analyses the work of various French Canadian companies outside of Quebec and here is how she characterizes the findings of her study:

L’étude des pratiques d’écriture, de traduction et de mise en scène aura d’abord révélé des registres ludiques, ironiques et parodiques qui contrarient les discours téléologiques associant le plurilinguisme à l’assimilation. En misant sur le supplément, les maîtres de jeu de ce genre de traduction déjouent les représentations soustraitives comme les représentations additives du plurilinguisme; ils répondent à divers profils linguistiques chez les spectateurs en prévoyant autant de réceptions possibles. (2014, pp. 237-238).

The study of the playwriting, translating and staging practices reveals, first of all, playful, ironic and parodic registers that contradict the teleological discourse that associates multilingualism with assimilation. By utilizing “supplement” [Derrida’s term], masters of this kind of playful translation thwart reductive representations of multilingualism; they respond to various linguistic profiles of the audience by considering as many possibilities of the audience reception as possible.

Ludic translation does not seem to belong with Caplan’s framework of multilingual dramaturgy because it rejects immediate and obligatory translation and does not automatically assume foreignness of the show material as well as monolingualism or monoculturalism of actors or audiences. Instead, it plays with the exclusion and inclusion of different audience members at different points of the production. Nolette calls it “la dramaturgie post-identitaire”—“post-identity politics dramaturgy”—one that uses L1 or L2 for purposes other than representation or reaffirmation of one’s cultural or linguistic identity. Its purpose is not
verisimilitude (even though verisimilitude can still be one of its concerns) but more an 
intelligent and playful experimentation with languages intertwined with the acute awareness of 
the performance and larger cultural contexts.

I would argue that these, still rather rare, instances of ludic translation in French 
Canadian theatre or experiments such as *The Four Horsemen Project* are signs of a different 
kind of multilingual dramaturgy developing in the Canadian context. These signs are of vital 
importance and they have been noticed and documented in other cultural contexts, too. For 
instance, summarizing the work of the conference *European Dramaturgy in the 21st Century* 
(Frankfurt, 2007), Hans-Thies Lehmann and Patrick Primavesi mention a number of significant 
departures from Lessing’s original understanding of dramaturgy. Lehmann and Primavesi 
write:

Since the times of Lessing, the notion of dramaturgy (not only in Germany) has been 
deeply rooted in the project of enlightenment, in the urge to educate the people and to 
built up the cultural identity of a nation. [...] After the decline of twentieth century 
ideologies, the relation between performing arts and politics has changed too. The trust 
in the artist’s right and ability to tell the truth, to educate the masses in revolutionary 
action vanished, and from a more distant, historical perspective the heroic 
commitment of political theatre often appears as a questionable support of propaganda 
and party politics. (2007, p. 5)

They continue to explain how the 21st century dramaturgy would be different from Lessing’s 
and the 20th century modernist-inspired positions:

In the last decades the urge to interpret and to explain the repertoire in light of a 
current perspective has often been questioned. The attitude in Susan Sontag’s 
programmatic essay *Against Interpretation* has since been adapted by many artists and 
dramaturges who rather tend to let spectators themselves reflect upon their position 
than teach them lessons in politics. [...] The function of theatre as a public sphere 
requires a dramaturgical discourse that is more ready to pose questions than to give 
answers and that is constantly reflecting its relation to political contexts without 
patronizing the audience or insisting on a particular interpretation (2007, p. 6).

Consequently, contemporary multilingual dramaturgy would mean not so much a mere 
presence of two or more languages in a theatre production for the purposes of representation of 
cultural or linguistic minorities or educational-edging-on-propagandistic messages about the
importance of multilingualism (and by corollary multiculturalism), but rather, an informed, complex understanding of the effect of two or more languages on stage and the questions those language-related choices may produce within a multicultural and multilingual context and how those choices might ‘queer’ one’s orientation towards different languages, including one’s own L1 or L1s. While it seems like a tall order, this is exactly the dramaturgical path I attempted to pursue in my own research inquiry on both practical and theoretical levels.

My PaR followed the general paradigm of “new dramaturgy,” a term coined by Marianne Van Kerkhoven and “arising from the realization that in many countries a form of theatre is being produced which answers to paradigms other than the traditional (reflected significantly in the play’s dramaturgy), and the realization that there was no terminology available to describe those new paradigms in all their aspects.” (Tscensényi & Cochrane, 2014, p. xiii). “New dramaturgy” is not a denial of old ‘play-based’ dramaturgy, which in fact can be incorporated into the new paradigm as well, rather it is a push to broaden and elevate dramaturgy and see it “as a critical engagement with the processes and architectonics of making and articulating performance” (Turner & Behrndt, 2010, p.148). Katalin Trenscényi and Bernadette Cochrane identify three common characteristics that ‘new dramaturgy’ practices tend to share:

a. Being post-mimetic, which means that “the work acknowledges […] the decline of mimesis as the dominant dramatic model…”

b. Being intercultural, which accepts that we are “surrounded by multiple value systems and cultures which are often intertwined,” and that we also experience “increased hermeneutic negotiations between the cultures and various periods or genres.”

c. Being process-conscious, which refers to the understanding that “when creating a piece of theatre, the way it is made, the process’s ethics, aesthetics, ecology etc., become dramaturgical concerns, as they inform and shape the materiality of the production” (2014, p. xii).
I propose to add multilingualism as another relevant and pertinent characteristic of new dramaturgy, on par with its intercultural, post-mimetic and process-conscious traits. Multilingualism is not just a matter of representation (i.e., representation of multilinguals), which is especially important in the context of global multilingual cities like Toronto, it is also an attempt to queer “the straight line” of monolingualism by “increasing hermeneutic negotiations” between various languages, value systems and cultures.

Chronology and Process Documentation.
Just as in the title of this thesis, I used another quote from Thomas Kyd’s *Spanish Tragedy*—“*In Sundry Languages*” (*ISL*) to give my project a name—similar and yet slightly different from the thesis title. The name seemed broad, clear, and at the same time obscure enough to serve its purpose: the title directly pointed to the explicit multilingualism of this theatre experiment. It was a fitting code name with the word ‘sundry’ functioning as a slightly confusing, fairly infrequently used, almost foreign sounding63 vocabulary item. At the same time the abbreviation of the title, *ISL*, resembled the much more familiar “ESL” (English as a Second Language)—a common term, which in Canada is usually reserved for immigrant non-native speakers of English, as well as Canadian francophones learning English.

*ISL* had a long germination prelude—approximately three years, which comprised investigating various potentialities of multilingual dramaturgy and multilingual theatre in Canada and abroad (see *Lineage of Similar Practices* in this chapter), studying current linguistic theories related to multilingualism, and exploring various methods of applying drama/acting to second language acquisition. The actual artistic research, approved by the Theatres Committee of the Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies (University of Toronto), included working with participants, generation of new artistic material, and its

63 Sundry comes from the Old English *syndrig* ‘distinct, separate’ (http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/english/sundry)
documentation, all of which took place in the spring 2015 and lasted approximately nine weeks. In early March 2015, after receiving approval from the university’s Ethics Review Board, I began recruiting participants by advertising my search for multilingual and monolingual actors, both professional and non-professional, both online and offline: through social media, various university listservs, as well as through friends and colleagues. The call specified that the project would be of a devised nature and would explore possibilities of playing with multiple languages on stage without using any translation (see Appendix A).

All candidates interested in the research were invited to come to the introductory meeting with the researcher; no one who indicated an interest was excluded from the invitation to partake in the research. In order to accommodate everyone’s availability, two separate days were set aside for the first introductory meeting. On March 23 and 25, 2015, I met with the potential participants to explain in more detail what my, or rather, our, artistic investigation would be and the workload it might present. I also guided them through the informed consent forms and answered their questions related to research structure, goals and ethics (see Appendix C). After signing the consent forms, the participants completed the initial questionnaire (see Appendix E), a one page document that inquired into the participants’ knowledge of languages, stage experience/theatre training and their schedules for the following six weeks. The devising process began in early April and lasted six weeks.

### Table 2. The Timeline of the ISL Devising Process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Devising Activities</th>
<th>Data Collection Tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| One   | One: April 6-12 | Introductory Exercises  
Trust Building Exercises  
Acting “warmups” exchange | Researcher’s Journals |
|       | Two: April 13-19 | Conversations. Playing with Rhythm and Poetry  
Devising Scenes from Personal Experiences. | Researcher’s Journals  
Audio recording of conversations. |
The devising process was divided into two phases. Phase One (Weeks 1-3) included a great number of introductory activities, trust building activities and improvisations, and an open exchange of ideas and training exercises. Phase One was documented through the researcher’s notes, written at the end of each week, and the actors’ reflective journals, written at the end of Week 3. While Phase One was more process-focused and did not have a goal to generate any particular material for a stage performance, Phase Two was more presentation-oriented, as the team moved towards scene creation, where many initial ideas generated in Phase One were utilized, challenged, reworked, reconceptualised or completely discarded. Phase Two was documented first through selective audio recording of actor-director conversations that served as a starting point for devising a scene and generating initial dramaturgical ideas. Subsequently, the actors were asked to document any material they created individually or in small groups.
(monologues, interludes, songs, movement pieces, or structured improvisations). They were also to take note of any changes in the dramaturgical material, specifically any textual material, including any minor text edits. In addition, in Phase Two, as the actors were already quite familiar and comfortable with each other, occasional video recording was gradually introduced to the rehearsal process.

Phase Two culminated in a presentation of the devised scenes on two consecutive nights under the guise of a ‘show’ entitled “In Sundry Languages”. The “show” itself was a last-minute genre concoction: six days prior to the scheduled presentation day, after seeing all the available scenes, the participants collectively negotiated which material should be presented to the audience and what should be put aside for further development. The order of ‘scenes’ was also collectively discussed as well as the overall format of the presentation.

At this point, the lighting designer and the stage manager stepped in to provide all the necessary support, such as creating a lighting score for each of the scenes and calling the cues. The show had one run-through in the theatre, one cue-to-cue technical run and one dress rehearsal – ironically, at each of those, one or two actors were missing due to various job or school conflicts. Essentially, the first time the show had its full cast entirely present was its first performance at the department's Robert Gill Theatre on May 15. In a way that night became an open dress rehearsal. It was also attended by my thesis committee.

Knowing that the first night might have a lot of unpredictable issues, I arranged only for the second night performance to be fully videotaped. The performance was recorded from three different angles by video cameras, positioned in different parts of the house: a handheld close-up camera (downstage centre), whose footage was projected on the screen above the stage as part of the show, a medium shot camera positioned in the middle of the house slightly left of centre and a wide shot camera located at the back of the house above the last row of seats.64 This footage was later montaged together to accompany the ‘script’ of the show to

64 Due to a technical issue, the sound of one of the scenes was not recorded.
provide a representation of the live performance through two radically different media, expected to somewhat complement each other.

In addition to videotaping, another research tool was employed to document the audience’s perception of the show—on both performance nights, prior to the stage presentation, I welcomed the audience in different languages, explained the nature and goals of the project, answered their questions about the project and guided them through the audience consent forms. After all the forms were signed and collected, we performed our production, which lasted approximately 65-70 minutes. After the presentation, the audience received the four-page survey (Appendix F) and remained in the theatre to complete the survey comprising mostly of open-ended questions inviting them to reflect upon their experience of the stage multilingualism they had just witnessed. Most audience members took 15-40 minutes to complete the survey; some stayed longer. The surveys were collected for later analysis.

In turn, the actors were also invited to reflect on their performance as well as on the devising process overall—within two weeks of the show I met with ten of them, with the exception of two who were not available, to discuss their perception of the show in a semi-structured interview. The interviews were audio-recorded. Since the interviews were conducted after the praxis was completed, they had no affect on the praxis; however, they still had a potential to provide more insight into the actors’ processes. I selectively transcribed the parts of the interviews that resonated with the ‘discoveries’ documented in the journals and the video footage.

**Ethics.**

Since my research had two types of participants (actors and audience members), the Ethical Review process was also split into two segments. First, my study received a general approval from the University of Toronto Ethical Review Board, which allowed me to recruit my core participants, i.e., the actors. By the end of Phase One, I developed the audience survey, which invited the audience members to reflect upon the following: their overall impression of the
show, the use of multiple languages in the show, the scenes where they could understand one or more languages, moments of not understanding, and their interpretation of the NVC used in the show. The survey was read and approved by my core participants before being submitted to the university’s Ethics Board.

Overall, both groups of participants had to read and sign the Information and Consent Letter (see Appendix C for the core participants and Appendix D for the secondary participants). Both letters included a paragraph explaining that participation in the project would be entirely voluntary and that participants may withdraw from it at any stage and for any reason, without any negative consequences or the need to provide justification for their withdrawal.

The audience surveys remained entirely anonymous and contained no questions potentially revealing the identity of my secondary participants. In regards to my core participants, the artistic process they were involved in challenged the notion of confidentiality, central to the ethical review process. My application for the ethical review explained, however, that participant anonymity would not be appropriate for my research project, as it would have contradicted the very nature of the devised collaborative theatre work, whose purpose is to be shown to an audience. The participants, both professionals and amateurs, were engaged in a process not radically different from the process they are normally involved in in their professional lives (or their hobbies—for the non-professionals). In addition, making the collected data confidential would have jeopardised the actors’ ability to use the data, i.e., their own work, for instance, videotaped material for their own professional purposes, such as online self-promotion (their own website).

Another important aspect of the ethical review process was vulnerability, which I considered relevant to my core participants only. While my core participants, being actors, were expected to be accustomed to collaborating with others as well as being observed, including moments of emotional exposure when performing a character, an extra effort was taken to ensure that the artistic process did not impose unnecessary psychological or emotional
risk. Embarrassing or upsetting situations, such as an unsuccessful performance or a difficulty working with a partner, were highly unlikely to occur and were within the range of situations both I was trained to deal with. My training as a teacher and theatre director as well as my previous research experience (specifically, research for my MA thesis), which also included working with both professional and non-professional performers, had taught me to mediate potentially conflictual situations that may occur in the process of collective devising. Having a teaching degree and 20 years of pedagogical experience has also provided me with enough expertise to work with beginner and student performers and address any potentially embarrassing situations that invariably happen in a process of learning to perform on stage or speak in a second language. In addition to that, my Ethics Review Application also mentioned that should my efforts be insufficient, the participants would be directed to the Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at the University of Toronto.

One final aspect of the ethical review that needs to be briefly addressed here is financial compensation. Due to the nature of the project, which implied a collaborative artistic creation, it was imperative for me that the participants be driven by their creative interests as well as their desire to learn and collaborate. All participants were informed that they would not be financially compensated for their participation; however, by virtue of working on a collaborative multilingual production they could benefit from a unique opportunity to hone their second language and acting skills through peer-coaching, the researcher’s feedback and the audience’s responses. No financial compensation was provided to my secondary participants either; however, in return for their effort, they received an opportunity to see a new theatre production at no charge.

Participants.

Core participants.

Overall, ISL had 25 participants who were initially working in two groups. The expected attrition process commenced as early as Week 2 with many participants realizing that they
might have overestimated their availability. Two participants had to withdraw almost immediately when they realized that the objectives of the process were not necessarily commensurate with their own learning objectives. Overall, eleven out of the original twenty-five participants stayed for Phase Two; additionally, one more actor joined the team after Phase One (Clayton, see Table 3). Some of the core participants failed to submit their journals (Mark, Amy and Felicia) and to find time for the post-presentation interview (Lyla and Felicia); however, I have included them in the analysis presented in Chapter 3. As my actors were all unpaid volunteers—mostly full time employees or full time students—I did not feel comfortable pressuring them to produce more work and more reflections, which explains some gaps in my data.

Overall, out of the twelve participants that performed in the final presentation (see Table 3 below), seven of the core participants provided most of the data included in the analysis as presented in Chapter 3: Sepideh, Yury, Mario, Gloria, Joy, Danielle, and Maria. The table below presents the participants’ involvement in the Phases One and Two as well as their self-reported profile, based on the questionnaire they had to complete when they joined the project.

**Table 3.** The Core Participants’ Involvement and Self-Reported Profile.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Professional, in-training or amateur</th>
<th>Dominant languages</th>
<th>Non-dominant languages</th>
<th>Languages s/he would like to perform in</th>
<th>Took part in Phase One</th>
<th>Took part in Phase Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sepideh (f)</td>
<td>Amateur</td>
<td>Persian, English</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felicia (f)</td>
<td>Semi-professional</td>
<td>English (Canadian and Jamaican)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Spanish, French</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark (m)</td>
<td>Amateur</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>French, Spanish, Any</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As seen from the table, my original intent was to divide the groups into professionals and non-professionals, i.e., those with a degree and/or extensive experience. That came from my (completely unjustified) belief that professionally trained actors might easily become annoyed and bored by having to work with non-professionals. However, those categories became problematic very fast. Not that the categories I offered my participants (professional versus non-professional) were ideal either. For example, one of my actors self-identified as a “recovering actor,” as she was in the process of switching careers when the project started.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Language 1</th>
<th>Language 2</th>
<th>Any Language</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>Russian</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>Amateur</td>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Any</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yury</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Russian, English</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>English, German, Russian, French</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clayton</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>In-training</td>
<td>Mandarin, Cantonese</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>English, Mandarin, Cantonese</td>
<td>Chow Jo (Chinese Dialect), Spanish</td>
<td>Mandarin, Spanish, “Surprise me”, Chow Jo</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>Professional (improviser)</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Spanish, Turkish</td>
<td>Any, Spanish</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyla</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>In-training</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Any (esp. Russian, Arabic, French)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>In-training</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English and Korean</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mario</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Portuguese, English</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Any</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, for the first three weeks Group 1 (tentatively called “Professionals”) and Group 2 (tentatively called “Amateurs”) met twice a week for about four hours. The groups met separately; however, Saturdays were reserved for Dramaturgy Development meetings to which both groups were invited. In reality, almost each time attendance was an unexpected surprise to me—work, auditions, classes, family issues, as well as the infamous Toronto traffic and transit affected the makeup of the groups and very soon “scenes” began to form not on the basis of dramaturgical or linguistic competence but rather on who was present on either of the days. One performer (Yury) was interested in being part of both groups and ended up attending more rehearsals than anyone else, which also resulted in his extensive involvement in the ‘final’ presentation—he performed in six out of seventeen scenes.

**Audience participants.**

Audiences were invited to see the show on May 15 and 16, 2016. From my observation, most audience members stayed after the show to complete the survey. Only participants 18 years and older were invited to complete the post-show audience survey. The first part of the survey focused on the participant’s profile, specifically their dominant and non-dominant languages and their relationship with theatre and live performance. The analysis of the submitted surveys indicated that ISL had a very diverse audience with the vast majority of participants being non-theatre professionals. There was also significant linguistic diversity present with multilinguals constituting the majority of audience members. All audience members could speak and understand English to a different degree—expectedly, English was the only language everyone shared in the audience. Most participants completed the audience survey in English, only two used other languages (Russian and Polish). The second part of the survey invited the audience to reflect upon their experience of the multilingual performance they had seen. The obtained data were digitized and analysed using the N-vivo qualitative analysis software.
The following three chapters present my analysis of the devising process as seen through a queer phenomenological lens. It follows the trajectory and the chronology of the artistic practice in question. Chapter Three focuses on the devising process through the actors’ and the researcher’s (my own) phenomenological perspectives, as they were documented in the journals, interviews and conversations with the core participants. It searches for “queer multilingual orientating” in the participants’ perspectives and reflects on how those orientations affected the devising process and the overall dramaturgy of the production in development. Chapter Four is a textual and video representation of a ‘queer object’—the devised multilingual performance involving no translation, as presented to a live audience on May 16, 2015 at the Robert Gill Theatre at the University of Toronto. It ‘evidences’ (Robin Nelson’s term) the outcome of the devising process and reflects upon the challenges of textual and video documentation of ‘the queer object,’ such as a multilingual and devised production. Chapter Five provides a qualitative analysis of the audience’s perception of the production in question by analysing the results of the 182 audience surveys collected at the end of both performance nights (May 15 and 16, 2015). In other words, following Ahmed’s queer phenomenological framework proposed at the beginning of this chapter, Chapters 3 and 5 endeavour to understand a “queer subject”, while Chapter 4 presents “a queer object”.
CHAPTER 3
The Process: Applying and Resisting Phenomenological Reduction

A native is less in control of the language. The language controls him.

Jerzy Kosiński (1933-1991), *Teicholz*

The Problem of Phenomenological Reduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the participants’ phenomenological experiences of performing in multiple languages, including their non-dominant languages. My analysis presents four common themes across all the data sources and core participants involved in the study. Overall, I looked at eight actors’ journals submitted by the actors involved in both Phases One and Two, five researcher journals, and nine post-production interviews. First, I identified common themes in the participants’ journals, which were written and submitted at the end of Week 3 after the participants had been involved in both text-based and non-text-based improvisations in multiple languages. Then I listened to, transcribed, and read the post-production interviews with the core participants—those who performed in the public presentation of our devised work on May 15 and 16, 2015. In the post-production interviews, the participants were invited to reflect on their experience of performing in different languages, as well as the overall value of the project. They were also asked to describe their experience of performing for a live audience—an important aspect of their phenomenology that their journals did not capture. Finally, I drew additional insight from my own journals, which served as a secondary source of data, since the focus of my study is the phenomenology of the actor’s experience of performing in multiple languages. The researcher journals were particularly useful for providing context—clearly circumscribed by my own perception—for each of the creative activities we were involved in.
Before I present my analysis, there are a few brief preambles for the understanding of both the richness and the limitations of my data. The first one is related to a concept used in the phenomenological method called “phenomenological reduction.” In his comprehensive tome on the practice of phenomenological research, Max Van Manen defines phenomenological reduction as follows:

[…] the reduction is an attentive turning to the world when in an open state of mind, effectuated by the epoché [bracketing]. It is because of this openness that the insight may occur that remembrances are held in the things around us, and they may be released through sensory contact, even though these occurrences are not really predictable or under our control” (2014, 218).

In phenomenology, reduction means “returning” to the experience in order to understand it. While there is very little agreement on how exactly phenomenological reduction differs from introspection, there is a general understanding that phenomenological reduction is about achieving a pre-reflexive thinking, a concept that can be traced back to Heidegger’s Inbegriff or Inception.66

According to Gallagher and Sørensen (2005), phenomenological reduction can be achieved if research subjects “are not asked to adopt predetermined categories but to develop their own descriptions” (p. 122). In more practical terms,

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65 Following Husserl, Van Manen conceptualizes epoché as “bracketing”: “The Greek word epoché means abstention, to stay away from. Ancient skeptics used the term to indicate the suspension of belief. And Husserl adopted the term epoché to indicate the act by which the natural attitude of taken-for-granted beliefs and the attitude of science are suspended. He used the term bracketing as an analogy with mathematics where what is done within the brackets can be kept separate from the operations outside of it.Bracketing means parenthesizing, putting into brackets the various assumptions that might stand in the way from opening up access to the originary or the living meaning of a phenomenon” (Van Manen 2014, p. 215).

66 “Inceptual thinking is not the same as conceptual thinking: inceptual thinking involves ingrasping, coming upon an inceptual thought. Heidegger makes a distinction between Begriff and Inbegriff. Begriff means concept, but Inbegriff cannot easily be translated. A concept is an abstract representation that is given precise meaning in theories and scientific reports. [...]> An inbegriff evokes the richness and uniqueness of the particularity of meaning. So, while the concept generalized from particulars to abstraction, the Inbegriff singularizes” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 237).
The reduction can be guided by the experimenter through open questions—questions not directed at opinions or theories, but at experience. [...] These are questions that do not impose pre-determined theoretical categories. Rather than asking ‘Do you think this experience is like X or Y or Z?’ the open question asks simply, ‘How would you describe your experience?’ By posing open questions immediately after the task the experimenter helps the subject attend to the implicit strategy or degree of attention that is implemented during the task” (p. 124).

Gallagher and Sørensen proceed to explain that phenomenological reduction can be achieved through the training of participants in the phenomenological method. 67

While I did not conduct individual training sessions with each of the participants, our first session included an extensive improvisation in the participants’ dominant and non-dominant languages, after which I asked the participants to share their experiences by posing an open question: What did it feel like? After the participants shared their brief descriptions of their experiences, I explained that they would be asked similar questions as the study continued and it was their detailed descriptions of the experience that I was interested in.

After Week 3, when Phase 1 of our project was concluding and the participants had gained varied experience in improvising and performing in various languages, I invited them to submit their journals by formulating my request as follows:

Describe a few moments (or scenes/improvs) when you had to perform in your non-dominant language. What challenges did you experience? What positive discoveries did you make? What did that different language do to your mind, voice and body? Remember to indicate which scene(s) or improvs you're talking about.

At the centre of my request is what Van Manen calls a lived experience description, or LED (2014, 298). In addition to that, a number of sub-questions offered potential adds-on, some of which invited the participants to ascribe valence to their experience, specifically to the challenges they might have experienced. My request also used explicit categories such as

67 “In developing their [the subjects’] descriptions they [the subjects] effected a phenomenological reduction by bracketing their ordinary attitudes and shifting their attention from what they were experiencing to how they experienced it. The procedure followed Varela’s (1996) definition of three steps in phenomenological method: (1) suspending beliefs or theories about experience; (2) gaining intimacy with the domain of investigation; (3) offering descriptions and using intersubjective validations” (p. 124).
‘mind’, ‘body’, ‘voice’ and ‘non-dominant languages’. Similarly, the post-production interviews conducted at the end of Phase Two contained only one open question requesting the participant to provide a LED of performing in a non-dominant language for a live audience. The rest of the questions invited the participants to reflect on the process, not actual phenomenological descriptions.

The rationale behind the decision to go beyond LEDs is two-fold. First, given my theoretical stance of including the body as part of the linguistic performance (see Chapter 1), I attempted to gear the actors’ attention to the specificity of their bodily experiences, not just the language component of their performances. The other reason is related to my philosophical stance outlined in Chapter 2: I am using Sara Ahmed’s queer phenomenology (i.e., the phenomenology that inverts its look in order to question its own conceptual lens). Seeing not only the “Inbegriff,” but also the “Begriff,” to which the participants (and I myself) would relate it to, was essential for understanding the theoretical paradigm within which the participants framed their thinking.

The way I constructed my questions certainly affected the content of the journals and the interviews. For instance, here is an excerpt from Yury’s journal:

When you grow up using Russian for everyday life and for strong emotions (anger, surprise, jealousy) your body and gestures are naturally in sync with the words, for you have developed them at the same time. How do you sound when you are angry in English? What is your body doing when you are scared and talking at the same time?68 (Yury’s Journal).

What becomes immediately conspicuous in Yury’s writing is not just his perception of a lived experience, but also what helped him understand his struggles as an actor and as a speaker of a non-dominant language who works in a profession that puts very high demands on his linguistic performance. Through his journal, he shared his own professional worries and

68 Here and throughout the rest of the thesis, I keep the spelling and the wording used by my participants. Wherever any miscomprehension may be anticipated, in parenthesis I will be offering my own interpretation of what the participants attempted to convey.
concerns about being a performer who constantly needs to act in his non-dominant language in order to make a living. He also juxtaposes English (his second language) and Russian (his first language), which hints at how he conceptualizes those languages and his own relationship to them—an essential piece of information indicating how Yury orientates himself towards the languages he performs in.

Another complication of phenomenological reduction, or, more specifically, of *epoché* ( bracketing) was related to how the actors were conceptualizing their experience of performing. As I was reading the journals of those who were trained performers (Mario and Yury), it became evident to me that they were not necessarily applying the categories that I proposed in my question but, rather, using their own categories. This trend was particularly strong in Mario’s writing. Here is how Mario constructs his phenomenological experience of performing in his L2:

[…] it felt like I was using a foreign ‘mask’. This ‘mask’ (it felt) could be shaped in as many forms as I liked […] (Mario’s journal).

Evidently, Mario, who is a trained clown and mask performer, processes his experience through the concepts and ideas that are deeply rooted in his practice and training. In a way, he verbalizes his experience through the ‘acting praxis’ that underlies his training. In fact, one might ask if verbalizing an actor’s experience without relating it to an acting theory is even possible. Philip Zarrilli writes:

Every time an actor performs, he or she implicitly enacts a ‘theory’ of acting—a set of assumptions about the conventions and style which guide his and her performance, the structure of actions which he and she performs, the shape that those actions take as a character, role, (or sequence of actions as in some performance art) and the relationship to the audience (2002, p. 3).

I would like to suggest that the opposite may also be true: every time actors (especially trained actors) attempt to describe their experience, they can only ‘transcribe’ it through the concepts, categories, and assumptions they are familiar with, or trained in. Once again, those categories, concepts, and assumptions are not simply inescapable, they are essential for me as a researcher
because they have the capacity, in Sara Ahmed’s terms, to make the “straight” or “queer” direction more visible in the participants’ phenomenological accounts of their LEDs.

In sum, the analysis presented in this chapter both applies and resists the classical phenomenological reduction by reflecting on the moments of conceptualization, rather than altogether avoiding them. In addition, while reading the analysis, it is important to keep in mind that the artistic process, the documentation of it, and the analysis happened mostly in English and within a larger Anglophone context—in a city, province, and country that, despite their multilingualism and multiculturalism, have English as a dominant language. While I did encourage linguistic plurality throughout the process, I also chose English as the language of my research, which certainly gave English far more presence, more legitimacy and more power than any other languages involved. English clearly dominated our work from the very start—a limitation that is important to acknowledge because, as research in sociolinguistics shows, multilinguals’ use of language resources is affected by ideological and power relationships existing within a social context (for instance, see Heller, 2007).

With these preambles and provisos in mind, let me now delve into the data to see what it revealed and how it shaped our process and ‘product’.

**Performing in a non-dominant language: Introducing the Common Themes**

After three weeks of multilingual warmups, games, and improvisations, Korea-born, Toronto-raised actor-in-training Danielle, submitted the following journal:

I have two distinct experiences of performing in different languages. First experience was when I auditioned for acting class during university years and the other was during improv session.

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69 Of course, other limitations of phenomenological reduction, including one of the strongest of them—language, have been noted and addressed by various phenomenologists, starting with Husserl’s first disciples. For a comprehensive account of the limitations and potentialities of phenomenological reduction and epoché, see Chapter 9 of Max Van Manen’s *Phenomenology of Practice* (2014).
For having English as a non-dominant language, I was given three lines from three
different plays— Canadian, Greek, and contemporary. The lines were simple and
concise yet the idea of acting in a non-dominant language made me feel very
uncomfortable. Maybe because this audition was held with an assumption that every
contestants are natural with the language, I felt pressured to become a person I was
not. I was not so natural with the language then. Not because I was afraid to present in
front of unfamiliar faces but because I felt unprepared to digest those three lines as
naturally as my dominant. If this audition was held in Korean, I would have not
memorize them but rather try to understand and examine my reaction to place them
into justifiable actions and gestures. Having an audition in a non-dominant language
made an extra step before understanding. Memorization. Throughout the whole
process, I could not resist myself from memorizing lines over and over. This drew me
away from understand overall context. Rather, fear of losing a word made me more
incompetent to other contestants. My goal was to deliver exact words to the audience,
which consequently made my movement rather slow and yet exaggerated. This
definitely caused every very unnatural.

Another experience of presenting in a different language was done in an improv
sessions. Our group learned ‘welcome to the theatre’ in different languages. A
language I learned was Mandarin Chinese (En Chu Ma Shang Ijo Yaw Kai Shu Leu).
After learning the language, we presented the line with non-dominant language several
times in a group of circle and corrected each others’ gestures and accents. Then, we
started an improv with whatever scene or story we would like to play with the
language we achieved. Unlike my experience of audition in university years, this time
was different. Although I did not get a full grasp of the language, I started to play
around with the language. Not caring much of correctness of the language, I listened
very carefully to its lyrical tones and allowed my body to flow. Ups and downs of its
tones shaped my body gestures correspondingly but it also triggered my memory of
my childhood, which I remember only glimpse of. I could picture a face of an old
Chinese lady down the market alley, screaming out loud to get her customer’s
attention. Having her in my mind, my body gestures and voice soon turned more
rigidly and aggressively like the old woman. This created quite interesting dynamic
with Gloria who learned Korean as her non-dominant language. Assumably due to the
conceptual image of old Chinese lady, my interaction with Gloria developed into a
mother-and-daughter-like relationship. Also, throughout the whole process of playing
around with the language, when I shifted my language back to Korean, I was surprised
to realize that my automatic response in my dominant language was in a dialect, which
 sounded very close to Chinese intonation I learned.

Looking back, a reason behind not being aware of correctness of the language might
be because everyone in the group were also learning and presenting in different
languages. The experience of learning a new language was no more a source of fear
but a source to connect with the rest of the group (Danielle’s Journal).
I cite Danielle’s journal in full not only because it does a remarkable job of introducing the complexity and diversity of issues arising from performing in a non-dominant language, but also because it juxtaposes two of her own experiences of performing in English and Mandarin: one where correctness and precision were expected—which, in Danielle’s case, was nothing but stifling—and the other, a free improvisation where the actors were given a chance to connect the body and the little they knew of the language, as well as develop their own characters, stories and relationships. Interestingly, at the time of the first experience Danielle was already able to speak her non-dominant language, English (although, in her own words, she was not “so natural” with it yet), whilst in the case of the Chinese improvisation, Danielle was not a speaker of Mandarin at all and had simply learned one sentence to play with throughout the whole improvisation.

While I was not privy to Danielle’s first experience, I had a chance to witness the second one. My own journal, dated April 19, 2016, describes Danielle and Gloria’s improvisation as “the most engaging as a visual and auditory feast.” I would like to point out here that I certainly knew the meaning of Danielle’s repeated lines in Mandarin, hence, my mind was not at all pre-occupied with the linguistic meaning making while I was observing the improvisation. I do remember laughing a lot and enjoying immensely the unexpected connection between the body movements and tones of the Chinese: Mandarin has four tones that help differentiate the meaning of words, while neither English nor Korean shares this phonological feature.

Danielle’s journal provides an effective start to my analysis as it sheds light on the complexity of the actor’s experience of performing in a non-dominant language, which is not necessarily linked to the actor’s mastery of the language. Her journal also hints at the potentially paradoxical nature of a performance in a second language: it can both stifle and liberate the actor’s bodymind. Danielle’s description of her LEDs was the first to caution me from ascribing a positive or negative meaning to the actor’s experience in their non-dominant language. It also has clear references to four common thematic threads that emerged in the phenomenology of the actors’ experiences, and that make the backbone of this chapter.
Let me now introduce the four themes that transpired in my participants’ LEDs. To provide some initial illustration I will be interspersing the themes with references from Danielle’s journal:

- **Body disconnect/connect**: “Not caring much of correctness of the language, I listened very carefully to its lyrical tones and allowed my body to flow.”

- **The (un)safe route**: “Unlike my experience of audition in university years, this time was different. Although I did not get a full grasp of the language, I started to play around with the language.”

- **(Un)split attention**: “Throughout the whole process, I could not resist myself from memorizing lines over and over. This drew me away from understand overall context.”

- **Memory**: “Ups and downs of its tones shaped my body gestures correspondingly but it also triggered my memory of my childhood, which I remember only glimpse of. I could picture a face of an old Chinese lady down the market alley, screaming out loud to get her customer’s attention. Having her in my mind, my body gestures and voice soon turned more rigidly and aggressively like the old woman.”

These four themes found their specific instantiations in Danielle’s as well as in the other participants’ LEDs. Through the analysis below, I will attempt to explicate how these themes emerged and developed. I will also show how some of the phenomenological observations related to the participants’ LEDs eventually translated into dramaturgical devices and became part of the aesthetic fabric of our collective creation. At the end of my analysis of each of the themes, I will attempt to connect them to current research in both Theatre Studies (specifically, the theory of acting) and applied linguistics (specifically, research on multilingualism and second language acquisition).

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70 The names of the themes were created by me using the terms originally coming from my participants’ journals.
Theme one: body disconnect/connect

To understand how early the “body” theme entered our artistic investigation, let me draw on the researcher’s journal, written at the end of the first week of our exploration and focusing on the first improvisation I did with my participants (Phase 1, Week 1):

We first met in late March. [...] Once all the questions were answered, all the forms were signed and all the pizza, both gluten-laden and gluten-free, was consumed, we got on our feet in order to get a sense of what we might be doing together for the next six weeks. [...] I suggested that we do a little improvisation. I proposed sharing one simple expression in all the languages we could speak it was not even an expression but a simple interjection – Shush! – or basically any short call for silence. As expected, languages brought to the table offered a wild range of shushing: French speakers taught us “Chute!”, Russian speakers—“Tch-tch-tch!”, Arabic—“Hosh!” Each of those expressions was immediately accompanied by a very specific physical gesture: from expected ones, such as pressing a pointer finger against one’s lips as we do in English, one I’ve never seen before: a forceful raising of an arm or repeated hitting of outer edge of your right palm against the left palm (the latter accompanied the Arabic “Hosh!”). I introduced the rules of the improvisation: the actors were to quickly learn and adopt a ‘shushing’ expression in a language they didn’t speak or had very little knowledge of and by repeatedly using it, they had to make everyone be quiet/silent. The improvisation continued for a few minutes, as my actors and I together explored different ways of saying the ‘shush’ expressions and quieting each other – ironically, the volume went up, some tried to interact with each other instead of becoming progressively more and more silent, while others attempted to violently ‘shush’ everyone and dominate over the whole group, mostly, to no avail. The ‘shushing’ was doomed to fail from the very start, which allowed the paradoxical nature of this improv to really shine.

Following the improvisation, I asked my actors to reflect upon the experience of performing in the languages they were not fluent in. [...] I was very much intrigued to hear their observations and compare them to my own. Immediately, one of the most prominent themes emerged: unanimously, the actors claimed that it felt ‘wrong’ or even ‘unnatural’ to do an ‘incorrect gesture’, i.e., a gesture that is different from the one they were used to doing in their dominant language(s). It felt even more unnatural to respond appropriately to the incorrect gesture, despite knowing its meaning. It was clear that theoretical knowledge of the meaning of the sign does not necessarily constitute one’s bodymind experience of it. The gestures and words in the new languages were not linked to the experience of being shushed, only to the meaning of it (Art’s Journal, April 12, 2015).
The “Shush!” improvisation introduced the idea of “bodily experience” associated with a non-dominant language long before my participants submitted their LEDs. It revealed that ‘adopting’ a new non-verbal communication (NVC) convention (or gesture) would not be an easy experience of emulating. This improvisation was later turned into a more linguistically complex étude—the one described by Danielle. In that etude, the actors had to learn an extended chunk of text in their non-dominant language by imitating a proficient speaker of that language. In addition, we also videotaped each other as speech models and saved the videos on an online platform (Dropbox), so that everyone could practice the text in a language of their choice at any time between our sessions. The text used was a standard welcome-to-the-show speech: “Ladies and gentlemen, the show is about to start. Please, turn off your cell phones. Enjoy the show!” I asked the participants to use this newly learned text to create a free improvisation: they were allowed to come up with their own plot, characters, and relationships. The only constraint was language-related: the lines they were allowed to use were restricted to the “Welcome to the show!” speech delivered in the language of their choice. Furthermore, if the participants chose to perform in their dominant language, they were asked to avoid clichéd or expected ways of speaking the language. Instead, I suggested that they try speaking their dominant language the way they had never spoken it before or never heard anyone speak it. I encouraged them to ‘distort and mangle’ their language to make it sound strange or even completely unrecognizable to themselves. I also encouraged them to explore the separation of language and movement, making the movement independent of the meaning of the language.

My rationale for this exercise was to subvert the hierarchy of dominant languages and make all the actors, both those who chose to take the easy path of using their dominant languages and those who did not, focus on the language and the body movement.

Here is how Gloria’s journal verbalized her experience of performing in Mandarin, a language she was fluent in and which she identified as one of her dominant languages:

“Enjoy the show” in Chinese while doing unrelated movements, I found it challenging in the beginning because the meaning of the words kept interrupting my movements. When I was saying “The show is about to start. Please turn off your cell phone.” Therefore, I had to engage my mind to separate the language from the movement,
which I do not normally do when speaking a language that I’m familiar with. (Gloria’s journal)

The body-mind ‘disconnect’, related to performing in a completely new or non-dominant language and described in both my and Danielle’s journals, is not something that occurs unconsciously, according to Gloria. She had to make a conscious effort to separate her movement from the spoken text in Mandarin, a language she is fluent in. The conscious disconnect is worth noting even though Gloria did not elaborate on how it happened and how she dealt with the challenges it posed. However, a similar disconnect was noticed by other participants, each of whom gave it a particular slant. Here is, for instance, Joy’s mention of it:

I was hyper aware of my movements or the lack thereof. It was hard to be authentic because I felt like there was a bit of disconnection between my movement, voice, and my thoughts. It’s like my body didn’t understand the cues? Maybe? Out of sync? (Joy’s Journal)

As we have already seen at the beginning of the chapter, Yury also pondered the same question of the lack of ‘natural connection’ between the body and his second language (he identified both English and Russian as his dominant languages):

When you grow up using Russian for everyday life and for strong emotions (anger, surprise, jealousy) your body and gestures are naturally in sync with the words, for you have developed them at the same time. How do you sound when you are angry in English? What is your body doing when you are scared and talking at the same time (Yury’s Journal).

I observed a spectrum of differences between various aspects of the body-mind disconnect that each of the participants notes: Yury is preoccupied with the expression of L2 emotions through body, while Gloria focuses more on the perceived differences of the overall expressiveness of her gestures: “I also had to undo my body movement because the Korean gestures are more contained compared to the Chinese.” Nevertheless, in almost everyone’s
writing, there was a reference to a complete or partial body-mind disjuncture having transpired during the work.\(^{71}\)

In a way, such prominence of the body-mind disconnect was to be expected: while we learned the speech samples of different languages, we never focused on the rhythm and flow of the body or the conventions of NVC accompanying the text. One of the aspects that might have been at play was the mere fact that we were switching from syllable-timed to stress-timed languages, again without addressing the particularities of each of the language types. Arlene Moyer explains the importance of the language rhythm and timing as follows:

> English is a stress-timed language, and as such, stretches out the duration of stressed syllables relative to unstressed ones in order to preserve equal timing between stress groups. [...] THIS is the HOUSE that JACK BUILT has the same rhythm as THIS is the HOUSE that KENNedy BUILT, even though the syllable count is not equal. Other languages (e.g., Spanish) preserve syllable timing so that syllables are of relatively equal length throughout (2013, p. 17).

In our case, we played with two syllable-times languages, Farsi and Cantonese, which might explain some of the “out of sync” experience described by the actors. In distinct ways, it was clear that this divorce of body and language presented challenges for performing in a non-dominant language and while some actors (Yury) questioned the very possibility of a non-native speaker ever getting the ‘right body’, others inadvertently proposed a few potentially “queer” solutions. For instance, Mario, who identified Portuguese (his first language) and English (his second language) as dominant, discovered the potential to reconnect the language and the body through the concept of the “foreign mask”:

> When I was improvising in a second language with the sentence "Ladies and gentlemen the show is about to begin..." using a thick British accent\(^{72}\), it felt like I was using a foreign ‘mask’. This ‘mask’ (it felt) could be shaped in as many forms as I liked.

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\(^{71}\) Interestingly, the same aspect did not find much reflection in the journal of amateur performers: Maria and Sepideh, who had not had much stage experience before ISL, never mention the bodymind disconnect as an issue.

\(^{72}\) Mario was attempting to learn the British accent (specifically, the Black county accent) he is talking about here from a model provided by one of the participants of Phase 1, a British actor who characterized himself as being very good with accents and very bad with languages.
For example, I could stretch and/or accentuate syllables in any part of the sentence without having my mind interrupting, as to tell me that I was not making intonations properly. It was as if there was permission to shape the language without feeling that I had stepped outside the ‘proper’/normative/intelligible boundaries assigned to it. The same with body language, I could exaggerate gestures (lift my chest, bend backwards) without a self-evaluative ‘noise’ in my head. In this way, I experienced a sense of liberation in wearing this ‘mask’.73

As we have seen, Danielle’s experience echoed Mario’s discovery: she said that she had directed her attention to the “lyrical tones” of Mandarin and allowed her body to respond to that specific phonological aspect of Mandarin, instead of focusing on grammar or the exact execution of Chinese sounds. Apparently, instead of trying to create an impossible ‘native-like’ connection between the body, the mind and the new language, Danielle found her own link: she allowed her body to respond to the tonal quality of the Chinese language. Arguably, it is thanks to her previous exposure to Mandarin as well as her awareness of the Mandarin tones, that she was capable of singling out the tonal nature of Chinese as a guiding point for her body. More importantly, as a result of her “flowing” with the new language, she got to experience another, unexpected discovery:

[...] when I shifted my language back to Korean, I was surprised to realize that my automatic response in my dominant language was in a dialect, which sounded very close to Chinese intonation I learned.

To her surprise, Danielle noticed a phonological shift in her L1, which had been caused by her use of Mandarin. This phonological shift hints at the potential of her “new” language to disrupt the ordinary, the expected, the common—in her case, it is the “ordinary”, the expected and the common of her mother tongue.

73 In his interview, Mario provided more specifics on how both Portuguese and English feel in his body—he even specified a “body location” for Portuguese: “I do think that when I’m doing in Portuguese I feel more with my chest, I mean, literally, I feel more in my chest. [...] I seem to be in touch, in touch with ahhh body sensations in my chest. Uhh a warmth, like a warmth. Also a sensation of warmth, does this make sense? Um… doing it in English I, um, there was an effort, but there was also a detachment.”
From the researcher’s perspective, it was interesting for me to observe both the conscious struggle of one proficient speaker (Gloria) to disconnect the body from the mind and the language, and at the same time, the joy of discovery exhibited by other speakers (Mario and Danielle) as they were attempting to forge a new body-language connection: one that came out of the necessity to carry out acting tasks while speaking a learned line.

This specific improvisation found its way into our public presentation. In the final scene of ISL, Danielle approaches Yury and offers him a random line in Korean without explaining to him what it means and without providing him with any gesture or body movement attached to it. Yury, who has no knowledge of Korean or of what the line means, emulates Danielle’s pronunciation to the best of his ability and then attempts to ‘make the line his own’ by applying his body movement to it—in a way following the idea of “flow” as expressed in Danielle’s LED. Then Yury passes the Korean line to another actor, who eventually finds their way of ‘connecting’ their body to it. Then this actor passes the gesture to another actor, and the patterns continues until all the actors are on stage (See Chapter 4, Scene 16). This kind of improvisation may be called, following Sara Ahmed’s direction metaphor (see Chapter 2, pp. 41-42), “the initiation of direction”: it invites actors to explore the possibilities of linking a line or a text in an unknown language to a body movement (or a gesture). It may or may not develop into a “repeated direction”. In fact, it may be even a flawed attempt at direction (i.e., the connection may contradict the phonological or grammatical conventions existing in the language) but it is a necessary start for an actor to learn to apply what is said to what is done. That specific improvisation focused on phonology, specifically with prosodic features of the languages used, such as rhythm, prominence, and intonation. For the most part, the actors did not know the meaning of the words and, hence, were not pre-occupied with meaning making.

Mark, an English speaker, an amateur actor, and an ESL teacher, offered a compelling account of this improvisation in his interview. He compares it to a different scene, a short
scripted scene where he had to perform in Esperanto and where both his knowledge of Esperanto and the necessity to make meaning made his body movements feel “mechanical”:

Mark (M): I had no idea what I was saying most of the time (laughs) but I think there was Korean in there, um which changed from one night to the next, I noticed that, that was very interesting, and I think there was some Farsi and possibly some Russian in there too. I don’t actually remember because I wasn’t really recording I was just trying to mirror, trying to learn what the other person was doing and saying and trying to reflect and learn what they were doing and just make those sounds as opposed to think about, what, what did it mean, at that point it wasn’t important to me what it actually meant it, it was, as far as I was concerned it was an exercise in trying to emulate the movements and the sounds that they were making and then replicate, and then copy it to somebody else, I was just like a photocopier.

A: Very interesting. So [...] you were just like a parrot in a way. Did it bother you that you didn’t understand what the words meant?

M: No, no it didn’t bother me in the slightest because I just saw it as a form of entertainment for the audience, um it wasn’t about me at that point, it was, as you call it, um it was an improv so, but not the kind of improv where you have to think quickly on your feet, it’s like oh my god what would that person say in this moment, how can I make sense of this, or how can I make this funny, there was none of that involved at all, it was just go out there, see what people are doing and saying and copy that as close you can and once you think you got, it pass it on to someone else. For me that was the easiest part of the whole thing. [...] 

A: So I would like you to maybe reflect on how your body felt in different languages. I know that in one of the languages, at the very beginning when you were doing Russian and Farsi the body wasn’t much involved, certainly the speech apparatus was involved but the body was doing something else, but in other instances the body was involved and it was performing with the language um… how did it feel for you to be performing in different accents and in different languages.

M: [...] I would say that it felt more mechanical, my brain was more focused on what I was going to say. I was thinking about what it meant as well but that took away some of the energy from the body in that case so everything just - but the whole thing with that whole scene in Esperanto felt mechanical to me and I’m not sure whether

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74 Mark performed the scene called *Kie Vi Devenas* (*Where are you from?* in Esperanto), which he devised together with Felicia, another Anglophone, and Danielle. He voluntarily took up the task of translating the scene, which was originally created in English, into Esperanto, a language he had been studying for a while. For the full text of the scene in both English and Esperanto, see Chapter 4, Scenes 2, 5, 8, and 11.
that’s because it was the style we were going for, whether it’s a constructed language that added to it too or whether it was because I was thinking ahead for the lines.

A: Right and that didn’t happen in English?

M: Not as much, no I don’t think so. No it felt more natural.

A: You also mentioned before that when you were performing at the very end in Farsi, Korean, whatever other languages you used, it seemed like you were much more relaxed… and I guess it was an improv and you were supposed to imitate so there was a potential of it becoming very mechanical as well, because like you basically imitate. Did it feel mechanical, did it feel the same way or was it different from the Esperanto scene?

M: No it was quite different because as I said before I wasn’t thinking about the meaning, I wasn’t thinking about the I of the words and the grammar and so all those layers were stripped away from me right so basically because I didn’t have all those layers, basically the only layers that were left were pronunciation and of mimicking body movements. That’s all there was. I didn’t care about what it meant, so the semantics weren’t there. I didn’t care about the structure because it was just whatever structure the other person was using, and I was open to that being incorrect because sometimes that was second or third, second or third hand copy from somebody else, they may not be the originator and I didn’t care. So that didn’t feel mechanical to me I was just trying to be as organic as possible um so that was quite different to the scenes that I was performing where to me it had meaning and there were so many different layers that had to be in place to make it effective.

While Mark does not use the word “disconnect”, it is clear that he experiences his body differently in Esperanto than in English.75

Paradoxically, Esperanto, unlike any other language we played with had no NVC system associated with it and, theoretically, could have offered more liberty than any other language involved. Mark also speculates that it is having to make meaning versus having to play with the “form” (pronunciation) that produces two different effects on one’s body.

75 In regards to her performance in Esperanto, Danielle’s observations about body were similar to Mark’s: “[...] when I spoke Esperanto compared to English and Korean was totally different experience. I felt more rigid in a way like it was really difficult for me to think of a gesture that that kind of matched with the words” (Danielle’s Interview).
Finally, there is another salient aspect of “body disconnect,” which entered our conversation through my own observations, rather than the actors’ journals. At the end of Phase One, I noticed in rehearsal, and documented in my journals, how my own culturally-bounded perception coloured my experience of watching Chinese speakers perform. In my second journal, I write:

Joy and Gloria have been consistently improvising together. I keep noticing that there is something almost uncanny about their performance whenever they speak in Mandarin or Cantonese. Gloria always maintains this particular posture—when she sits down, she is keeps her body upright without ever touching the back of the chair with her back. She always places her hands on her laps and her knees are always kept together. Joy, on the other hand, seems much more relaxed about her body language: her knees are often spread apart, she has no problem sliding down the chair and not keeping her back straight. She does not change when she speaks Chinese either, maintaining the same affirmative body language. Even the way she smiles is different—I recognize her smile as local, while whenever Gloria smiles, I see it as foreign: it’s very contained, slightly forced and at the same time full of duly respect (Art’s Journal, April 25, 2015).

What is documented through my journal is that, as a spectator, I was also experiencing a peculiar body disconnect: it was difficult for me to perceive Mandarin when it was spoken by Joy. What challenged my perception was the Anglophone NVC conventions Joy was consistently using when speaking Mandarin or Cantonese. Joy, born in Hong Kong, grew up in New York City and Toronto, and learned Mandarin as a language of schooling—she went to a Chinese school. But her first language, her home language, and her heritage language, is Cantonese. In her initial questionnaire, she identified English, Mandarin, and Cantonese (respectively) as her dominant languages—and yet, I failed to see Mandarin or Cantonese NVC in Joy’s performance. However, since she was often improvising in the same languages as Gloria, the difference between them became more obvious to me and Joy’s body seemed “unauthentic” to me.

Interestingly, the same kind of language-body disconnect did not happen for me when I observed those who performed in English and yet did not speak English as their dominant language. Evidently, my perception was much more tolerant in regards to English, a language I
speak fluently, and not so tolerant in regards to the language I was not even familiar with—in fact, I was essentially stereotyping the ‘Chinese’ body while I remained much more open to what an English body can be and do. I shared this observer’s paradox with Gloria and Joy, which eventually led to the creation of the only scene that attempted to both expose and critique this same “paradox”. The scene was divided into two parts, neither of which used spoken language. Instead, they focused specifically on NVC and our perception that can be coloured by our racial and cultural assumptions (see Chapter 4, Scenes 12 and 14). In Part I of the scene, Gloria and Joy were standing downstage centre facing the audience and demonstrating exaggerated gestures. Following Kendon’s classification of gesture (1988), introduced in Chapter One, p. 18) we focused on affect displays (i.e., gesture and body movements expressing emotion), and emblems, (i.e., culturally circumscribed signifiers such as “thumbs up” or the “peace” sign). Gloria was demonstrating gestures appropriate for a Chinese cultural context, while Joy was portraying “English Canadian” gestures. In Part II of the scene, Gloria was joined by Clayton and Sepideh while Joy was joined by Mario and Amy: both trios repeated the same sequences of gestures (Gloria’s group did the “Chinese set”, while Joy did the “English Canadian one”). This time around the audience was confronted with more racial and gender diversity, which we hoped would invite a re-evaluation of perceptions of race, culture, gender and body (for the audience response analysis, see Chapter Five). In a way, while language per se was not directly involved, that scene was an invitation for the audience to experience body as a site of disconnect, confusion and disruption, partially similar to the body-language disconnect the actors were going through as they were trying to improvise in different languages.

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76 I can also propose another reading of this ‘paradox’: by living in downtown Toronto and being a practicing ESL instructor, I am accustomed to hearing people speak English at various levels of proficiency and with various levels of interference coming from other languages, specifically their L1s. At the same time, while I can also hear Chinese on a regular basis, I have no capacity to assess people’s levels of proficiency or accentedness.
**Discussion one: Language and body.**

My analysis of this first theme has clearly shown that the body disconnect/connect had a prominent place in the actors’ LEDs, particularly the LEDs of those who self-identified as professional actors and actors-in-training. In the rest of this section, I will attempt to find links between the body disconnect/connect theme and current research in both Theatre Studies and Applied Linguistics.

Theatre scholars have recently begun to work on creating a unified theory of acting—a theory that would look beyond multiple actor training schools and traditions in order to understand how acting works. Body and movement take a prominent place in such theorizations. For instance, John Lutterbie, in his book *Toward a General Theory of Acting*, analyses a wide range of acting schools and traditions (both Eastern and Western), and identifies six common tools employed by trained actors: “movement, language, gesture, memory, attention and executive control” (Lutterbie, 2011, 104). Lutterbie separates gesture and movement, arguing that gesture is linked to language while body movement is generally not; he argues that both gesture and language are “part of the cognitive processes of language production and [...] have their origins in the same part of the brain” \(^{77}\) (Lutterbie, 2011, p. 124). However, another scholar, Rick Kemp (2012), who attempts to frame acting through the conceptual apparatus of cognitive science, utilizes both gesture and body as synonymous to refer to NVC tools. Kemp’s interpretation of gesture suggests a broader understanding of the concept of NVC, and is consonant with how my participants also used the terms *body, gesture,* and *movement* in their phenomenological descriptions. \(^{78}\)

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77 Lutterbie speaks of Broca’s area, which is commonly considered a “speech centre” of the brain.

78 Recent calls for a more radical, more embodied, and more environmentally situated understanding of cognitive processes occurring in the brain pushes against simplistic views of brain lateralization (see, for instance, Kiverstein & Miller, 2015, or Chemero, 2013). Such propositions may eventually undermine the distinction between gesture and body, proposed by Lutterbie.
Following McNeill’s theory of gesture (McNeill, 2000, 2005), Kemp provides a compelling explanation of how language and gesture are related and how this relationship can play out in a conversation:

Despite the potential for conscious control of gesture, the vast majority of gestures in everyday speech are unconsciously generated, produced alongside words (rather than substituting for them) and almost impossible to inhibit. This last feature probably explains the fact that most people, when confronted with a discrepancy in meaning between verbal and non-verbal communication, will trust the non-verbal (Kemp, 2012, p. 34).

Kemp hints at the dialectical relationship between language and body and, by extension, a potential to generate extra meaning through playing with the language-body dialectics. This position certainly resonates with the idea of “language-body disconnect/connect” I identified in my participants’ LEDs. What I, following my participants, called “disconnect”, Kemp calls “incongruent” use of NVC, that is, when NVC lacks synchronicity with verbal communication both in terms of timing and meaning.

There is, however, one important caveat that sets my observations apart from Lutterbie’s and Kemp’s theories. Both Lutterbie and Kemp automatically assume that actors perform in their first and dominant language only—all second or non-dominant languages are predictably outside of their focus. With this assumption of monolingualism, any disconnect between language and gesture caused by an actor’s multilingualism would be considered undesirable as well as disruptive of the ‘natural’ connection as expected from a native speaker. My data show that this is not the only way in which multilingual actors’ perception works.

As my participants encountered that perceptual disconnect for the first time (in relation to the languages they had not spoken before or did not know well), they selected various ways to deal with it. Some reported stilted, “mechanistic” performance; some applied their L1 “gesture” features to their L2; some resisted doing so, and some intentionally strived for establishing a new connection between body and the phonology of the new or non-dominant language. This variety of approaches indicates that, in order to understand how multilingual
actors may approach the “incongruence” of language and NVC, it may be useful to turn to studies, not yet numerous, on the relationship between gesture and L2.

Research in this area is only emerging, but it has already indicated that there are various developmental patterns associated with the acquisition of gesture in L2 and, as a result, major differences in how gestures are used by multilingual speakers. For instance, when speaking their second language, L2 learners may retain a great number of unconscious gestures from their L1 (Stam, 1996; Negueruela et al, 2004). Arguably, both Joy and Gloria demonstrated elements of such a mix of English and Chinese NVC signs in their respective languages.

Another strand of research indicates that language proficiency can correlate with the type of gestures being learned (Taranger & Coupier, 1984) — specifically, metaphorical gestures and emblems are not necessarily easy at the start of language learning. This fact can perhaps partly explain why a completely emblematic gesture coming from an unknown language causes a major disconnect between body and language, as in the case with the “Shush!” improvisation described earlier. One more factor, currently being explored by researchers, is the learning environment. Some scholars hypothesize that naturalistic learners (i.e., learning through full immersion in a target language speaking environment) tend to acquire L2 gestures, while those who are learning a language in a purely educational context usually fail to do so (McCafferty & Ahmed, 2000). This line of arguing may explain why my participants reported broad spectrum body-language “disconnects”: in the end, Gloria, Joy, Danielle, Mario, and Yury had learned their languages in a mix of naturalistic environment and instruction, while Mark could only learn Esperanto through formal study.79

It is clear that there may be some potential in understanding the relationship between body and L2s through research in Applied Linguistics; however, it is important to also mention that L2 acquisition research has not yet directly addressed the issue of the body “disconnect”,

nor has it applied a phenomenological framework to studying this relationship. Instead, it mostly concerns itself with experimental and quasi-experimental studies focusing on acquisition or perception of a single gesture or a single gesture type. Hence, establishing direct connections between my study and L2 gesture acquisition research proved to be difficult. What is important to acknowledge is that the “body-language” disconnect is not simply an automatic indicator of “incongruence” predicated on the assumption of monolingualism. Within a multilingual context, the body disconnect can be experienced in many different ways. Moreover, it is not necessarily perceived as incongruence by both multilingual actors and multilingual observers (or spectators), as my own example of observing Gloria’s and Joy’s performances showed. From the aesthetic point of view, both the disconnect and the potentiality of a new connection provided our collective with a multitude of possibilities for creating dramaturgical devices, allowing multilingual actors to create both purposefully “congruent” and “incongruent” uses of language. More importantly, it challenged the notions of “congruence” and “incongruence” by disrupting the conventionality of monolingual connections between language and body. Finally, it invited the “audience” (observers) to “queer” their framework by making the possibilities of language-body “incongruence” salient.

**Theme two: The “(un)safe route”**.

In the beginning of the second week (Phase 1, Week 2), we moved on from warm ups and unstructured improvisations with different languages to a new type of activity. Bearing in mind that actors are commonly accustomed to starting with a written text, I decided to introduce text-based work to both groups of participants. I chose a book with which I expected most of the actors to be familiar—*Le Petit Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. *Le Petit Prince* is one of the most translated books in the world, which facilitated my finding both electronic and hard copies of it in different languages. In the University of Toronto library, I found multiple editions in Farsi, Russian, French and English and brought them to the rehearsal room. We
collectively selected a couple of scenes to play with, did a table read, first in French, the language of the original, and then English, the language we could all understand. We also did a little impromptu translation into other languages we were fluent in. Then I proposed we venture into text-based improvisations: we began switching and meshing languages, repeating the same line in two or three languages, and playing with the characters, the story and the sound. One of the scenes we worked on was the Prince’s encounter with the Tippler, which represents Chapter 12 of Exupéry’s novel:

La planète suivante était habitée par un buveur. Cette visite fut très courte, mais elle plongea le petit prince dans une grande mélancolie :
– Que fais-tu là ? dit-il au buveur, qu’il trouva installé en silence devant une collection de bouteilles vides et une collection de bouteilles pleines.
– Je bois, répondit le buveur, d’un air lugubre.
– Pourquoi bois-tu ? lui demanda le petit prince.
– Pour oublier, répondit le buveur.
– Pour oublier quoi ? s’enquit le petit prince qui déjà le plaignait.
– Pour oublier que j’ai honte, avoua le buveur en baissant la tête.
– Honte de quoi ? s’informa le petit prince qui désirait le secourir.
– Honte de boire ! acheva le buveur qui s’enferma définitivement dans le silence.
Et le petit prince s’en fut, perplexe.
« Les grandes personnes sont décidément très très bizarres », se disait-il en lui-même durant le voyage 80 (1943, pp. 50-51).

80 The next planet was inhabited by a tippler. This was a very short visit, but it plunged the little prince into deep dejection.
"What are you doing there?" he said to the tippler, whom he found settled down in silence before a collection of empty bottles and also a collection of full bottles.
"I am drinking," replied the tippler, with a lugubrious air.
"Why are you drinking?" demanded the little prince.
"So that I may forget," replied the tippler.
"Forget what?" inquired the little prince, who already was sorry for him.
"Forget that I am ashamed," the tippler confessed, hanging his head.
This scene provided a lot of room for imagination for it offered no description of the “buveur” or his planet: we could practically invent the characters and the given circumstances. It also contained only very short lines, which made it a good playing ground for an improvisation in various languages. One of the ideas that seemed particularly fruitful was performing the characters of the Prince and the Tippler in two different languages.

Joy wrote an extensive journal analysing her experience of playing a text-based étude based on this scene. Joy performed in Mandarin, her non-dominant and yet working language, and French, a non-dominant language she studied in school but had no working knowledge of. Joy specifically reflects on the improvisation where we decided to have three Little Princes, all speaking different languages, and one Tippler, in order to indicate that the tippler was seeing and hearing triple because of his perpetual alcoholism.

Here is what Joy wrote in her journal:

**IN FRENCH**
- **Challenges**
  Although we were not up on our feet when I read the lines of the Little Prince in French, I definitely found myself overthinking and even speaking the lines in my head before it came up. I was worried about intonation and pronunciation, less about intention or about the person/character I was interacting with. I believe I also often spoke with the same intonation because it was safe and I knew it was “right”...or so I thought?

**IN MANDARIN**
- **Challenges**
  During the scene, I used my non-dominant language, Mandarin. It was challenging because there were still many elements of improv even though we had the text to the whole scene. There were uncertainties in structure and that made it more challenging.

"Ashamed of what?" insisted the little prince, who wanted to help him.

"Ashamed of drinking!" The tippler brought his speech to an end, and shut himself up in an impregnable silence. And the little prince went away, puzzled.

"The grown-ups are certainly very, very odd," he said to himself, as he continued on his journey (Translation by Katherine Woods).
With 3 people playing the Little Prince, we used our impulses to decide who would speak when and whether we would repeat each other and etc. [...] 

It’s tricky because mandarin isn’t EXACTLY a non-dominant language. I grew up learning English and Mandarin simultaneously and because I moved back and forth between North America and Asia a lot, I was able to exercise using both languages. English started becoming dominant probably at the age of 8 or 9 for me. I know that Mandarin isn’t exactly a non-dominant language because when I speak in Mandarin, I don’t often need to translate the words in my head from English to Mandarin. Even when I ask myself, “oh what’s that word again?” in my head, it would be in Mandarin. I think of the English word only when I encounter vocabulary that is typically outside of daily conversation. I may even fall into a particular “character” when I speak Mandarin.

There was, however, little text and more room for responding to the Tippler through movement. I did notice that many of the Little Prince’s lines were questions and I asked the questions in similar manners in tone and in the way I broke up the sentence. If I had done the scene in English, I would have been able to feel more comfortable in exploring various ways to ask the questions, tried out different intentions etc. In my pseudo non-dominant language I often chose the easier and “safe” route (Joy’s Journal).

Predictably, Joy’s accounts of reading the scene in French and then performing it in Mandarin are different. She links the differences to her more advanced knowledge of Mandarin, which “is not exactly a non-dominant language” for her and her lesser mastery of French. What I find more important is the one similarity—specifically the behavioural strategy she chose in both cases. She calls it a “safe route”. In French and in Mandarin, she selects one intonation pattern to repeat instead of exploring various ways of saying the line. The pattern she chose was “safe” because she perceived it as “correct”.

What prompted her decision to stay within this comfortable safety zone? To find potential answers to this question, let us go back to the researcher’s very first journal and what I noticed in the “Shush” improvisation:

[...] Another point my actors made was that it was difficult to improvise with each single word-gesture: having learned only one version, a lot of the actors were not comfortable enough to explore variability without actually knowing how that variability works. Were they allowed to play with the volume? Was is it ok to change pitch? Elongate vowels? Stretch consonants? Languages work in multiple ways: changing pitch in Mandarin will affect the lexical meaning of words, changing pitch in
English in most cases only changes the intonation. The same applies to gestures: how far can a gesture be modified or altered before it loses its meaning and becomes a different sign, at least for somebody who understands it? How would those who are not at all familiar with it interpret it?

After this very first improvisation, Yury made a point that he was not able to do much with the learned line because he had only acquired one single model and had no access to the potential variety of pronunciations as well as body expressions that could be applied to the expression learned in a given language. We returned to that observation in the interviews:

A: I do remember this interesting comment you made, I think it was the very first rehearsal when we were doing a little improv with like saying “shh, hss” or like whatever or “hosh” whatever and I think it shows a gesture of a different language, not one you really spoke, and you said something really interesting which I observed later in everybody’s performance. Do you remember that moment of…?

YURY (Y): What did I say?

A: I think you had a sort of discovery moment that it’s difficult to, it’s almost impossible to perform a gesture when it has no meaning even though you know the meaning. It was like your body doesn’t feel that way. It was weird. You know the meaning of it, I told you it means quiet, but it doesn’t feel the right way.

Y: I remember that class, yeah. It’s almost like with the dance, when you tried something for the first time and it doesn’t sit well with you and it doesn’t and I don’t even think about that. And there is so much more variations of how it can be done, sexy, it can be seductive, it can be harsh and punishing. And with that yeah, it’s like I only have one pain (UNCLEAR), its pain hush hush like that’s all I know, like there’s no, no circumstances like there’s no infrastructure around it. I can’t play with it (Yury’s Interview).

To me, Yury’s astute observation pointed to the multilingual actor’s acute awareness that the phonetic (and by extension linguistic and NVC) resources, or in Yury’s words “infrastructure,” that he could use in his other language were not necessarily applicable to a new language in accordance with the conventions of his first language, for instance. If he had thought otherwise, he would have had no problem changing the learned line. Yury’s observation does not necessarily mean that multilingualism guarantees metalinguistic awareness: I am just stating here that a multilingual actor took note of the significance of linguistic variance, and his lack of access to the linguistic resources of the language he did not
speak. That awareness did not allow him to apply the simplest possible solution: apply the phonological resources of his mother tongue (or any dominant language) to his ‘new’ language.

Gloria, who describes another episode—a scene from *Le Petit Prince* which depicts the narrator’s first encounter with the Prince when the Prince asks him to draw him a lamb—“Dessine-moi un mouton”. Reflecting upon that scene, she writes:

> When I was performing in French with one phrase “S’il vous plait… dessine-moi un mouton”, I was tempted to change the intonation because I felt that I was repeating the same thing over and over again. Then I realized that I could change the mood by changing the volume and the speed instead of changing the intonation. (Gloria’s Journal).

Once again, the actor’s knowledge and awareness of the phonetic limitations of her mastery of a new language are clear—Gloria does not dare to invent an unknown intonation pattern or apply, for instance, an English intonation pattern to French. Gloria attempted to employ the resources that she thought would be safer and less likely to produce a drastic change of meaning: speech rate and volume.

This, for instance, was not the case with Lyla, who self-identified as an actor in training who spoke English as her only dominant language. Lyla also worked on a scene from *Le Petit Prince* but her scene was a monologue, rather than a dialogue. It was her first time ever performing in her non-dominant language—French.

Lyla starts her journal by admitting that her knowledge of French turned out to be much more limited than she originally thought it was—a recent high school graduate she had gone through the Core French programme, a mandatory minimum of French instruction in Ontario’s public schools. Lyla writes:

> When I signed up for the project I severely underestimated the challenge it proposes – I seemed to have overestimated my knowledge of my second language (French), to the point when it came to actually looking at French texts I felt slightly overwhelmed. Constructing my scene itself was also made more difficult due to the fact that I realized I had next to no knowledge of the culture of the French language so I was rather lost on what to do (Lyla’s Journal 1).
Indeed, for the first couple of weeks, Lyla’s improvisations were quite stilted. She, however, continued to work on her piece. In addition, she was the only participant who decided to submit another journal two weeks later (Phase II, Week I), which provides some insight on her progress. In her second journal she notes some improvement to her knowledge of French. She also describes how she overcame her stiltedness of her performance:

I realized that as I attempted to work on the French that I was memorizing something that I didn’t really process as language, but simply sounds and sentences. While I understood what the text meant I didn’t really connect the French words to ideas and thought like I did with English words. However, as soon as I made a conscious effort to see my text as language rather than just sound with a story and a meaning and a message that was woven into the words themselves I feel like my performance of the piece was much better. I found my body reed itself up to become more involved when I didn’t have to focus so much on remembering the text, and my voice was much less restrained and able to channel more expression (Lyla’s Journal 2).

Paradoxically, while Lyla notes a significant improvement of both her French and her performance, my own observations of Lyla’s ‘progress’ indicated the opposite: I found that the freer she was getting, the less “francophone” she was becoming. I noted that she became completely inattentive to the particularities of pronunciation: for instance, she would apply English intonation patterns and rhythms to French. The same applied to her body—to me she seemed like an Anglophone speaking French and employing the arsenal of pronunciation and body elements.

Eventually, Lyla and I developed her monologue into a scene centred around her own learning to perform in French. I performed the role of a machine translator (Google Translate) while Lyla was repeating the words of her monologue after me without being involved or engaged in meaning making. Eventually, her “character” decides to apply body, emotion and intonation to what she was saying in French, and yet as a monolingual she only has access to

81 French is a syllable-timed language, English is a stress-timed language. The rhythm of French speech differs from English significantly. This can affect the production of gestures: some gestures, for instance, beat gestures tend to happen in sync with the stressed syllables of the most important word in a thought group. (See Kemp, 2012, p. 33)
the tools of her first language, so she decides to apply them both enthusiastically and uncritically (see Chapter 4, Scene 3).

Reflecting on Lyla’s case now, I believe that she chose a route different from the “safe” strategies discussed above. I would call it an “unsafe route,” an attempt to play with the language without much concern with the model. From my perception, it produced “contaminated French”—the effect that Yury, Gloria and Danielle were trying to avoid. From Lyla’s perspective, it provided her with a chance to meaningfully “connect” with her non-dominant language as a language, not as an assortment of “sounds and sentences” or as a school subject. The connection can be interpreted as a new direction for Lyla, which can eventually grow into “an orientation”, should she decide to continue that journey of becoming bilingual.

There is another story, which, unfortunately, did not find its documentation in any of the journals but is directly related to that significant change of direction. This is the story of Amy. To my regret, I myself learned about it only during the post-production interview with her. It revealed what might happen when an actor speaking a non-dominant language is forced to decide to take an ‘unsafe’ route. Amy self-identified an English-speaking American and “recovering” actor, trained in both long and short form improvisation, but not working as an actor or improiser. Instead, at the time of our project, Amy was teaching ESL.

Amy grew up in a mostly monolingual context despite living in a Spanish-speaking neighbourhood. She also studied Spanish in high school and university. Later, she had some exposure to Turkish, which she picked up from a Turkish-speaking partner. Throughout weeks of rehearsals, Amy chose to perform in English, her first and only dominant language. Her reasons for participating in the project were slightly different from everyone else’s:

[...] when I first started I was enjoying it as an observer I think more. I was interested in hearing peoples stories haha and watching and then I feel I just became more uh involved and because at the last um I, I spoke a non-dominant language I had the experience I think maybe, may have been what other people were experiencing all along which is the kind of terror of that and the challenge and the completely different
way of interacting with everything that was happening so… I really liked that I was
glad that you pushed me to do that (Amy’s interview).

Amy came mostly to observe what it meant to be a performer in a non-dominant
language. After weeks of observation and improvisation mostly in her dominant tongue—
English, I insisted that she try a short improvisation in Spanish, where she would have to
perform with a fellow English speaker, Clayton. We were developing that improvisation in
week 5, so there was very little time left for devising and rehearsal. Understandably, Amy was
hesitant. In the interview, she claimed that she was glad that I had “pushed” her to do so,
despite her fear of speaking in a different language. I asked her about that:

A: Mmhmm. So you mentioned “terror” which is a word I haven’t heard yet. You’re
my last interview but there’s terror.

AMY: Oh (laughs) I was trying to think because my um Spanish is so rusty and I
knew that I was not uhh conversational in, in the language so to do improv in a
language that I you know can barely speak basic stock phrases in was, was, was
terrifying and I felt, I felt like a fraud, I felt like I was revealing myself to being
monolingual (laughs) so maybe that’s more of a personal issue but now all of the
internet will know about it (laughs).

A: Yes absolutely it’s already on YouTube. Um did anything help you to overcome
that fear?… I know we introduced that very very late so we didn’t have a chance to
work with you um but was there any way you tried to overcome that fear and terror…

AMY: Yeah just reminding myself of what the purpose of the project was and what
we um, what I was getting from the – and valuable it is to be in the role of learner, I
think, and non-dominant person haha and um because yeah I just think it makes me a
better human, better teacher, better everything.

Amy’s experience correlates with Danielle’s experience of the English audition, which
I cited earlier in this chapter. While Danielle uses the word “fear”, Amy utilizes the much
stronger “terror” in relation to her non-dominant languages. The task of performing in a non-
dominant language can be perceived as an “unsafe” route, which has a capacity to entirely
stump actors and halt their creativity. Again, as we have seen from Danielle’s example, the
level of language fluency could be, but is not necessarily, a guarantor of the absence of that
paralyzing fear.
Amy’s interview does not reveal her process of overcoming that fear and preparing for the performance of the improvisation in question; however, the video recording of the performance of May 16, 2015 (see Chapter 4, Scene 13) shows that during her improvisation she actively engaged in using her limited repertoire of Spanish stock phrases, even though she did allow Clayton to be the Spanish speaking lead in the scene. From being completely silent and terrified, she moved on to being actively engaged. Arguably, she moved from “terror” to re-directing herself to Spanish, similarly to how Lyla reoriented herself toward French. Again, a necessary start, even though it causes a performance significantly affected by one’s first or dominant language.

**Discussion two: Executive control, language inhibition and language transfer.**

The theme of the Safe Route essentially concerns various ways in which actors make executive decisions in regards to the use of the language they did not speak well or did not know at all. On realizing their limitations in their non-dominant languages, my participants reported an experience of caution, concern or outright fear. This kind of perception of their non-dominant language initially stumped some of the actors, specifically those with only one dominant language (Amy and Lyla), and subsequently required a major re-evaluation of their orientation towards their non-dominant language. Actors with two or more dominant languages (Joy, Gloria and Yury) reported being cautious about their decisions to play with a new language: arguably, it was their metalinguistic awareness that prompted their choice of a safe route.

In the discussion below, I will attempt to connect this decision-making process based on the perception of one’s non-dominant language to a number of concepts commonly utilized in Theatre Studies and Applied Linguistics, specifically studies on bilingualism and second language acquisition. These concepts are executive control, language transfer and language inhibition. I will address each of these concepts, explicating how they may be useful for the understanding of a multilingual actor’s performance.

John Lutterbie (2011) explains the function of executive control as follows:
The prefrontal cortex is linked to executive function, which is identified by attention and executive control. Attention, connected to working memory, directs focus on the environment, selecting those stimuli that are necessary for responding to a person’s specific circumstances in any given moment. Executive control is associated with decision making, particularly in novel situations, such as determining a course of action, responding to unusual circumstances, or abstract reasoning. This part of the brain has specialized neurons that are bidirectional; that is, these neurons can send and receive activations from the sensorimotor regions of the brain. The executive function also works through inhibition and disinhibition, the suppression of facilitation of behaviors. (109-110)

Lutterbie continues to explain how executive control is linked to perception:

Executive control is not merely responding to incoming perceptual information, but it is also overseeing intentional actions. As human beings, we have needs and desires—whether hunger pains or an influx of hormones—that cause us to intervene in the world on our own behalf (111).

It is clear from Lutterbie’s definition that executive control operates in conjunction with attention and memory. A novel situation may confound our executive control because our brain might fail to have or to find appropriate “templates” for it—the templates that get accrued through attention and memory. According to Lutterbie, acquiring templates for performance, be it performance in real life or on stage, is an essential part of acting: “Every acting system has a recommended template, in the form of techniques, that actors use in devising a performance” (2011, p. 112). Returning to the analysis presented above, the “safe route” can be interpreted as actors’ executive decisions to deal with familiar templates or patterns, as, for instance, in Gloria’s, Joy’s and Danielle’s cases. Different from those cases is the case of Amy. Being a trained improviser, Amy was completely stumped when she had to improvise in Spanish for the first time: clearly, the templates of improvisation she had learned in English suddenly became inaccessible to her due to the language switch.

To understand why Amy was stumped, it is important to look at how executive control operates in a multilingual versus monolingual brain. Research on bilingualism points to the so-called bilingual advantage or the advantage of the bilingual brain linked to the necessity to inhibit other languages (most commonly L1), when communicating in one single language. In simple terms, if I am speaking English to a monolingual Anglophone (or a multilingual speaker
that does not share any other languages with me), my brain has to automatically inhibit any other language I know, especially my mother tongue, if it is not English. If my brain does not inhibit other languages, then the danger of overwhelming language transfer, or ‘contamination’, may become too great and I will start importing vast amounts of resources from my other languages to English—a strategy that may jeopardize my communication effectiveness. The language inhibition happening in my brain should also be automatized enough not to overload my working memory, otherwise it could become too taxing for the brain to ‘consciously’ inhibit my other languages. The so-called bilingual advantage indicates that bilinguals tend to have a better-developed executive control function than monolinguals (see for instance, Bialystok et al 2006). 82

There is, however, more to the inhibition process that the bilingual brain has to deal with on a regular basis. Bilinguals are also known for their ability to switch between languages: some do it on a regular basis (“switching bilinguals”), some prefer to keep their languages separated (“non-switching bilinguals”). Depending on the switching patterns and preferences as well, each bilingual’s executive control function can be developed differently. 83 In addition, most bilinguals are not balanced, that is, possessing similar fluency in two languages (or more). Those factors may be important for executive control as well.

This variation of how various types of bilinguals can use executive control, language inhibition, and language switching can also be affected by their fear of language transfer. As my data showed, those participants who were self-identified speakers of two or more dominant languages (bi or multilinguals) were both aware of the potential transfer and chose to be cautious about it. This awareness is not simply of a property of an individual bi- or multilingual

82 There is also a growing body of research pointing to the bilingual disadvantage: for instance, see Paap & Greenberg, 2013.

83 For instance, Verreyt et al (2015) showed that balanced switching bilinguals tend to outperform balanced non-switching bilinguals and unbalanced switching bilinguals on executive control performance. For Verreyt et al, “the bilingual advantage does not emerge from bilingualism in itself, but instead that certain characteristics of language use may be crucial for development of the control advantage” (p. 182).
brain—it may be deeply rooted in the societal structures and hierarchies and how they play out in the bilinguals’ language use. For instance, in her interview, Gloria told me a traumatic story of how she had been scolded in her university drama class because of a cross-linguistic transfer occurring in her pronunciation:

A: So it feels the same in the body, it feels the same, the same techniques of acting you would use to perform in your first language and your second language.

GLORIA (G): It’s uhh, it’s the one thing, it’s the pronunciation? When I was performing in English I had to be really focused on the language uh I’m actually afraid all the time that I pronounce something wrong or not clearly. This doesn’t really happen in Mandarin of course.

A: Mmhmm. Did that fear come from the external sources? Was that me telling you, please pronounce this correctly or was it just internal –

G: Just internal. And also in the drama program for two years because all the people are native speakers and I feel like I need to get up to that level.

A: Mmhmm. So it’s originally from external sources then right? It’s somebody probably telling you that you need to up your game…?

G: Yeah, I had a voice teacher and then she kept telling me “its dogs not dogse”. She kept, she was kind of correcting me for ten minutes in front everyone in the class-

A: And how did you find that experience?

G: I was furious but I couldn’t show anything, in my face.

A: When did that happen?

G: That was the first year. So in 2013. That was my first year in drama program (Gloria’s Interview).

Clearly, Gloria’s negative perception of L1 transfer can be associated with this traumatic experience, where she, being multilingual, was taught to speak as though she was a monolingual with a locally unmarked accent. A similar situation, where a power holder

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84 Gloria also confided that as multilingual speaker she was never given an opportunity to use her other languages in any of her acting classes: “There was like one class where the professor, actually [instructor’s name], asked us to use a different language as gibberish, so if you speak French and I speak Chinese then we create a scene together it’s kind of like an improv but yeah it’s kind of like the only time I use a second language.”
exerted pressure on a multilingual to perform as a monolingual, found its representation in Yury and Clayton’s devised scene; they created an audition scene based on Yury’s own experience of auditioning for various roles in Toronto and getting incessant comments on his ‘marked’ accent (See Chapter 4, “Prologue”).

To summarize, multilinguals vary enormously in their use of their languages and in their repertoires of switching between languages, which may affect their executive control function and their language inhibition capabilities. While performing in various languages, multilingual actors also vary in how they apply executive decisions in relation to each of their languages. On the other hand, for monolingual actors, the very issue of language transfer as well as the fear of it might be a completely novel experience, which may certainly affect their decision making process.

Executive control, however, is not a function that works in isolation. It always relies on attention and memory. Next, I will analyse how these themes manifested themselves in my participants’ LEDs.

**Theme three: (Un)split attention.**

Attention, concentration, awareness or focus can be construed by different acting schools as various guises of the same acting tool. John Lutterbie calls this tool “split attention” and defines it as “the ability to perform an action while monitoring it at the same time” (2011, 56). As the actors were describing their experience, most of them chose to specify that their attention was more heightened when they had to perform in their non-dominant languages. In other words, their self-“monitoring” ability was more active when non-dominant languages were involved.

For instance, Yury makes a general comment about the differences between speaking English and Russian, which is not even related to acting: “Speaking English, my adopted
language, requires an extra effort, as I can get tired speaking it after a certain amount of time”. In contrast to that, he notes “I am never tired [of] speaking Russian.” He also feels that performing in English requires more effort; however, he specifies that the complexity of what he needs to say matters enormously:

When speaking in English in simple phrases I have no problem keeping an eye on grammar and the right use of words and their order, but when [I am] too excited to tell a story or overwhelmed with emotions I will lose control and most likely make mistakes Never happens when I am speaking my mother tongue – Russian (Yury’s Journal).

Why does this problem of “keeping an eye on grammar” and language pragmatics (i.e., the socially appropriate linguistic choices) matter? Yury explains that this necessity to self-monitor his speech affects his attention, as it may be ‘split’ very unevenly, so that language processing can become too taxing for the brain, and there can be little to no processing power left for the acting:

When performing in English, my mind is preoccupied with words, and meanings and other linguistic nuances, and the acting is always secondary. Even when I have a good grip on English text, I might have a slip or two, deforming the proper English intonation ways of expressiveness. (Yury’s Journal)

When reflecting on her experience of performing in Korean, a language completely new for her, Gloria also mentions a heightened sense of focus compared to her performance in Mandarin: “When I was performing with the new phrase I learnt in Korean, my mind had to be fully engaged in order to say it right” (Gloria’s Journal). When I asked her to reflect on this more in her interview, she brought up the issue of conscious control:

G: It’s like I had to think about my body more. I don’t know if it’s good or bad it just, I’m more conscious of my body when I’m performing in different language.
A: Why do you think it happened?
G: I think it’s because it’s something that I’m not familiar with it kind of forces me to be more engaged in it.
A: And it doesn’t happen in English and in Mandarin or Cantonese?
G: In Mandarin I’m not in control of my body at all, I just do whatever I feel like doing. It’s all about feeling. And in English, because I’ve been performing in English for two years, the most, the thing I focus more about is the language itself, it’s like if I can pronounce these words clearly but not so much about the body. And in a complete different new language I need to focus on the body as well because I feel like, I’m not, um I need to engage more to be in control of the situation (Gloria’s Interview).

Sepideh, an amateur performer with Farsi and English as her dominant languages, voiced similar concerns about how her focus plays out in different languages. In one of the scenes she co-created with Yury, she had to switch from English to Farsi and back within one conversational turn. In that scene, Yury and Sepideh were trying to provide a cultural critique of existing sociolinguistic conventions of English small talk, which they personally experienced and initially had trouble with as newcomers to Canada. They also addressed their own cultural stereotypes and misconceptions related to each other’s first language cultures (Russia and Iran). For their scene Sepideh and Yury carefully constructed a small talk conversation, common at social gatherings in Canada. During the scene Sepideh’s and Yury’s characters both tried to adhere to the politeness conventions appropriate to an English Canadian context. At the same time, they were intermittently switching to their first language and offering their private thoughts—both socially inappropriate and often fraught with negativity and sarcasm, in their first language. Here is what Sepideh wrote about this scene (called At the Party), where she had to perform in both Farsi and English:

[...] “I realized that I focus more on my voice and my body-language when I perform in English in comparison to when I perform in Farsi. For example, in the scene At the Party that I perform in both English and Farsi, when I speak English I am more aware of my voice and my body-language whereas when I speak Farsi I more focus on the meaning of the content (Sepideh’s Journal).

The necessity to increase attention towards the language (and body) as well as consciously carry out more control over one’s performance in order not to warp pronunciation, grammar or

85 The impetus for the scene came out of a real life situation that occurred in our rehearsal hall when one of the actors called Sepideh an Arab—a gross misconception Sepideh, being Persian, had heard and confronted many times before.
vocabulary seems central to one’s experience of performing in a non-dominant language. Sepideh’s LED indicates that her performance in her L2 brought to the conscious level of perception some elements that normally operate on the unconscious plane.

There was, however, a more complex understanding of what may have been causing that heightened attention. It was Clayton, an English native speaker with Spanish as a non-dominant language, who did not necessarily attribute the heightened awareness to the fact that he was performing in his L2, as, for instance, Yury, Gloria and Sepideh did.

Clayton only joined the project after Phase I. He also excused himself from writing journals by claiming to be “very bad at journaling” (Clayton’s Interview). Nevertheless, his post-performance interview provided some valuable insight into his process of performing in two different non-dominant languages. Clayton performed in two scenes: in the first one, he had to perform an audition in Russian—the scene was devised over the course of three weeks with Yury and eventually acquired a scripted text. The second one was an improvisation called “Tim Horton’s”—a reference to the staple Canadian coffee and doughnut shop, and a popular cultural cliché meant to invoke a sense of belonging. In Tim Horton’s, Clayton performed with Amy, another Anglophone speaker who had some rudimentary knowledge of Spanish. The actors’ objective was to order a coffee from the shop assistants, who did not share the same language with the customers. The shop assistants were performed by Gloria and Joy, who both spoke Mandarin throughout the scene, while the customers, Clayton and Amy, were supposed to only use Spanish, a language Clayton picked up during his travels to Argentina and Amy learned mostly in school.

Here is what Clayton (C) had to say about his experience of performing in the improvised scene in Spanish:

A: So what languages did you perform in and how different was it for you to perform in...so you performed in 2, 3?

CLAYTON (C): I performed in English, Russian, and Spanish. The most difficult for me was the Spanish because it was uh improvisation and so trying to carry a scene with three other people and also wanting to speak properly, not make silly mistakes
that a foreigner would make which is my own junk that got in the way, but uh that was the most difficult, it was also a lot of fun.

Similar to Yury, Gloria’s, and Sepideh’s, Clayton’s concerns also revolve around grammatical correctness of his non-dominant language. However, he emphasizes even more the improvisational nature of the scene, which, in his opinion, added significantly more difficulty due to its unpredictability and the fact that it was more than a simple two-hander. Subsequently, his reflections on his experience of performing in the scripted scene where he had to perform in Russian, a language he had little to no knowledge of, were quite different:

C: The Russian was actually quite easy because I was practicing the same lines over and over again. I don’t feel like my uh, my Russian has improved any from that experience which is fine, that’s not what it was for but…uh that was actually quite easy to perform in Russian because I knew exactly what to say and what it meant.

A: Okay. Alright. And was the experience of the body of being a Russian speaker, an English speaker, and a Spanish speaker, was it different, did it feel different?

C: Yeah, absolutely. Um I mean, English to me is 99% of the time I’m speaking, well I guess 95, 98 percent of the time I’m speaking English and so that is just natural and I don’t, the differences were yeah there was a lot of when the Russian came in it was just mostly very well-rehearsed so it was, it felt grounded it felt rooted, and direct also because I don’t actually speak the language that was part of the reason I just say the words and so that was a lot easier to act and again Spanish was difficult because it was free flowing but at the same time I think also I think my body responded in that way as well, it was a lot more vibrant a lot more energetic which I find is the case when I speak Spanish –

A: In Spanish.

C: Yeah that’s the case generally

A: And do you feel that Russian constrained your body a little bit or was there any or did you constrain it on purpose as an actor…?

C: Well it wasn’t a lot … there wasn’t a lot of Russian to be spoken of but there for sure was a little more constraint a little more tight because it was also on screen it was I had to stay still couldn’t move around too much and it was only three lines, four lines, so it was quick and I was getting yelled at so I mean all of those things together would have added to that so I can’t say if that was, if that’s a really good indicator of that’s how I would be responding if I would actually be performing something in that language.

A: Ok Cool that’s actually very interesting and um insightful in many ways
C: If I could, I could add that when I was practicing the lines and speaking to people with those words, it came off a lot but it did feel heavier. The Russian lines. If I was just saying it to somebody for fun. Just to practice it, get it in my body, it definitely was denser. It was like uh I had a more dense feeling in my body. Saying those things. It was way more directed.

Clayton stresses the importance of knowing his lines—not simply the text of the lines and what they meant but also being grounded in the correct pronunciation of them—repetition and practice allowed him to dedicate too much of his focus to the linguistic correctness. The ‘rigid’ blocking of the scene—both Yury and Clayton had to be in a very tight close-up for the live feed accompanying the show (see Chapter 4 for the scene text and video)—is seen by Clayton as another positive affordance. When asked about his focus, Clayton emphasizes staying focused on the acting task, not the language. He also sheds light on what tools he utilized to become more ‘grounded’ in Russian:

A: Right. Were you at all concerned with the body of the language as well like being a different body in Spanish and in Russian and in English or were you more focused on the linguistic part?

C: Um I was just focused on my task as an actor to do the job that I’m there to do. The task was to with the Russian be the auditioner and then the auditioning and uh be an actor trying to audition for a role when somebody is yelling at you and the Spanish the same thing but there is a lot more going on technically and a lot more going on technically and more people on stage and so I wasn’t really thinking about that stuff I was thinking about carrying the scene as an actor. And not speaking, saying something stupid that a Spanish speaker would laugh at (laughs).

A: That’s understandable. Um so you as far as I remember you have gone through different type of training as an actor. You’ve done movement, um speech-

C: Done text work

A: Text work. Scene study.

C: Classical conservatory training for a year at George Brown. Uhh I continue to read out loud and practice accents. Things like that.

A: Aha, so you took a class on accents? Did you have a class on accents?

C: Yeah, I went through, for a year, we did it twice a week for that year I was there.

A: Okay so I’m just wondering if any of your training was useful for this particular production and um what techniques did you use and you can be very specific about it.
C: Absolutely. So when the Russian, when Yury recorded the Russian, that’s when I got him to read it very slowly into my phone, I actually transcribed it into the IPA, and that was something that came from that training I wouldn’t have been able to do that I would be guessing. But because I had knowledge of that particular system I could utilize that to figure out how it was I was to say UNCLEAR. And that’s what gave me the framework, we went from there. Um other than that I mean all that training is inside me now, I’m a very organic person, structure is not something I do very well. I don’t do regimented training sessions. I just like to go with it. I like to see what do I need right now. I do that.

A: Did you use any specific acting trick or technique to impersonate a Russian person or…?

C: Um if I did I wouldn’t be able to tell you what it was, it was just, it just happened. I may have at a certain point played with something during the rehearsal process but these things are at now they’re inside me so I…

A: You were not conscious of it

C: Yeah, I don’t even think about it anymore.

In sum, both having a recorded sample of speech and the use of IPA (although questionable, as Clayton had no knowledge of the IPA symbols for the Russian language) allowed Clayton to feel more grounded in the performance in the language he did not speak at all. On the other hand, the overwhelming complexity of the Spanish improvisation, such as the absence of a scripted text, the number of people in the group, as well as his knowledge of Spanish and his concern with the grammatical and phonological correctness increased the challenge. Hence, it is not just the dominant versus non-dominant language dichotomy that matters for the actors’ perception, specifically their focus. A heightened attention can emerge as a result of a combination of factors, not simply because the performance takes places in a non-dominant language. In his interview, Clayton also reflected on the fact that during the performance he was aware that a Spanish-speaking friend was present in the audience, which may partially explain his concern with grammatical correctness.\(^\text{86}\)

\(^{86}\) In addition to the mentioned factors, Clayton’s own pre-conceived stereotypes about Russian and Latino cultures might have been at play, especially during the “Spanish” scene, which was fully improvised. I offer a brief discussion of linguistic and cultural stereotypes in Chapter 6.
As seen above, the necessity to split attention and execute more control over the form—that is, how things are expressed rather than what is being expressed, either verbally or non-verbally—was an important part of the actors’ phenomenology. Despite the significant prominence of this theme in the actors’ journals, throughout the rehearsal process, it did not necessarily become visible to me as an observer; none of my journals documented that aspect of the actors’ performance. Nevertheless, this theme found some artistic representation in our performance in the scene constructed around Sepideh’s autobiographical account of arriving in Canada and struggling to learn English. At some point, Sepideh confided in me that one of the reasons she joined our project was her utmost desire to improve her pronunciation and speak like a native speaker. Despite having a Bachelor’s degree from an Iranian university and a Master of Science degree from an Ontario university, she had been having a significant amount of trouble finding a job anywhere in Ontario. At her latest job interview, she was explicitly informed that it was her accent, and not her qualifications or experience, that impeded her prospective employment.

In Week 4 (Phase Two), I suggested that she write about her experience of struggling to acquire the ‘right’ accent and Sepideh created a two-page monologue where she explicated the relationship between her accent, her education, and her employment prospects. As we began rehearsing the monologue, I noticed Sepideh’s focus on her pronunciation: she explicitly asked me to correct her accent whenever it was possible. This led to the eventual addition of a native speaking character to her scene: Amy, a trained ESL teacher and a native speaker of English, was tasked with correcting Sepideh’s pronunciation. As the scene developed, Amy’s character gained a dual function: on the one hand, she was performing an accent coach correcting her student’s pronunciation errors. On the other hand, Amy’s correction was meant to hint at the phenomenology of speaking in a new or non-dominant language. Amy’s voice began to signify the internal voice of a language learner, who needs to exert additional control over the

87 In my view, Sepideh had a very clear and completely intelligible accent—the perspective I did share with her multiple times, as we were working on our show.
linguistic correctness of what she needs to say. As Sepideh continued to deliver her monologue and navigate between meaning making and pronunciation work, she repeated the correct pronunciation of words after Amy and yet, would not engage in any form of meaningful conversation with her. Eventually, the “internal” voice represented by Amy mercilessly correcting Sepideh’s speech becomes too intrusive, which makes any meaning making impossible and forces Sepideh to break off and leave the stage offering no easy solution to the problem of her “split attention.”

**Discussion three: Procedural and declarative knowledge.**

There may be multiple reasons why my participants took note of their heightened attention in relation to their dominant and non-dominant languages, especially second (or any other additional) languages. One reason can be linked to the process of *language inhibition* and, related to it, fear of *language transfer*. Both can be extremely taxing for the brain of monolinguals and some bilinguals attempting to speak a non-dominant language, especially a new language. Another potential reason may be related to one of the major contention points in second language acquisition research, specifically, the opposition of *declarative* and *procedural knowledge* (sometimes called declarative and procedural memory) and the existence of any interface between the two. The terms “declarative” and “procedural” knowledge/memory came to second language acquisition from neuroscience and have been extensively discussed by Paradis (2009) and Ullman (2005), who argued for a “no interface” position, which assumes no link between declarative and procedural knowledge.

Here is how SLA researchers Lantolf and Poehner use Paradis’ and Ullman’s models to explain the difference between the two types of knowledge/memory as well as their relationship to language acquisition:

88 In this subsection, I use terms ‘memory’ and ‘knowledge’ interchangeably. However, in the following section, I will use the term ‘memory’ in the meaning my participants used it, i.e., as an emotional and embodied experience.
Declarative memory is the brain system that underlies semantic (i.e., facts, including word meaning) and episodic knowledge of events in the world (Ullman, 2005, p. 143). This knowledge is in part explicit and therefore available to consciousness. Procedural memory, on the other hand, is the neurological system involved in learning and control of motor and cognitive skills, in particular those that involve sequences (Ullman, 2005, p. 146). It underlies implicit knowledge and as such is not accessible to conscious inspection. [...]

Paradis and Ullman agree that the neurological system that subserves implicit language acquisition is procedural memory. It is a slow process that requires extensive amounts of exposure to language. Once language enters procedural memory, however, it is processed automatically and with a high degree of accuracy. According to Paradis (2009, p. 32) once acquisition (i.e., unconscious procedural learning) occurs, the language is accessed automatically. That is, automatic processing is not the result of practice; it is a consequence of acquisition by the procedural memory store. Moreover, procedural learning does not entail attention or noticing with regard to either “intent to learn,” or “what is acquired” (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014, 75).

What Paradis and Ullman are discussing here is related to L1 learning—L1 is always learned through procedural memory. While there is no consensus between scholars on what kind of memory should be prioritized for more successful L2 learning, there is a general agreement that procedural and declarative knowledge represent very different neurological systems and that there is either no interface or very little interface between them. There is also an understanding that “procedural knowledge has an advantage over declarative knowledge in that it greatly reduces the burden on working memory [...]” (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014, p. 74).

This is the juncture where I would like to make a connection between the concept of procedural and declarative knowledge and my participants’ LEDs. To start with Yury’s example, Yury’s concern with language complexity could be related to a significant

89 Some L2 researchers argue that the same system should be applied to L2 learning. Most famously, more than 30 years ago, Stephen Krashen proposed that acquisition and learning are two different processes and it is language acquisition, which happens through procedural memory, that should be prioritized (1981). Lantolf and Poehner though take the opposite stance, arguing that after the so-called “sensitive period”, broadly conceptualized as “before the age of puberty” when procedural memory begins to decline, engaging declarative memory for language learning would be more effective for adult L2 learners. In crude terms, L2 should be learned through a conscious effort and is destined to reside in declarative memory (with only some potential for procedural memory), while L1 is always learned with no (or very little) conscious effort and mostly engages procedural memory.
employment of working memory resources—the ones that are requested by his declarative knowledge. Yury reports the need to “keep an eye” on grammar and vocabulary when performing. He is conscious of that control—a clear sign of declarative knowledge to be involved. It is important for him not to “lose control” of the correctness of his language—something he does not need to do in Russian. This additional “control”, which requires a significant usage of working memory resources, can become too taxing for the brain, which can explain why Yury associates tiredness with English, his second language, and never with Russian. English, the language Yury learned mainly through schooling, is most probably related to his declarative knowledge, while Russian, his first language, is probably “stored” mostly in his procedural memory. Unlike Yury, Clayton, who had learned Spanish through immersion and never taken any Spanish classes, most likely has his second language stored in his procedural memory. Predictably, he does not associate his “heightened attention” to the complexity of Spanish but rather to the complexity of improvisation as well as the presence of his Spanish speaking friend in the audience.

Another notable aspect of declarative and procedural memory is that they may be important not only for language, but also for one’s perception of the body. For instance, Sepideh reported more awareness of her “English body” versus her Farsi body. When performing in Farsi, her mind was concerned with meaning making, possibly because Farsi, her L1, is stored in her procedural memory and does not require conscious processing. In contrast, her English language and her “English body” require more conscious control—again, a potential reference to the necessity of conscious processing and a clear sign of declarative knowledge being engaged.

Finally, there is also the case of Clayton learning the Russian monologue without knowing the language. Russian was a new language for Clayton, and yet he did not report much difficulty associated with the performance in Russian. What is important to understand here is how he acquired the Russian lines. First, Clayton had an instructor at hand: Yury was consistently providing him with corrective feedback. Second, Clayton utilized professional tools, such as IPA to acquire what he perceived was the right pronunciation of the Russian
sentences. Then he also used repetition to learn the lines. In sum, Clayton learned the Russian lines through ‘schooling’ and by engaging his declarative memory. But there is a caveat: due to a lot of repetition and feedback, his declarative memory became highly automatized. In relation to that, Paradis argues that in declarative memory “controlled processing may be speeded-up” (Paradis, 2009, 26), which eventually makes the processing less taxing for the brain.

To conclude this section, I would like to add that my attempt to interpret the theme of “Attention” through the concept of declarative and procedural knowledge is certainly a simplification. To really argue how brains utilize one system or another, one needs to have access to deep brain scans of someone engaged in a certain activity, which was neither the purpose nor the methodology of this study. I am proposing my interpretation only to introduce the conceptual paradigm, which to my knowledge has only been tangentially addressed by acting theory, and yet, I believe, can be very useful for both researchers and artists. The very understanding of how a language or NVC conventions have been learned and experienced as well as how that knowledge may be distributed across declarative and procedural memory may help multilingual actors understand their own process better, and address different issues occurring in their different languages in distinct manners. Knowing what is available to conscious processing and what is not, as well as which kind of knowledge utilizes the precious resources of working memory, can be invaluable for stage performers and those working with them.

The declarative and procedural knowledge discussion serves as a good segue to the next theme of my analysis—memory—a theme that deals with the participants’ attitudes toward their languages and cultures—attitudes that are often rooted in a multitude of embodied linguistic “memories”.

Theme four: Memory.

In week three, Maria shared a personal story. When she moved to Canada from Russia, she had a dog who proudly bore the surname of German classical philosopher Immanuel Kant. Obviously, the name had been given to the dog in Russian, and Maria continued to use the Russian sounding German name “Кант” here in Canada. She loved her dog and often bragged about him to her Canadian colleagues. Little did she know that every time she mentioned her dog’s name, her listeners would surreptitiously snicker or giggle. One day, she was chatting with a colleague over a lunch break—she was very excited to share yet another of her Kant stories: in that story Kant was being naughty and did not want to go inside the house and Maria would continue to call him in by shouting: “Kant, Kant, come home! My lovely Kant, come home!”

To Maria’s surprise, on hearing this, her colleague immediately burst into hysterical laughter. And so did we when Maria told us the story. It turned out that due to Maria’s very thick Russian accent, in English the dog’s name Kant sounded very little like the German philosopher’s surname and a lot more like the English word “cunt”. By the time Maria told us the story, she already knew what that word meant in English. She enjoyed a laugh with us but also confessed that that word bore no negative connotation for her whatsoever. Theoretically, she was very much aware that it was an extremely derogative taboo word in English but she did not experience any specific visceral feelings towards it whenever she had to say or hear it.

I am using this jocular episode to introduce “memory” as another major theme that became very prominent in the actors’ phenomenological descriptions. Maria generously shared not only the “Kant” story, essentially a typical second language learning experience that had caused both embarrassment and laughter, she also introduced the very idea of a non-dominant language being empty, hollow, devoid of memories or emotions that are rooted in those memories. Here is how Maria reflected on an improvisation that was based on her “Kant” story and in which she had to play ‘herself’ as a newcomer to Canada:

When we improvised “Kant” scene I noticed that swearing in English wasn’t a problem for me at all, even if I knew what particular word meant, even if it was very
rude word. It is absolutely different in my first language (Russian). I cannot force myself swear in Russian, except of some “innocent” words. I think it is because I don’t have any emotional connections with such English words, I don’t have any bans on using them somewhere dip [deep] in my subconscious. Maybe because of something else (Maria’s Journal).

It seems that Maria sees her experience in English as inherently deficient—all due to the fact that she is emotionally disconnected with her second language. It is perhaps hardly surprising that in her interview, when asked to reflect on the overall value of the project for her, she revealed that her experience with *In Sundry Languages* urged her to reconsider her relationship to her existing and potential second language(s):

Ok um yes, I realized that sometimes we can do things just for fun like learning languages for fun. Started uh learning English for like, like, necessary thing. To immigrate to Canada. It was just things must happen, right? Ah, but when I learn some phrases in Mandarin and I listen actually to Mandarin I realize that I just like it (Maria’s Interview).

It was fascinating and unexpected for me to realize that the very possibility to learn or speak a new language just for enjoyment was new for Maria. By virtue of being her L2, English was just a language of necessity for Maria, not a language for experiencing emotions, specifically positive emotions or just having fun.

It is exactly that pragmatic, and, in a way, sterile attitude towards English that Maria captured in the scene that she devised with Amy. The scenes starts with Maria’s monologue in which she reflects on all the cultural and linguistic learning that she had to go through when she arrived in Toronto, calling English “the toughest challenge” of her life. English, a language she had to learn through formal schooling and specifically for immigration and employment purposes posed comprehension, pronunciation, and vocabulary problems, as well as other difficulties. As Maria and Amy developed their scene, they focused on the comprehension issues, specifically capturing the moment when Maria had to rent her first apartment in Toronto. Once Maria’s character starts the conversation with the building manager (Amy’s character), she discovers that despite many years of her learning English, she was not capable of understanding very simple sentences related to such a seemingly simple task as having a
conversation with a building manager. In order to recreate Maria’s experience of consistent incomprehension and being at a loss, Maria and Amy decided to replace Amy’s actual lines with intermittent “blah-blah-blah”, which made any comprehension of what Amy had to say either very difficult or completely impossible (see Chapter Four, Scene 6).

In her journal, Sepideh, who also originally came to Canada as an immigrant and eventually became Canadian, echoes Maria’s sentiments towards her second language but only to some extent. In a way, she argues that the internal void that English provides allows unprecedented performative freedom, impossible in her first language:

**Challenges:**

When I perform in English that is my second language, I have realized that I mostly try to imitate others who speak English as their first language. I try to imagine what they would say or do in that situation. For example, in the scene that I was telling my story (to unemployment insurance officer or interviewer) I was asking myself what a Canadian born person would say in that situation. [...] 

**Positive Discoveries:**

Even though, English is my second language when I perform in English to some degree I feel like I am more fluent in it than Farsi. One reason can be the audience. Since I am performing for English speaking audience, I think speaking English at the performance is more natural than Farsi for me. Also, when I perform in English I feel less limited. When I perform in Farsi it is like that I am obligated to be myself. On the contrary, when I perform in English, I feel like I can imitate anyone that I like (Sepideh’s Journal).

Instead of relying on memory and the routinized performance of “self,” Sepideh enthusiastically embraces both the performative nature of her second language and the fact that it gives her liberty to “imitate anyone”. Mario, a professional performer that went through conservatory training (in Portugal), agrees with Sepideh on the issue of performative freedom and takes it even further:

When I was improvising in a second language with the sentence "Ladies and gentlemen the show is about to begin..." using a thick British accent, it felt like I was using a foreign 'mask'. This 'mask' (it felt) could be shaped in as many forms as I liked. For example, I could stretch and/or accentuate syllables in any part of the sentence without having my mind interrupting, as
to tell me that I was not making intonations properly. It was as if there was permission to shape the language without feeling that I had stepped outside the 'proper'/ normative/ intelligible boundaries assigned to it. The same with body language, I could exaggerate gestures (lift my chest, bend backwards) without a self-evaluative 'noise' in my head. In this way, I experienced a sense of liberation in wearing this 'mask'. This may be because the 'mask' is devoid of personal history or conflict. It also felt more 'superficial' than when speaking in my mother-tongue. The same sentence in Portuguese (first language) invoked memories, and attached to these memories there were deeper feelings. I felt more serious, less playful, but also connected at a deeper personal level. An insight I gained was that when speaking in a second language I felt more in touch with the sensory dimension of myself whereas when speaking in Portuguese I was more engaged at a psychological level (Mario’s Journal).

Both Sepideh and Mario, while confirming the differences between how they experience performance in their English and their first language, take a ‘queer’ direction on their second language. Mario even challenges the idea of the ‘self-evaluating noise’—a reference to the previous themes: ‘the safe route’ and ‘(un)split attention’. Unlike the other actors, who were concerned with the authenticity and correctness of their non-dominant language, Mario asserts that the ‘self-evaluation’ is linked to the language that is full of ‘personal history or conflict” (i.e., his first language, Portuguese). For Mario, English, a language he is fluent in, works in, and is doing an advanced degree in, is associated with freedom, not with self-monitoring. It is Portuguese that brings the “self-evaluating” noise along with evoking subtlety and associations.

In his interview, Mario elaborated more on this point explaining where the self-evaluating noise was coming from:

A: Why do you think it didn’t happen in Portuguese, the freedom? Or, the same level of freedom?

Mario (M): Uhh because I have a lot of subtext uhhh when I do speak in Portuguese, there’s a lot of attachment, involvement. So, um… yeah. It’s like the language, it’s loaded with history and memories. So I can become a little more caught up on that, I can become more over involved and that will be a mistake or I can become involved and still have some detachment to be able to and yeah… (Mario’s Interview).

Mario’s position on his performance in English and Portuguese is a radical departure from the orientating demonstrated by most other participants and, perhaps, one of the most interesting
discoveries of this research project. Without denying the deep connection with his first language, Mario perceives English not as a language of perpetual deficiency but a language of unexplored possibility. In other words, Mario’s phenomenological experience shed light on a different way that people may orientate themselves towards their second language.

As Sarah Ahmed points out in *Queer Phenomenology*, “orientation” is a result of a repeated direction, or repeated orientating towards an object in a specific way (see Chapter 2, p. 41): unlike the other actors, Mario came to the project with a “queer orientation” towards his second language already in place. In fact, he consistently encouraged us to explore the idea of liberty provided by a new language and at some point created an improvisation with Amy and Sepideh, in which he and Sepideh performed two newcomers to Canada who do not speak English and who encounter a native speaker of English—the part performed by Amy. After both Mario’s and Sepideh’s characters demonstrate their inability to speak English, Amy’s character immediately takes on the role of an instructor and begins to teach English words to the “newcomers”: “It’s a cup. Repeat! It’s a cup.” Instead of taking this belittling experience as offensive, Mario accepted it as an invitation to play. Specifically, he adopted a “baby mask” and began to “learn” English by repeating words after Amy, but also by behaving like a little kid: impatiently throwing things around, happily laughing at most innocuous words, holding Amy’s hand as if she were his mother, and copiously drooling onto the floor. Aesthetically, Mario took the idea of liberty to the extreme—and nevertheless, made his point clear: his role of a language learner likened him to “a child” and allowed him to do and say things that he would never be able to get away with as an adult native speaker of his first language.\(^{91}\)

In contrast, Yury’s phenomenology remained deeply rooted in a more conventional monolingual framework, where English, which he identifies as his dominant language (as does Mario), could make him tired, while Russian never did. Yury agrees with Mario on how

\(^{91}\) Unfortunately, this improvisation was only conceived in Week 5 and we did not have time to fully develop it. As a result, it did not become part of our public performance.
emotions are experienced in his second language

How do you sound when you are angry in English? What is your body doing when you are scared and talking at the same time. All those extreme emotions might be expressed and felt a bit plainer when speaking in non-dominant language (Yury’s Journal).

Nevertheless, he does not share Mario’s ‘queering’ of the monolingual paradigm: Mario seems to have redirected himself towards his second language through discovering “the sense of liberation”—that is liberation from memory, and liberation from “stronger psychological engagement” accompanied by an affordance to be playful in his second language. 92

As we transitioned to Phase Two, this ‘clash’ of “orientations” coming from these two professional actors grew stronger. It turned out that the memories involved in that conflict were not only linguistic but also cultural: both Mario and Yury held a grudge against their respective home countries. Mario confessed that he had abhorred the violence that he observed in Portugal, which was typically related to football (soccer), a game with which he personally had a love-hate relationship. In turn, Yury revealed his tumultuous and yet loving relationship with Russia: a place where he knows most cultural codes, has a lot of connections, and yet where he was never fully accepted as a gay person. As we were devising our work, they also shared their attitude to Canada: while Mario enjoyed living in his new country and praised it for what it had to offer, Yury expressed mostly frustration. In his view, it was difficult for him to connect with his new compatriots on the same level he was able to connect with Russians. Furthermore, he had difficulty finding jobs as an actor—all because of his accent and perceived lack of pragmatic and cultural competences in English.

As Mario and Yury were devising their own material, I could not help noticing their

92 In her interview, Gloria expressed a similar observation on what language gives more space for improvisation: she observed that it was easier for her to ‘bastardize’ Cantonese than Mandarin because she does not “really use it [Cantonese] that it doesn’t really matter” to her. (Gloria’s Interview) Despite being her first language, Cantonese did not share the same affection that Mandarin did for Gloria, so playing with Cantonese in a non-conventional way was easier for her. Hence, she chose Cantonese to ‘bastardize’ in her “Welcome to the theatre!” speech (see Chapter 4, Scene 3)
diametrically opposed perspectives as well as striking similarities between their ‘histories’. I eventually began to see some possibility for a strong dramatic conflict and I encouraged them to work together. Their improvisation started with ‘theatrical’ cheek slaps—perhaps, a symbolic nod to their training—clowning. Eventually, the slaps grew into words and then into a football (soccer) match. That double handler, performed in Russian and English by Yury and in Portuguese and English by Mario, was eventually entitled Futebol (the Portuguese for soccer) and presented an emotional artistic, athletic and philosophical duel between the two actors (See the script in Chapter 4, Scene 10), where both expressed how they were “orientating” themselves to their old and new countries, cultures and languages.93

It is evident that in Mario’s and Yury’s cases (and possibly Maria’s case too), memory is linked to emotion, specifically affection, or the lack of it. However, Yury’s interview showed that there was more to this metaphor of memory than simply affection. When I asked Yury to explain the difference between how performing in Russian and English felt to him, Yury once again confirmed what he had stated in his journal: Russian was natural and easy, English was not. He, however, also reflected on memory as an embodied experience of living in his second language and acknowledged the possibility of gradually gaining that memory and becoming more at ease with one’s less dominant language:

Y: I’m less stressed when I’m speaking, performing in Russian because I don’t have to keep so many things in mind like I do with English. And it doesn’t sit yet as comfortable in me vocally wise, like its tiresome, speaking English so long, not anymore now like my first year in Canada it was so ridiculous like my jaws were like in pain like muscles are different and in Russian it’s like I know where it sits. And there’s no effort, in English there is.

A: But I’m speaking about this particular experience [participation in ISL]

Y: Same, yeah, same.

A: Still, English was still more work?

93 This scene produced a significant emotional response from the audience of “In Sundry Languages”—for the analysis of the audience reception, see Chapter 5.
Y: English with an accent was more work.
A: Which accent?
Y: The one I don’t have, the general American. No, but for the party scene or for the last piece when I mostly speak English I don’t think the language was the problem because all the experience was from in that language, biking, auditioning, Bellwoods park, all that was my Canadian experience so the language naturally grew out of it. If it’s like a magician, like I told before, like he have a text, and like it’s so new I need time to get into it (Yury’s Interview).

In this interview, Yury recognizes the very possibility of accumulating varied lived experiences in English or “memories”—he also acknowledges that the variety of experiences he had had in English contributed to his ease with his second language, which, in his words, “grew out” of these experiences “naturally”. I would argue that this recognition may be the first sign of the ‘direction’ change, a possible re-orientation towards his less dominant language—English. Of course, this redirection may or may not be sustained in the long run in order to be turned into an orientation—and, here, I have to resort to pure speculation given my limited perspective on Yury’s situation. Being a working actor, Yury is likely to continue auditioning for various productions and, within the context of the Canadian English-speaking entertainment industry, his accented English will always (almost always) be perceived as deficient, jeopardizing his employment prospects. The larger sociocultural context assigns power to certain accents, and Yury is fully aware of that: he mentions General American because it is the ‘unmarked’ accent that he knows he is expected to have when he comes to audition for film, television or theatre. In other words, due to the power relationships operating within a larger sociocultural context, Yury’s queering of the “direction” may quickly become obsolete.

Discussion four: Emotions and multilingualism.

It may seem paradoxical that this discussion subsection is entitled “Emotions”, rather than “Memory” to fittingly match the analysis presented above. The reason behind it is that “Memory” as understood by my participants was a construct related to a) an emotional attachment to vocabulary items in a language; b) general emotional attachment to a language,
specifically one’s L1, and c) emotional and embodied experiences in L1 and L2. By extension, this construct also encompasses the concept of emotional detachment from one’s L2, even in the case of performers who identified their L2 as a dominant language. Hence, it is emotion and the lack of it that hide behind the term “Memory”.

Turning again to Lutterbie’s general theory of acting and his six acting tools, I cannot find a direct equivalent of emotion as an acting tool. It is possible, though, to connect the construct of memory, as perceived by my participants, to the “acting tool” conceptualized by Lutterbie as “Language”. Lutterbie subscribes to an embodied model of language, rooted in neuroscience. This model sees language as an embodied experience, which includes the experience of emotions.\textsuperscript{94}

This terminological paradox (Memory-Emotion-Language) is not a mere coincidence. Theatre scholar Erin Hurley explains that emotions (which she differentiates from affect and mood\textsuperscript{95}) are rooted in embodied memory, which, in turn, gets interpreted through culture:

As an act of interpretation of bodily response, emotion […] is inevitably influenced by a person’s expectation and interpretive lens: the shape of the expectations and the curvature of the lens are gorged in experience and cultural norms that vary across geography and period (2010, p. 19).

Here Hurley speaks of what Bruce McConachie, who approaches the study of emotion from the position of cognitive sciences and psychology, calls social emotions, i.e., those that “depend on cultural conditioning” (2013, 19). Language is, of course, an important part of culture and itself offers an “interpretive lens” or “cultural conditioning,” too; however, language can also work as an external stimulus that can produce a new bodily experience or evoke an old one rooted in

\textsuperscript{94} Lutterbie writes: “The fundamental tenet of the neural theory of language is that abstract thought, long considered an autonomous function of the mind, is based on embodied experience” (2012, p. 118).

\textsuperscript{95} In her book \textit{Theatre and Feeling} (2010), Hurley classifies feelings into three interconnected categories: affect, emotion and mood. She explains: “Affect happens to us and yet happens through us (it is the body regulating itself via the activation of certain organs, processes, or responses, as when we shiver in the cold). Mood is a disposition or background state that orients us to certain kinds of emotional responses and reactions. And emotion names our sensate, bodily experience in a way that at once organises it and makes it legible to ourselves and consonant with others’ experiences or emotional lives” (pp. 22-23).
memory. In the discussion below, I will provide links between my participants’ observations and recent scholarly attempts to theorize the relationship between emotion (as a result of memory) and multilingualism. Simultaneously, I will attempt to connect all the four themes and explain their complex relationship to the multilingual performers’ experiences.

When Lutterbie speaks of language as an acting tool, just as with the other tools he discusses, he is only concerned with a monolingual actor. Interestingly, the data analysed under the “Memory” theme came from multilingual speakers who share the immigrant experience—Mario, Sepideh, Yury, and Maria, all immigrated to Canada at some point in their lives. To some extent they also share a language learning pattern: all four were first monolingual and later became bilingual, first through schooling then through a mix of schooling and immersion (after their immigration to Canada). None of the English-speaking actors with a weak non-dominant language (Clayton, Amy, Mark, Felicia, and Lyla) or the early multilinguals\(^\text{96}\) (Gloria, Joy, and Danielle) provided LEDs related to this topic. Thus, my data are inherently connected with the participants’ multilingual experience, specifically L2 learning experience, which explains why I chose to direct my attention to research on emotion and L2 acquisition rather than acting theories.

Unfortunately, research on emotions and L2 is currently in its nascent stage. Merrill Swain, who has recently advocated the inclusion of emotion into the study of L2 acquisition, explains this existing paucity of research on emotions by the overall dominance of cognitivism in L2 studies. In general, the cognitive tradition relies on the Descartian separation of body and mind and Socrates’ division of reason and emotion (Swain, 2012). Due to this conceptual framework, emotions have been consistently excluded from L2 research. It is thus not surprising that Aneta Pavlenko, the author of *Emotions and Multilingualism* (2006) often refers to studies outside of the field of Applied Linguistics to discuss how emotions play out in L2s. Pavlenko’s book is indeed the first comprehensive volume exploring the very nature of

\(^{96}\) Those who learned their second language before or during the age of puberty, i.e., the so-called sensitive period.
emotions and their expression in and through different languages, and it proposes a complex multi-level view of emotions as they pertain to multilingualism.

Given my focus on the actors’ perception, here, I will only address the level Pavlenko identifies as neurophysiological. It discusses both the speaker’s perception of emotions and the neurophysiological processes occurring in the speaker’s brain when emotions are experienced in or through language. Pavlenko argues that “depending on their linguistic trajectories, bi- and multilinguals may have different neurophysiological responses to their respective languages, or at least to emotion-related words” (2006, p. 153). Coincidentally, most studies that Pavlenko references also concern late bilinguals, that is, people with similar L2 learning trajectories as Mario’s, Yury’s, Maria’s, and Sepideh’s.

First, I would like to address the issue of Maria’s perception of English taboo words as emotionally vacuous for her. Pavlenko cites ample psychoanalytic research addressing the difference between speakers’ perception of taboo words in L1 and L2:

Lamendella (1977b), and later Jay (2000, 2003), have argued that taboo words constitute a nexus where language and emotions come together in an unprecedented manner. When processed, these words activate not only the semantic network but also the amygdala, eliciting autonomic arousal. This arousal can be detected through a variety of physiological measures, including sweating of palms and fingertips, a signal that can be quantified by measuring the transient increase in electrical conductivity of the skin. This increase, otherwise known as skin conductance response (SCR), typically occurs within 1 to 1.5 seconds following appearance of the aversive stimulus, and may last for 2 to 6 seconds (Harris, 2004). (Pavlenko, 2006, p. 168)

Pavlenko concludes that taboo words in one’s L1 elicit greater anxiety, as measured through SCR, which relates to how Maria experienced English. While I recognize the problematic nature of reducing emotion to ‘SCR’, which is typical of cognitivist research, I would like to acknowledge that the taboo words can indeed be of some significance for the understanding of speakers’ relationship to their L2. The vacuous feeling in relation to taboo words can be an indicator of the overall absence or general paucity of embodied experience in L2. This proposition takes me back to the discussion of how languages were learned by various multilinguals: in a naturalistic setting, such as immersion or through instruction, or in a mix of
both environments. Following neuroscientific research, Pavlenko specifies that, depending on the language learning environment, two very important language development processes—conceptual development and affective linguistic conditioning—may play out very differently:

In the process of conceptual development, words and phrases acquire denotative meanings. Their multiple uses in distinct contexts aid in the formation of conceptual categories, linked to each other through elaborate semantic and conceptual networks. These conceptual representations include information received from all sensory modalities – visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, kinaesthetic, and visceral – and are subject to ongoing subtle modification that takes place in the language socialization process.

In the parallel process of affective linguistic conditioning, words and phrases acquire affective connotations and personal meanings through association and integration with emotionally charged memories and experiences. Some words become linked to personal fears (clown, spider) or to positive memories (Citizen Kane’s ‘Rosebud’ or Proust’s ‘madeleine’), while taboo words, such as ‘piss,’ ‘shit,’ or ‘cock,’ become associated with experiences of prohibition, punishment, and social stigmatization. [...] Both processes contribute to the perception of language embodiment, whereby words invoke both sensory images and physiological reactions. Foreign languages learned in educational contexts are almost never perceived as embodied, because language learning in the classroom takes place without significant involvement of the limbic system or the majority of the sensory modalities (2006, p. 154-155).

The lack, or weakness, of emotional and bodily connection when speaking or performing in L2, reported by Mario, Sepideh, Maria, and Yury can indeed be explained by how each of them experienced affective linguistic conditioning while acquiring their languages. The concept of

97 Pavlenko also briefly discusses other factors that can affect emotions in L2: These factors include: (a) age of acquisition; (b) context of acquisition; (c) personal history of trauma, stress, and violence; (d) language dominance; (e) word types; and (f) language proficiency (p. 185).

98 Pavlenko also explains how instructional settings cause the lack of affective linguistic conditioning: “Two reasons explain this dissociation between declarative and emotional memory in FL learning, representation, and production. First, in the decontextualized classroom context, development of word meanings takes place through definition, translation, and memorization—and thus through declarative or explicit memory — rather than through consolidation of personal experiences channeled through multiple sensory modalities to implicit and emotional memory. Consequently, emotion or emotion-related FL words are not integrated with non-verbal sensory representations or autobiographic memories and do not activate brain structures involved in the generation of emotions. Second, to involve the limbic system in production, a speaker must have a need or a desire to produce a particular message (Paradis, 1994). But in many foreign language classrooms, utterances are elicited from learners
‘affective linguistic conditioning’ also invokes the theme of body disconnect discussed earlier. The absence of affective linguistic conditioning can also affect the body-language relationship in various ways. It is not surprising, for instance, that Mario mentions his body disconnect in conjunction with his emotional disconnect from his L2. In very simplistic terms, a learner can learn a language without attaching it to emotions or to the body or by attaching only select emotions to select words. Such lack of affective conditioning may have serious consequence for actors attempting to perform in their L2.

My post-production interview with Yury showed that, being a working actor, Yury was very much aware of the ‘emotion and body disconnect.’ When asked to reflect on his process of embodying a character in English, Yury recognized that English occasionally fails him and blames it on his absence of certain emotional embodied experiences in English:

A: So what you’re saying is, and correct me if I’m wrong, is if you’ve experienced something as a human being in a particular language, right, it’s easier to portray it on stage in that language rather than translate it in a different language.

Y: I’m not saying translating, when you’re given the text, the cold reads, I haven’t experienced that text I haven’t seen it. There might be even a word I don’t know or how to pronounce that word. It’s rare but it happens. Like that audition piece I brought to the rehearsal like the, remember when three of us tried to do it, it’s hard. So that takes time. What is this text, where is it coming from, what is the circumstances around it how can I embody it so it’s mine. Possess? Пиствоить?

A (translates): Appropriate.

Y: Appropriate. Yeah, make it mine. So it’s not text, so it’s me. Yeah that’s work (Yury’s Interview).

Essentially, Yury voices very practical concerns about how to embody a character in English or in his words, how to “appropriate” a character,99 Yury indicates that an English text is difficult

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99 Yury brought an audition monologue he was working on into rehearsal one day and said that he wanted to work on it. The monologue depicted an English speaking character (an American) talking to another English character (also an American) and Yury was adamant to learn the General American accent for this monologue.
for him to “make his own”—another possible translation of the Russian verb he used. He first recognizes that, occasionally, it may be his lack of linguistic competence (or lack of declarative knowledge) that causes difficulty: he admits that there may be occasional vocabulary or pronunciation problems he encounters. What seems more important to him is his lack of “experience” of the text, by which, I would argue, he refers to his lack of experiential understanding of English. This lack of experiential, bodily understanding is very similar to the comment he made in regards to our very first improvisation—the “shushing” improv I analyzed earlier in this chapter. It is not necessarily the lack of semantic knowledge (or in Pavlenko’s terms, conceptual development) that jeopardizes his attempts of “appropriation,” it is the lack of a very specific “embodied memory” that resonates with the text and/or the language. From Yury’s LEDs and reflections, I can extrapolate that he feels that his “embodied memory” in English is often insufficient when he has to concern himself with the authenticity of English speaking characters he has to portray as an actor.

At the other end of the spectrum were Mario’s and Sepideh’s orientations. As their LEDs showed, Mario and, to some extent, Sepideh, reoriented themselves towards their first languages. Moreover, Sepideh talks about the liberty of not being herself in English and the opportunity to imitate anyone, which is close to the idea of a ‘mask’, used by Mario. An L2 “mask” allows them to liberate themselves from the emotionality (and memory) of their L1.

Interestingly, this re-orientation resembles the position of translingual writers that Pavlenko discusses in her book. She brings up multiple examples of internationally recognized authors who made a writing career in their second or third language. In addition, she quotes a number of prominent writers whose sentiments about their L2—their main writing instrument, resemble what Mario said about his relationship to Portuguese. Here is, for instance, a quote from a Canadian-born Anglophone—a famous French writer Nancy Huston — where she describes her feelings towards French:

Elle était froide, et je l’abordais froidement. Elle m’était égale. C’était une substance lisse et homogène, autant dire neutre. Au début, je m’en rends compte maintenant, cela
It was cold and I approached it with coldness. It was a smooth and homogenous substance—let us call it “neutral.” What now gives me immense liberty, at first I was simply aware of it—for I didn’t know what I was writing and against which backdrop I was writing.

The liberty of the second language, which Huston describes here, is partly based on the emotional detachment from it. It is this emotional detachment that can allow artists (in my case—actors) to orientate themselves towards that language as a language of possibility. A new language may give one a space of exploration and potential liberatory practice—an allowance to try a new “mask”, even a mask that does not seem appropriate or fitting age- or gender-wise (for example, Mario tried a “baby mask”). In fact, as Pavlenko argues, it does not even have to be a second language: she cites research that indicates that those who switched to a dominant language different from their L1 rated words in L1 as less emotional than those in their dominant language (Dewaele, 2004). It is perhaps not surprising that Gloria and Joy, whose dominant language is different from their L1, did not document any observations in relation to the stronger emotionality of their L1. Their orientating towards their languages was different from Mario’s, Sepideh’s, Yury’s, and Maria’s.

**Going beyond the Themes: Theorizing Desire**

To conclude my discussion of the four themes, I would like to summarize three main points that my participants’ phenomenology revealed.

First, it is clear from my data that the four themes—which I can now reframe as body, executive control, memory, and emotion—were interconnected on many different levels and in many different ways. For instance, body disconnect and emotional disconnect in dominant and non-dominant L2s were often related to each other, and were reported as happening simultaneously. As those disconnects became available to the actors’ consciousness, they affected some of the performers’ focus, as well as their executive control in regards to the languages in which the performance was taking place. This interconnectedness has major
implications for the understanding of the actors’ process of multilingual performance, since each of the elements listed above and language—is always affected by all the others.

Second, each of my participants presented a unique case of perception, which was related not only to the languages they spoke, but also to their previous history with those languages (or the absence of it); the genre of the performance (improvisation versus scripted text); the presence or absence of a live audience; and the availability of a speech model and/or a more knowledgeable speaker of the target language to provide feedback. There were some notable patterns in relation to some of the themes: for instance, all the participants noted the ‘body disconnect’ when performing in an unknown language. At the same time, it was only multilinguals who reported various degrees of emotional connection with different languages. These patterns may serve as a springboard for further research on multilingual performers.

The third, and, perhaps the most important point is related to Sara Ahmed’s concept of a “queer direction” or “orientation”, as both transpired in my participants’ phenomenology to a degree. As I showed in my discussion subsections, actors may differ widely in their attitudes and attachments to their languages. They may have also experienced different trajectories of learning and using their languages, which inevitably affects how those languages are approached by them in performance. Occasionally, despite obvious similarities of some of these trajectories, my participants still demonstrated very different directions and orientations toward all of their languages, with Mario’s and Yury’s antagonism of orientating being particularly telling. In addition, some participants claimed that their experience with new or non-dominant languages nudged them toward a possible new direction, perhaps only transient. Yet, some demonstrated very little or no “queer” orientation in their phenomenology.

Admittedly, another study would need to be conducted to understand why certain actors (or L2 speakers in general), despite being multilingual, resist the very idea of “queering” their monolingual framework, while others readily accept it. Here, I will attempt to put together a few initial questions and theoretical ideas that might help look at the reasons behind multilingual actors’ “orientations”.
What stands behind the desire to try on a “foreign mask”? What allows actors to perceive their performance in their non-dominant language as a liberatory practice? And, in contrast, what locks the perception of others within a more conventional paradigm? Is it only one’s history: for example, how this or that language was learned, the order or the age of acquisition, the involvement of procedural and declarative memory in the process of acquisition, or the presence or absence of affective conditioning? Why, then, despite all the similarities in their L2 acquisition, did Yury and Mario have completely opposite phenomenological “orientations”?

I would like to propose what I think may become a fruitful way to understand how “orientations” can be formed, challenged or shifted. It is the concept of desire, a relatively new idea for the field of L2 acquisition research. Desire is understood as an emotion but, as Motha and Lin explain in their programmatic article on desire and L2 learning (2013), it is not a private experience:

Although desire has historically been conceptualized as natural and emerging from some primal part of the human core, Sarah Benesch (2012) has recently helped us understand the ways in which emotions themselves are actually invented through social interactions. Emotions, Benesch tells us, “are not private, individual, psychological states but social and embodied” (p. 333).

In order to understand emotion such as desire, we need to understand what drives it on the social level, not simply on the individual one.

Motha and Lin also refer to Sarah Ahmed’s definition of desire: “Desire is both what promises something, what gives us energy, and also what is lacking, even in the very moment of its apparent realization” (p. 34). Ahmed also argues that certain objects become objects of desire because they “promise” happiness (p. 6). Following Ahmed, Motha, and Lin, I propose that in the modern globalized world the English language has become such a happiness-promising object. They theorize that in order to understand L2 acquisition, L2 teachers, L2 learners, and L2 researchers need to consider an embodied socially rooted desire (not motivation—a term coming from the cognitivist tradition) as the driving force of learning.
I propose an extension of this idea in relation to understanding the reasons behind multilingual actors’ direction or reorientation. As my data showed, some of my participants were preoccupied with the concept of linguistic authenticity, especially phonetic authenticity. Specifically, Yury was very much determined to perform in the General American accent. His desire for this specific accent was not necessarily his own—it was formed by the social milieu in which Yury works professionally. It is safe to assume that non-accented speech is a common expectation of casting directors (unless, of course, they are casting for a role of a Russian mafioso, as Yury mentioned in his interview). Following this societal and professional pressure, Yury desires what he does not possess—an entirely new accent which is perceived as unmarked and carries ‘the promise of happiness’—potential acting jobs.

Yury’s perception is framed by the idea of authenticity—one should speak, move and feel like a native speaker in order to be believable and, ultimately, in order to get hired. As I mentioned before, any potential queering of this desire to sound like a native speaker is likely to be rendered obsolete by the power structures embedded in the hiring processes that Yury has to be involved in. Essentially, just like Gloria, who was forced by her acting instructor to “perform” being a monolingual, Yury’s perception may be significantly influenced by the pressing desire to “perform like a native speaker” and the immeasurable difficulty to reach that goal.

In sum, exploring “desire” as a socially-grounded emotional driver in relation to various languages and accents could add significantly to the understanding of multilingual actors’ phenomenological directions, orientations and, potentially, even their identity.

**From Phenomenology to Dramaturgy**

Having looked at the actors’ phenomenology, in the next chapter, I will transition into the dramaturgy of our artistic experiment. As a conclusion of this chapter, I would like to provide an overview of how that dramaturgy came out of our artistic process, what prompted its themes, ideas, and techniques.
Two weeks of playing with the text of *Le Petit Prince* seemed to be producing very little interest: my Journal Three indicates that I was disappointed by the process, as my actors were not quite able to connect with the book, its characters, and story. In his post-performance interview, when characterizing the improvisation based on Exupéry’s text, Yury stated bluntly and unapologetically: “It felt like it was pushed upon us” (Yury’s Interview). The text-based études we were coming up with were very constraining and, in most cases, would leave the observers and the actors unengaged if not completely stumped. At the same time, in Week 3, a new dramaturgical thread began to emerge: it was based on personal narratives related to various multilingual and language learning experiences, moving to a new sociocultural milieu, learning the linguistic and cultural codes to be accepted (or not), struggling with accents and manners, hearing judgements and assumptions about their first language (or first accent), their culture, their origins, as well as sometimes enduring outright racism and xenophobia. It was also based on the phenomenological observations that were shared, discussed, and artistically explored through our improvisations.

Some of those explorations and conversations occurred sporadically, almost in spite of what had been planned. For instance, one day Gloria happened to be the only person who was able to make it to the rehearsal on time. While we were waiting, she and I ended up talking for a considerably long time, and she confided in me about her struggles of being the only Mandarin speaking student in an all-white and all-English-speaking Canadian drama class. I suggested she put our conversation to paper and the very next week (Phase 1 Week 3), she arrived with a full-fledged monologue describing her experience of being consistently misconstrued as a ‘shy’ person by English speakers and as an arrogant person by Chinese speakers (see Chapter 4, Scene 9), while, in her perception, not being one or the other. As we developed her monologue throughout Phase 2 (weeks 4 and 5), we came up with the idea of her performing in two languages simultaneously: the first part of each sentence would be in English, setting up a false premise for understanding for English speakers, while the second part would be in Mandarin, destroying the illusion of understanding for those who were not
able to follow the language. Gloria was the first participant to come up with a scene based on her personal perception and her personal narrative.

Sepideh, Maria, Yury, and Mario followed. Sepideh shared her story of struggling and failing to achieve a native-like accent in English and being consistently denied jobs for not having the ‘right’ pronunciation. Maria constructed her narrative around the first days after her arrival in Canada and failing to understand very simple sentences in English as well as completely misinterpreting cultural codes that most locals would take for granted. Yury became very vocal about his dissatisfaction with Canadian politeness, which he construed as dishonesty, and more so with unfair casting practices which prevent him, as a non-native speaker of English, from performing any other role but a role of a stereotypical Russian Mafioso, echoes of the concerns of other Canadian immigrant actors such as Humsi and Aspherger, whose stories I addressed in Chapter Two. Mario, on the other hand, argued that Canada, unlike his country of birth Portugal, had embraced him and, therefore, he appreciates its overall liberal mentality, compared to Portugal’s thinking and culture. Finally, Felicia, the only black person in the cast, raised a question of racism: despite being born and raised in Toronto and despite her flawless Toronto accent, she gets asked on a regular basis where she comes from, all because of people’s perception of her skin colour.

As we were developing scenes based on these personal stories, I noticed far more engagement and interest coming from the actors. By the end of Week Four (Phase Two), our production themes had become clearer to us: we were addressing the phenomenology of multilingual experiences and various societal issues associated with those experiences. The following chapter presents both a discussion of what constitutes multilingual dramaturgy, and our collectively devised multilingual artistic creation captured through text and video.
CHAPTER 4
The Performance: Evoking the Queer Object

你以为就你有屁眼啊？我也有屁眼啊！

Gloria’s Character, “In Sundry Languages”, Scene 8

Introduction

This chapter serves as a necessary ‘buffer zone’ between the analysis of the actors’ perception, as presented in Chapter Three, and the analysis of the audience’s perception, as presented in Chapter Five. At the core of this chapter is a representation of the multilingual dramaturgy of “In Sundry Languages” (ISL) through text and video documentation (i.e., the production script and footage). Without this ‘buffer zone’, the reader’s understanding of Chapter Five would be jeopardized, as Chapter Five contains numerous references to various scenes, characters, and languages employed in the show. Overall, Chapter Four has a dual function: it represents the actual instantiations of the multilingual dramaturgical devices whose origins were discussed in Chapter Three, and, at the same time, provides the necessary context for the understanding of Chapter Five.

While this chapter aims to help the reader seamlessly transition from the discussion focused on the actors’ experience to the analysis of the audience’s perception of stage multilingualism, it additionally provides the reader with an opportunity to engage with my data analysis, as presented in Chapters Three and Five, in a non-linear way. For this purpose, the script of “In Sundry Languages”, presented in this chapter, is interspersed with numerous references to the pages in both Chapter Three and Chapter Five, which should allow a cross-sectional reading of the three chapters in question. For instance, such a reading can facilitate
zooming in on a specific scene or a multilingual dramaturgical device used in ISL and compare the actors’ and the audience’s perception of that scene or device. For example, when reading Chapter 4, the reader may choose to use the cross-referencing to return to the actor’s perception of a scene or ‘fast-forward’ to the referenced pages in Chapter 5 to see how the audience responded to the scene in question.

Structurally, Chapter Four consists of two parts: the discussion and the representation of the artistic work. The discussion is centred on two main clusters of questions: the why questions and the how questions. The why questions aim to provide a theoretical rationale for the unorthodoxy of this chapter. Specifically, it addresses the inclusion of the full text and footage of ISL. Additionally, turning again to my theoretical framework, and the work of Sara Ahmed (2006), I contend that multilingual dramaturgy, presented through the script and the video, is a “queer object”—an object than can potentiate the queering of its subjects, whose perception is the focus of my research. Following the why-questions, the how-questions are concerned with the issue of representation of stage multilingualism through various media, as well as the media’s advantages and limitations. Central to this discussion will be the concepts of mise-en-page and mise-en-écran.

The why- and how-questions will be followed by the actual script and video,100 with the former containing the links to the latter. It is important to acknowledge that the very existence of this script and video was not part of the devising process itself but rather an essential component of “constructing” this dissertation. In fact, ISL was presented to a live audience without ever being one unified script; our stage manager had to run the show following a very approximate list of scenes and light cues, often without even knowing or understanding the actual meaning of most lines presented onstage. The textual encoding of the piece was a separate post-production process, replete with difficulties of transferring the show into written dramatic material. It was a re-construction of the performance, meticulously rebuilt

100 Available online on the vimeo server.
from the actor-generated texts of each of the scenes and the three-camera footage taped at a public presentation of our collectively devised work.

The Nature of “Know-How” and Multilingual Dramaturgy as a Queer Object

Why should a doctoral thesis include a documented version of the artistic practice in its entirety? Dramatic scripts and performance videos embrace a different way of presenting “knowledge.” Conventionally, in both quantitative and qualitative research, ‘raw’, ‘unanalysed’ data is commonly placed in appendices along with ethical review protocols, while the analysis of those data corroborated by citations, graphs, etc., would generally be included in the thesis body. Why, then, should my “raw data” be given a whole chapter?

In recent years, scholars from various disciplines, but mostly the Humanities and Social Sciences, have challenged the orthodoxy and supremacy of the traditional written dissertation. A prime example of such an attempt would be Nick Sousanis’s two-hundred page doctoral thesis written entirely in the form of comics and later transformed into a graphic novel published by Harvard University Press (2015). Sousanis’ thesis aims to provide insight into how human knowledge is constructed by addressing this issue through both content and form. Another notable example is Gregory T. Donovan’s PhD dissertation entitled MyDigitalFootprint.ORG: Young People and the Proprietary Ecology of Everyday Data (2013). Donovan, whose interest is in digital technologies, used a Participatory Action Research methodology and included a website he had designed as part of his action research. Similar to Sousanis’ work, the question of the “medium” and what it does to knowledge production and appropriation is central to the ecology of Donovan’s work.102

101 Sousanis book won multiple awards, including the 2015 Lynd Ward Graphic Novel Prize.

102 Donovan relies on Marshal McLuhan’s iconic idea that “the medium is the message” (1964). Donovan explains: “In making the medium the message, McLuhan argues that human experience and technology are locked
Robin Nelson, whose Practice as Research (PaR) methodology I use for this study, pushes not only for a re-examination of the medium but a re-examination of what constitutes knowledge, specifically artistic knowledge, which he refers to as “know-how”. For Nelson, practice, or more precisely, praxis, as research constitutes “know-what” knowledge, which is different from both the academic “know-that” knowledge and the artistic “know-how” knowledge. While Nelson welcomes scholarly attempts to subvert the hierarchy of knowledge and carve out a space for a “third” (neither qualitative or quantitative) kind of methodology—artistic research (see Chapter 2, p. 54) — he also resists ascribing any exclusive rights to artists with respect to understanding their own artistic “know-how”. For PaR, Nelson proposes a possible middle ground—a place of tension and negotiation where the modes of “know-how” and “know-that” need to converge:

I asserted [...] that writing about an arts and media practice is by no means intended as a translation of sounds, images or movements into words, but I have also argued [...] against artists’ claim to a special private knowledge which, based on intuition, is incommunicable other than in the art form. Though I agree that verbal articulation about arts processes are unlikely to yield either analytic or synthetic propositions, I hold that critical reflection does yield insights, some of which might be disseminated in a verbal commentary. Knowing is a continuing process of negotiation between the various modes [...] (2013, p. 58).

Following Nelson’s proposition, Chapter Four represents a metaphorical “mode switch,” and does not provide any “analytic or synthetic propositions” (p. 58), leaving this equally valuable “work” to Chapters Three and Five. Instead, this chapter “evidences” (Nelson’s term) the artistic creation through the dramatic text and video. Presented through two different media, this documentation of ISL is the presentation of the dramaturgical “know-how,” as it showcases an artistic attempt to capture a collectively devised multilingual dramaturgy that resists any use in a state of reciprocity thus producing an environment of relationships where people and extensions of people mutually shape one another” (2013, p. 78).
of translation. In sum, by including the artistic work into my thesis, I align myself with scholars who resist the rigid confines of the doctoral thesis, arguing that the thesis as a genre coerces both the writer and the reader into a very specific kind of analytic scholarly thinking and, by that, fails to engage other modes of intelligence.\textsuperscript{103}

There is another, arguably more important, reason for the inclusion of the artistic work in this thesis. It takes me back to Sara Ahmed’s queer phenomenology. In Chapter Two, I explained why multilingual dramaturgy that does not use translation represents a \textit{queer object}, at least within the linguistic and cultural milieu I was working in (Toronto, Ontario, Canada). Multilingual dramaturgy that does not employ a means of translation, for instance, such as surtitling, disrupts the notion of expected continuous access to the linguistic meaning. In other words, by limiting access, it creates “distance” and forces viewers to re-orientate themselves towards the presence of multiple languages. The potential of queer objects to be disruptive is essential for Sara Ahmed, who writes: “Queer objects might take us to the very limits of social gathering, even when they still gather us around […]” (2006, p. 24).

In sum, this chapter is not merely a transitional zone that facilitates comprehension of the subsequent parts of my thesis, it also presents a queer object, the object towards which the participants of, and audience to, my research had to orientate themselves. In order to understand their reorientation, it is essential to experience, even only through the limitations of the chosen media, a queer object itself.

\textsuperscript{103} For a comprehensive analysis of current trends in the evolution of the dissertation genre, specifically various experiments of including sounds and video in a contemporary electronic dissertation, see Pantelides (2013). She asserts that multimodality of data presentation is a prominent feature of what she calls “successfully innovative” dissertations (p. 138).
Representing Devised Multilingual Dramaturgy as *Mise-en-page* and *Mise-en-écran*

How does one represent a queer object, such as untranslated multilingual dramaturgy, on paper, or in film? What is important for such a representation?

Multilingual dramaturgy is not the first “queer object” being considered by theatre scholars and theatre practitioners as a difficult case for dissemination and publication. For example, devised theatre creations, while not having been theorized as “queer objects”, have already earned a reputation of being “reluctant” texts, at least in the Canadian theatre context. Bruce Barton even calls devised theatre works “anti-texts” (2008, p. 1), as they defy a more conventional mode of representation because spoken word may or may not necessarily be central to their aesthetics. Barton writes: “It would be a mistake, however—a common one—to decide that devised theatre diminishes the value of spoken (or sung) language in performance. Instead, language in theatrical devising is often ‘recast,’ so to speak, and given a different, broader, more poetic set of duties to fulfill” (Barton, 2008, p. 2). In a way, Barton calls for the inclusion of the text as one of many elements of devised dramaturgy without prioritizing the words (spoken lines), as is the case in more conventional plays.

In order to capture the complexity of devised dramaturgy, Barton and his colleagues, when publishing their series of Canadian devised texts, took extra steps to provide an extensive context and represent both the auditory and visual aspects of each of the productions included in their volume of *New Canadian Drama* (2008). Barton writes:

> In each case, therefore, we have striven to provide as ample and dense contextualization as possible through a wide and varied accumulation of complementary materials. Each play is accompanied by a detailed essay introducing the production, the company, and the conditions of its presentation. Each piece is also, to varying degrees, surrounded by the *evocation* of its performance through photographs, drawings, textual commentary, and/or supplementary articles and reading. Indeed, it is the impossibility of moving beyond *evocation* in a printed text—and the rich, imaginative buoyancy of that impossibility—that provides a key source of satisfaction of reading these works. (2008, p. 3)

Essentially, what Barton is concerned with is the impossibility of a complete translation of a devised *mise-en-scène* into a *mise-en-page*, because each devised *mise-en-scène* is unique.
Similarly, each *mise-en-page* of a devised performance should also be unique. The goal of creating a *mise-en-page* is not representation, but, rather, *evocation*, a term central to Barton’s methodology of publishing devised work. According to Barton, the *mise-en-page* should produce an evocative effect, which can be achieved through heavy contextualization, visuals, and access to the soundscape.\(^{104}\)

Expanding on the idea of evocation, I present our collectively devised work in two modes: through *mise-en-page* and *mise-en-écran*. The first is closer to a conventional play; containing the actors’ lines (with the exception of improvised parts), elaborate stage directions, and descriptions of the NVC involved in the performance. Arguably, in the case of ISL, the stage directions were not originally conceived as directions—rather they were created post-production to document the actual actions that happened in the performance. Notably, the *mise-en-écran* aims to provide the same kind of evidence, and, due to its visual and auditory capacities, captures it differently than the *mise-en-page*.

Just like the *mise-en-page*, the *mise-en-écran* was specifically composed for this thesis and it includes the footage from the three cameras (see Figure 3 below) that recorded the show on May 16, 2015. The first camera was the only moving camera—it provided the live feed for the audience, and consists only of close-ups, which were projected onto the downstage screen above the actors’ heads. This close-up frame focused on the actors’ faces, mouths, hands, and bodies at different parts of the production.\(^{105}\) The footage recorded by the other two cameras was not part of the show. The second camera captured a static medium shot that showed a larger *mise-en-scène*—the positioning of the actors on the stage in relation to each other. The third camera was placed at the end of the auditorium, behind the last audience row, to capture the full stage, as well as the position of the screen on which the live feed was projected, the cameraman handling the first camera, and the musician (myself), who was providing live

\(^{104}\) For example, some devised ‘plays’ in the volume edited by Barton included sheet music.

\(^{105}\) For each scene, the script of ILS indicated what the focus of the close-up camera was.
accompaniment throughout the performance. For the ease of viewing, in the footage provided in the vimeo links, all three frames alternate approximately every 10-15 seconds offering a consistent multi-angle view of the performance.¹⁰⁶

**Figure 3.** Camera Positions at the Robert Gill Theatre on May 16, 2015.

The *mise-en-écran* does not intend to replicate the live performance—which is an impossible task by definition—but, rather, to purposefully direct the viewer’s focus to the variety of media and angles that the live audience of ISL engaged with, as well as compensate for the limitations of the *mise-en-page*, specifically those related to the representation of body movement and the complexity of the soundscape.

Returning to the *mise-en-page*, I would like to highlight another important consideration that plagued the process of preparing the text of ISL for this chapter. How much translation of the words spoken in ten languages is needed, if any? If full or partial translation is indeed something to consider, where should it be positioned on a printed page in relation to the actual lines spoken by the performers? The dilemma of translating, or not translating, a multilingual text that was performed untranslated has only been recently addressed by Canadian theatre scholars. Aida Jordão, who investigated her own process of putting on and publishing a bilingual (English and Portuguese) play, writes:

¹⁰⁶ The soundscape of the show was recorded through the microphone of the second camera, located in the middle of the auditorium.
From a small but representative sample of multilingual plays in North America and the U.K., few recreate the conditions of occasional non-comprehension when a language that is not English is introduced. That is, when performed, the bilingual/multilingual scenes are unaccompanied by any sort of translation but when published every word can be read in English. (2017, In press)

According to Jordão, the only exception to the rule of mandatory translation for published stage work is related to the presence of Canada’s two official languages. For instance, Jordão notices that the French and English lines in David Fennario’s iconic *Balconville* were published in the original languages with no translation. Paradoxically, when Jordão published her own bilingual play *Funeral in White* (2013) in a Portuguese Canadian anthology, she was surprised to discover that her own play was the only one that contained untranslated lines in Portuguese. The other authors opted for a full translation of Portuguese lines into English, even when translation had not been available in the original productions of the plays.

Undoubtedly, translation gives immediate (though limited) access to meaning. However, as I indicated in Chapter Two, my participants and I were not always concerned with meaning—in fact, often times, our focus was on the sound of the language, its rhythm and other prosodic features (for instance, in Scene One “Turn off your cellphones”). Periodically, our focus was also on NVC conventions related to a specific language or culture, rather than the verbal layer of the language (for example, Scene Ten “Tim Horton’s”). Hence, providing translation to each of the lines said in the show in ten different languages would have contradicted the purpose and the aesthetics of our devised work. At the same time, avoiding

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107 The non-translation policy is not a new thing in Canadian theatre, nor is it new in Canadian theatre research. However, it does not mean that it is a common practice either, especially when no translation is provided for the languages other than English or French. Eva Karpinski (2017, in press) shows how violent the audience (granted mostly white and Anglophone) response can be when immediate access to the meaning is not given: she describes a case of a production utilizing Aboriginal languages and not providing translation as an act of resistance to colonial structures, powers, languages and discourse. In terms of theatre research, Louise Ladoceur’s recent provocation in *Theatre Research in Canada* (2016) gives an example of deliberately balanced code-switching with no translation provided (with an important caveat that Ladoceur’s publication is in English and French, Canada’s two official languages).
translation completely would have created a misperception of what actually happened during the performance nights—as, on both nights, multilingual audience members, depending on their linguistic competences, could actually understand various scenes of ISL. Hence, not providing any translation would have reduced the reading of the script to a monolingual Anglophone experience only, while the reader of Chapter Four might be multilingual after all. For these reasons, I made a decision to add translation as footnotes, in conjunction with presenting the original text in the original languages using the appropriate alphabet. At the same time, translation is completely absent in the mise-en-écran, which should allow the viewer to experience the sound of the languages used. Additionally, in the scenes where meaning was not our focus, translation is omitted in both the mise-en-page and the mise-en-écran. Instead, for those scenes, I asked my participants to provide an English transcription (using the English alphabet, not IPA signs) of each of the lines spoken. Together with the footage of the show they should give a more rounded image of what the show looked and sounded like. Overall, in the performance script below, each scene presents a unique treatment of translation and non-translation strategies.

With these considerations in mind, below I present the script of ISL with accompanying links to the online videos of each scene of the production.
Performance Text and Footage

“IN SUNDARY LANGUAGES”

As Presented on May 16, 2015 at the Robert Gill Theatre, University of Toronto

Devised from personal stories, encounters, experiences and ideas by

Clayton Gray,
Юрий Ружьёв / Yury Ruzhyev (Rouge),
Felicia Nelson,
Mark Dallas,
Lyła Belsey,
Sepideh Shariati/سپیده شریعتی,
Amy Packwood,
Мария Прозорова / Maria Prozorova,
손연지/ Danielle Son,
高子莹 / Ziying Gloria Gao,
Mario Lourenço,
李明颢。/ Joy Lee-Ryan,

and ԱրտԲաբայանց / Art Babayants.

Additional Dramaturgical Support: Gabrielle Houle and Shelley Liebembuk

Camerawork and Montage: Justin Blum
Prologue.

“ЗАНОЗА В ЗАДНИТС’Е”

Video:

A large white screen separates the stage and the apron. The screen functions both as a projection space and a curtain. A film director’s chair is placed in the house, right in front of the first row of seats. Next to it is a tripod with a professional video camera directed towards the stage. A cameraperson is occupying a seat in the first row. The actor performing the film director is sitting in the chair. Stage right: there’s a pianist at the piano/keyboard.

House lights go down to 50%, lights up on the apron. A voice is slowly approaching from the theatre lobby: Зры-зра-зра-зря! Зры-зра-зря! (Practicing voice warmups in Russian). An actor (Yury) enters from the back of the house. Lights on the apron.

YURY (walking down the aisle towards the stage): Hello!

CLAYTON/FILM DIRECTOR: Hello!

YURY/AUDITIONING ACTOR: Thank you for seeing me! How are you? (Gives him his resume/headshot)

CLAYTON: Fine. (Looking at Yury’s resume, squints). Yury Ru…zi-yev?

YURY: Юрий Ружьёв.

CLAYTON: Yury Ruchi-off?

YURY: Ружьёв.

CLAYTON (bastardizing the name even more): Rouge-if.

YURY: Yep. That’s perfect.

CLAYTON: What is it? German?

YURY: No, it’s Russian… Canadian. (Raising his hand in an ironic gesture) Proud!
CLAYTON: All right then, Mr. (stumbles and produces by far the worst version of Yury’s last name) Ryouche-yov... Slate for the camera, please.

A projection of the live feed comes up on the screen. Live feed focus: zoom in on Yury’s head/shoulders.

YURY (looking into the camera): Yury Ruzhyev reading for Jeff. I’m 5’10. (Does a turn for the camera. Then turns to Clayton) If I may, I’m wondering if you could tell me more about the character.

CLAYTON (annoyed): Didn’t you receive the breakdown?

YURY: I did. Thank you. But it just says he’s a guy over 30 – there’s only that much you can do with that.

CLAYTON: Hm… well… a Russian mafioso, his girlfriend is breaking up with him. How about that?

YURY: Oh, that’s very helpful. Thank you! (Prepares. Looks at Clayton)

CLAYTON (slightly annoyed): No-no-no! Don’t look at me! Look at the camera.

YURY: Oh yes, of course. (Prepares. Looks at the camera. Suddenly slaps himself on the face.)

CLAYTON: What? Why are you hitting yourself?

YURY: Wha..?... Ah… (hastily) This is the Grotowsky method. (Looks at Clayton but gets no understanding or empathy). He was a Polish theatre dir… It just helps … helps you get into charact… faster… I took a worksh… (No reaction from Clayton again.) Money wasted anyway! If it bothers you, I don’t have to do it.

Clayton shrugs “Whatever, man”.

YURY (prepares, looks at the camera, slaps himself): “That’s what we do! We fight… You tell me when I’m being an arrogant son of a bitch. And I’m telling when you’re being a pain in the ass, which you are. Ninety nine per cent of the time. I am not afraid to hurt your feelings. You have like a two second rebound rate and you’re back doing the
next pain-in-the-ass thing. So it’s not going to be easy. It’s gonna be really hard. And
we’re gonna have to work on this every day. But I wanna do this. ‘cause I want you.
All of you. Just you and me forever.

Could you do me a favour? Just picture your life 30 years from now, 40 years
from now. If it’s with that guy, go, go. I lost you once, I think I can do that again. Just
don’t take the easy way out! Would you stop thinking what everybody wants? Stop
thinking what he wants, what I want, what your parents want? What do you want?”

CLAYTON (interrupting): Wait… What’s with the accent, man?

YURY: It’s … mine.

CLAYTON: We need a Russian accent for this character.

YURY: Yep.

CLAYTON: Ok. You know what a Russian accent sounds like?

YURY (ironically): Yes, I think I have a pretty good idea.

CLAYTON: Good. So?

YURY (visibly uncomfortable. Prepares again. Slaps himself): Zat is what we do.

CLAYTON: No! (He is on the edge) Mr. Rouge-ief, you CAN do the Russian accent, Mr.
Rouge-ief, yes?

YURY: Yes, I am an actor. I can do anything.

CLAYTON: Can you do it right now for me, please?

Clayton, in indignation, gives a gesture to start over.

YURY (prepares and slaps himself.) Zet is vot ve do…

CLAYTON: No! No!! No!!!! (Jumps up in fury. Approaches the stage);

Live feed: Clayton profile enters the frame and moves really close to Yury’s face.
CLAYTON (in a horribly exaggerated but recognizably “Hollywoodish” Russian accent)
Zyet… ees vot vyee do! (Pauses, looks at Yury, waiting for him to repeat)

YURY (visibly uncomfortable): Zat…

CLAYTON: Zat… yees vot vyee do.

YURY: Zet…. Ees vot vee doo!

CLAYTON: Vyee fight!

YURY: Vyee fight!

CLAYTON: yoo tell me ven I’m bein arrogant sahn of beetch… an I tell yoo ven you’re beink pain in arhs.

YURY (repeats): pain in ahs… Ant I coll yoo an arrogant sahn of beetch.. (Yury slaps himself. Simultaneously, Clayton slaps himself).

Sudden power switch: the self-slap turns Yury into the director and Clayton into the auditioning actor. Clayton is now auditioning in Russian. He remains centre stage and starts the same monologue in Russian. Yury moves towards the director’s chair correcting Clayton’s pronunciation. Live feed: zoom in on Clayton’s face.

CLAYTON: My tolko ee delayem, chto rugaemsysya.

YURY: делаем, что ругаемся!

CLAYTON (tries to emulate Yury’s pronunciation, with difficulty): ruga..em..sysa.

CLAYTON: Ty nazivaesh men’ya kozlom.

YURY: КА-злом!

CLATON: KA…zlo… A ya nazyvayu tebya zanozoi v zadnitse.
YURY: Смотри, мне нужно, чтобы было страшно. Ты бандит, ты мафиози, ты можешь убить. Пожалуйста. (Look, it has to be terrifying. You’re a thug, a Mafioso, you can kill… Let’s go.)

CLAYTON: Хорошо. (Ok) «Мы только и делаем, что ругаемся...»

YURY: Ok, страшно—это когда от тебя зависит его жизнь. Бандит! Бандит! (Ok, terrifying means you are in charge of his life.)

Clayton tries again.

YURY (suddenly comes uncomfortably close to Clayton; in perfect Russian pretending to be a gangster): Мы только и делаем, что ругаемся. Ты называешь меня страшным козлом, а называю тебя занозой в заднице.

Yury spits through his teeth, which completes his portrayal of a typical Russian Mafioso/nouveau-riche).

Clayton is paralyzed.

YURY: Вот как надо играть бандитов! Слейт для камеры, пжалста! (This is how you play thugs. Slate for the camera, please)

CLAYTON (turning around for the slate): Clayton Gray, reading for Jeff.

YURY: Спсиба, да свиданья! (Thanks, bye!)

CLAYTON: Do svidaniya!

YURY (sarcastically): Привет бойфренду! (Say hi to your boyfriend!)

Clayton leaves through the house.

YURY (turns towards the house; yells): NEEEEEXT! (Abrupt blackout.)

- References to Prologue in Chapter 3: pp. 119-123
- References to Prologue in Chapter 5: pp. 219-220
Scene 1.

**TURN OFF YOUR CELLPHONES!**

Video: [https://vimeo.com/139656833](https://vimeo.com/139656833)

It is pitch black. The audience is unaware of the actors seated in various locations in the house. Suddenly, one of the performers begins the following announcement in Cantonese: “Dear friends, we’re about to begin. Please, turn your cell phones off. And please, enjoy the show!” Another actor joins her by saying the same announcement in Mandarin, then more – in Korean, Spanish, Farsi, Russian, French and all the other languages of the production with the exception of English. Some are speaking their first language, some – their second/third but all make an effort to transform the familiar sounds of the language into pseudo-ritualistic howling, which makes the languages very difficult, almost impossible, to decipher. Eventually, the overlapping languages create a sort of Artaudian soundscape, which wraps around the audience and to which the pianist starts adding a cacophony of high and low notes. With the first notes of the piano, the footlight located upstage centre blasts a beam of light towards the house and lights the screen from behind. The screen rises, slowly opening a space approximately 3 feet (1 metre) high between its lowest edge and the stage floor. The actors begin moving from the house towards the stage light, bending and contorting their bodies and trying to squeeze into the opening between the screen and the stage—it is as if they were trying to penetrate an invisible and difficult barrier. Their voices grow louder and louder—the cacophony of sounds becomes almost unbearable.

**Live feed: off.**

GLORIA (in Cantonese)

演出馬上就要開始啦，請關閉你嘅手機，請欣賞。/ Jin Ceot Maa Soeng Zao Jiu Hoi Ci Laa, Cing Gwaan Bai Nei Ge Sau Gei, Cing Jan Soeng.
JOY (in Mandarin)
演出马上就要开始了，请关掉你的手机，请欣赏。
/ Yăn Chū Mā Shàng Jiù Yào Kaī Shī Le, Qīng Guān Diào Nǐ De Shǒu Jī, Qīng Xīn Shǎng.

DANIELLE (in Korean, overlapping with previous languages)
친애하는 신사숙녀여러분, 공연이 곧 시작합니다. 부디 전자 기기를 꺼주시고, 공연을 즐기십시오! /

YURY (in French, overlapping with previous languages)
Chers ami(e)s! Nous allons commencer. Veuillez éteindre vos cellulaires. Bon spectacle!

MARK and SEPIDEH (in Farsi, overlapping with previous languages)
وستان عزیز،
تا لحظاتی دیگر برنامه را شروع می کنیم. لطفاً تلفن های همراهتان را خاموش کنید و از نمایش لذت ببرید!

MARIO (Portuguese, overlapping with previous languages)
Senhoras e senhores o espetáculo vai começar. Por favor desliguem os telemóveis e desfrutem do espetáculo!

CLAYTON (Spanish, overlapping with previous languages)
Queridos Amigos, estamos apunto de comenzar. Por favor, apagen sus telefonos celulares y ¡disfruten!

MARIA (Russian, overlapping with previous languages)
Дорогие друзья! Спектакль начинается. Пожалуйста, отключите свои мобильные телефоны. Приятного просмотра!
Light dies; screen rolls up.

- References to Scene One in Chapter 3: pp. 93-94
- References in Scene One in Chapter 5: pp. 214-216
Scene 2.

KIE VI DEVENAS? PART 1.

Video: https://vimeo.com/139656834

Music changes abruptly taking us to the era of Modernism and silent film. The pianist is playing Charlie Chaplin’s “French Gibberish” song (from The Modern Times) while typical old film projection flickering light colours the following interlude.

Live feed: off.

WHITE GUY: Good morning, neighbour! Your garden looks swell. And the daisies look great.

BLACK GIRL: Thanks!

WHITE GUY: Say, I have been meaning to ask you a question.

BLACK GIRL: Go for it.

WHITE: Where are you from?

BLACK GIRL: I am from Toronto.

WHITE GUY: Hm… But where are you really from?

BLACK GIRL: The T-dot. The big T.O.

WHITE GUY: No. Where are you from originally?

BLACK GIRL: I was born in a hospital… downtown. St. Joseph’s.

WHITE GUY: Yeah. But… come oooon! Where are really really from?

BLACK GIRL: I’m from here.

BLACK GIRL (pauses): AFRICA! (Leaves in indignation.)

WHITE GUY (to himself): Africa?! Such a beautiful country! (Blackout.)
- References to Scene Two in Chapter 3: p. 146
- References to Scene Two in Chapter 5: p. 220 (footnote)
Scene 3.

**Le Petit Prince**

Video: [https://vimeo.com/139656832](https://vimeo.com/139656832)

A girl with a laptop enters stage left, wanders across the stage, eventually gets to the armchair centre stage, reluctantly opens the laptop. Presses computer key, which 'activates' the computer voice.

*Live feed:* close up on the computer keyboard.

COMPUTER (*pianist speaking into mic*): C’est une question de discipline.

LYLA (*repeats*): C’est une question de discipline. (*Presses computer key.*)

COMPUTER: C’est une question de discipline.

LYLA: C’est une question de discipline. (*Presses computer key.*)

COMPUTER: C’est une question de discipline.

LYLA: C’est une question de discipline. C’est une question de discipline. C’est une question de discipline!

*(Runs stage right, returns to chair carrying a crown and a cape, puts on crown and cape to become Little Prince)*

LYLA: C’est une question de discipline! Quand on a terminé sa toilette du matin, il faut faire soigneusement… Soigneusement… *(Returns to computer, presses key)*

COMPUTER: Quand on a terminé sa toilette du matin, il faut faire soigneusement la toilette de la planète.

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108 It is a question of discipline. When you've finished your own toilet in the morning, then it is time to attend to the toilet of your planet, just so, with the greatest care. You must see to it that you pull up regularly all the baobabs, at the very first moment when they can be distinguished from the rosebushes, which they resemble so closely in their earliest youth. It is very tedious work, but very easy (Antoine de Saint Exupery. *Le Petit Prince*).
LYLA: Quand on a terminé sa toilette du matin, il faut faire soigneusement la toilette de la planète.

COMPUTER: Il faute s’astreindre régulièrement à arracher les baobabs dès qu’on les distingue d’avec les rosiers auxquels ils ressemblent beaucoup quand ils sont très jeunes.

LYLA: *(struggling to remember all the lines)* Il faut s’astreindre régulièrement à arracher les baobabs…

COMPUTER: Il faute s’astreindre régulièrement à arracher les baobabs dès qu’on les distingue d’avec les rosiers auxquels ils ressemblent beaucoup quand ils sont très jeunes.

LYLA: *(still struggling a bit)* Il faute s’astreindre régulièrement à arracher les baobabs dès qu’on les distingue d’avec les rosiers auxquels…

COMPUTER: Il faute s’astreindre régulièrement à arracher les baobabs dès qu’on les distingue d’avec les rosiers auxquels ils ressemblent beaucoup quand ils sont très jeunes.

LYLA: *(get up and performs as if le petit prince)* Il faute s’astreindre régulièrement à arracher les baobabs dès qu’on les distingue d’avec les rosiers auxquels ils ressemblent beaucoup quand ils sont très jeune! … Quand ils sont très jeune… Quand ils sont très jeunes…

*(Returns to computer and presses key)*

COMPUTER: C’est un travail très ennuyeux, mais très facile.

LYLA: *(slowly falling asleep)* C’est un travail très ennuyeux, mais très facile… C’est un travail très ennuyeux, mais très facile…

*(head lands on computer key)*

COMPUTER: C’est une question de discipline-

LYLA: UGH! *(slams the laptop shut)*

Blackout.

- References to Scene 3 in Chapter 3: pp. 109-11
- References to Scene 3 in Chapter 5: p. 235
Scene 4.

**INTERDENTAL CONSONANTS**

**Video:** [https://vimeo.com/139656835](https://vimeo.com/139656835)

**Live feed:** zoom in on Sepideh’s face.

SEPIDEH’S VOICE IN THE DARK: /t/ank you for your question!

(Lights go up centre stage. In the same chair, there sits Sepideh wearing a business outfit.)

SEPDEH: I came to Canada seven years ago when I couldn’t speak absolutely any word in English. First time I went to McDonald’s to order some food, I had to point to the cheeseburger on the wall to order the food because I couldn’t make one simple sentence in English. When they brought the burger, it was by far smaller than its picture, but I couldn’t complain, I couldn’t speak any English.

(There comes a sudden hissing sound from the back of the theatre that sounds like the voiceless ‘th’ in English. It puzzles Sepideh. She pauses, then shrugs it off to continue).

SEPIDEH: /d/en, I signed up for ESL program. /d/at was a bad idea.

It was full of people that they were just there to learn some English for /d/eir daily lives tasks. /d/hey didn’t want to go to university or get a professional job. /d/hen, I applied for a college.

VOICE: Then!

SEPIDEH: Then I applied for college. That was another bad idea.

VOICE: That!
SEPIDEH: That was another bad idea. No one told me there are thousands of colleges in Canada with an infinite number of programs with certifications that no employer would care for. Then, I applied for university.

VOICE: Then!

SEPIDEH: Then I decided to go to university, I had to pass TOEFL exam. They call it standard test, but it is absolutely not standard. They asked me to read three reading passages and answer to 42 questions in 1 hour. I can’t do that even in my first language. After attending TOEFL for three times, I got to university. My research was to design an Energy monitoring system to measure the energy consumption of the portable devices. Even though I was academically doing very well ….

VOICE: Vvvvery wwwwell!

SEPIDEH: Very well!

VOICE: Vvvvvery wwwwell!

SEPIDEH: Very vell!

VOICE: Vvvery well!

SEPIDEH: I was doing good.

VOICE (no interruption).

SEPIDEH: My accent was embarrassing for me. I had to defend my /t/hesis in front of the whole faculty members. After graduation, I was brave enough to pursue my dream to become a mat teacher.

VOICE: Math!

109 Letters in bold indicate potential ‘pronunciation mistakes’ that could be corrected by the VOICE.
SEPIDEH: math teacher. After graduation from Teacher’s College, I applied for my Ontar Ont/ah/rio certification…

VOICE: Ontario! (Amy, the teacher, raises from her seat and starts moving towards the stage simultaneously correcting more and more pronunciation ‘mistakes’ Sepideh is making.)

SEPIDEH: OntArio… OntArio certification was another dramatic story on its own. OCT people were insisting that I should contact my university via email; they couldn’t understand email is not the way to communicate in all countries in the world. Basically, I had to send my dad to go there in person and bribe my university to get my transcripts.

Now here I am, an Ontario Certified Teacher who applied for over 50 jobs and got only two interviews. Of those 2 interviews, one of the employers rejected me; they commented on my language skills. And the other employer hired me with big workload and not enough money.

But now I am thinking, maybe it is time for me to stop listening to that voice. Maybe it is time for me to stop pushing myself. Maybe I had enough!

(Sepideh rises in order to leave. Amy follows her out continuing the corrections and make it impossible for Sepideh to talk. Pianist plays a melody hinting at O Canada! and then switches back to the fast-pacing French Gibberish Song again).

- References to Scene 4 in Chapter 3: pp. 123-124
- References to Scene 4 in Chapter 5: none.\(^1\)

\(^1\) Chapter Five discusses the audience’s perception of multilingual scenes. Scene 4 was performed entirely in English.
Scene 5.

KIE VI DEVENAS? PART B.

Video: https://vimeo.com/139659146

Live feed: off

Cinematic lighting.


WHITE GUY (in a pseud-South African accent): Thanks!

BLACK GIRL: You know I’ve been meaning to ask you a question.

WHITE GUY: Sure, fire away.

BLACK GIRL: Well… ah where you come from?

WHITE GUY: I am from here, Toronto.

BLACK GIRL: No where you really come from?

WHITE GUY: The T-dot. The big T.O.

BLACK GIRL: Nah. Where you really really come from?

WHITE GUY: It’s the accent, isn’t it? North York.

BLACK GIRL: Come on, man! Where your people them come from?

WHITE GUY (pauses): AFRICA! (Leaves in indignation.)

BLACK GIRL (to himself): Africa?! A beautiful country that! (Blackout.)

- References to Scene 5 in Chapter 3: pp. 146
- References Scene 5 in Chapter 5: pp. 220 (footnote)
Scene 6.

**BLAH-BLAH-BLAH**

**Video:** [https://vimeo.com/139659174](https://vimeo.com/139659174)

**Live feed:** focus on Maria’s upper body.

*Stage right is Maria. The cameraman is behind her focusing on where Maria is looking at various moments of her monologue: the stage, the audience, later – Amy.*

MARIA: A newcomer... Do you remember you being a newcomer? Do you remember that feeling?

Of course, you tried to prepare yourself as much as possible. Thanks to Serguey Brin... *(repeats the name the English way)* Sergei Brin, we all have Google now. But no matter how well you had prepared, your new life caught you unawares.

*Amy enters stage left and sets up an office chair.*

Look! That girl! She is wearing Uggs. Nothing wrong, but it’s summer! I am wondering do they wear flip flops in winter? By the way we have to buy some winter clothing. Our neighbour said we should wait till Boxing day. What’s that?

*Amy enters again and sets up a table. Maria and Amy exchange looks.*

MARIO: Why is she smiling at me? Do I have something on my face? No? Strange… Oh, such a funny guy! I stepped on his foot and he said “Sorry!” Which guy? That big guy…

Oh yes, the metric system which is not metric at all! How to shrink Snow White who is one hundred seventy one centimetres tall to a five foot seven inch dwarf? How to convert Fahrenheit to Celsius? It’s easier to solve integral equation, isn’t it! Thank God Canada got rid of gallons and miles.

*Amy enters again, sorting out letters and lays them out on the table.*
MARIA: Right. Mail. Envelopes almost every day. Bills, notifications, invitations. Surprise - cheques! Look, we’ve got a cheque from Canada-something-agency! How do they know our address? We didn’t inform any agency about our address, did we? So, huh, that’s true, the Big Brother is watching us… But they’ve sent us money! What?! Two hundred sixty six dollars every month? Just for having that teenager? Wow! We got paid for having a child! If we knew we would have made more of them. (to her kid) By the way did you do your homework? Yes, your math homework. What? Oh, you learnt that already! In your primary school! Good, you can focus on your English now.

*Amy sits down at the table, begins ‘office work’.*

**Live feed:** zoom in of Amy’s body, slowly zooming in on her mouth.

MARIA: English! The toughest challenge in your new life.

MARIA *(facing the audience)*: Hello!

AMY *(facing the audience)*: Hello! How can I help you?

MARIA: My name is Maria. I am looking for an apartment.

AMY: Great. We have a one bedroom blah September.

MARIA: What?

AMY: We have a one bedroom blah September.

MARIA: Ah, sorry, I need an apartment next month.

AMY: Ah, we blah-blah-blah September

MARIA: Sorry, what is the cheapest price?


MARIA: Does it include parking?

A: Blah-blah-blah winter tires blah-blah-blah 750 dollars a month blah-blah-blah
MARIA: O-kaaayyy... Can I see that room... I mean apartment?

AMY: Sure! Just blah-blah-blah some questions...

MARIA: Yes, yes, of course!

AMY: What is your name again?

MARIA: Maria.

AMY: Blah-blah-blah-blah-blah?

MARIA: Sorry, what?

AMY: Where blah-blah-blah work?

MARIA: Oh, I am a newcomer, I don’t have a job yet.


MARIA: I am very sorry, I don’t understand. Could you please explain in different words?

AMY (at the top of her voice): blah... blah... blah... job... blah... blah... you need... blah... blah... blah... blah...

MARIA: Sorry... Could you repeat?

AMY: Blah! Blah! Blah! Job! Blah! Blah! Blah! Blah! You need! Blah! Blah! Blah! Blah! Blah!!!

More people are entering the scene – they are also saying Blah-blah-blah but it looks like they are having a meaningful conversation. The office turns into a party room full of people.

- References to Scene 6 in Chapter 3: pp. 129-130
- References to Scene 6 in Chapter 5: pp. 216-217, 219
As party guests fill up the stage, Amy and Maria exit while Sepideh and Yury move downstage centre.

YURY (to Sepideh): What a great party!
SEPIDEH: Yeah! I’m so glad I came here today.
YURY: Oh, sure.
SEPIDEH: Hi! My name’s Sepideh.
YURY: Nice to meet you, Sepideh. I’m Yury.
SEPIDEH: Nice to meet you too.

Yury suddenly turns to the camera.

Live feed: close-up on Yury’s face.

YURY (aside): Сэпидэ, какое странное имя! Откуда она, интересно? (Turns back to Sepideh). You look like Jasmine from Aladdin, the movie.
SEPIDEH: I’m Persian.
YURY: Oh, good for you. (Aside). Пержн – это Ирак или Иран? Или Сирия? А чо тогда это... шарф... хиджаб на башке не носит. (Turns back to Sepideh). So were born here then?
SEPIDEH: My parents are not religious.
YURY: Oh, right oooon! (Aside.) Так... если она арабка, тогда чо она пьет алкоголь?! (Turns back to Sepideh). Is it ok that I am drinking my alcohol next to you?
SEPIDEH: I told you my parents are not religious.

YURY: Oh, how interesting! (Aside, to camera). Да, ну, здесь-то ей лучше. В Иране ее бы камнями забросали за такой наряд. Это точно. So how do you like Canada?

SEPIDEH: Iran is a beautiful country.

YURY: Где-то я ее видел? Тим Хортонс? Старбакс? Индийский ресторан! So you look very familiar? You work around here, right?

SEPIDEH: I am a professor at UofT.

YURY: Of course, you are.

They exchanges places.

Live feed: close-up on Sepideh’s face.

SEPIDEH (aside to camera): چه کلاسی از جامعه از یک لاس چه به (to Yury) How do you know the host?

YURY: Oh no, we’re just friends.

SEPIDEH: (aside to camera): In Farsi: چطوره؟ مالیت چقدره؟و ضع درآمدت (to Yury) Did it take long for you to get here today?

YURY: Not at all, I live near here at Queen and Ossington.

SEPIDEH: چطوره؟ مالیت چقدره؟و ضع درآمدت Queen and Ossington! / (to Yury) Do you live on your own?

YURY: Oh, no. I am not rich. I’m comfortable.

SEPIDEH (aside to camera): چگونه تشک یک چملا (to Yury) You have a very good taste in fashion.

YURY: Oh, no! I am not gay.
SEPIDEH (*aside to camera*): چقدر آدم خسته کننده ای هستی و چه مکالمه آکواردی (*to Yury*) Shall we join other people at the dining table?

YURY: I’m sorry I bored you. Let’s get more wine.

*Both walk off as do the other party guests. Blackout.*

- **References to Scene 7 in Chapter 3:** pp. 118-119
- **References to Scene 7 in Chapter 5:** pp. 221-225
Scene 8.

KIE VI DEVENAS? PART 3.

Video: [https://vimeo.com/139659203](https://vimeo.com/139659203)

Live feed: off.

Cinemantic lighting again. WHITE GUY is planting flowers. ASIAN GIRL enters.

ASIAN GIRL (*putting on an overexaggerated Korean accent*): Goodah morningah, neighbour! Your gardenah is pine.

WHITE GUY: Thanks!

AG: Can I askah you a qvestion?

WG: Sure.

AG: Where… ah… you… prom?

WG: I am from Toronto.

AG: No! Where are you leally prom?

WG: The T-dot. The big T.O.

AG: Noooo! Where are you prom? O-li-gi-na-rry?

WG: I was born downtown in St. Joseph’s Hospital.

AG: Noo! No-no-no! Where are your peoplah prom?

WG (*pauses*): AFRICA! (*Leaves in indignation.*)

AG (*very satisfied*): Aprica! Beautifu countly!

Blackout.

- References to Scene 8 in Chapter 3: p. 146
- References to Scene 8 in Chapter 5: p. 220 (footnote)
Scene 9.

“I LIVE HERE”

Video: https://vimeo.com/139659222

Live feed: close-up on Gloria’s face

Wearing her business attire Gloria is standing downstage centre behind a podium. The audience can only see her face and upper body. Her laptop is open as if she is presenting at a conference.

GLORIA: I live here, and yet I exist in two separate worlds. One world is called 中国, and the other is called 加拿大. I live in these two worlds being two separate 人。

I’m a quiet person. Because 我不喜欢废话，我只想把我的事情做好。In the Chinese world, my quietness is perceived as 傲慢。Apparently my face just looks 傲慢 to them. Look at me, what do YOU think? In the Canadian world, 我的安静被看作是 shyness. In Canada, if you’re not 大大咧咧, then you must be shy. 看着我，你觉得呢？

In the Chinese world, I know the language and culture inside out, THEREFORE I would 追求任何我可能获得的机会。Now I have to start bragging a little bit, which I don’t really feel comfortable about, because 中国的文化讲究谦虚。I have been 这里春晚的主持人啦，然后还是杂志的模特啦,然后还是微电影的主角啦。But in the Canadian world, 就没什么好吹的了。I have language and cultural barriers, and I am also seen by Canadians as 少数族裔, so I would often be cast as 配角。For example, I played 一个年轻的傻逼穷小子, I also played 跑龙套的，because I don’t LOOK like 主角。

(She is visibly annoyed).
我看起来不像主角。我当然看起来不像主角啊！因为我是亚洲人啊！亚洲人怎么可能看起来像主角！而且英语又不是我的母语，有时候我连话都说不清楚，所以我在你们眼里应该就是一个傻逼吧！啊？是不是啊？我是不是就是一个傻逼啊？啊？你说啊？我是不是个傻逼啊？我是不是啊？可是谁才是傻逼啊？你现在说什么你听得懂吗？啊？你听得懂吗？你以为我平时安安静静不说话就没有意义是吧？意见就像是屁眼一样每个人都有！你以为就你有屁眼啊？我也有屁眼啊！（Suddenly realizes that she crossed the line. Breaks off). Sorry.

She grabs her laptop and hurriedly rushes off stage. As she leaves the podium, the audience gets a glimpse of the lower part of her body – it turns out she is wearing a very tight and very revealing pair of BDSM laced leather pants.

- References to Scene 9 in Chapter 3: p. 145
- References to Scene 9 in Chapter 5: pp. 230-234, 235

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111 I live here, and yet I exist in two separate worlds. One world is called China, and the other is called Canada. I live in these two worlds being two separate people.

I’m a quiet person. Because I don’t like bullshitting, I just want to get my shit done. In the Chinese world, my quietness is perceived as arrogance. Apparently my face just looks arrogant to them. Look at me, what do you think? In the Canadian world, my quietness is perceived as shyness. In Canada, if you’re not loud, then you must be shy. Look at me, what do you think?

In the Chinese world, I know the language and culture inside out, therefore I would go for any opportunity that I could get. Now I have to start bragging a little bit, which I don’t really feel comfortable about it, because you’re supposed to be modest in Chinese culture. I have been the emcee for the Chinese New Year gala here, and a model for a magazine, and also the lead role in a short film. But in the Canadian world, there’s nothing to brag about. I have language and cultural barriers, and I am also seen by Canadians as a minority so I would often be cast as the sidekick. For example, I played a stupid poor young guy, I also played an extra because I don’t look like the main role.

I don’t look like the main role. Of course, I don’t look like the main role! Because I’m Asian! How could Asians look like main roles? And English is not my mother tongue. Sometimes I can’t even say things clearly, so I must look like an idiot to you! Right? Am I not an idiot? Say it! Am I an idiot? Am I? But who is the real idiot? Do you even understand what I’m saying right now? Do you? You think I don’t have an opinion just because I’m quiet and don’t say much? Opinion is just like an asshole, everyone’s got one! You think you’re the only one who’s got an asshole? I’ve got an asshole too!
Scene 10.

FUTEBALL

Video: https://vimeo.com/139659241

Yury and Mario enter from opposite sides, slowly carrying in two identical armchairs. They place them downstage centre facing each other. It is clear that there is a sense of competition between the two actors, as they are looking intensely at each other without breaking eye contact. They step back and start their acting warmup: Mario is doing it in Portuguese, Yury in Russian. Yury finishes his warmup first and goes to his armchair to sit down. He folds his arms and waits for Mario, who is taking his time to finish up. Finally, Mario approaches the armchairs only to realize that the distance between the two chairs is too close for him to fit in. Instead of pulling his armchair back, he decides to squeeze in and forces his legs between Yury’s. Yury doesn’t budge. After a short struggle, Mario drops himself into the chair. Yury and Mario face each other. The tension has clearly intensified. Suddenly, Mario slaps Yury. Yury is shocked. He makes a huge effort not to slap Mario back. Instead, he gently brushes his hand off Mario’s cheek. This puzzles and then enrages Mario – he slaps Yury again, this time with more force. Yury touches Mario’s cheek even more tenderly – Mario slaps again. The routine is repeated three times.

Live feed: close-up on Yury’s and Mario’s hands.

YURY (the third slap turns his head to the audience): Количество ударов, которое можно снести, ограничено. Выбора три: смириться и нарастить толстую бесчувственную кожу, убежать или научиться давать сдачу. Я убежал, но иногда могу и дать сдачу. (Slaps Mario.)
MARIO (the slap turns his head to the audience): Uma das coisas que eu não sinto falta do, Portugal, e a violência, a violência e o medo que cresceu dentro de mim. (Tries to slap Yury, but Yury catches his hand. They start arm-wrestling.)

YURY (with effort turns his head to the audience): Быть злым и агрессивным там – это естественное состояние. Чтобы быть добрым нужно прилагать много усилий. Я хочу быть добрый. (Turns head back to Mario, applies force to his hand.)

MARIO (head to the audience): It was as if there was no space in Portugal. Not just in the emotional sense of the word but also in the physical sense. Sair de Portugal veio de uma necessidade inata de me expandir, de me esticar, de me esticar. (Head back to Yury)

YURY (head to the audience): Удивительный парадокс. Там, где все злые и агрессивные, я был нежным, добрым и женственным даже. Здесь, где все нежные и добрые— я злой и агрессивный. Я хочу быть добрым и мягким. I choose to be nice. (Head back to Mario).

MARIO (head to the audience): When the going gets tough, there is always the national sport to relieve the grief. O futebol! Desfraldam-se as bandeiras nas varandas dos bairros historicos e canta-se o hino nacional! O que levanta a moral do pais e o futebol, o futebol. O FUTEBOL! (Screams) FUTEBOL! FUTEBOL!!!!!

The pianist throws in a soccer ball. Mario is first to catch it. The match starts. While playing they keep conversing in English with the exception of various football terms such as “Pass” or “Goal” in Portuguese and Russian.

**Live feed: close-up on the actors’ feet.**
MARIO (while playing): Here in Canada, I found more space; I could be more of myself. I am more at ease.

YURY (while playing): They are cold, cold and closed. I want to open them up. I want them to be open to me. Do they have a soul or is it lost in their indifference, somewhere between I’m sorry and How are you?

MARIO: For example, as a man I was able to make more room to myself; to my sensibility and vulnerability, as a man. (Passes the ball to Yury)

YURY: And they are so conservative and passive aggressive, they would never say no to you. And they are nice....

MARIO: I think, there's something about Canada and its progressive politics that just agrees with me.

YURY (he is out of breath): What I want them to do is just to accept me. Not to be a stranger.

Mario, who is a much better soccer player, throws the ball off-stage. Yury, exhausted by the game and their competition, rushes after the ball, leaps forward, almost falls but all of sudden ends up in Mario’s arms. For a second both men freeze. Then Yury’s body collapses as he bursts into tears. Mario slowly carries him off stage. Blackout.

- References to Scene 10 in Chapter 3: pp. 133-135
- References to Scene 10 in Chapter 5: pp. 225-227, 235
Scene 11.

**Kie vi devenas? Part 4**

Video: Missing.\(^{112}\)

Live feed: off.

*This scene is technically a repeat of Scenes 2, 5, 8 but it now has an absurdist flair and can be almost entirely improvised, provided the actors use the Esperanto lines below. The ‘characters’ may be asking ‘Where are you from?’ to the flowers in the imaginary garden. The can also pretend that the flowers are responding back. Other options are encouraged.*

**QUESTION:** Vi\(^{113}\) razeno trovias bona. La lekantoj aspektas bonaj.

**ANSWER:** Dankon.

Q: Mi **volas demandi** vin ion.

A: Certe. **Demandu** ja.

Q: **Kie vi devenas?**

A: Mi venas de ĉi tie. **Toronto.**

Q: Mi **volas diri,** origine.

A: T dot ... la **granda to - o**

Q: Ne, sed ... **Kie vi devenas vere?**

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\(^{112}\) The video of Scene 11 is missing for technical reasons: the close-up camera was turned off during this scene (as with all *Where are you from?* scenes), the second camera ran out of tape, and the wide shot had had a malfunction. The same technical issues partly affected the footage of the previous scene—it is presented in an abridged version.

\(^{113}\) Bolded syllables indicate word stress.
A: Bone, vi malkovris mian sekreton! Estas la akcento ĉu ne? Mi venas de .... Norda Jorko!

Q: Mi volas diri, do, kie vi devenas efektive?

A: Nu, mi naskiĝis en Sankta Jozefo Hospitalo urbecentra.

Q: Venu ja! Kie devenas via popolo?

A: Afriko !!!

Q: Ah! Afriko… kia bela lando. (Blackout.)

- References to Scene 11 in Chapter 3: pp. 97-99, 146
- References to Scene 11 in Chapter 5: pp. 193, 220
Scene 12.

**Body. Part A**

Video: [https://vimeo.com/139659265](https://vimeo.com/139659265)

Footlights cast light on the two figures downstage centre: Gloria and Joy both dressed in white begin demonstrating ‘cultural gestures’ of emotion. Gloria’s body language is over-exaggerated ‘Chinese’, Joy’s – over-exaggerated English Canadian. Pianist plays pseudo-Chinese music. The actors demonstrate the following gestures:

2. Come here!
3. “I’m happy to see you.”
4. “It’s hilarious!”
5. “High five!”
6. “Me? Oh! Thanks!”
7. Good-bye!
8. “Selfie” face (cute in Chinese, ridiculous in English)

- References to Scene 12 in Chapter 3: pp. 99-101
- References to Scene 12 in Chapter 5: p. 223
Scene 13.

**Tim Horton’s**

**Video:** [https://vimeo.com/139659294](https://vimeo.com/139659294)

**Live feed:** zoom in on the actors’ hands.

This scene is fully improvised. It is set at Tim Horton’s, the staple Canadian coffee and doughnut shop. As customers arrive, they order a cup of coffee to go. They place their orders in their first or second language (with the exception of English). The two servers, performed by Gloria and Joy, speak Chinese to each other and to the customers. The conversation as well all kinds of misunderstandings that occur always happen in two languages with no English translation provided.

- References to Scene 13 in Chapter 3: pp. 111-113, 119-123
- References to Scene 13 in Chapter 5: pp. 221-225
Scene 14.

Body II.

Video: https://vimeo.com/139659318

Live feed: off.

This scene is technically a repetition of SCENE 13 but this time there are six ‘bodies’ on stage instead of two. Clayton, Sepideh, Gloria are performing the ‘Chinese’ gestures while Joy, Amy and Mario are performing the Anglo-Canadian gestures. After the “selfie” gesture, everyone leaves stage left.

- References to Scene 14 in Chapter 3: pp. 99-100
- References to Scene 14 in Chapter 5: p. 223
Scene 15.

Why?

Video: https://vimeo.com/140667762

Live feed: zoom in on Yury’s upper body.

As the six performers are leaving, Yury literally falls onto the stage from behind a right wing: he has two suitcases, a standing lamp and a whole bunch of props. He is visibly exhausted.

YURY (speaking to someone offstage): Thank you so much for seeing me! Good luck with the project. You too!

Takes a couple of steps and suddenly crashes on the floor.

YURY (to himself, muttering): “Не бывает маленьких ролей, бывают маленькие актеры”. Константи Сергеевич Станиславски. Oh yeah? There are no small parts? Try to be a big fucking actor in a ten second commercial with only your back to the camera. So, fuck you, Stanislavski! No, I love you. But fuck you.

It is now decades that I have been acting, dancing and performing for a living. A poor one, but a living. I get by. I am an independent entrepreneur, with in French means failure. :-) I am a one man circus, where I get to be a ring master, a monkey and a tent.

Yury stumbles over a lamp. He picks it and turns it into a dancing partner.

My motto - say YES. “Life keeps happening every day, yes—say yes. The opportunity comes your way, say yes” and I do. Thank you, Liza.

My friends and mom keep nagging me about going back to my marketing career - to a real job. Yes, I do worry about the future and rent and food and such.
(turns to talk to his ‘mom’, in Russian) Мама, ну что я могу сделать. Родился актером и ничего другого мне не надо. Я только прошу поддержки. No, no, no. I am not asking anything from you anymore. Never asked you for money, I even stopped inviting you to my shows, but please, don’t rob me of your moral support. I am losing it on a regular basis. Don’t kill me.

(To the audience) Last year I spent 2,600 CAD on theatre tickets, and 2 grand more on classes and workshops. Do you wanna guess how much money I made as an actor within a year? 418 Canadian dollars. (Piano riff)

But it was so much fun! You can’t buy that!

Picture this, Thursday evening in Toronto, amazing sunny weather. Friends are gathering in a park with beers, hipsters are rolling a joint, la petite bourgeoisie is being led to their tables. What am I doing? I am biking. No, it’s not leisure biking, I am biking to an audition. I am carrying a mic stand, it’s duct taped to my bike and it is uncomfortable to bike for it’s between my legs. The base of the mic stand is in a bag on my back with tons of costumes, make up, and other show gear. And in my left hand, therefore I am biking with one hand, I have a suitcase with more stuff. I am biking cross town to an audition from Queen West West to Gerard East, east, east. Yes, I am biking, sweating, cursing - taxi is too expensive, the TTC will take 3 hours, so I am biking. At some point I tripped and hurt my ankle. I got scared. I need my legs. Am I happy? No!

Why? Why are we doing this? Why do theatre? There is still hope? No, not to make it big, but to get by somehow. So, why? I don’t know. I like it, and it makes me happy. Why do theatre? (turns to his mom) Вы были правы? Oh, dear. You were right. (to himself) Какого черта, нафига мне все это надо. Мазохист хренов.

- References to Scene 15 in Chapter 3: pp. 146
- References to Scene 15 in Chapter 5: none.
Scene 16.

**COLOURING EACH OTHER**

Video: [https://vimeo.com/40667764](https://vimeo.com/40667764)

**Live feed: zoom in on actors’ bodies**

Danielle comes on stage and notices Yury lit only by his lamp. She says something in Korean to Yury—he doesn’t understand and ignores her. She repeats the expression with more insistence, then again, a few more times—Yury finally accepts the challenge. He decides to play with the Korean sentence, even without really understanding it: he repeats it to the best of his ability and adds his own body movement to it. Another actor comes in—Yury passes the Korean sentence and his movement to him/her. That actor passes it to the next person. The improvisation continues. At some point, they may decide to add expressions in other languages. When all the cast is on the stage, the screen-curtain starts coming down slowly and the pianist resumes Chaplin’s Gibberish song. As soon as the screen touches the stage floor, the light dies and so does the tune.

**CURTAIN CALL** is performed to a jazzy interpretation of L’Internationale. The performers, pianist and cameraman take a bow in front of the screen.

- References to Scene 16 in Chapter 3: pp. 96-99
- References to Scene 16 in Chapter 5: none
CHAPTER 5
Multilingual Reception: Trusting the Audience

An audience doesn’t like to see things twice, and an audience doesn’t like other languages. It has big concentration problems…

Christian Peters, freelance theatre and dance curator\textsuperscript{114}

Introduction: From Multilingual Actors to Multilingual Audiences

On May 15, 2015, at the Robert Gill Theatre (University of Toronto), an audience of approximately 100 people, including my thesis committee, gathered to see the first rendition of “In Sundry Languages.”\textsuperscript{115} Before the show started, following the spirit of multilingualism, I welcomed them to the theatre in four different languages, including English and French. Next, I explained the premises of my research project, how I would be collecting their responses after the show, and what would be required of them in terms of time and effort. I handed out the informed consent form (see Appendix D) and let the audience members read it in silence, after which I invited questions or concerns. After the ethics part was completed, I delivered an impassioned speech which was supposed to encourage the audience to be supportive of the actors on stage, since only three of them were working theatre professionals, while the others were amateur, in-training or had not performed for a significant amount of time. Finally, I proceeded to my piano, located right in front of the first row of seats close to the left wall of the auditorium, and waited patiently for my light cue to begin the accompaniment. The show began.

\textsuperscript{114} As cited in Frank & Waugh (2005), p. 103.

\textsuperscript{115} The second performance happened the day after and had a similar number of attendees.
At that point, I had little idea that being in such close proximity to the audience would provide me, as both a performer and a researcher, with an unforgettable and revelatory experience. As various scenes and languages were being introduced on stage, our multilingual audience began reacting to the linguistic variety on stage in a way I could not have anticipated. At first, I was even concerned that the audience was failing to produce a uniform synchronistic response such as applause or laughter. Later, I accepted it as part of my own phenomenological perception of the show and started enjoying what I was hearing: an occasional chuckle from a committee member able to follow the untranslated Mandarin lines, a frequent uproarious laughter coming from the centre front row densely “populated” by Russian speakers, a series of approving giggles from Persian speakers scattered around the auditorium. Interestingly, each time someone laughed, almost immediately did I notice a swift turn of heads: those who did not understand a language used at a given moment would briskly glance or turn toward those who did. It seemed as if the power of knowledge was moving through the auditorium creating little collectives here and there, occasionally modifying them, and sometimes eliminating them as if they had never existed. This experience reminded me of an interesting citation French philosopher Jacques Rancière borrowed from Sommerakademie—a place where he was once invited to teach: “Theatre remains the only place where the audience confronts itself as a collective” (2009, p. 5).

The same ‘travelling’ laughter and audience “self-confronting” happened the following evening during the second presentation of ISL. Even though I was already anticipating both phenomena, they would still occasionally catch me off guard because the patterns and trajectories of that laughter and ‘head turning’ were vastly different from the previous night. Evidently, the show was enjoying a different audience who had different multilingual competencies to interpret what was being said on stage. Generally speaking, on the second night, it seemed that our Chinese and Farsi jokes suddenly became more noticeable, more powerful, more affective, while the previous day’s ‘hits’—our Russian jokes—suddenly lost some of their lustre.
It was the first time in my artistic life that I saw and heard stage multilingualism working its unpredictable “magic” in and through a vastly diverse multilingual and multicultural audience. This kind of audience reaction was not unnoticed by the other performers, either; in fact, in the post-performance interviews, many of my core participants reflected upon the scenes and languages which elicited more reaction from the audience, and, by corollary, made the actors feel there was more connection between them and their public. For instance, in her post-performance interview, when speaking about the scene series *Kie vi devenas? (Where are you from?)* Danielle remarked that, from her perspective, the audience had had more connection with her exaggerated Korean English than with her Esperanto:

I don’t know it’s just like I felt more reaction coming from the audience when I was speaking more English, Korean style English while Esperanto, people were just looking at the scene not the actions, not the gestures, I felt that was bit of like, I felt yeah, that I wasn’t really pleased with that I felt we should have been more prepared and that was what, that was the last thing that remained on my thought (Danielle’s Interview).

Danielle also emphasizes here that the Esperanto scene needed more “preparation” (by which she probably meant either more devising or more rehearsal time), which may be the reason it did not quite elicit the same kind of response. In her interview, Gloria echoes Danielle’s reflection when she speaks about her experience of performing on two different nights: in her view, it is not only the spectator contingent, but also the quality of her own acting that affected how the audience reacted to her monologue scene:

A: Right. And do you think the audience reacted differently to your performance?

G: Yeah, yeah… yeah, the first night, when I, the beginning of the monologue, it’s like nobody reacted to anything. And then you have the note for me, it’s like be nicer, more like a presentation and the second night I feel like there are some response when I first started even though it’s not that funny yet.
A: Right. So did you hear responses? Did you notice-
G: Yeah. And also in the second night I was doing that Chinese rant and I was saying, am I an idiot? I kept saying the same thing and then somebody in the audience said Yes.
A: \( (laughs) \) In Mandarin?
G: \( (laughs) \) Yeah.
A: Wow.
G: Yeah.
A: And you heard that.
G: Yeah.
A: Wow. And how did that affect you?
G: Well, I was surprised but I just ignored it. I just went on with the performance.
A: Okay. Do you think it was an evil, vicious thing to say or it was, somebody was just being funny?
G: Yeah I think it’s just funny.
A: Okay, cool. Okay interesting. Yeah I actually think your scene was a lot stronger the second time but I also think the second night that we had a lot more Mandarin speakers. That’s my personal observation, I don’t know.
G: My friend is sitting behind you \( (laughs) \).
A: Yes. They were laughing their asses off.
G: Yeah, I can tell my friend’s laugh, like I can tell his laughter, it’s like going like falsetto or something \( (laughs) \) \((Gloria’s Interview)\).

When I interviewed Joy, she also stressed that hearing reactions to her Mandarin lines was important to her as a performer. However, similarly important and simultaneously difficult was getting accustomed to \textit{not} hearing reactions to certain lines (or jokes):

\[ \text{[…] knowing that someone might be Mandarin-speaking in the audience made a difference and being like, oh they’re going to get this (laughs), or like, and then like you hear laughter or you hear something but only bits of it. But then, trying not to worry about the fact that maybe the audience won’t understand half the things that I’m saying um and hoping that they will still understand and find it entertaining somehow, by not understanding the language, so that was… I think that was sort of thinking like, not like while I’m onstage but like after performing or like before performing, those are some of the thoughts that I had (Joy’s Interview).} \]
In contrast, Mario emphasised that he did not hear any specific reactions to Portuguese jokes, but he felt a sensation of being understood when he spoke Portuguese. He and a few other participants mentioned that the audience gave them ‘energy’, or in Mario’s words, “the heat” to perform better (Mario’s Interview).

Overall, according to my participants, language was certainly not the only defining element that allowed the audience and actors to create and ‘feel’ the connection between each other. Moreover, almost all of the participants emphasized the complex nature of the relationship between the actor and the audience—the actors were affected by the audience’s reactions (or the absence of those where they were expected)—as much as the audience was affected by what the actors’ did at any given moment of the show. Without simplifying this relationship, and without reducing the complexity of the ‘theatrical event’, which ISL was, in this chapter, I will, nevertheless, attempt to focus specifically on the audience’s perception of the presence of multiples languages on stage. In my analysis, I will focus on how understanding or not understanding a language, or a number of languages, affected the audience’s perception.

It is important to acknowledge that I am looking at the audience reception of ISL in order to better understand the work of the multilingual actor as well as the possibilities of multilingual dramaturgy, not to study a multilingual audience per se; that would have required a completely different study, with a much stronger focus on the audience and much more elaborate tools to elicit audience responses. My interest instead is to understand how the audience experienced the challenges posed by the multilingual dramaturgy of ISL.

Before I look at what the audience surveys revealed, I would like to situate my analysis within the broader field of audience research to show how the philosophical

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116 Interestingly, as the audience survey showed, Mario’s continental Portuguese was not actually an easily recognizable language. Some audience members confused Portuguese with Spanish, some with Russian. One of the things that could be explored by further artistic research is the idea of recognisability of a language within a certain context.
framework I am utilizing in this research (see Chapter Two) could be useful for audience studies dealing with experimental theatre work.

**Audience Research: the Emancipated Spectator and Queer Phenomenology**

Since the publication of Susan Bennett’s work *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception* (1997), audience research has been receiving more and more acknowledgement and consideration in theatre studies. Helen Freshwater, in *Theatre & Audience* (2009), offers a comprehensive account of various approaches, such as historiographic, psychoanalytic, and cognitive, that are currently used by scholars who focus, both directly and tangentially, on audiences. Additionally, Freshwater points to an interesting paradox: at present audiences are being studied by theatre-makers (particularly, theatre producers) and theatre scholars in two radically different ways. The former rely on collecting data, particularly easily quantifiable data, from actual theatre audiences by conducting surveys and interviews, as well organizing focus groups; the latter avoid a real audience altogether and prefer to assume a “hypothetical” or “ideal” audience—an audience that is expected to read a particular theatrical sign in a specific way (pp. 29-30). Freshwater acknowledges the programmatic nature of Susan Bennett’s research for audience studies, but also argues against Bennett’s own distrust of audience research which involves actual audience members. Freshwater proposes that a “hypothetical” view of an audience is limiting and only common in theatre studies, as opposed to film or television studies, for example. Freshwater writes:

> […] although it is possible to speak of ‘an audience’, it is important to remember that there may be several distinct, co-existing audiences to be found among the people gathered together to watch a show and that each individual with a group may choose to adopt a range of viewing positions (2009, 9-10).

Christopher Balme explains that the aversion to dealing with actual audience members comes from a lack of training of theatre scholars, who are often unfamiliar with qualitative methods of research in cultural studies and social sciences (Balme, 2008, p. 34-35). It is not surprising that scholars who work in cultural studies or at the intersection of theatre studies and
other disciplines, for instance, education or sociology, not only adopt, but also advocate for the use of qualitative data collection in audience research. For instance, Kathleen Gallagher, in her study on urban youth engagement in drama (2014), or John Tulloch in his study on the production and reception of Shakespeare and Chekhov (2005), are not afraid to engage with the audiences directly: in fact, a significant part of their data comes from post-performance audience interviews where audience members are invited to reflect on what they have seen and experienced in the theatre.

I align myself with this strand of research and follow the principle of “trusting the audience” put forward by Helen Freshwater at the end of her book. Freshwater herself draws from the philosophy of the Emancipated Spectator (*Le Spectateur émancipé*), developed by Jacques Rancière (2009). Rancière pushes against the frameworks proposed by Brecht and Artaud in relation to the positionality of artists who are expected to teach the audience through alienation or make the spectator part of the spectacle. As Rancière posits, either type of engagement is supposed to make the spectator active as opposed to passive. The positionality in which artists are rendered active and audiences passive is not rooted in equality and does not presume emancipation, according to Rancière; moreover, he calls it a pedagogy of “stultification” (p. 21). Rancière argues that a spectator should be understood as equal to the actor from the very start, similarly, the act of spectating should not be seen as passive:

Being a spectator is not some passive condition that we should transform into activity. It is our normal situation. We also learn and teach, act and know, as spectators who all the time link what we see to what we have seen and said, done and dreamed. There is no more a privileged form than there is a privileged starting point. […] We do not have to transform spectators into actors, and ignoramuses into scholars. We have to recognize the knowledge at work in the ignoramus and the activity peculiar to the spectator. Every spectator is already an actor in her story; every actor, every man of action, is the spectator of the same story (p. 17).

Following Rancière, understanding the spectator should not (and cannot) mean understanding whether or not the spectator learned a message encoded by the artist, or whether the spectator became an ‘active’ political subject after engaging with a work of art. This would
mean that the artist has a “privileged starting point.” Rancière proposes a different emancipatory framework—he writes:

Like researchers, artists construct the stage where the manifestation and effect of their skills are exhibited, rendered uncertain in the terms of the new idiom that conveys a new intellectual adventure. The effect of the idiom cannot be anticipated. It requires spectators who play the role of active interpreters, who develop their own translation in order to appropriate the ‘story’ and make it their own story. An emancipated community is a community of narrators and translators (p. 22).

To understand how the spectator deals with the ‘idiom’ proposed by the artist, especially with a queer idiom, such as a multilingual performance, one needs “to trust the audience,” i.e., trust that the audience actively engages with the “idiom” and applies their own knowledge and experience to interpreting it. I would like to suggest that Rancière’s positioning bodes well with Sarah Ahmed’s reformulation of Marx’s 11th thesis, which I cited in Chapter Two: “Rather than suggest that knowledge leads (or should lead) to transformation, I offer a reversal: […] transformation, as a form of practical labor, leads to knowledge” (2014, p. 173).

Engaging with the multilingual queer idiom is a form of practical labour for the audience—it may be unorthodox for some, less so for others. This encounter—which nevertheless remains nothing but an artistic encounter—includes interpretation, which in turn may lead to knowledge, whether or not that knowledge was conceived (or even understood) by the creators of the “queer idiom”, or the queer object, as Ahmed calls it. A queer object has a potential to spur “redirection” or even “reorientation,” although one cannot assume what (re)directions and (re)orientations should necessarily happen, nor can one assume a potential ‘direction of the redirection.’ It is by inviting the audience to reflect on their own experience and interpretation of the “queer idiom,” that one can uncover the potentially transformational work that the audience was going through when watching the show. Furthermore, conceiving

\[^{117}\text{When explaining his push against Brecht’s epic theatre, Rancière refers to his programmatic work on “stultifying pedagogy” called }\textit{The Ignorant Schoolmaster} (1997).\]
of the act of reflecting as a form of practical labour that the audience engages in positions it as potentially transformational, too.

Last but not least, following Rancière’s theory of the emancipated spectator, I, as a researcher-artist, should abandon the high position of the instructor/teacher/knower and see the queer object as a “teaching” tool. Indeed, as some of my audience responses showed, for a few of the audience members, there was little ‘queerness’ in the ‘queer object’ that I had assumed ISL was. Here is, for example, an audience response to the questions of non-understanding the languages used in the show: “I grew up in a house with multiple languages, so it was comforting even if comprehension was an issue” (Audience Survey 1-85). This response clearly indicates the conventionality of multilingual experience for this particular audience member. Admittedly, “Comforting” was not a response I was expecting or even could conceive of when devising ISL. “Comfort” was certainly not the artistic goal I had in mind. And yet, “comfort” happened. However, since “the effect of the idiom cannot be anticipated,” I have to reconcile myself to this perception and acknowledge it. At the same time, I have to acknowledge that this emancipated spectator’s experience is their own alone; in no way can it represent a generic key to understanding the artistic work being experienced and interpreted. Importantly, neither I nor the other creators’ of ISL can “possess” that key either because, as Rancière explains, neither the artist nor spectator owns the meaning of the artistic work:

It is not the transmission of the artist’s knowledge or inspiration to the spectator. It is the third thing that is owned by no one, whose meaning is owned by no one, but which subsists between them, excluding any uniform transmission, any identity of cause and effect (p. 15).

Once again, Rancière rejects the simplistic “cause and effect” connection between the actor and the audience. Instead, he encourages scholars to investigate the very process of

118 1-85: the first digit means the survey was completed on the first performance night, May 15, 2015. The second number indicates the number on the survey in the Excel and Nvivo files.
“interpreting” that the “emancipated spectator” is going through when engaging with a performance.

Data Collection: The Audience Survey

Following Freshwater’s and Rancière’s call to “trust the audience,” I asked the audience members on both performance nights to reflect on their perception of stage multilingualism as presented in ISL. I chose to do that through audience surveys—a pragmatic choice of a methodological tool, given that I was involved in the show as a musician performer and would not have been able to conduct audience interviews after each of the performance nights. Yet, I wanted to have access to the audience’s immediate reflections—the ones that are more representative of their phenomenological experience of the production. In addition, the surveys allowed me to get a broader rather than a deeper scope, as they captured a wide variety of responses coming from audience members who had vastly different linguistic competences, including the knowledge of the languages used in the show. In addition, the anonymity of the surveys gave me a broader representation of the audience response to ISL. It is safe to assume that some audience members might have chosen not to partake in interviews.

The survey was divided into two parts. Part One was comprised of nine questions (questions A to I) aiming to collect some basic information about the respondents, focusing specifically on the audience relationship of both languages and theatre. The respondents were asked to identify the following:

- their dominant and non-dominant languages (if any), their first languages

119 Phenomenology “explores what is given in moments of prereflective, prepredicative experience—experiences as we live through them.” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 27), which explains why it is important to gain access to the audience immediate rather than delayed responses.

120 In addition, the anonymity of the surveys gave me a broader representation of the audience response to ISL. It is safe to assume that some audience members might have chosen not to partake in interviews.

121 The question numbers were assigned later in order to digitize the data for Excel and Nvivo.

122 A dominant language was defined in the survey as a language one can think in and speak fluently.
- their relationship to the fields that study or employ language: linguistics, translation, language instruction, etc.
- their relationship to theatre: professional or amateur theatre artist, frequency of attending theatre production
- their relationship to the cast and crew of ISL, specifically, how they learned about ISL.

As multilingualism was at the centre of my enquiry, my interest was to understand the multilingual makeup of the audience on both performance days. Other points served as additional ways to provide more information about the audience.

The second part of the survey (questions J to P) consisted of seven open-ended questions requesting the audience to reflect on their experience of the show:

J. What is your overall impression of the show?

K. What was your general reaction to the presence of multiple languages on stage? Would you be interested in seeing multilingual shows like this in Toronto?

L. Is there any specific scene that struck a chord with you? Why?

M. How did you respond to the parts of the show where you couldn’t understand the language used?

N. How did you react to the scenes where you were able to understand two or more languages?

O. One of the focal points of my research is the relationship between language and body (gesture, facial expression, posture, movement). Was it something that you focused on while watching the show? If yes, what moments made that relationship stand out for you? Could you describe your perception/interpretation of those moments?

P. Do you have anything else you would like to add? Any other impressions? Ideas? Criticism?

The questions were broadly formulated to allow each respondent to have more agency in deciding how to describe or reflect on their experience. At the same time, most questions
also requested specifics: for instance, questions L, M, N, O asked the respondents to specify which scenes of the show they were writing about rather than write about the whole show. In addition, on each of the performance nights, after handing out the copies of the survey, I also encouraged the audience to have a deeper engagement with the questions asked and spend as much time as they needed in case they wanted to provide longer answers as well as address more than one scene in each of the answers. The list of the scenes was provided on the last page of the surveys and most audience members took their time in responding to the questions. In total, the number of surveys came to 182 with 89 surveys submitted on May 15, and 93 on May 16. All respondents were 18 years of age or older.

Once the surveys were collected, the results were digitized and saved as an Excel file. I used Excel to analyse the audience makeup on each of the performance nights, focusing specifically on the audience’s knowledge of languages. Then, I transferred the Excel file to Nvivo—the qualitative software I used for my analysis. Having read through the answers to each question, I identified themes and subthemes (where possible) for each of the questions, and proceeded to the second reading during which I coded the answers into the identified themes (nodes). The following three sections of this chapter present the results of my analysis which corresponds with the questions K, M and N of the audience surveys. I start my analysis with the description of the audience makeup on both performance nights, and then I proceed to the audience’s general reaction to the stage multilingualism of ISL (question K). After that, I look at the issue of not understanding languages (question M) used in the show, with a particular focus on how the audience perceived the actors’ NVC, which, according to the surveys on both days, was the most frequently mentioned tool/strategy for dealing with unknown languages. Then, I analyse the audience’s responses to the question of understanding multiple languages (question N). The chapter concludes with a discussion of the multilingual dynamics that happened within the audience in response to the languages presented on stage and in response to the audience’s own reactions to those languages.
The Linguistic Makeup of the *ISL* Audience

According to Peter Eversmann, a Dutch psychologist who influenced such scholars as Tulloch, the first question audience research should consider is: “Who goes to the theatre?” (Eversmann, 2004, p. 134). The audience survey conducted on May 15 and 16, 2016 revealed that the audience that attended both performances of *ISL* was could be called an alternative audience, in John Tulloch’s terms, “specialized” audience (2005, p. 10). It was an audience of mostly family, friends, and colleagues who came to appreciate a theatre experiment and help me with my research. It was also an audience that responded to the multilingual aspect of our production, as indicated in the call for participants (Appendix B). According to the audience surveys, when asked how they had learned about *ISL*, the vast majority of the audience members indicated having some sort of a connection with either the researcher or one of the performers. Only a handful of people had learned about the show through other sources, such as a university events page, online events listings, Facebook, and other social media sources. Additionally, our audience consisted of a significant number of theatre professionals (25% of the audience on both performance days) as well as those who self-identified as belonging to the professions related to the study of languages: language teachers, interpreters, and linguistics majors (33% on Day One and 35% on Day Two).\(^{123}\)

In relation to the main focus of my research—multilingualism—the *ISL* audience represented a wide variety both in terms of the number of languages they could speak and the levels of linguistic competence they possessed in each of their languages. Rather than separating them in two clearly defined but grossly simplified categories, monolingual and multilingual, I propose seeing them as gravitating towards the two unattainable ideals: monolingual (a person who knows only one dominant language and has absolutely no knowledge of any other languages) and multilingual (a person who speaks multiple languages

\(^{123}\) Unfortunately, since *ISL* was not a ticketed event, the exact number of audience members present on both days remains unknown. However, it is safe to assume that the majority of audience members stayed in the theatre to fill out the survey. After both performances, the ushers reported that they had not witnessed any walkouts.
with the exact same degree of fluency). Between those ideals lies a vast array of linguistic competences in various languages, including L1s. Instead of being asked to self-identify as simply a mono- or multilingual, the ISL audience members had to indicate which dominant and non-dominant languages they could speak and which of those languages were their mother tongue or tongues. This way, audience members who had only one dominant language—whether or not it was their mother tongue—and no other dominant languages would be closer to the monolingual end of the language competence spectrum, while somebody who spoke four dominant languages certainly represented the other end of the spectrum. Such an approach provided a more complex understanding of the linguistic makeup of the ISL audience (see Table 4) and a better understanding how this linguistic makeup could have affected their perception of the show’s multilingualism.

**Table 4.** The ISL Audience’s Linguistic Makeup: Dominant Languages (DLs).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of DLs</th>
<th>May 15, First Night</th>
<th>May 16, Second Night</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Respondents</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One DL</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two DLs</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three DLs</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four DLs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table Four indicates, the majority of the audience members on both nights could speak more than one language fluently (52% and 58% respectively), while only 43% and 39% spoke one dominant language. Out of those who self-identified as speakers of one dominant language, perhaps not surprisingly, the vast majority were speakers of English. Nevertheless, on the first night, one Chinese, one Japanese, one Korean, and three Russian speakers also self-
identified as having no other dominant languages. The second night’s numbers of those with one dominant language were as follows: one Chinese, two Korean, one Spanish, two Persian, and three Russian speakers. These numbers show that, according to the audience self-identification, among the ISL spectators, there was a small percentage who did not possess fluent command of English (May 15: 7% and May 16: 10%).

These are important numbers to acknowledge simply because of the significant amount of English used in the show. Overall, more than 50% of the show text was still in English: in fact, Scenes 2, 4, 5, 6 and 8 were performed entirely in English and in a variety of accents: Canadian, South African, British among many others. In addition, Scenes 7, 9, 10 and the Prologue were performed partially in English. At the same time, fewer scenes did not contain any English (Scenes 1, 3, 11, 12, 13, 14). It was obvious that despite our multilingual goal, we had still constructed ISL under the assumption that the only shared language among the audience and the actors would be English. It was both a failure and blessing: in the end, it was English that all our audience members had some command of, although the exact level of their linguistic fluency remains unknown. Additionally, it is important to admit that the presence of non-fluent English speakers problematizes my approach to data collection: those who did not speak English fluently still had to submit their surveys in English.

At the same time, among those with only one dominant language, I was able to identify another very particular group: a small percentage of the audience members indicated that they had no knowledge of any non-dominant languages either. Interestingly but perhaps not surprisingly, all those speakers were native speakers of English with English being their only language. These respondents were the ones closest to the monolingual end of the spectrum. In fact, they constituted approximately 8% of the ISL audience (7 and 8 people on each night respectively). While it is only a speculation, the numbers of speakers with English as their one and only dominant language could have been a lot higher if I had conducted research on the audiences of more mainstream TO productions. It is clear that the small percentage of “ideal monolinguals” and the overall dominance of those with two or more dominant languages
once again point to the alternative character of the ISL audience, at least with respect to its linguistic makeup.

Turning now to the languages spoken by the audience, the survey showed that there were 20 dominant languages reported on Day One and 16 on Day Two. As Figures 3 and 4 demonstrate, the majority of dominant languages reported by the audience coincided with the languages used in ISL: English, French, Farsi, Mandarin, Cantonese, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Korean. This coincidence could be explained by the fact that the audience was mainly comprised of the actors’ personal invitees—friends and family of those performing in the show. The only language that was not named by any audience members as dominant but was used in the show was Esperanto, the world’s most widely spoken artificial language, originally created in 1887 and rooted in Germanic, Romance and Slavic languages but currently not associated with any specific linguistic or cultural community.

Figure 3. Dominant Languages on Performance Day One.

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124 In addition to that, the audience on both days reported non-dominant languages, including those different from the dominant languages already present in Figures 3 and 4. Those non-dominant languages included Greek, Romanian, Yiddish, Esperanto, Latin, Catalan, Slovene, Swahili, Lithuanian, Maya, ASL, Leochow Chinese, Vietnamese, Estonian, Polish, and Arabic.
Predictably, English was spoken by the majority of the audience members: 91% and 90% respectively. But as Figure 4 shows, Russian and French were also spoken by a significant number of audience members, followed by Mandarin and Spanish on Day One, and Farsi and Spanish and Day Two. Another notable difference between Days One and Two was that there were also slightly more Korean speakers on the second night (seven people versus four). Various other languages, particularly those not used in ISL, were represented by a much smaller number of people (one or two), which once again can be explained by the fact that most audience members were invited by the performers who had probably taken into consideration the linguistic repertoire of the potential audience members they were inviting.

I am providing these numbers not in order to find simple correlations such as, for instance, the amount of laughter produced in response to the Russian jokes as opposed to Farsi jokes on either of the given days. These numbers emphasize the unique nature of the ISL

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125 To clarify, one’s understanding of humour is not dependent on one’s knowledge of verbal language alone. The knowledge of cultural references and NVC signs can be even more relevant than the knowledge of the verbal language.
audience. I would argue that our audience had little to do with the audiences mocked by the character of Guillermo Verdecchia in *Fronteras Americanas* (Chapter 1), i.e., the mainstream Toronto theatre audience who happens to be white and Anglophone. Even more interestingly, my post-show interview with Danielle almost inadvertently confirmed that our audience had a number of attendees who would not normally attend theatre in Canada:

Danielle (D): [...] when they [Danielle’s friends] came in they were like ohh it’s so amazing that even like, even like people like us can enjoy something, enjoy theatre.
A: What do you mean “people like us”, who are your friends?
D: Like Korean-Canadians.
A: Oh I thought they were not theatre people.
D: They are not theatre people. They are not theatre people, they are the people who are look, watching theatre. And, most of them, they would go to theatre when they are in Korea, but they wouldn’t go, they wouldn’t know which place to go.
A: Ohhh… So what they meant to say, correct me if I’m wrong, it’s amazing that they can enjoy Canadian theatre…
D: Yes, yes!
A: They would go to the theatre in Korea but they wouldn’t go to the theatre here.
D: Yeah, because they don’t know, there is lack of cultural references that we carry from Canadians. Like there aren’t many things that we have a connection and also we see people laughing, we laugh because they laugh, but we don’t know what exactly what they’re laughing at unless we’re like culturally synced into that culture. But my friends immediately, whether they’re first gen, whether they’re second gen, whether they’re one point five gen they were like, we were laughing from the beginning to the end and I was like, that’s amazing, and they were like, this was so funny, and I was like, oh my god, maybe like if things like this can happen why not, like there are going to be more spectators from the Korean community (Danielle’s Interview).

To summarize, the ISL audience’s makeup was certainly, if not representative of, at least closer to Toronto’s general demographics, which itself represents a multilingual and
multicultural mosaic. From the linguistic point of view, the ISL audience had more speakers of two or more dominant languages than those of one dominant language; dominant languages reported by the audience coincided with most languages used in the show, with English being the most common dominant language followed by Russian and French.

**Focal Point One: General Reaction to Multiple Languages on Stage**

Before I look at the specifics of the audience’s experience of ISL’s multilingual dramaturgy, let me provide a brief overview of the audience’s overall reaction to the presence of multiple languages on stage. In the audience survey, I strategically placed the question about the general reaction to the show first (question J) and the question about the reaction to ISL’s stage multilingualism second (question K). Clearly, one’s positive or negative impression of the show could be linked to various factors: acting, directorial decisions, lighting, or music, that is, not necessarily to the multilingual nature of it. That was why I separated a more general question (J) from the question requiring specificity (K). My goal was to focus specifically on the audience’s reflections related to the stage multilingualism, not to see what the audience generally thought of our production.

In addition to asking about the audience’s reaction to the presence of multiple languages, the same survey item (question K) had another sub-question: *Would you be interested in seeing multilingual shows like this in Toronto?* I added it in order to challenge any potentially simplistic answers to the first sub-question, especially positive ones, and invite the audience’s thoughts on the potential of stage multilingualism as an imagined feature of

126 According to the latest census, 45% of Toronto’s population has a mother tongue different from English or French, 28% speaks languages other than English or French at home, 5% does not speak either of the official languages (2011 Census: Language).

127 As mentioned above, a significant number of our audience members were friends and family invited by the core participants, which certainly affected the survey responses. It is plausible that some audience members might have attempted to conceal any negativity in order not to hurt the feelings of the creators of ISL.
Toronto theatre performances. It was an invitation to think beyond ISL with its specific characters, themes, and dramaturgical devices. In the end, enjoying one single multilingual show does not de facto mean wanting more languages on stage in general. It is important to mention that not all audience members answered both questions but those who did made it clear that they appreciated ISL as a very specific example of multilingual theatre and did not treat as a representative of all the possibilities that multilingual dramaturgy could bring.

In terms of the audience’s reaction to the stage multilingualism, the vast majority of the audience members (81%) gauged their experience as positive, about 14% gave answers that I interpreted as ‘undecided’, and six respondents (3%) evaluated their experience of stage multilingualism as negative.\(^{128}\) Out of those who gave ISL negative assessment, one audience member found multiple languages “esoteric” and “exhausting” (1-50), another one thought they were too “complex” (1-59) to follow; in addition, two respondents (2-43 and 2-56) also considered their lack of comprehension an issue, with one specifying that they would not attend any more multilingual shows unless those were subtitled.

A much more mitigated opinion was expressed by 14% of the respondents who generally enjoyed or appreciated the presence of multiple languages in ISL specifically, but also mused on the fact that stage multilingualism could still be too much of a challenge for them to attend other multilingual productions. Some considered the brevity of the ISL scenes as a positive factor that made it possible to make the obscurity of meaning bearable, e.g., “I think it is nice to see in short reprises, but I wouldn’t like to see two-hour long performance in [a] foreign language” (Survey 1-22). One suggested that dance theatre may be more suitable for multilingual dramaturgy than text-based work:

I still have doubts about the limitations of using multiple languages so I don't think there can be too many shows with many languages. Dance or dance theatre (e.g. Pina Bausch) is great in overcoming the limitations of languages. So instead of

\(^{128}\) The rest of the responses (2%) were either unreadable or not relevant to the questions asked.
multicultural language shows, I would be more interested in watching shows that don't use any language (Survey 1-89).

A few audience members also indicated that access to meaning was an important issue for them with one respondent suggesting that “program notes” (rather than subtitles) be sufficient to provide partial access to meaning. Two more respondents brought up the issue of English subtitles, although in a much milder way: “It was an interesting idea, but at some points where even the body language was not sufficient to help understand the scene, and English subtitles would be preferred” (Survey 2-53). Finally, one respondent mentioned the fact that ISL was a free theatre event and that they would have had a different attitude, more negative than positive, to the experiments with multiple languages if the audience had had to pay for it.

Overall, the responses above indicate the approximately 18% of our audience found stage multilingualism a challenge, although the majority of them (14%) indicated that they still generally enjoyed its instantiations in ISL. Additionally, the answers of the “negative” and “undecided” groups also indicated that the respondents came to the theatre with both curiosity but also with doubts (as in the answer “I still have doubts” quoted above) about the very possibility or necessity of using multiple languages in one production.

Interestingly, it is precisely the challenging nature of multilingual dramaturgy that was named a positive, rather than negative, aspect by the majority of the ISL audience. According to them, multilingualism made the performance more interesting and engaging. After analyzing the audience responses that described their experience of ISL’s multilingualism, I identified the following “themes”, presented here in no particular order:

- Enjoyed the challenge
- Enjoyed because of the audience (audience’s reaction)
- Enjoyed despite the expectations
- Enjoyed hearing the sound of other languages
- Enjoyed the “foreignness”
- Enjoyed the humour
- Enjoyed this show but not because of multiple languages specifically
- Enjoyed because my language was represented
- ISL reflects Toronto or is relevant to Toronto
- ISL reflects my own multilingual experience

Among these themes, the most popular response was the enjoyment of the “challenge” that ISL’s stage multilingualism presented. Here are, for example, a few of the more detailed responses that explain the attractiveness of the ‘multilingual challenge’:

Definitely. Something about the use of multiple languages--ones I'm not familiar with-made something in my mind switch on, stretch out, try to solve the puzzles that the scenes presented. It was a different kind of engagement (1-2).

I loved it. It invites me to engage with the actors, scene, audience, and myself in a different way. Yes, I'd be curious to see more. I wonder if topic would impact how you could integrate language. I felt it allowed me to experience multilingualism and pluralization simultaneously (1-42).

Added fun, keeps me active, more open to nonverbal communication, very engaged in making sense of what I see/hear/feel (1-82).

I was fascinated. It piqued my interest as I attempted to understand the gist and/or some words or familiar sounds of the languages. Overall it was delightful and I would love to see more multilingual shows like this in Toronto (2-23).

It was intriguing and made me work a bit harder as an audience member—I had to pay closer attention to some scenes; but for the most part the intentions and the content of the scenes was understandable regardless of language (2-73).

The need to “keep the mind active” or pay “closer attention” clearly resembles the theme that transpired in my actor’s journals: their heightened attention (see Chapter 3). Instead of disconnecting from the content of the show because of the challenge, these audience members indicated connecting more because of ISL’s multilingualism. It is the presence of unknown languages, granted that it was only a limited presence since more than 50% of ISL was performed in English, that made their minds work differently by posing new challenges to the meaning making process. Many respondents even referred to this kind of “mental” work as “fun” rather than an inconvenience.

The second most prominent theme was prompted by my sub question asking the
audience to reflect upon their interest in seeing more multilingual theatre in Toronto. The responses to this question varied widely. Some referenced Canada’s official discourse on multiculturalism, others referred to the extreme diversity (and even uniqueness) of Toronto, and the fact that stage multilingualism would be a better representation of Toronto’s everyday reality than stage monolingualism:

I like multiple languages on stage—no, I didn't understand every word but this shows it's not just the words--the mis/noncomprehension is as important as the comprehension. And this is much closer to the reality in Toronto than monolingual productions (2-04).

I think it shows respect in multicultures also put dominant cultural perspective in the minority's shoes to better understand challenges and barriers that non-Canada-born Torontonians (2-22).

Yes, I would love to. Toronto is multicultural, multilingual. It resonates to different people on different levels. It would be beneficial to immigrants as well as Canadian born population (1-55).

Especially in Toronto! No better place for that in the world. Multiple languages--never an obstacle in understanding. In contrary—much more expressive and characteristic (2-54).

While embracing the idea of stage multilingualism, a few audience members specified that the show served as an important reminder of Toronto’s multilingual nature—something that they were aware of but had not necessarily paid much attention to sometimes due to their own monolingualism:

General reaction: it felt more comfortable and easy to watch/listen than I was expecting [unclear] alienating. But I realised how often I do hear languages other than English in my daily life—just by walking through Chinatown, eating out, going to my Portuguese-dominant gym, etc. Interested in seeing multilingual shows like that: Yes (2-35).

It was new and intriguing and at times frustrating, just like many things in life! I would be interested, if I was in a patient mood. It reminds me of the privilege of speaking the dominant language in a country and that we all need to confront frustration with kindness and a willingness to listen (1-47).
In a way, responses like these two—both coming from speakers who identified English as their dominant language\textsuperscript{129}—point to the potentially legitimizing power of stage multilingualism, particularly for a multilingual urban context: in Toronto, multilingualism is a commonplace reality, which can be easily completely forgotten or ignored, especially if one speaks English, the dominant and official language of the country (and province). In other words, as one audience member puts it: “Life is multilingual and we hardly notice most of the time. I think the show reminded me of this” (2-8).

While recognizing the importance of the multilingualism of ISL, the audience also continued to acknowledge that, overall, it was still a novel experience for them to be exposed to so many languages without translation, specifically sur-titling. However, a few respondents also questioned the necessity of sur-titling, arguing that the absence of it provided them with a necessarily different theatrical experience:

Yes. It would really great to seeing multilingual shows like this. Usually, it represents English subtitle on the screen if the show contains multiple language—in case—I can't follow on the language, sound, emotion behind that—but, this show doesn't provide English subtitle and I can concentrate the language and more than just language (2-48).

Finally, the third most common theme that transpired in the audience responses was related simply to the pure enjoyment of hearing multiple languages on stage:

I enjoy listening to language I don't know and get a feel from them. I [unreadable] pleasure in listening to the difference texture and flow of languages. (1-29)

I especially loved when the actors spoke in their own languages to each other and tried to communicate, it was more interesting than hearing English vs. another language all the time. I would see a multilingual show again--so long as it’s fast-paced like this (2-25).

There was a caveat: the pleasure may be associated with the sound of certain languages but not with others:

\textsuperscript{129} The first respondent (2-35) had English as a dominant language, the second (1-47)—English and Mandarin.
The Russian eventually wore on my nerves (if I'm being honest) because of the fact that I have no sense at all of what is being said by sound alone, coupled with the way it sounds. The Asian languages were more appealing, but perhaps because I'm more used to hearing them (2-35).

As Bruce McConachie reminds us, feelings are central to the theatre-going experience, despite theatre scholars’ frequent dismissal of them:

Theatre theorists and critics have been slow to adopt a method to understand spectator emotions [...] primarily because of a lingering commitment to semiotics in our discipline. [...] Despite clear psychological evidence that emotional engagement always informs the search for meaning, these scholars unscientifically assume that spectators are primarily engaged in trying to understand the symbolic meanings of a theatrical performance (2013, p. 57).

This notion of the relationship of emotion to how one experiences theatre is an important reminder, especially for a study focused on languages. As I showed in Chapter Three, languages and emotions were interrelated on different levels and affected my core participants (actors) in a number ways. Predictably, emotional responses reported by the audience were quite complex too—for some audience members, the enjoyment of hearing different languages was working in conjunction with other types of enjoyment, including the “mental challenge” I mentioned above:

I loved it. (Sorry to repeat myself) I loved trying to pick out words I understood in languages I was very tangentially familiar with, I loved reading the person's actions and expressions in order to try to understand, I loved the surprising, unexpected shift changes of languages, and I loved seeing may own experiences being interpreted on stage (1-81).

One scene in particular that stood out in the manner it triggered emotional responses from the audience was Scene 1, entitled “Turn off your cellphones!” (See Chapter Four). In a way Scene 1 was an “emotional” outlier—its dramaturgy was created in order to obscure, even obliterate any meaning, and to create a strong emotional response. Different from any other scene, Scene 1 happened in the house, instead of the stage; it did not utilize the body (the actors were sitting among audience members and spoke their lines without moving); it also was the only scene where the actors were attempting to butcher the languages they spoke creating a frightening “Artaudian” soundscape, later accompanied by a no less terrifying cacophony of
disjointed piano chords, glissandos and arpeggios generously supplied by my own efforts.

Below, I specifically look at the audience’s response to Scene 1 as different from any other scene in the show.

**Scene 1: Triggering affect.**

Scene 1 did not get too many mentions in the audience surveys despite its utter multilingualism and complete absence of translation into English. Nevertheless, whenever it was mentioned, it was in relation to the emotional, almost visceral, response it had triggered. For instance, when responding to the question “Which scene struck a chord with you?” (Question L), audience members who chose Scene 2 to write about responded in the following way:

"Improv Turn Off Your Phones"—I loved the sensory experience of being surrounded by language that felt like music harmonies all through the audience (I didn’t get it was about phones until I read the title here) (2-40).

I was a little off put and overwhelmed by the scene where the whole cast spoke in languages I did not understand. At first I thought it was neat but then as more and more languages were layered upon the others it almost became like an assault on my senses. It was disconcerting but I think that was the intent. We always tend to notice more readily people talking in other languages than those we understand (2-91).

These two responses present strong emotional reactions—neither of them is related to the meaning making process. Interestingly, the second response indicates how multilingualism (granted that it was augmented by various other theatrical tools) can trigger “discomfort” and produce “assault” on the senses. Even more interesting is the observation of another audience member who compares this multilingual “assault” to a personal experience of moving to Canada:

I was a little bit frightened where there were first time a lot of actors speaking together loudly. Just like culture shock to me when I first [arrived] in Canada (1-05).

The speaker indicated Mandarin, Cantonese and English as dominant languages with Mandarin being L1. Even though I do not know the exact linguistic history of this respondent, it is
probably safe to assume that the multilingual “culture shock” was experienced by that person for the first time in Toronto (or any other large Canadian urban centre). Interestingly, Scene 1 started with two languages that this respondent could speak: Mandarin and Cantonese—in fact, they were spoken without too much overlapping with other languages and with no musical cacophony added. Thereby, those languages were arguably more “digestible”. Yet, Scene 2 still produced a shocking effect.

Here, I would argue that the extreme unfamiliarity produced by the cacophony of music and languages—essentially indecipherable (and yet, clearly perceived as languages not as any other sounds humans could produce) in the absence of any body language—caused what Erin Hurley calls “affect”, i.e., an “immediate uncontrollable, skin-level registration of a change to our environment” (2010, 13). In fact, other audience members reflected on the effect of this “indecipherable multilingualism” of Scene 1 in a similar vein:

I was strongly affected by the scene in which the actors, one-by-one, started saying words in various languages from places around the darkened theatre. The incomprehensibility of the words intensified the feeling of being overwhelmed in confusion that was produced by the first [reaction] to a cacophony (2-55).

Interestingly, while Scene 1 produced strong, even “shocking,” affect, it did not mean it was not appreciated. As it is clear from the responses I cited above, the audience could still find “enjoyment” in being both shocked and overwhelmed—a scene that caused a very particular visceral experience and a scene memorable enough to be chosen for a lengthy reflection in the surveys.

Overall, the audience responses, including those to the “shocking” Scene 1, challenge the simplistic notion that “audiences doesn’t like other languages,”—a quote I used as the epigraph to this chapter. While the vast majority of our audience members very much “appreciated” the multilingualism, they also linked their appreciation of it to a wide variety of factors, including the enjoyment of a particular affective state produced by the mix of multiple languages. That said, Scene 1 was the only multilingual scene where the audience reported an experience of what can be called affect—a purely visceral response, not concerned with
meaning making. Most of the audience responses with respect to all the other scenes revolved around the issues of understanding and non-understanding of what was being said. The following two sections of this chapter deal with those issues in detail.

**Focal Point Two: “In Unknown Languages”**

It is perhaps ironic that the scene that received most mention as a response to the question *How did you respond to the part of the show where you couldn’t understand the languages used?* turned out to be a scene performed entirely in English with no use of any other languages. Scene 6, entitled *Blah-blah-blah*, depicted Maria, a speaker of English as a L2, searching for her first Toronto apartment, and Amy, a native speaker of English, whose speech Maria perceives as an almost incomprehensible and interminable chain of blah-blah-blahs. While the audience was indeed not able to understand Amy’s blah-blah-blah’s, it would be a stretch to call this scene multilingual. English was still the only language used in this scene and even the blah-blah-blah was, essentially, an English word substitute\(^{130}\) pronounced with English phonological features: intonation, rhythm, and sound quality. Similar to many other ISL scenes linked to the issue of multilingualism only thematically, Scene 6 used the only language everyone in the audience could understand. All such scenes are excluded from my analysis below.\(^{131}\) Instead, in this section, I discuss scenes that utilized two or more languages, focusing

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\(^{130}\) The word substitute *blah-blah-blah* is inherently part of the English lexis and while it is used in some European languages too, it is anything but universal. For example, in European French, an equivalent expression would be “nanani-nanana” or “et patati et patata,” in Italian—“parole, parole, parole”, in Russian—“lya-lya-lya-tri rublya” and in Hebrew—“ba-ba-ba,” in Argentian Spanish—“bling-bling-bling,” in Turkish—“falan filan,” in Mandarin—“啰里啰嗦” (luo li luo suo), in Korean—“이쩌구저쩌구” (eojjeogu-jeojjeogu). In addition, in each of the languages, there may be certain connotations and peculiarities of use not necessarily consonant with how *blah-blah-blah* is used in English.

\(^{131}\) The scenes that used English only included 2, 3, 4, 6, 8. Scene 15 was also done mostly in English with only two short sentences in Russian. Two scenes did not use any spoken language: 13 and 15. All these scenes are excluded from my analysis in this chapter, even though some are still occasionally referenced.
specifically on the issue of non-understanding—that is, non-understanding at least one of the languages spoken in any particular multilingual scene.

Overall, the ISL audiences gave a wide variety of responses in respect to how they had dealt with the non-understanding of the languages spoken on stage. Among this range of responses a few of the main themes transpired (from the most common ones to the least common):

- Focused on body, physicality, facial expressions
- Experienced frustration, disappointment, discomfort, confusion
- Ease to follow or pleasure despite not knowing language
- Was guessing or yearning to understand
- Relied on context
- Focused on sound of language, intonation
- Experienced heightened attention/effort
- Experienced boredom, disconnect, losing meaning or interest.
- Was affected by other audience members’ reaction
- Experienced desire for translation
- Was reading the actors’ emotionality
- Used own multilingual competence
- Experienced Empathy

From this list of themes, it becomes clear that some of these themes represent the strategies the audience were employing to understand the “unknown” languages (or overcome their not understanding), while others focus on the audience’s experience (particularly, emotional experience) of ISL’s multilingual scenes. It is important to note here that the majority of the responses show that the audience was, by and large, pre-occupied with trying to understand what was being said in the “unknown” languages, and only a few respondents indicated that understanding was either easy for them, despite not knowing the languages, or it was not their main concern at all. I am going to start my analysis with discussing the latter to understand what made those audience members more at ease with the language they did not speak.
The three responses below, those who were not concerned with the challenge of meaning making, in fact had slightly different perspectives:

I think I got them [the scenes] all! No specific details and all the intricacies of course, but that didn't bother me in the least (1-23).

I didn't try too hard to understand. I was just looking passively at what was happening. I was following along to the flow of the act and looking at how the plot developed. I wasn't too affected by the nonunderstanding of the language (2-26).

Even though I could not understand the languages often, I would still get a grasp of the story (like the scene of the two girls running the café) not knowing the languages helped me to sympathise more with the stories of struggling with language barriers (1-33).

This last response points to an interesting connection between non-understanding and feeling sympathy towards a character who does not share the same language as another character or an audience member. This immediate unavailability of meaning caused by the presence of untranslated languages helps transmit a visceral feeling of what it means to have a “language barrier.” It is important to acknowledge here that, according to this audience member, this feeling of a “barrier” comes not from a logical conclusion or the message of the play, i.e., not through the semiotic process, but, rather, through the personal experience of not being able to follow what is being said on stage.

Here, I may argue that this very inaccessibility of meaning where meaning is expected and desired can explain the “popularity” of the Blah-blah-blah scene in the audience responses: the incomprehensible blah-blah-blahs that interspersed Amy’s speech indicated the newcomer’s (Maria’s) perception of a native speaker’s speech; it also rendered her, an L2 speaker with little command of English, powerless. No matter how hard one tries, if the blah-blah-blahs replace all key words or simply the majority of words in a sentence, understanding what is actually implied becomes impossible. Just like Maria, the audience was experiencing what it means to have very partial access to words—they were being denied access to the only common language they all expected to understand. This experience made them relate to the L2
A different common theme that emerged in the responses of those who were not concerned with meaning making or found it easy to understand ISL’s multilingualism was related to the show’s opening scene—the Prologue. The Prologue depicted an audition where an English-speaking casting director humiliates a Russian-speaking actor for not having the “right” Russian accent in English. When the director’s scolding reaches its emotional apex generating more and more uncomfortable laughter from the audience, the scene switches entirely to Russian; the Russian-speaking actor becomes the director and the English-speaking director becomes the auditioning actor. The scene continues with the English actor attempting to read the same audition monologue in Russian and miserably failing at performing a Russian Mafioso stereotype as understood by the Russian director and easily recognizable by Russian speakers. While the Russian part of the scene lasted almost two minutes and was left entirely untranslated, it did not cause much confusion, according to the audience responses:

The first scene (The Audition) was wonderful for how language was a powerful index of control; I didn't need to know how to speak Russian to understand this scene (1-01).

Sometimes the scenes were still funny because I could get what was happening. This was the cast with the opening scene and the coffee shop scene, for example (1-70).

In this case, the dramaturgy of the scene indicated that it was not necessary for the audience to understand the language because they were just seeing a mirror version of what they had already experienced in English, the language they could all understand. And while the

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132 While the response cited on the previous page used the word “sympathy,” many more respondents mentioned experiencing “empathy” toward an L2 speaker or learner. It is, however, possible that the audience did not necessarily distinguish between the two as scientists tend to. For instance, Bruce McConachie explains that empathy is “the cognitive operation by which one person can come to know something about what another person is intending and feeling. […] For most cognitive scientists and philosophers, empathy is not an emotion, as sympathy is. The cognitive operation of empathy may lead to a feeling of care and concern, but empathy can also lead to antipathy, the opposite of sympathy” (2013, p. 15).
details of what exactly was being said in Russian must have escaped those who did not speak it, the overall dramaturgy of the scene allowed them to ‘follow without following.’

What matters here is that the audience reported understanding the dramaturgical device being used in this scene, consequently realizing that understanding Russian was not necessary to understand the whole scene. A similar technique was used in the series of scenes Where are you from? After three repetitions of the scene in various English accents, the fourth rendition of the same dialogue (Scene 11) occurred in Esperanto. This dramaturgical technique is closest to the idea of ludic translation I discussed in Chapter 2 (see also Nolette, 2015)—the “translation” is “front-loaded,” which means that the audience is invited to experience the content of what is coming in “unknown” languages first in the language they can understand (in our case—English). While it may be similar to some examples of ludic translation, it is also important to remember that translation was not our dramaturgical goal and the second part of The Prologue contained numerous meaningful details not at all present in part one of the scene.

I have now briefly looked at the multilingual scenes that were identified as “easy to understand”; however, as I mentioned before, a much more prominent theme that emerged in the response to the multilingual scenes was related to the desire and attempts to understand what was being performed in “unknown” languages. I will now discuss how the ISL audiences approached “unknown languages”, zooming in on two most common subthemes in the audience responses: focusing on the body and experiencing frustration.

I am not analysing the Where are you from? scene series here, because the audience surveys do not mention it in relation to the issues of understanding or non-understanding languages. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that this scene series resonated with a significant number of audience members: some admitted to asking the Where are you from? question too much, others offered an explanation why they hated the inescapable question about one’s origins. Here is, for instance, one of the most poignant answers: “I really loved the “where are you from” scenes. I personally hate that question, but for the opposite reason—I am not sure how to answer given that I was born in one country, lived in several others for extended periods, and each of my parents was from other countries, some that I never lived in. I don’t define myself as being home one place and I don’t like having to pin myself down. It’s an awkward question. Any short answer betrays part of my identity” (1-81).
Scenes 7 and 13: Confusing body.

Focusing on the body (often referred to by audience members as “body language”) was the most common way for the audience to try and make sense what was happening in “unknown” languages. References to body were particularly frequent when the audience reflected on multilingual scenes where NVC (including face, eye contact, hand gestures, posture, overall movement) or, was made particularly prominent by the scene dramaturgy (for example, by focusing the live feed on gestures of facial expressions). Scenes 7 (Party Convo) and 13 (Tim Horton’s) were two most commonly addressed in relation to the theme “Focus on Body.”

Tim Horton’s was the sole scene where the close-up camera was directed specifically on the actors’ hands augmenting the audience’s perception of the gestures used by both the “customers” and “shop assistants.” In addition, Tim Horton’s was strategically placed after Scene 13, called Body, with Gloria and Joy performing a range of culturally circumscribed and slightly grotesque, gestures and facial expressions to a piece of pseudo-pentatonic music;\(^{134}\) Tim Horton’s was then followed, again strategically, by the extended Body scene where the same gestures and facial expressions were repeated by six actors of various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. In sum, the audience’s attention was constantly directed toward the body both through the chronology of the scenes and the use of the close-up live feed.

Tim Horton’s was also one of the most multilingual scenes of the show with an extensive use of Mandarin, Farsi, Russian, Korean, Spanish and Portuguese but with no English. The content of the scene was overtly simplistic: each customer arriving at the coffee shop ordered a coffee or tea in a language Gloria and Joy could not understand. In turn, Gloria and Joy attempted to provide the service in Mandarin, a language none of their “customers” could follow. Finally, this scene was entirely improvised and had no established script—the

\(^{134}\) The music, my piano accompaniment, is frequently praised in the audience surveys. Overall, the piano music was central to the creation of the rhythm and the “mood” of the show. It was also meant to occasionally provide additional commentary on what was happening on stage. Specifically, in the Body scene, the pseudo-pentatonic music was clearly alluding to the folk music of East Asia (China, Japan, Vietnam, Korea, Thailand) colouring the scene in a very specific way and possibly evoking feeling.
actors simply followed the order of entrances and exits that was determined during the last rehearsal.

As I was reading the audience responses, what became clear to me was that those who were not familiar with the languages spoken at any given moment of the scene would direct their attention to the body and often treat it as their main source of meaning:

But it was great NOT TO HAVE captions or anything to translate. Body language says a lot! (2-50)

I paid more attention and read body language. I also attempted to pick up on as many contextual cues as possible. I didn’t feel alienated or confused, just more attentive and careful (1-85).

Interestingly, those who mentioned body as their main source of meaning usually declared that their interpretation was completely or partially successful. In contrast, there were only a few responses that indicated some recognition of failure—also either complete or partial. Compare, for instance, the following two responses:

The Asian girls speaking—coffee scene I loved to understand what they were saying focusing on gestures and facial expressions (2-77).

I couldn’t understand most of the "coffee" sketch for example; instead, I tried to understand by gestures, mostly unsuccessfully. I got bored and disconnected. (2-43)

In addition, “body” (or more specifically gesture—the specific focus of Tim Hortons) was often mentioned in conjunction with facial expressions as well as intonation, rhythm, and other pronunciation features:

Felt for the poor girls serving coffee. Must have been frustrating. Actors were able to portray the parts very effectively—understood the gist of what was happening from their facial expressions and body language (1-16)

Some audience members indicated that along with the sound of the language, they also took into consideration the overall dramaturgy of the show to in order to enhance their understanding:
I need to rely on context, cognates (if present), gestures, pauses, interaction, facial expressions, the music, the camera, and the use of speech to construct the meaning (1-42).

Overall, the audience surveys indicate that, while deciphering the body was a challenge which demanded extra effort and attention, all in all, the audience had implicit trust in their ability to read “body language.” This trust was in stark contrast to how languages were treated: the audience clearly recognized the impossibility of deciphering the actual meaning of words without knowing the language, and yet the same kind of recognition was not present when the audience attempted to infer meaning from the body. In a way, the body was often perceived as a readable and mostly reliable sign due to its perceived “universality”:

I had to work really hard because I wanted to understand it, so I kept trying to see if I could pick up words, even though I knew I wouldn't. But it was still kind of accessible because the movement was universal, so I started paying attention to that and things like tone of voice. That was neat. I had to try and understand that as opposed to the language. It was nice not to be fixated on language as closely. More space for other things. (2-34)

Despite seeing Scene 12, which depicted major cultural differences in “body language,” right before the coffee shop scene, only a few audience members considered the cultural specificity of body movement and their own interpretive lens, which undoubtedly limited their own potential of understanding NVC, especially NVC associated with languages they did not speak. In fact, just like in Scene 12 (Body), in Tim Horton’s the actors used culturally specific gestures (“emblems”) to once again remind the views of the limitations of their interpretation of NVC. Specifically, in the last episode of Scene 13, Mario touched his ear, which in Portuguese means “Top quality!” (similar to “two thumbs up” in English)—the gesture was misunderstood by Gloria and Joy—and likely, also by the majority of the audience. In a way, the audience’s treatment of NVC reminded me of my own biases in relation to what constitutes Chinese NVC, a discover that I made only when I started working closely with Gloria and Joy, two fluent but very different speakers of Mandarin (see Chapter 3).
While trusting their own judgement of NVC was the most prominent feature of the audience perception of the NVC of “unknown” languages, a more cautious approach to one’s interpretation of the body also found its reflection:

In Tim Horton’s I got that the orders weren’t being understood but I didn’t get why. The gestures didn’t help me understand most of what was being said but I looked to them and understood at one point the staff thought small, medium, large cups were being indicated. I liked the part where the customer kissed the girl and bargained—what I got was that maybe the scene was more about cultural-specific gestural (2-40).

This response was more of an exception than the rule. As was the response below, reflecting on what matters more: one’s interpretation of the meaning or the meaning itself:

At other times, I wanted to pay full attention to tone, body language, affect, etc. At some point, I thought it was my own interpretation that matters more than the actual words (1-47)

With respect to Scene 8 (Party Convo), a significant number of the audience responses indicated the same fairly uncritical trust in the audience’s ability to interpret the body, except in this case the audience also alluded to a broader range of “body” features than just gestures, for example, facial expressions, as well the tone of voice:

Networking party scene, when a man had the conversation with a woman. The languages they used were non-sense to me. But I followed their body languages, eye contact, expressions, tone of voice, intonation, sentence stress to guess what they were talking about (2-03).

Party Convo was constructed differently from Tim Horton’s: Yury and Sepideh, who were performing polite Canadian small talk in English (their dominant but second language), would take turns to conspicuously look into the close-up camera to provide highly acerbic comments on each other or each other’s cultures in their L1s: Russian and Persian respectively. Their comments were often based on cultural and racial stereotypes easily recognizable by those who could understand either Russian or Persian. In fact, the grotesquely judgmental characters performed by Yury and Sepideh were also recognized by those familiar with the Russian and Persian languages:
The part that Persian woman was talking to a guy in a party, because I'm familiar with language and culture and purpose of that woman (2-36).

Because Yury and Sepideh would explicitly change the ‘mask’—from smiley to sarcastic—every time they delivered their asides to the camera, the shift in their facial expressions clearly indicated their shift in attitude: from affable to acerbic. The audience surveys confirmed that it was indeed the actors’ NVC, specifically their facial expressions, that carried the “meaning” or the “emotion” for those who did not speak Russian and/or Persian. It also provided enjoyment:

I wasn't bothered by not understanding what 2 speakers were saying to the camera in the cocktail party scene. The body language was delicious! (2-39)

Overall, in both Scenes 7 and 13 the actors’ NVC was perceived as an important and powerful carrier of meaning. While in Scene 8 the NVC was slightly more removed from the meaning of what was being said than it was in Scene 13, Yury’s and Sepideh’s facial expressions, augmented by the close-up feed on the screen, were still very transparent in terms of showing, if not the meaning, then the attitude that was embedded in their spoken lines. The audience unmistakably read the meaning:

Another scene I really liked was the party conversation because, at least from what I could understand, the characters seemed to be answering the question or comment that was being ask—it was hidden in a culturally-defined code that somehow they understood. I felt that it showed how coded language is, has meaning is much more than the words strung together (1-81)

But what happens in the case of a complete divorce of NVC and spoken lines in “unknown” languages? To see how the audience perceived this kind of dramaturgical experimentation with multilingualism, I will now look at the audience’s perception of Scene

135 The ease of the audience’s reading of the emotions understood through Yury’s and Sepideh’s facial expressions could also be explained, at least to some extent, by the fact established by psychologists that “people from cultures around the world will usually identify the same faces as happy, angry or sad” (McConachie, 2013, p. 42). McConachie relies on Paul Ekman’s research (2003), which points to the universality of facial expressions of primary emotions (2003, p.37). McConachie, however, also circumscribes his argument by adding that “each culture constrains the acceptable public expression of our primary emotions” (p. 43).
10, entitled *Futebol*, a two-hander with Mario and Yury reflecting on their immigration experience and playing Portugal’s national obsession—soccer.

**Scene 10: The futebol frustration.**

In the audience responses, *Futebol* turned out to be one of the most commonly referenced multilingual scenes. It grew out of a cheek slapping impov that Yury and Mario did at one of our devising sessions; later, it developed into a complex four-part scene. At the beginning of the scene, it seems as if both Mario and Yury have come to an audition—both start with warmup acting exercises in their L1s (Portuguese and Russian)—but as soon as they sit down facing each other, part two commences a slapping duel with asides to the audience. In their aside lines, Yury and Mario both share what it meant for them to live in Russia and Portugal respectively before moving to Canada. As the slaps become more intense, the “game” turns into an arm-wrestling match. Then, as soon as Mario mentions Portugal’s national craze, football—which for him is deeply associated with violence—the musician throws in a ball and the duel continues as a soccer game. During the game, the conversation switches to the discussion of Canada, as well as Canadian values, politics, and cultural norms. The scene ends with Yury, disheartened by both his poor gamesmanship and difficult relationship with Canada, jumping into Mario’s arms and collapsing into a lifeless mannequin as Mario slowly and silently carries him offstage. This was the moment that the audience, in their surveys, called “touching” or “powerful” or “poignant.”

This is not, however, where my research interest lies: here I am discussing not the emotional value of the scene, but the question of understanding what was being said on stage. From the language use point of you, *Futebol* replicated Mario’s and Yury’s own language learning journeys: it started entirely in their L1s, then during the arm-wrestling segment, both began to use a bit of English (only one or two sentences that complemented what they were saying in their L1s), finally, when playing football, both actors switched to English reserving Russian and Portuguese only for standard football commands such as “Goal!” or “Pass!” What
was interesting about this scene was that nowhere in the scene did the performers’ NVC
directly signified or reflected what was being said; Mario and Yury were always busy
“fighting”: slapping, arm-wrestling, or scoring a goal, rather than expressing through their
NVC what they were saying. In this sense, Scene 10 was very different from Scenes 7 and 13
discussed above.

Leaving aside those audience members who could speak either Russian or
Portuguese, here I am going to look at the responses of those who did not. While some
indeed pointed to the fact that they were able to guess what the scene was about, overall, the
most common audience’s reflection on this theme was related to “confusion,” “yearning to
understand” or even “frustration because of not-understanding”:

I was confused, especially by the football scene. At first, it was fun to try to
understand to read expressions and movements, but I started to become slightly
frustrated because I felt I was making no in roads. When I would create some kind of
narrative, even if I later found that it was incorrect, I felt better. But until the
characters spoke some English, I was lost during the football scene and I started to feel
left out and stupid. I tried to take it as a challenge, and to a large extent I could, but I
was aware of underlying frustration and a feeling of being less valuable as a person. I
also felt [unreadable] to study the languages I didn't understand (1-81).

I was just watching trying to figure out what they were trying to say by
emotions and actions. But I didn't get it at all. Where two men were sitting
facing each other and playing soccer afterwards (2-33).

If there is text of a person with no gesture behind it then the meaning is lost.
The pre-soccer game I did not know what it was about. I'm guessing intro of
their cultural background? (1-44)

Interestingly, the scene did not cause boredom or disconnection because of the
extensive use of Russian and Portuguese. In fact, as one spectator wanted to see even more of
it: “The ‘guys in chairs’ scene confused me most and I wanted to have it go longer so I could
‘get it’” (1-32). This response shows that any confusion” and “frustration” caused by

136 The surveys showed that none of the audience members was fluent in both Russian and Portuguese (see the
Audience Makeup section of this chapter).
multilingualism should not be necessarily interpreted negatively. In fact, the following response to Scene 10 indicates that the confusing guessing game urged the spectators to turn to their own perceptive lens and recognize the limitations of their own interpretations:

At times I thought I might be following parts of it, but at some point it becomes imposing my own thoughts on interpreting another’s actions so my feelings ranged from those ah-hah! moments to feeling presumptuous. Futebol is already a universal language so that helped (1-78).

Stage multilingualism can spur more awareness of how one perceives the stage action—in way it can urge one to become more humble about one’s perception. It is the guessing, the confusion and, perhaps, the frustration caused by the indecipherability of languages (in the absence of the helpful NVC) that suddenly makes one’s interpretive lens more conspicuous.

There is, of course, more to this “act of humility”—those who did not understand Russian or Portuguese were sitting among those who could follow Russian and English or Portuguese and English. The latter could follow what was being said and did not have to engage in the guesswork as much. They were also often reacting to what was being said, possibly adding to the frustration (or wonder) of those who were not “in the know” or who had guessed erroneously. A similar situation occurred with every single multilingual scene of ISL. The following two subsections of this chapter look at multilingual audience members who were able to understand multilingual scenes and explores the concept of inter-audience dynamics to understand how those with the knowledge of the languages spoken on stage might have affected the perception of those who did not have that knowledge and vice versa.

**Focal Point Three: Multilingual Competence**

To contrast with the previous section of this chapter, this section could be called “in ‘known’ languages”. To clarify, it will not speak of multilingual competence in general: with the majority of audience members being multilingual, i.e., having various degrees of knowledge of different languages, each and every multilingual audience member represented a unique case
and perceived each scene and each language in each scene in a unique way as well. However, what is clear is that those who spoke more than one language always used their multilingual competence when watching multilingual scenes. For instance, here is a response of Russian as a DL reacting to the scene in English, Farsi and Russian:

Party Convo: Iran or Iraq highlighted prejudices and stereotypes. I guess Persian comments were as nasty as Russian ones (2-24).

It is clear from this response that, despite not knowing any Farsi, the speaker deduced that the Farsi parts of the scene would be similar to what the Russian comments. The mirror structure of the scene must have certainly helped: first, Yury made fun of Sepideh in Russian, then Sepideh made fun of Yury in Farsi. But the “understanding” of the degree of “nastiness” of Sepideh’s asides came from the knowledge of Russian, not the knowledge of English. Other respondents also alluded to the same technique of deciphering a line in languages they did not speak:

I felt relieved and that I did not have to make so much effort. Also, I used that information to fill in the gaps of the parts I did not understand (2-89)

With Futebol, I could understand some of it—only half but it made me follow the scene more intently—trying to see if I could understand the other part through the part I could (1-20).

Deducing the meaning of another language through the languages one already speaks is just one example of how multilingual competence can be used when one perceives a multilingual scene.

In general, there were many more themes that transpired in the surveys of those who could understand more than one language: some reported additional enjoyment of the scene because of the ease of understanding; some claimed that understanding a language made the humour come out stronger; some focused on the difference between how they perceived different languages, and some alluded to the sense of pride or inclusion they experienced, especially when they heard their L1(s) being spoken on stage.
The presence of L1 (when different from English) specifically made things just feel “more natural” (1-75) for some audience members. Moreover, it sometimes caused immediate strong response. Here is, for instance, how a speaker of Mandarin as L1 described her reaction to the two scenes containing long chunks in Mandarin:

I almost answered the question she [Gloria] asked in Mandarin. But I swallowed my words, and kepted watching how she performeded. (The Chinese girl who stood alone and complained about she couldn’t get the lead character). I can’t stop laughing when two Chinese girls tried to sell tea to different people (1-39).

Such strong engagement with L1 stands in contract to what other respondents said with respect to their perception of multilingual scenes. In fact, several audience members mentioned that they did not necessarily see their ability to understand two or more languages an advantage:

I fully understood the Chinese/Mandarin scenes. Interestingly, I felt like I missed on parts of the show when I understand everything, because I was quite enjoying the searching of meanings. (the temporary confusion) (1-06).

Less pulled to be active listener/engage—felt easy and mind easy to drift away. Not as striking, less emotional engagement (1-57).

There was certainly a much more complicated affective element. But also, because [unreadable] is a part of my everyday life, it was also very mundane. Comprehension and incomprehension are sort of just normal for me (1-85).

As seen from these examples, even those who found the multilingual scenes less engaging had differences in how they perceived that lack of engagement. Once again, the audience’s multilingual competences worked in various ways and shaped everyone’s perception differently. This is exactly why, rather than attempting to understand “the multilingual perception” in general, in this section, I will closely look at one specific scene dealing with two specific languages and the reactions of those who could follow both languages used. Scene 9, entitled I Live Here and performed by Gloria, was one of the most referenced scenes in the audience surveys. What makes it particularly interesting for my analysis is that the audience’s reactions to it were varied and often contradictory.
Scene 9: Resonance and empowerment.

Gloria’s monologue was a scene with very simple dramaturgy: dressed in business attire, she would stand behind a podium, open her mac, and read her text as if it was a public lecture. She had created her text bearing in mind the structure of the English sentence, where the subject group (thema) normally precedes the verb group (rhema). It was the verb group—the words that contain new information in a sentence—that was replaced by Mandarin words. Hence, each sentence, while begun in English, was never clear to those who did not speak Mandarin—the language that would invariably end each sentence. In addition, Gloria would occasionally accompany the Mandarin lines with an ostensibly exaggerated NVC sign, linked to the meaning of the Mandarin words either directly or indirectly. For example, when speaking about racist casting practices she had encountered in multicultural Canada, she explains that she was never cast for a main role because she did not look like 主角 (“main role” in Mandarin). However, the gesture that Gloria provided here did not technically signify “the main role”: she placed her fingers on her eyelids to open them up as widely as possible making a clear reference to the “white race.”

As the monologue progressed, Gloria’s character became more and more angry and used less and less English. At the end, she went into a high-pitched passionate rant entirely in Mandarin, copiously supplying it with a different kind of NVC—gestures indicating anger, not the meaning of her words. After reaching the emotional apex, she composed herself, politely apologized in English for her emotional outburst and rushed to leave the stage. As she moved away from the podium, she suddenly revealed to the audience her outrageously sexy and purposefully inappropriate fishnet stockings and BDSM leather boots—once again, rejecting any assumptions that may have been made about her.

In essence, Gloria’s monologue was both a critique of the racism she had experienced in Canada, and a reflection on her own identity and character, which gets commonly misconstrued by both Chinese and English speakers. Both the racism and the misconstrued identity found deep resonance among audience members who had had similar experiences:
“I live here but I live in 2 worlds”—Having grown up in an English speaking country, but with parents and myself from elsewhere, I can identify with the experience of occupying two worlds. Even though I could not understand half the scene, it felt familiar (1-18).

The scene with the Mandarin speaking girl talking about "shyness" in Canada—it felt like my own experience and probably the experience of many other racialized folks and immigrants. It spoke to the two or more "faces" we have and how we have to hide or repress what isn't understood by the dominant norms of where we live. She was able to convey the frustration, anger, and disappointment in those moments when we feel boxed in, sometimes by choice (1-47).

I really liked the Mandarin rant in suspenders. That was awesome (the whole dual identity thing and being type-cast really struck a chord!) (1-61).

The conversations about the Asian racializations and gender/sexuality stereotyping. I'm Asian myself, and a PhD candidate studying race at OISE/UT. Also resonant was the piece about overbearing Anglo. Whiteness (1-85).

While not all of the responses above come from those who could understand Mandarin, it is clear that both the dramaturgical devices and the content of Gloria’s monologue resonated with those who had experienced similar concerns related to racism and identity. All these responses came from speakers of two or more dominant languages and it seems that it was a familiar practice for those respondents to “hide or repress” the other language or culture when it was not needed (or not welcome) in a certain sociocultural milieu.

In Gloria’s scene, a multilingual actor addressed a multilingual audience without much concern for monolingual understanding or experience. Only those who were privy to the experience and/or had command of multiple languages were expected to relate and/or follow. As one audience member put it in relation to a different scene (Scene 13)—understanding two languages felt better because “it was like being a part of an inside joke!” (2-92).

Naturally, the ability to fully follow and better relate resulted in a sense of pride and empowerment—the theme that permeated audience surveys of those who could understand two or more languages spoken on stage. Here is, for instance, a compelling response of one of the audience members who could follow Mandarin—interestingly, not a native speaker of that language:
I studied Mandarin a long time ago and I was glad to see that I remembered some of it. I felt proud that I could understand not only a more unfamiliar language, but also the familiar one, I felt like I was "in" on a secret and wondered who else was in the group of "secret-holders", i.e. who else shared knowledge of the culture and language, and therefore shared a bond with me as part of an "imagined community" (1-81).  

Some of those in the “in-circle” were not just wondering who else was “in” on the language and culture but also got concerned that the multilingual “superpower” they suddenly gained was not shared with those who did not understand multiple languages. In fact, some even admitted to having been translating Gloria’s Mandarin to their friends who could not speak the language.

On the other hand, the sudden lack of power (even loss of power) was also recognized by those who did not understand Mandarin:

There seemed to be some pretty great jokes I was missing when English was not being spoken. The scene with the Chinese girl and the laptop seemed like an excellent piece of satire and I was disappointed I was missing out on half of what she was saying, but I feel like that may have been the point? (1-58).

It was indeed the point to show the complexity of a multilingual person and our general inability to adequately see this complexity, particularly when we do not have access to all the languages that person speaks. It was indeed the point to represent the complexity of a multilingual identity—the one that resists being put into categories to be defined by her respective cultures. But similarly, it was also the point to shift the power relationship: those who did not understand Mandarin had to experience what it means to have no access to the meaning provided by language.

The use of academic lingo, specifically, Benedict Anderson’s term “imagined community,” once again confirms a very specific nature of our audience—an audience willing to engage with the theatrical experiment and ready to provide profound, often scholarly, reflections on what they experienced.

Here is, for instance, a response from a speaker of Russian and English (both dominant languages): “I enjoyed the Russian-English scenes and wished other people in the theatre could understand them” (2-81).
Gloria’s monologue, however, did more than just linguistically confuse those who could not speak Mandarin or address those who could follow her two languages and relate to her experiences. It also smashed the stereotypes of those upheld by some audience members:

I really liked the Chinese girl's monologue because I often had an impression of very cold/distant/shy attitude of the Chinese. It was the first time to see a Chinese girl express emotions of a young person. Also, I don't hear much Chinese, and it felt formal with not personality. But, she definitely showed personality (2-26).

Gloria’s 'lectern speech' about her Chinese/Canadian personality. I taught Gloria acting, and I had never seen the side of her expressed in the final speech (1-14).

It seemed that to these audience members, Gloria’s monologue came as a surprise challenging their assumptions about the Chinese and about her personally. It is particularly interesting to read the response of Gloria’s acting teacher, who, it seems, discovered that Gloria was capable of portraying anger (or emotion, in general) and—while it is only my assumption—that she was capable of performing in a language different from English. As discussed in Chapter Three, Gloria did mention to me that English was the only acceptable language in her drama classes, so perhaps, it was not surprising that her acting teacher discovered that Gloria had—for the lack of better wording—“an angry Chinese” side to her. I may argue here that Gloria’s monologue forced these audience members, in Sara Ahmed’s parlance, to queer their “direction” towards their notion of Chinese people generally and to her as an actor.

It is, of course, important to note that not all audience members perceived Gloria as a capable multilingual performer even after hearing her monologue in both languages. Here is, for instance, an audience comment indicating the “queer” multilingual lens was not even considered:

What is very interesting is I was upset by a scene where an actor was speaking, I believe, in Mandarin (?). First mixed English/Mandarin (okay) and then she was getting angry, and naturally she switched to just her first language, berating the audience, and I wanted to understand, but couldn’t (1-56).

In reality, Gloria wrote her monologue in English and then through the lengthy devising process she and I collectively decided which sections of it would be said in Mandarin—her
dominant language but not her actual L1. There was nothing “natural” in the fact that she switched to Mandarin when she was performing the “angry” character, just like there was nothing natural in the revealing fishnet stockings and BDSM boots she was wearing, or in her grotesquely un-matching business shirt. All of those were nothing but dramaturgical constructions, just as her language choices in the monologue. And, yet, the monolingual lens made Gloria monolingual too: Mandarin was perceived as natural to her, while English was not. Evidently, for some audience members (arguably, only a few) the monolingual lens was not an easy one to abandon.

There is one more significant theme that emerged in the audience surveys in relation to Scene 9, as well as a number of other multilingual scenes. This theme brings me to the beginning of this chapter, where I described my own experience of watching ISL and referenced my interview with Gloria, where we discussed how the audience, specifically Gloria’s friends, had reacted to her Mandarin lines. As I have shown in this section, the non-Mandarin speaking audience could only see Gloria’s anger. However, the Mandarin-speaking audience could see a whole lot more. The secret weapon Gloria used in the final, exclusively Mandarin part of her monologue, was profanity; however, nowhere in her NVC had she indicated that her character turned foul-mouthed. The emotional apex of Gloria’s purposefully high-pitched speech ended with asking the audience whether they “had an asshole” and affirming her own status as an “asshole holder,” basically referencing the issue of racism one again. This was the moment where she sounded most angry, but this was also the moment where her Mandarin became the most profane. This was also the moment of the surreptitious chuckles I heard from the Chinese speakers, and this was the moment when other spectators turned their heads either in wonder or in indignation musing on what they might have missed. Those moments represented perhaps the most interesting impact of ISL—the phenomenon I would like to call inter-audience dynamics, the last focal point of my analysis.

**Focal Point Four: Inter-audience Dynamics**
From the very first scenes of *ISL*, the audience quickly recognized that what would matter in our production was not just the “known” or “unknown” languages happening on stage but also what was simultaneously happening in the house, amongst audience members themselves. As soon as the first jokes started appearing in the languages other than English, ripples of laughter began to emerge in different parts of the auditorium attracting attention of those who were not able to understand the language(s) used: “When crowd laughed that created an inner mystery for me” (1-37).

Responses like this one were very common in the audience surveys. They were particularly common in the surveys completed by those who only had one dominant language. However, not all of such responses saw the laughter of others as a mystery; in fact, more frequently, it caused frustration: “I was especially frustrated when I could tell that other people knew what was being said and I didn't” (1-89). The scenes did not even have to be multilingual to be causing this frustration. For instance, *Le Petit Prince* (Scene 3), performed by Lyla, was the only scene performed entirely in one language but that was only the third most spoken language among ISL audiences—French (see Audience Makeup in this chapter). Here, for instance, is a response of one audience member in respect to the monolingual French Scene 3 and multilingual English-Russian-Portuguese Scene 10: “Other times when I didn't get the scene I felt jealous of the people who did” (1-70).

Experiences of jealousy or frustration versus comprehension and laughter are not just a matter of simple divide between those who could speak more than one language and those who could not. The audience responses indicated that, overall, people in the theatre were cognizant of each other’s reactions, and moreover were sensitive to each other’s reactions and potential interpretations of what was being performed on stage. For instance, some of those who could speak two or more languages occasionally helped with translation (especially for Mandarin-heavy scenes); while others reported that they had to withhold laughter because they knew that people around them might not be able to understand jokes in the languages they could follow.
What is a lot more interesting, even peculiar, is that some of those who did not follow the “unknown” languages also expressed a similar feeling of reservation with respect to laughing:

[Speaking of Scene 9 I Live Here] I followed very little of and sensed that the part I couldn't understand had the vital information. I didn't want to laugh, because it felt like a sensitive subject that was maybe parodied. I didn't laugh during the parts I didn't understand—and somehow resented audience members who did... (2-20).

It definitely makes you nervous at points, i.e. where you struggle with whether you are laughing appropriately. It definitely makes you think twice about whether you are responding appropriately—since it is shining a spotlight (literally) on how easy it is to misunderstand (2-7).

These responses point to the fact that there was a separate kind of dynamic that was developing in the audience as the multilingual scenes were unfolding on stage. The languages used in ISL instigated these dynamics and fueled it throughout the show. It was obvious that our linguistically diverse audience could understand certain parts of the show and knew that others may be perceiving the same parts differently – or, similarly, if they could understand the same language. John Tulloch, following Susan Bennett, calls it “relationship between individual subjectivities and social formation” (2005, p. 19). I propose a more specific term to call this relationship “inter-audience dynamics.” Arguably, inter-audience dynamics is a term more focused on the procedural aspect of how both individual subjectivities and social formations, existing and emerging, relate to each other in the process of experiencing the performance. What is clear is that multilingual dramaturgy, particularly the way it was conceived in ISL, pushed the “inter-audience dynamics” to a level which the audience was not necessarily accustomed to. In other words, it “queered” the audience’s orientation not only to the multilingualism happening on stage, but also to their own collective multilingualism.

Conclusion

The 182 audience surveys collected after the performances of ISL provided me with an almost overwhelmingly wide range of how the audiences perceived the multilingual dramaturgy of
Some prominent themes, such as attention to the body, or joy from engagement in the “guesswork” needed in order to follow the show’s multilingualism, emerged. Most significantly, the responses provided in the survey clearly resisted notions of an audience’s passivity or their inherent dislike of “other languages.”

Importantly, my analysis of audience perception indicated that, during the multilingual performance, the audience experienced a particular kind of inter-audience dynamics—essentially the dynamics of negotiating power—the power of knowing or not knowing languages. These dynamics, prompted by the multilingualism of ISL, have a potential to “queer” the monolingual perspective and underscore the common issue of misrepresentation of multilinguals. It is not, however, simply the use of multiple languages that makes such “queering” possible, it is the way multilingual dramaturgy and the theatre event are constructed. To encapsulate this central idea of theatre construction, and to give the last word here to an audience member, I close with the following poignant audience reflection:

I was interested in coming to the show because of the multiple languages. I enjoyed trying to figure things out. I liked the idea of putting people (the audience) in the situation of going from understanding to not understanding. I liked knowing that there were some people in the audience who could understand thing[s]. I would go to another show because I think there is a lot of creative potential (2-45).
CHAPTER 6
On Languages, Stereotypes and Diversity

Real art has the capacity to make us nervous.
Susan Sontag

Why Another Chapter?
I have now looked at the multilingual actors, multilingual dramaturgy, and multilingual audiences of ISL and have discussed perceptions, challenges, and discoveries pertaining to each of the three main aspects of my research. Chapter Three revealed the complexity of the actors’ perceptions when they were performing in their dominant and non-dominant languages, as well as languages they had no previous knowledge of. Through video and text, Chapter Four presented the dramaturgical devices of the untranslated stage multilingualism of ISL. In turn, Chapter Five showed the complexity of the ISL audience’s perceptions with respect to the presence of multiple languages on stage and the issues of understanding and not understanding those languages. Each of these three chapters incorporated not only a unique focus on the stage multilingualism of ISL, but also an alternative way of presenting data. Finally, each chapter also addressed the conclusions and limitations pertaining to its specific focus and circumscribed by the ecology of the artistic practice in question.

Why is there a need for yet another chapter?
I see this chapter not as a conventional “Conclusions” chapter but rather as an extension of the discussion of the potential of stage multilingualism started in previous chapters. First, Chapter Six will look at one purposeful omission—an issue of stereotypes—linguistic, cultural, ethnic, racial, or national. It is an issue that, despite its palpable presence throughout all stages of my research, I have only tangentially addressed in chapters three to five. It is through the discussion of stereotypes and stereotyping that I will segue into a broader discussion of the potential of multilingual theatre as diversity work, and its importance,
particularly in large multicultural and multilingual urban centres such as Toronto. Additionally, this chapter will address an important limitation of my research not addressed in the previous chapters—specifically, ISL’s inability to take a more radical multilingual perspective, especially in relation to languages other than English. The chapter will conclude with a brief discussion of the implications for further research on multilingual acting, multilingual dramaturgy and multilingual audiences.

**One Purposeful Omission**

When working on ISL, I encountered a peculiar video resource—part of the series *Visual Media for College and High School Classrooms*—that triggered my immediate interest. The DVD *Body Language for Actors: Portraying Different Cultures* (2007) seemed directly related to our exploration of how non-verbal communication signs may differ depending on cultures, users, power relationships, and contexts. I watched it carefully from the beginning to the end.

In this thirty-minute video, a middle-aged white American English-speaking woman, whose occupation is identified as “diversity specialist,” provides instruction to two young American actors—a man and a woman, both white and English-speaking, and one more gentleman (older, white and English-speaking), who occasionally joins the actors. Specifically, the specialist teaches the differences, as the introduction to the video puts it, between “how we behave” and how “people from other countries” behave. The “students” readily follow the diversity specialist’s advice and demonstrate gestures and movements such as shaking hands, hugging, kissing, bowing or holding cutlery during meals. Here is a sample transcription of one of the lessons:

**DIVERSITY SPECIALIST:** We’re now going to practice the *abrazo*. The *abrazo* means “embrace” and it’s very commonplace in Mexico and further south in Latin America. So, the two gentlemen will now face each other, grab each other tightly, and embrace warmly, saying ¡Hola!
BOTH MEN (embracing; in a thick English accent): ¡Hola!\textsuperscript{139}

Later, the expert continues to explain that abrazo “is a very nice, warm embrace and it expresses so much of the Latino culture.” Predictably, in the video, the cultural lesson on abrazo was accompanied by stereotypical “Mexican” mariachi band music, as opposed to, for instance, the demonstrably Parisian harmonica-infused melody accompanying the expert’s later lesson on kissing on both cheeks to greet another person.

As puzzling as it may be to encounter such a teaching resource—presumably, created with good intentions in mind—I believe that there is little unusual about this specific pedagogical tool. In fact, I would like to argue that teaching “body language” in this simplistic, overgeneralized manner, with little or no consideration for power relationships, contexts, and users, is not necessarily different from teaching student actors to emulate various “national” accents—an extremely common and, oftentimes, mandatory, practice in theatre schools for actor training. The danger, of course, lies in essentializing—essentializing the Other: their body, their accent, their language, their culture, and even their identity. It is this kind of essentializing or stereotyping that I would like to address in this section.

When writing about the actors and the audiences, I purposefully avoided any extensive discussion of stereotyping. The only chapter that, almost inadvertently, “flaunted” this issue, though only through the content and aesthetics of ISL, was Chapter Four, containing the actual script of ISL. Unsurprisingly, the ISL performance was permeated by the issue of stereotyping and essentializing: in the Prologue, Yury’s character was refused a role because he did not have a stereotypical Russian accent; in Where are you from?, Felicia, Mark and Danielle played with racial and national stereotypes, as well as the problematic idea that people should necessarily belong to a “land or country” because of the way their speech or looks are perceived by others; in the scene I live here, Gloria went on an angry rant dismantling any stereotypes linked to the

\textsuperscript{139} This transcription was made by me solely for the purposes of this thesis. The DVD does not include any transcripts or additional materials.
perceived shyness and emotionlessness of the Chinese; finally, in *Party Convo*, Yury and Sepideh excelled at exchanging acerbic verbal jabs clearly rooted in essentializing the “Other’s” culture, religion and sexual orientation.

Stereotyping, however, entered our exploration much earlier—as soon as we started playing with different languages. In Week Two (Phase One) of our exploration, I noted in my journal that, when asked to improvise one specific line in a language they did not speak, almost all the performers immediately fell into a stereotypical performance of an ethnicity, nationality, and, often, an accent. The strongest warning sign occurred when one of the core participants, an English speaker with many years of cruise ship performance experience, attempted to improvise with a French line he had learned: as soon as the improvisation started, the actor adopted a caricature mask, both visual and vocal, of a beret-wearing, baguette-carrying, Galoises-smoking, nasal-sounding Parisian loverboy. To make matters worse, his loverboy almost immediately abandoned his only French line in order to switch to speaking English, with a thick French accent straight out of a Hollywood movie.

Five weeks later, I invited a colleague of mine to have a look at the dress rehearsal of *ISL* and provide some feedback. Being a fluent speaker of Central American Spanish, she drew my attention to the fact that, in one of the improvised scenes of *ISL*, Tim Horton’s, Clayton, who was performing a Spanish character, also resorted to portraying a somewhat stereotypical brash and sexy Latino who was making conspicuous advances towards the Mandarin-speaking women serving him coffee. As I theorized in Chapter Three, it seemed that it was the improvisational nature of the scenes that had something to do with the actor falling into such stereotypes. When I was discussing the actors’ process of performing in a non-dominant language (see Chapter Three), I suggested that, unlike in *the Prologue*, where Clayton performed as his humble (and humbled) “self” going through a Russian language audition, in *Tim Horton’s*, Clayton performed the “Other”—his perception of a “Latino” character ordering coffee. Furthermore, in *Tim Horton’s*, Clayton had no set script and had to improvise his lines and his actions using Spanish.
In *Theatre & Mind*, Bruce McConachie addresses improvisation as an acting exercise by explaining it through the cognitive sciences and linking it to Michael Chekhov’s technique of acting: Chekhov extensively used improvisation as a tool to create a full-fledged dramatic character. McConachie explains the complex nature of improvisation, which involves an extremely fast activation of attention (i.e., heightened attention) and executive control, among many other aspects. Both heightened attention and executive control “must occur on the fly, in a matter of milliseconds, during the heat of improvisation” (2013, pp. 41-42). McConachie’s explanation of the cognitive structure of the improvisation corroborates my observations and analysis of Clayton’s improvisation in *Tim Horton’s*. McConachie’s explanation also hints at why actors tend to select a familiar pattern from a past memory—be it a stereotypical character, voice, accent, language or movement—to portray in an improvisation. What remains unanswered are the following questions: *Why and how did a simplistic stereotype become the actor’s most convenient memory pattern to resort to? What kind of cultural conditioning allows for such simplistic visions to be there in the first place? Similarly, how and why do audiences accept certain stereotypes as authentic? How do stereotypes get institutionalized?*

These questions lie outside of the purview of this research project, and yet, the issue of stereotypes was still central to my research. While *ISL* was aiming to ‘queer’ the dominant monolingual perspective, as an a multilingual collaborative artistic practice, it also managed to address, though only tangentially, racial, ethnic, cultural, and other types of stereotypes. In this regard, I believe *ISL* presented what, in her book *On Being Included* (2012), Sara Ahmed calls “diversity work” (p. 173). She explains:

Doing diversity work is institutional work in the sense that it is an experience of encountering resistance and countering that resistance. Each new strategy or tactic for

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140 McConachie writes: “Through complex processes neuroscientists are only beginning to understand, the executive brain synthesizes cues from the environment, from relevant memories and from other networked activations to make split-second decisions about possible courses of action. This involved scanning memory for a possible fit between a past solutions and present circumstances. Usually an earlier precedent will help to resolve a present problem, but novel solutions occasionally emerge when a new neural network is slotted into an existing pattern” (2013, p. 41).
getting through the wall generates knowledge of what does or does not get across. Perhaps diversity workers aim to transform the wall into a table, turning the tangible object of institutional resistance into a tangible platform for institutional action (Ahmed, 2014, 175).

Ahmed uses a metaphor of a wall, which stands for an institutionanilized barrier, and a table, a place around which people gather to talk, debate, negotiate, collaborate, among many other things. She sees diversity as “praxis” (p. 173) that “encounters resistance” and “generates knowledge” (p. 175) and essentially transforms institutions by turning a “wall” into a “table”. It is through this understanding of diversity work that I propose to theorize the value of ISL. It is through this perspective that I will look at three specific aspects of ISL’s diversity work: representation, collaboration, and resistance.

Let me start with the importance of representation. When I was conducting the post-show interviews with the core participants, I was struck by how often the issue of representation came up in the participants’ reflections on the value of ISL. Here is, for instance, what Sepideh said in her interview:

SEPIDEH Yeah from immigrant perspective I think that I, when I came to Canada, there are like centre (UNCLEAR) of newcomers, they do lots of stuff for immigrants but they never listen to me. I think this was the first time that openly I think all of us, some of us, decided to talk and it was open a stage for us to sit down and talk, whatever we wanna say. And I think that was great and-

ART What do you mean, never listen?

S Well, when you go to the centre of new family, all the time [they] want to teach you something. Learn English, learn, learn how to write resume. Nobody ever sit down and say where are you coming from, what is your story, what did you do, what do you want to do actually, what do you want to learn and … I don’t know it was very, for me, interesting that, it was, I think it was the first time. Even my, uhm, two of my friends came the second night, they never heard my story, that was the first time. They were like, wow, you did a lot in past seven years and it must be hard to learn English this level to go to university when you didn’t know anything in your childhood. So, nobody ever ask actually. And this was the first time you ask, what is your story and I (UNCLEAR) then you try to put in theatrical way and I think many people, many people actually came to me and was like, wow this is actually very similar to our stories and we identify with a lot. I think that (Sepideh’s Interview).
Here, Sepideh shows resistance to being objectified by others—something that she experienced when she came to Canada. She also provides a compelling argument for the necessity to represent the immigrant’s (or the L2 speaker’s) perspective, as expressed by the immigrant (or the L2 speaker). Later in the interview, she also confided to me that when her father came to the show, he cried simply because he had heard Farsi, his L1, spoken on a “Canadian stage.” Sepideh’s father was not alone: as I showed in Chapter 5, hearing their L1 (or even being able to understand languages other than the majority tongue) had a lot of emotional value for many of the ISL audience members. Evidently, it is not just one’s personal story that matters for representation, but also one’s L1.

The second, and arguably more important, issue is the institutionalized isolation of linguistic and cultural communities that one may experience in Toronto. Interestingly, as opposed to representation, this issue does not always receive enough attention from Toronto theatre creators. For instance, this is how the acclaimed Toronto playwright Jordan Tannahill laments the state of diversity in Toronto theatre:

There’s a major lack of socio-economic, cultural and geographic diversity both in our audiences and onstage. Professional Western theatre remains primarily made and seen by white people living downtown. Audiences are also disproportionately middle-aged and middle-class. For many, going to the theatre has never been something they’ve imagined integrating into their daily lives. For those living outside downtown, a night at the theatre might mean wrestling with traffic for an hour to and from the venue, finding and paying for parking, paying for a babysitter, paying forty or fifty dollars for a ticket; it is a sizeable financial and logistical commitment. And in larger, diverse centres like my hometown of Toronto, there is little theatre available to hundreds of thousands of residents in their primary language, let alone plays that speak to or even acknowledge the presence of their cultural identities (2015, p.33).

While I acquiesce to Tannahill’s general lamentation of the state of diversity in mainstream Toronto theatre, I believe he may be unaware of theatre companies, both professional and amateur, flourishing in various Toronto communities and performing in the languages of those communities. My experience with Farsi-speaking, Spanish-speaking, Russian-speaking, and French-speaking companies—evidently all fairly prominent Toronto communities—tells me that the problem is not the unavailability of theatre in the communities’
“primary” language. For me, the problem is the institutionalized isolation of each of those communities. The problem is also the monolingual paradigm expressed through Tannahill’s assumption of one “primary language”—most possibly, being one’s L1, which might not be relevant to second or third generation Canadians in Toronto or any other large Canadian urban centre.

Here, I would like to argue that representation of minorities, linguistic or otherwise, is only a small part of diversity work, as understood by Ahmed. While representation may be extremely useful for raising awareness, it does not necessarily, in Ahmed’s parlance, turn a “wall” into a “table”. Diversity work that constantly pushes against essentializing of the “Other” needs to be about artistic collaboration and exchange; it needs to be about learning and teaching; it also needs to be about sharing power and space. It is this kind of understanding of diversity work that appeared in one my core participant’s writings. Sebastian, a multilingual actor with English as his first language, who had only taken part in Phase One, wrote the following journal where he reflected on the value of ISL for him as a professional theatre creator:

As my schedule prevented me from a long term commitment to ISL, I spent time on a number of different group projects. This was quite stimulating for me, as it exposed me to a huge range of possibilities when considering L2 performance. At one point I was comparing poetry from Shakespeare and Pushkin in Russian and English. At another, I was assisting with an English/Mandarin (or Cantonese?) monologue. And at other points I was observing or taking parts in various scenes. For me, the mixture of experiences, working with different people and learning about linguistic and cultural differences, was very rewarding, and an opportunity that, despite living in a multicultural city, is in fact relatively rare. The mixture levels the playing field, making everyone both a beginner and expert. It encourages creativity as you’re forced to think and work in ways that you aren’t used to. At times there could be blocks, but more often there was an overabundance of possibilities to follow, stemming from the pleasure of learning new languages and seeing one’s own L1 from new perspectives. When there were too many choices, it became a matter of choosing what was interesting for all parties involved. Often the most interesting scenes were those that portrayed two sides of a linguistic situation. In the airport scene, for example, where a traveling family from outside Canada is waiting for their flight, the couple is reduced to a childlike state. The situation presents both the youthful pleasure of learning a new language, as well as the parental (potentially condescending) nature of the L1 figure.
Such unresolved bilateral scenarios seem the most fruitful to work with because they are not predictable, giving spectators much to ponder.

For me, overall, this project has less to do with theatre, and more to do with working interculturally. Theatre becomes a means of establishing communication or relationships. It could equally be another art form or task that brings people together. Theatre is one of many possible tools for breaking down barriers and expanding one’s horizons. It is a pity that such humanly rewarding situations seldom occur in everyday life (and in this case, within the artificial framework of a research project), when Toronto clearly has the potential for more (Sebastian’s Journal).

In his journal, Sebastian emphasizes the social and educational value of ISL: for him, ISL was a space engaged in diversity work, which was not simply focused on representation but, rather, encouraged direct engagement and dialogue among artists who otherwise would not have encountered each other in a city where linguistic and cultural isolation is the norm. Interestingly, Sebastian also refers to the interplay between “experts” and “novices,” pointing to the fact that the acknowledgement of the expertise of the “Other” creates a space for exchange. In a way, his observations are consonant with Sepideh’s reflections on the power shift created by ISL—a power shift where a newcomer or a L2 learner is given an opportunity to become a “speaker,” not just a “listener.” Additionally, while neither Sebastian nor Sepideh talk about the audience, I showed in Chapter Five that the ISL audiences were also engaged in a similar process of a power exchange between temporary “experts” and temporary “novices”—the process that I called “inter-audience dynamics,” Such inter-audience dynamics could also be seen as part of ISL diversity praxis.

Finally, besides the institutionalized community isolation, there, of course, is another institutionalized entity ISL targeted—the issue of artistic stereotyping. In theatre (as well as film and television), stereotypes, linguistic or otherwise, frequently become institutionilized, promoted, and even taught as legitimate entities. Above, I gave examples of teaching “body language” or national accents without much attention paid to the “users” of that language or

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141 Interestingly, in his reflection, Sebastian doubts the aesthetic value of ISL, which may be explained by the fact that he withdrew from the project before Phase Two, that is, when we switched to creating “scenes” for our public presentation.
accent and the contexts in which a “body language” or an accent can be used. As I showed in my analysis of Yury’s struggle (see Chapter Three), one can easily fall prey to such “teaching.” Yury’s struggle to acquire the right Russian accent in the imaginary world of the ISL’s Prologue, or the “right” American accent in real life, is indicative of linguistic stereotypes that have become institutionalized and embedded in everyday practice. Moreover, stereotypes can become a commodity and, through a promise of happiness, they also become desired. It is diversity work that has the potential to challenge the existence of stereotypes, as well as their institutionalization and commodification. By addressing such institutionalized stereotypes (specifically in the Prologue and Gloria’s monologue) and revealing their constructedness, as well as their harmful effect on an individual ISL became an attempt at diversity work, again, circumscribed by the “artificial framework” of the project.

Of course, an attempt to go against such institutionalized, even canonical, entities—whether or not they are related to multilingualism—and present a vision of complexity, while laudable, can also have serious repercussions. For instance, Antje Budde offered a reflection on her attempt to bring courses on Chinese Theatre to a theatre department, which was almost entirely white and Anglophone, and whose curriculum was steeped in the canons of Western (primarily British) theatrical traditions. Budde writes about the drama students’ complaints about the extreme diversity of her course:

One of the major complaints by students about these courses is on the one hand the “confusing” diversity, the struggle with foreign names and with my German accent, the challenging multitude of histories and political contexts that need to be considered. On the other hand, students were always critical about the many cultures that we were not able to discuss due to time constraints or not the least the impossibility of such an approach (2015, p. 202).

Budde talks about the very discomfort of diversity as well as the complexity diversity inevitably brings to the table, especially when it is not conceived of as a “token,” that is, when it aims for a broad but superficial representation. And, while Budde does not conceptualize her Chinese drama courses in Sara Ahmed’s terms, I believe what she was engaged in was, in fact, true diversity work. Sara Ahmed writes: “Diversity work does not simply generate knowledge
about institutions (in which the institution becomes a thematic); it generates knowledge of institutions in the process of attempting to transform them (2012, p. 173). Just like Budde’s work, ISL attempted to shed light on the institutionalized entities and generate resistance to the institutionalized power relationships through praxis.

In sum, ISL was not just an artistic experiment with multiple languages—it can be seen as an example of diversity praxis working on both aesthetic and social levels. The potential of multilingual dramaturgy that does not include translation, but does include multilingual actors and audiences, to be a type of diversity praxis is particularly vital for urban centres like Toronto. Its potential is not simply in giving voice to minority languages and putting up “resistance to a dominant language and culture,” as was suggested in one of the earlier writings on untranslated use of “minority languages” in Canadian theatre (Byczynski, 2000, p. 33). It allows for stereotypes to be exposed and dismantled, for languages to mingle, for acting training methods and theatre cultures to collide, and for artists and audiences to interact, challenging and helping each other. In a way, it offers a utopian space that potentiates multilingual and multicultural encounters without essentializing one’s L1 or L2 cultures and by that disrupting institutionalized isolation of artists and communities.

It is this direction that I hope further artistic research on untranslated multilingual dramaturgy, multilingual actors, and audiences will take. In some ways, this direction is related to a larger “utopian” framework proposed by Erika Fischer-Lichter:

[…] processes of interweaving performance cultures can, and quite often do, provide an experimental framework for experiencing the utopian potential of culturally diverse and globalized societies by realizing an aesthetic which gives shape to unprecedented collaborative policies in society. By permanently probing the emergence, stabilization, and destabilization of cultural identities, these performances can transfer their participants into states of in-betweenness, which allow them to anticipate a future

142 Ahmed also cautions against a simplistic understanding of diversity or fetishizing its value. She dedicated a whole chapter in her book On Being Included (2004) to the “language of diversity,” where she discusses both what is understood by “diversity,” what constitutes “official diversity,” and how diversity workers conceptualize the term (pp. 51-81).
wherein the journey itself, the permanence of transition, and the state of liminality, is indeed constitutive of their experience. What is perceived as an aesthetic experience in these performances will be experienced as everyday life in the future (2014, pp. 11-12).

And Yet...

And yet, the “state of liminality” is not what is always achieved through the efforts of stage multilingualism. I cannot claim that ISL was always successful in queering one’s orientation or achieved states of liminality or in-betweenness. As I showed in Chapters Three and Five, the monolingual perspective, where one language is perceived as mother tongue (or natural) and any other as additional (and, by extension, unnatural), was very much present in some of the actors’ and audience’s responses.

More importantly, the dramaturgy of ISL did not always attempt to create the “state of liminality,” since it was not necessarily free of monolingual “presuppositions” either. Those presuppositions manifested themselves through the clear dominance of English in the majority of the ISL scenes as well as the choice to make English the only “common language” in the scenes where one or two minority languages were used (e.g., in Party Convo and Futebal). Additionally, while ISL addressed the issue of authenticity of the majoritarian language (English) by providing a critical outlook on the English accents (in the scene series Where are you from?) and on the authenticity of the L2 speaker’s accents (in the scene Interdental Fricatives), it did not consider the possibility of pushing against the ideas of “authentic” language or accent in relation to the other tongues used in the show. It was partly because in almost all the scenes, languages other than English were spoken by native speakers with no marked accents.

The biggest exception to that rule was Scene Two, Le Petit Prince, the only scene performed entirely in French by Lyla and me (see Chapter Four, Scene 3). Neither of us spoke French as our first language; however, Lyla identified French as her non-dominant language and I identify it as one of my dominant languages. Additionally, in Le Petit Prince, I was
purposefully attempting to ‘butcher’ the flow of the language when performing the Google translate voice which was giving Lyla the pronunciation of her lines from *Le Petit Prince*.

When responding to Scene Three, an audience member who identified French as their L1 and dominant, noted the following: “The French scenes were not done by native speakers…I was witnessing them from afar” (1-37). “Witnessing something from afar” was not a common response in the audience surveys, specifically not to the question of understanding two or more languages. What is interesting about this specific response is that *ISL* actually had a lot more English than French spoken by non-native speakers. It also had significantly more native English speakers than French speakers in the audience. And yet, none of the English native speakers made a similar comment about witnessing any of the scenes “from afar,” or even the mere fact that most of the English spoken in *ISL* was spoken by non-native speakers of the language in a variety of accents.

While it is nothing but my speculation, it is possible to assume that “from afar” implies distance. Noticing “distance” may occur due to the “inauthenticity” or “foreignness” of the non-native speakers’ language. This kind of noticing of “inauthenticity” or “foreignness” occurs because only certain kinds of language (in this case—the native speaker’s) are perceived as “correct” or “authentic.” This kind of “noticing” of the inauthenticity or foreignness of the “Other” may have happened because the French speaker was not used to hearing French as spoken by non-native speakers. In the end, English speakers living in Toronto are used to hearing a variety of non-native “Englishes,” since English is the most common shared language in the city. French speakers might not have this kind of exposure. What is more important is that this kind of “noticing” is still noticing of someone else’s ‘Otherness’. In fact, it is not necessarily different from the noticing of the ‘Otherness’ of the English accents, which we critiqued in the *Where are you from?* scene series. In those scenes, various speakers of English were consistently asked where they were from due to the perceived “markedness” of their accent as well as the perceived “markedness” of their race or skin colour.

I believe that this kind of “noticing” is also similar to my own cultural and linguistic
essentializing—the essentializing of the Chinese speakers I had to own up to in Chapter Three. As I explained there, I had perceived Gloria as a “more authentic” Chinese speaker—or more precisely, a speaker of Mandarin with a more authentic body—while Joy seemed less foreign and thus, less “authentic” to me. Such examples of essentializing the “Other” indicate that the observer’s perception of a language or an accent is very much marked by the observer’s own preconceptions of what constitutes authenticity and foreignness in language and NVC. They also point to the fact that one can take a multilingual perspective on one language and not share that perspective in regards to other languages. In fact, as I explicated in Chapter Three, my own perception seemed to only apply the multilingual perspective to English and not to Mandarin.

To sum up, not addressing languages other than English through the same framework as we addressed English presents a serious limitation of ISL’s dramaturgy. Clearly, just like English, French, Russian, Mandarin, Cantonese, Portuguese, Farsi, Spanish are not uniform entities free from power relationships, historical and contemporary contexts. Clearly, speakers of those languages may share one attitude towards the ideas of linguistic authenticity (“nativeness” and “foreignness”) with regards to one of their languages and have a different attitude towards authenticity in a different language they can speak. Speakers (and listeners) of those languages are not free from stereotypes, specifically those related to accents, which could be perceived as marked and unmarked. ISL did not address the possibility of a multilingual perception of languages other than English, somewhat betraying the political aspirations I outlined in Chapter One. This, as well as other limitations, such as the overall dominance of English in both the dramaturgy of ISL and in the devising process, means that ISL was only “cautiously” multilingual and not pushing enough against the “wall” of monolingualism.143

143 A few other audience responses used the word “foreign” in relation to the languages other than English spoken on stage.
Considering the Future

Considering the limitations I outlined in the previous section, what implications can I draw for future artistic research looking at multilingual theatre? I believe that future research might make use of a recent term that has emerged in the domains of linguistics that study multilingualism and multilinguals. The term is *plurilingualism*, a word coined not to replace multilingualism as an idea, but rather propose a different theoretical framework to understand multilingual speakers. In their introduction to *Plurilingual Education: Policies-Practices-Language Development* (2014), applied linguistics Grommer and Hu write:

> The concept of plurilingualism puts the individual at centre stage. It focuses on the individual’s ability to make use of two or more languages in speaking, reading and writing at varying levels of competence and in varying contexts. It is assumed that these languages do not coexist in separate silos in a person’s mind, but that they form a composite competence. The share each language holds of this composition may change, languages may be added or lose in importance, but they are all seen in their own right. This view thus challenges normative, more traditional concepts such as that of a mother tongue or foreign languages (Grommes & Hu, 2014, p. 2).

The plurilingualism perspective assumes a more radical paradigm than the one I adopted in my research. While I asked my participants to identify their languages as dominant versus non-dominant, these approximations were not specific enough to understand the participants’ actual competencies and literacies in each of the languages they could speak or had some knowledge of. The plurilingual position should allow a more complex look at how languages “form a complete competence.” Knowing more about the participants’ language fluencies, as well as their desires and attitudes towards any of the languages they can speak or would like to speak or perform in, may inform future research in multiple ways.

Second, future research on multilingual acting might consider the issue of stereotyping as central. As I explained in this chapter, stereotyping may be ingrained in speakers’ perceptions. In the case of actors, it can even be part of one’s training. While stereotypes can be a powerful trope and can even be part of a specific genre or a theatre tradition, research might look specifically at how stereotyping can play out in the situation of plurilingualism, especially, in the situation when both the actors and the audiences are plurilingual.
Third, research might also need to expand the interdisciplinary framework that I used in my research. While in this study I mostly drew from my own expertise in applied linguistics and theatre studies, especially acting theories, I acknowledge that concepts, such as language, body, dramaturgy, and spectator require a much broader interdisciplinary perspective. Insight from disciplines such as psychology, sociology, neuroscience, among many others may help elucidate the process of plurilingual acting and spectating.

Finally, future research, especially artistic research relying on Ahmed’s concept of diversity work as praxis, needs to pay specific attention to the sociolinguistic makeup of actors and audiences as well as how that makeup reflects or resists local and global power structures, especially those that operate through various language policies. Specifically, research conducted in various Canadian contexts needs to take into consideration Canada’s current linguiste situation or rather—situations that are particular to each province, municipality or community. As I indicated in Chapter One, sociolinguists and applied linguists point to the very specific (though ever changing) nature of Canadian multilingualism, where the growing hegemony of English may threaten the very concept of multilingualism as well as put minority languages at a disadvantage (Dagenais, 2013). Another important consideration is the Indigenous languages of Canada, most of which are now at the verge of extinction—a tragic result of the colonial power relations and the long standing dominance of Canada’s colonial languages.

144 Diane Dagenais (2013) in her extensive review of studies on Canadian multilingualism explains that in the 2000’s, multilingualism was “generally increasing among the immigrant population of Canada”; however, “this was not the case for Canadian-born Anglophones living outside Quebec, most of whom remained monolingual, with the exception of graduates of French immersion programs.” She also specifies that “in schools where languages other than French and English are excluded, assimilationist policies lead to substrate bi/multilingualism for many learners” (p. 287).

145 Summarising research on Canada’s Indigenous languages, Dagenais (2013) asserts that “education policies that are legacies of colonialism in Canada have had devastating impact on Indigenous languages, so that only three out of the 50 that are still spoken today are not considered endangered” (p. 287).
In sum, future research, specifically artistic research, needs to both acknowledge the power relations that shape the status and the use of various languages (particularly, minority languages), and investigate different possibilities of resistance to each of those power relations and to the way they play out in each specific sociocultural context.

**In Lieu of a Conclusion**

A year after the ISL project was over and I was drafting the last chapter of my thesis, I was also contemplating the idea of continuing ISL as an artistic project beyond the boundaries of my dissertation research. A few people had approached me expressing interest in the project, one of them being my colleague—a dramaturge and a fluent speaker of multiple languages. Coincidentally, I was also invited to pitch ISL to an established theatre company in Toronto whose mandate is to support and produce the work of Canadian artists specifically focusing on local themes. I invited my colleague to devise and deliver the pitch with me.

Knowing that we were given no more than five minutes to pitch our idea, we decided to use one of the most successful techniques of the ISL multilingual dramaturgy and start the “performance” of our pitch in different languages, frequently switching from one to another and not employing the assumed shared language—English. Our plan was to expose the panel of our prospective listeners to no more than 45-50 seconds of the multilingual mix in order to give them a sense of the aesthetic potential of multilingual dramaturgy as it was conceived in ISL. We were inspired by and excited about this idea.

What actually occurred within the first minute of our presentation defied any of our expectations and shook us both to the core. On entering the space, we greeted everyone in English, shook hands with the panelists on the opposite side of the table, sat down and, when prompted, started our pitch. My colleague began in Hebrew, her L1—but before she could say two sentences, the panel chair, who also happened to be the artistic director of the theatre we were pitching to, glanced at her in indignation, suddenly threw up his hand two feet in front of
her face as if in a self-protective gesture, and cut her Hebrew off with a loud and clear *I don’t speak Spanish!*

My colleague did her best to hide her disappointment and swallow her pride—instead, she immediately switched to… Spanish, her language of schooling, explaining in Spanish that not understanding Spanish was not really a problem. Then, I continued the pitch in Armenian, Russian, and French. After a minute, we switched back to English and the rest of our presentation went more than fine. However, a sense of being rudely interrupted for simply speaking another language, especially in Toronto, especially in 2016, and especially in a theatre space—a place that implies playfulness and creativity—stayed with both of us for many days to come.

Patience wears thin when diversity, be it linguistic or otherwise, is involved. True diversity work requires reorientation, extra attention, and an “inverse look” at your own perception. Our experience of being interrupted reminded me of the frustration speakers of English expressed when talking about their perception of non-translated languages in *ISL*. When the assumed privilege is removed, audiences may become frustrated or even violent—the power of multilingual dramaturgy is to remove that privilege and give it to someone else, even if only temporarily. Unexpectedly, our pitch became a reminder of this power of multilingualism and of how important it is for Toronto, a place often touted for its diversity.

It also reinforced my decision not to abandon *ISL* as an artistic project, as I originally had planned when I conceived of it as simply my thesis research. Diversity work must continue because, in the end, *no entender español no es el problema actual.*
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Appendix A. Call for Core Participants

CALL FOR ACTORS

Performance-Research/Recherche-Création “In Sundry Languages”.

Are you an English-speaking actor who would like to try performing in French? Or in Spanish? Farsi? Mandarin? Or maybe English isn’t your first language and you’d like to perform more in English?

The Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies (UofT) is looking for a diverse group of 12-16 actors interested in collaborating on a new devised theatre project experimenting with the idea of using multiple languages on stage without the use of translation. The project is led by Art Babayants, a researcher-practioners from the Drama Centre and the artistic director of Toronto Laboratory Theatre.


If interested, please email the researcher: xxxxxx@xxxxxx.ca
Appendix B. Call for Audience Participants

The Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies

in collaboration with the Toronto Laboratory Theatre

presents

“IN SUNDRY LANGUAGES”

May 15 (Fri) and May 16 (Sat), 7:30 pm

Free admission

An outrageously multilingual theatre experiment is looking for an outrageously multilingual theatre audience. Languages used and abused: various dialects of Mandarin, Farsi, Russian, English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Korean, Esperanto among many others. Translation used: none.

Actor-Dramaturges:

Lyla Belsey
Mark Dallas

高子莹 / Zieving Gloria Gao

Clayton Gray

李明颖。/ Joy Lee-Ryan

Mario Lourenço
Felicia Nelson

Amy Packwood

Мария Прозорова / Maria Pro sorova

Юрий Ружъёв / Yury Ruzhyev (Rouge)

Sepideh Shariati / Sepideh Shariati

손연지 / Danielle Son

Director-Researcher: Արտ Բաբայանց / Art Babayants

Thesis Supervisor: Prof. Kathleen Gallagher

Additional Dramaturgical Support: Gabrielle Houle, Shelley Liebembuk.

This project represents artistic research and is part of a dissertation study. Audience members will be asked to complete a consent form before the show and a survey after the show.

Robert Gill Theatre, 214 College St (use St. George entrance)

To reserve seats, please email rsvp.dramacentre@gmail.com or call 416-978-7987
Appendix C. Information and Consent Letter for Core Participants

March 3, 2015

Hello,

My name is Art Babayants and I am a PhD student at the University of Toronto working on the dissertation entitled “In Sundry Languages”: Investigating the Phenomenon of Multilingual Acting. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study which will take place from March 16 to June 16, 2015 at the Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies, located at 214 College street.

The purposes of the study are to explore the possibilities and limitations of using multiple languages on stage as well as to better understand the actor’s process of performing in a second (or any other non-dominant) language. The study will be constructed as a process-oriented collaborative work in which participants and the researcher will perform the role of actor-dramaturges. The results of this collaborative work will be presented to public through a stage production. After the presentation, the audience will be invited to participate in a survey where they will be asked to reflect upon their perception of stage multilingualism as presented in the collectively devised work.

The study will include

- participating in the development of a multilingual devised production in the role of actor-dramaturge

- creating short blogs or vlogs documenting your experience of performing in your second language and posting those blogs or vlogs online
- peer-coaching: training your peers to perform in the language(s) that you speak at a proficient level (e.g., your mother tongue and/or your language of formal education) as well as being trained by your peers

- developing questions for the audience survey

- rehearsals and stage presentations of the devised work to an audience.

Overall, I am looking to engage 12-16 actors, both monolingual and multilingual, coming from different language backgrounds, including participants who speak English as their first or second language. If you are selected to participate in the project, you will be asked to sign a waiver to pass the rights for the developed material, its presentation and production to the researcher.

Please note that participation in this project is entirely voluntary and that you may withdraw from it at any stage and for any reason, without any negative consequences, in which case I will immediately and systematically destroy any data pertaining to your participation. You need not provide justification for your withdrawal. Also, you may refuse to answer any question or complete any part of any task in this project.

Also note that participant anonymity is not appropriate for this research project, as it would contradict the very nature of the devised collaborative theatre work, whose purpose is to be shown to an audience. The data collected will be stored at an online password protected facility and you along with the other participants will have full access to it. At the end of the process, the data (blogs, vlogs, videotaped rehearsals and performances) will be selectively chosen to be included in the final submission of my thesis. The selection process as the artistic process will be collaborative and the selected material will be posted online for open access. The selected data will be stored online for an indefinite length of time. The data will have significant archival value for the Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies as it will be the first documented process-oriented multilingual work at the Centre. In addition, the
participants, being working artists, may want to benefit from having access to the data in order to develop the production or their own work further at any point of their professional careers.

There will be no financial compensation provided for your participation in the project. However, by virtue of working on a collaborative multilingual production you will get a chance to benefit from a unique opportunity to hone their second language and acting skills through peer-coaching, the researcher’s feedback and audience’s responses. You will receive a unique kind of training focusing on performing in your second (or any other additional) language—a training currently not available in any other Canadian theatre institution. The participants will also be provided with a professional laboratory setting (the Drama Centre rehearsal space and the Robert Gill Theatre) and high-end equipment allowing you to better observe, analyse, understand and potentially improve your performance skills. Finally, the project will provide an opportunity for you to expand your professional network and connect with peers from Toronto’s various cultural communities.

I do not foresee any risks for you beyond the risks that theatre actors typically experience in their professional lives, such as the necessity to work collaboratively and being observed by peers and a broader audience.

Before you sign up to participate in the study, I would like to meet with you either on skype or face to face to give you an opportunity to learn more about the study, to ask questions or express concerns.

You may also contact me by email, xxx.xxxxxxx@utoronto.ca or telephone: +1 xxx xxx xxxx.

You may also address any questions or concerns to my research supervisor, Prof. Kathleen Gallagher (OISE/UT): email xxxxxxx.xxxxxxxx@utoronto.ca and tel: + x(xxx) xxx-xxxx
If you have any questions about your rights as research participants, you can contact the Office of Research Ethics of the University of Toronto by email: ethics.review@utoronto.ca or by telephone + 1 416 946 3273.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

[signature]

Art Babayants
Informed Consent Form and Waiver

If you wish to participate in this project, please complete this form and return it to me in the attached envelope.

I have read and understood Art Babayants’ information letter dated [date of letter] and I agree to participate in his study as detailed in the letter. I understand that participation in this study is strictly voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw from it at any time and for any reason. Also, I may refuse to answer any question or complete any part of this research project. I understand that there will be no negative consequences for me if I do so. I am keeping a copy of this consent form and of Art Babayants’ letter dated [date of letter] for my records.

By signing below, I also give Art Babayants the right to use my contributions to the project “In Sundry Languages”: Investigating the Phenomenon of Multilingual Acting for artistic and research purposes.

My name is (please print):

Contact information (please provide at least one of the following):

- address:
- telephone number:
- email address:

Signature:

Date:
Appendix D. Informed Consent for Audience Participants

May 15, 2015

Hello,

My name is Art Babayants and I am a PhD student at the University of Toronto working on the dissertation entitled “In Unknown Languages”: Investigating the Phenomenon of Multilingual Acting. The purposes of the study are to explore the possibilities and limitations of using multiple languages on stage as well as to better understand the actor’s process of performing in a second (or any other non-dominant) language. The stage presentation you are about to see is the result of six weeks of collaborative work of a number of professional and amateur performers exploring the theme of stage multilingualism.

After the presentation you will be asked to complete a short survey about your experience of watching the multilingual show. Please note that participation in the survey is entirely voluntary and that you may withdraw from it at any stage and for any reason, without any negative consequences. You need not provide justification for your withdrawal. Also, you may refuse to answer any question of the survey. Your participation in the survey will be anonymous – you will not be asked to provide your name or age.

This survey will be used in a study of the performance: excerpts of the survey may be used in my dissertation and quotations from the survey may be used as part of a print or web publication. All documentation will, on completion of the project, be deposited in a university archive for future research. There will be no financial compensation provided for your participation in the project. The survey does not ask any personal questions that may cause emotional distress. I do not foresee any risks for you. You will be able to keep a copy of this
letter and ask me any additional questions about the survey.

You may also contact me by email, xxx.xxxxxxx@utoronto.ca or telephone: +1 xxx xxx-xxxx.

You may also address any questions or concerns to my research supervisor, Prof. Kathleen Gallagher (OISE/UT): email xxxxxxx.xxxxxxx@utoronto.ca and tel: + 1 xxx xxx-xxxx.

If you have any questions about your rights as research participants, you can contact the Office of Research Ethics of the University of Toronto by email: ethics.review@utoronto.ca or by telephone + 1 416 946 3273.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Art Babayants
Informed Consent Form

I have read and understood Art Babayants’ information letter dated May 15, 2015 and I agree to participate in the audience survey as detailed in the letter. I understand that participation in this survey is strictly voluntary and that I may choose to withdraw from it at any time and for any reason. Also, I may refuse to answer any question or complete any part of this research project. I understand that there will be no negative consequences for me if I do so.

My name is (please print):

Signature:

Date:
Appendix E. Initial Questionnaire for Core Participants

“IN SUNDRY LANGUAGES”

Please, make sure you’ve read and signed the consent form before completing this questionnaire.

Name:

Previous Performance Training (amateur, semi-professional, professional):

Languages spoken (indicate your level of spoken proficiency: advanced-intermediate-low)

- Dominant languages:

- Non-dominant languages:

Languages you’d like to perform in:

Availability:

Stage 1: March 23-April 26

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<th>Day</th>
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Stage 2: April 27-May 24

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Please, note that each rehearsal/development session will run 4-6 hours.

Telephone:

Email:

Emergency contact (name and phone number):
Appendix F. Audience Survey

“In Sundry Languages”

Audience Survey

Thank you so much for agreeing to complete this survey! It should only take about 10-12 minutes of your time. If you’d like to use a table, you can use the tables in the theatre lobby or the seminar room adjacent to the theatre.

Part I. In this part, I encourage you to give very short answers.

Your knowledge of languages:

- What are your dominant languages? (the ones that you can think in and speak fluently)
  ________________________________________________________________

- Is one of them your first language? If yes, which one(s)
  ________________________________________________________________

- What are your non-dominant languages? (languages you can speak but not as fluently)
  ________________________________________________________________

Are you a theatre artist?
  ________________________________________________________________

Are you a trained theatre/film actor?
  ________________________________________________________________

Are you an amateur actor?
  ________________________________________________________________

Are you a language instructor, a linguist, a translator/interpreter?
  ________________________________________________________________

How often do you attend theatre productions?
  ________________________________________________________________

How did you learn about this show?
  ________________________________________________________________
Part II.

In this part, I’d like you to give more detailed answers – the more details you provide the better it would be for my research. Feel free to read all the questions first.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is your overall impression of the show?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What was your general reaction to the presence of multiple languages on stage? Would you be interested in seeing multilingual shows like that in Toronto?</td>
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<td>Is there any specific scene that struck a chord with you? Why?</td>
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<td>How did you respond to the parts of the show where you couldn’t understand the language(s) used? (Please, specify the scenes, if possible)</td>
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</table>
How did you respond to the scenes where you were able to understand two or more languages? (Please, specify the scenes, if possible)

One of the focal points of my research is the relationship between language and body (gesture, facial expression, posture, movement). Was it something that you focused on while watching the show? If yes, what moments made that relationship stand out for you? Could you describe your perception/interpretation of those moments? *(See the list of scenes on the backside)*

Do you have anything else you would like to add? Any other impressions? Ideas? Criticisms?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!
**SCENE ORDER**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“You pain in ahse/Zanoza v zadnitse” (Audition)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Improv: Turn off your phones!</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“Where are you from/Kie vi devenas?” Part I.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Le Petit Prince / Google Translate</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Interdental Fricatives (‘th’ sound)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>“Where are you from?/Kie vi devenas?” Part II</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Blah-blah-blah-apartment</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Party Convo: Iran or Iraq?</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>“Where are you from?/Kie vi devenas?” Part III</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>“I live here and yet I exist in two different worlds”</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Futebol</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>“Where are you from?/Kie vi devenas?” Part IV</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Two Bodies. Part I</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Tim Horton’s</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Six Bodies. Part II</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Why do theatre?</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Improv: Colouring Each Other</td>
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</table>