Translanguaging and Bi-Lingual/Cultural Acquisition: A Narrative Inquiry into Young Chinese Visiting Students' International and Cross-Cultural Experiences between Canada and China

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Translanguaging and Bi-lingual/cultural Acquisition: A Narrative Inquiry into Young Chinese Visiting Students' International and Cross-cultural Experiences between Canada and China

By

Haojun Guo

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies through the Faculty of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

Situated within Dr. Shijing Xu and Dr. Michael Connelly’s Project entitled “Reciprocal Learning in Teacher Education and School Education between Canada and China” (Xu, 2019; Xu & Connelly, 2017), this study makes a narrative inquiry into five K-5 young Chinese visiting students’ translanguaging and bi-lingual/cultural acquisition in the international and cross-cultural experiences between Canada and China. Three research questions are addressed in this thesis: 1) What are young Chinese visiting students’ translanguaging practices in their international and cross-cultural experiences? Do they change over time? If so, how? 2) What is young Chinese visiting students’ bi-lingual/cultural acquisition in their international and cross-cultural experiences? and 3) How do the young Chinese visiting students make sense of their international and cross-cultural experiences through language and culture? To understand the lives of five young Chinese visiting students in the Canadian schools, homes, and local communities, the researcher also recruited other three Chinese visiting scholars’ children (Grades JK-5) and three Canadian adults as research informants. Field texts were collected via participant observation, semi-structured interviews, field notes, casual conversations, students’ artifacts of classroom work, drawings, and diaries. Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000a) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space framework was used to analyze the fieldwork within social, cultural, and historical contexts. Research texts show that translanguaging played an important role during and after the young Chinese visiting students’ visit to Canada, including facilitating the understanding of English texts and
conversations, expressing themselves in flexible forms, and making sense of their lived experiences. Besides, the Chinese students were not passive recipients of knowledge during the visit but contributed to Canadian classrooms and communities with creative translinguaging that was contrary to monolingual practice. After they visited Canada and returned home to China, they continued to actively explore translinguaging spaces and reflected on the education systems, societies, cultures, and languages of the two countries. Implications for school administrators, parents, teachers, curriculum makers, and policymakers are presented. These include possible ways to effectively support young learners in Canada, young visiting students’ transition to the motherland after a short-term visit and to open more possibilities for language education in China and Canada.

*Keywords:* translinguaging, bi-lingual/cultural acquisition, young Chinese visiting students, narrative inquiry, international and cross-cultural experiences
DEDICATION

This narrative inquiry is lovingly dedicated to all the participant families who have been my constant source of inspiration. Children’s stories push me to work hard, overcome nihilism and let thinking flourish in solitude. Their goodness, curiosity, intuition, purity, and creativity are the most important thing for me to cherish and learn.

To my mother who is my best friend in the world. I could not have done this without you.
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Philosophically transforming from head to mind, I have been experiencing everything that narrative inquiry brings to me on a thesis journey. Looking back on my 28-year life that has been exploring limitless possibilities of the world and the meaning of life, I have received tremendous support, encouragement, and kindness. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of you who teach me how to be a good person and an independent researcher.

Thank you, Dr. Shijing Xu and Dr. Zuochen Zhang, my supervisor and co-supervisor. The meetings and conversations we had were significant for me to reflect on my way of being and knowing. I wish to thank foremost Dr. Xu, for reminding me of “nourishing the mind until it is tolerant like a sea.” Your wise guidance made this research possible and led me to see this world in a narrative way. Learning so much from you, I am glad that I fell in love with Chinese traditional culture and philosophy. Participating in the Reciprocal Learning Program has also expanded my horizons and promoted my understanding of a variety of educational topics in an international and cross-cultural context. I would like to say a special thank you to my co-supervisor, Dr. Zhang. Your emphasis on logic, details and format will continue to influence me in my future scholarly work. It is a blessing for me to receive your full support and mentoring.

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I wish to make a deep appreciation to all the participants, including all the Chinese children, parents, and Canadian friends. Your generous sharing of your experiences is crucial for me to complete the dissertation. Although I can only thank you in an anonymous way, I hope you know that I really appreciate your support throughout my thesis journey.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Starting with the background information of the study, this first chapter presents an overview of my doctoral research, including the purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, and the organization of the thesis.

Background of the Study

My doctoral research is built on my master’s thesis, which focuses on Chinese primary school students’ cognitive needs of translanguaging in English classrooms in China (Guo, 2019). As translanguaging is a relatively new term in second language acquisition and a significant issue that is investigated and discussed in the current research, I would like to present a brief definition here and provide a more detailed illustration and review of the related literature in Chapter 2. According to García (2009a), translanguaging is “the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential” (p. 140). In my master’s study, in order to know why some Chinese primary school students had translanguaging practices in an “English-immersion” program offered by a private English language training institution in Beijing, I observed the English classes in three classrooms for one semester and conducted a semi-structured interview with one Chinese teacher who taught English at this institution. The 35 Chinese primary school students in the study were first and second graders who attended a nearby public elementary school. I audiotaped the English
classes, transcribed the classroom discourses, and analyzed the cognitive needs of
Chinese primary school students’ translanguaging practices in class. Findings of the
qualitative case study showed that there were two types of the Chinese primary school
students’ translanguaging practices in English classrooms: 1) triggered by the unknown,
wherein students tend to solve problems via translanguaging, and 2) based on the known,
wherein students make use of translanguaging to express their life experiences and
themselves (Guo, 2019). I was especially intrigued by the second type of translanguaging
practice, which indicated young English language learners’ creativity, agency, and
motivation to engage in classroom communication and their ability to share lived
experiences through languages. But due to the time limit in these English classrooms
(each class only lasted for 40 minutes), most students were not given enough attention or
opportunities to express themselves (Guo, 2019). I was upset about the situation but
meanwhile, I kept my research interest in mind, hoping to more deeply attend to
children’s complex language practices and their sharing of lived experiences someday.

I have been interested in foreign language education since I was an undergraduate
student majoring in English. Therefore, I chose to study Applied Linguistics in a
master’s program at Beijing Foreign Studies University. While I was analyzing the
Chinese pupils’ translanguaging in English classrooms, a research puzzle that lingered in
my mind was whether there is any difference between young Chinese students’
translanguaging in China where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) and
English language learners in a context such as Canada where English is taught as a second language (ESL) or is the main language of instruction. To contextualize the two terms (EFL and ESL) addressed by and for the purpose of this research, it is necessary to define them at the beginning. According to Gass and Selinker (2001), teaching EFL refers to English language teaching in a country where English is not the official language nor the medium of instruction. It is taught as a major subject in schools in the EFL context (Gunderson et al., 2019). Teaching ESL refers to teaching English to non-native English speakers in a native English-speaking country (Wright, 2010). Countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States provide an ESL environment (Anderson, 2004; Gunderson et al., 2019).

However, the term ESL seems to indicate that English is subordinate (Wright, 2010), so another term English language learning (ELL) has been “increasingly used internationally among educators and researchers” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 5). For example, in a practical guide for supporting English language learners in grades 1 to 8 in Ontario published by the Ministry of Education (2007), the term ELLs (English language learners) refers to “students in provincially funded English language schools whose first language is a language other than English or is a variety of English that is significantly different from the variety used for instruction in Ontario’s schools” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 5). In my research, the participant children were Chinese primary school students or kindergarten children as EFL students in China but
became ESL students in Canada. When they returned to China after the international and cross-cultural visit, they were called EFL students again. To avoid confusion and contextualize them in this study, the young Chinese visiting students are more appropriate to be regarded as ELLs.

Since I started the PhD journey, my horizons have been expanded and I have taken part in various cross-cultural activities in Canada through Dr. Shijing Xu and Dr. Michael Connelly’s 2013-2020 Partnership Grant Project entitled “Reciprocal Learning in Teacher Education and School Education between Canada and China” (Xu, 2019, p. 703). Working for this large Project as a research assistant, I was privileged to know five Chinese visiting scholars and their children during their visits to Canada. With internationalization, Chinese rapid economic growth, and the goal of establishing world-class higher education in China, Canadian post-secondary institutions are receiving more and more Chinese visiting scholars in recent years (Ai, 2019). According to the China Scholarship Council (2021, January 13), Chinese visiting scholars visit another country with the purpose of broadening horizons, doing research, promoting professional development, and sharing the most updated research trends with colleagues after the visit. Unlike some immigrants or refugees who may experience harsh financial situations upon arrival, which may impact their children’s life and schooling, these Chinese visiting scholars are funded either by their universities or by a scholarship from the China Ministry of Education. They came to Canada with an academic/research plan with their
Canadian host professors, approved by the host institutions. Hence, the purpose of their visit is mostly well-planned and highly focused on academic learning and English language and culture acquisition and acculturation (S. Xu, personal communication, July 29, 2022).

The five Chinese visiting scholars that I knew stayed for a relatively short time (varied from three months to one year) during which their children went to local Canadian public schools. This group is not unique because many Chinese visiting scholars tend to bring their children with them and let them experience a new culture and education system during the visiting term (Ai, 2019; Li & Chen, 2017; Xue et al., 2015). Recent research also illustrates that some Chinese parents believe the best way to acquire English is to immerse their children in English-speaking countries and interact with native English speakers (Hu et al., 2014). As a result, a similar tendency exists among young Chinese international students who seek secondary education in Canada with or without their parents’ company (Jing et al., 2020). For example, Luedi (2020) reports that around 50,000 Chinese students are enrolled in public high schools, colleges, and private language institutions in British Columbia.

Reflecting on my research interests in translanguaging and interacting with Chinese visiting scholars and their children, I became curious about how this group of children made sense of the international and cross-cultural experiences during and after the trip. They were Chinese pupils or kindergarten children before the international visit
to Canada. Would they have the same experience as Chinese immigrant children or Chinese international students in Canadian schools or universities? Would they mix English and Chinese in conversations as the Chinese primary school students that I studied in my master’s study? Would they adopt some Canadian ways of being and knowing? What could we learn from their stories to contribute to language education in Canada and China? These puzzles gradually emerged in my mind when I engaged with the Chinese visiting scholars’ children. To know more about them, I read the previous literature on bilingualism, translanguaging, bilingual and bicultural acquisition, and young ELLs but find that there is a lack of studies of visiting scholars' children who attend Canadian schools as visiting students. Although there is a great deal of research on international or immigrant students in Canadian schools (e.g., Moore, 2010; Zhang & Beck, 2014), second language acquisition (SLA) and its implications for cross-cultural communication (Sanz & Morales-Front, 2018; Tullock & Ortega, 2017), this field of scholarship has primarily attended to American or British students studying abroad (Coker et al., 2018). Insufficient work has explored how Anglophone schools try to support sojourners’ SLA in ESL contexts, and how their cultural acquisition and perceptions of the host country are shaped in these short-term experiences (Kang & Pacheco, 2021). Therefore, to build on previous research findings and reflect on the puzzles above, I decided to make a narrative inquiry into the young Chinese visiting students’ experiences when they moved between Canada and China in my dissertation.
Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Contextualized in Drs. Xu and Connelly’s (2013-2020) SSHRC-supported project (Xu, 2019), my doctoral research makes a narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) into the young Chinese visiting students’ international and cross-cultural experiences between Canada and China, especially their translanguaging practices and bi-lingual/cultural acquisition as well as their own perceptions of the visit. The participants in my study are the Chinese visiting scholars’ children who came to Canada with one of both of their parents. Based on the definition on the official websites of higher education institutions such as the University of Oxford (2017) and Peking University (2022), visiting students are usually undergraduate or graduate students who attend courses in a foreign university for one semester or one year of study abroad. However, in my doctoral thesis, young Chinese visiting students refer to Chinese visiting scholars’ children. In other words, the two terms (young Chinese visiting students and Chinese visiting scholars’ children) are interchangeably used in my thesis. Thinking about the uniqueness of my participants, I went back to my original research puzzle about the difference between translanguaging in EFL and ESL contexts. Meanwhile, I kept reflecting on my interactions with Chinese visiting scholars’ children while working as a research assistant in Dr. Xu and Dr. Connelly’s Program (2013). More questions

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1 The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) is the federal research funding agency that promotes and supports research and training in the humanities and social sciences (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, n.d., para.1).
came up in the process, such as “what languages did they speak with Canadians and
Chinese during the visit? What have they learned about Canadian culture? Do they miss
Canada after the visit?” With a sense of inquiry (Clandinin, 2019), I realized that
language learning was only part of their lives, and I became more and more curious
about their lived experiences as a whole. Therefore, considering the current research gap,
my research interests and working experience as a research assistant, the purpose of this
study is three-fold:

1) to describe young Chinese visiting students’ translanguaging practices in their
international and cross-cultural experiences, including the changes over time;

2) to describe young Chinese visiting students’ bi-lingual/cultural acquisition in
their international and cross-cultural experiences;

3) to understand how young Chinese visiting students make sense of their
international and cross-cultural experiences by themselves.

Given the purpose of the study, I adopted Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000a)
narrative inquiry as the research methodology to provide important insights into three
research questions:

1) What are young Chinese visiting students’ translanguageing practices in their
international and cross-cultural experiences between Canada and China? Do they change
over time? If so, how?
2) What is young Chinese visiting students’ bi-lingual/cultural acquisition in their international and cross-cultural experiences?

3) How do the young Chinese visiting students make sense of their international and cross-cultural experiences through language and culture?

There are five main student participants in my research. With participants’ consents, including parental consents, field texts were collected via participant observation, field notes, semi-structured interviews, casual conversations, artifacts of children’s English schoolwork, drawings, and their diaries. Aside from the student participants, I also invited their parents and three Canadian contacts as supplementary informants whose information could help me understand the young Chinese visiting students’ lived experiences more comprehensively and narratively. Government official documents for English education in Ontario and China were also analyzed to provide background information about the sociopolitical context in two countries.

To transform field texts into research texts, I used Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000a) *three-dimensional narrative inquiry space* framework to analyze the narrative accounts, which were different from the discourse analysis in former studies of bilingual children’s translanguaging in classroom interactions (e.g., Duarte, 2019; García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017). I learned about the participant children’s past life and schooling experiences in China, the transition experiences during the short-term visit to Canada and the adaptation after they returned to China. Besides, I co-constructed participants’
narratives with them and let them lead the flow of their stories (Xu et al., 2007). Thus, their language practices and cultural acquisition were understood narratively through “a fluid inquiry” (S. Xu, 2017, p.12) into their complex and dynamic lived stories. The inquiry is fluid because the research methodology rests on Dewey’s philosophy that sees experience as ongoing, shifting and changing (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009). A fluid inquiry does not follow a set of linear steps but tolerates ambiguity (Schwab, 1969) as students’ experiences unfold in context over time (Craig, 2007). As Schwab (1962) highlights, it proceeds through uncertainty and “eventuates in knowledge that is contingent, dubitable, and hard to come by” (p. 5).

**Significance of the Study**

Based on the data provided by Statistics Canada (2022), 25% of the population’s mother tongue was not English or French in Canada and more than half a million Canadians spoke predominantly Mandarin at home. Canada has a rich linguistic diversity and Ontario is the “second-most linguistically diverse province in Canada” (Kubota & Bale, 2020, p. 778). Accordingly, the integration of bilingual and multilingual children who represent diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds into the school system is an urgent issue for educators (Statistics Canada, 2008). As classrooms nowadays are getting more and more culturally diverse and multilingual, the concept of translanguaging has been raised and has gained popularity in second language acquisition (Cenoz & Gorter, 2019; García & Kley, 2016; MacSwan, 2017). Nevertheless, the previous research so
far has not accounted for context-specific understandings of Chinese visiting children’s translanguaging practices (Darvin, 2019; Prada, 2019; W. Li, 2011) and bilingual/cultural acquisition in a short term (from three months to one year).

Although the population of Chinese immigrants was the second-largest foreign-born group in Canada (Statista Research Department, 2022) and many Chinese students on university campuses have received media attention (Basiri, 2021; Fisher, 2020; Todd, 2020), little has been reported on Chinese ELLs in K-12 private or public schools as well as those who come to Canada for a short period of time with their scholar parent. Chinese students tend to be an ignored group when it comes to discussions of academic struggles and program support (S. Xu, 2017). Qin (2008) thinks the main reason why young Chinese learners’ stories are often ignored is that people widely believe that they belong to “the model minority” who work hard and have excellent academic performances (p. 480). Nonetheless, the existing research on Chinese ELLs in Canada has discovered their settlement difficulties (L. Fang & Y. Huang, 2020; Sakamoto et al., 2009) such as discrimination at school (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2012), language barriers (Paradis et al., 2020), cultural differences (J. Li, 2009), identity issues (F. Wang, 2016), and acculturation (Sharir, 2002). A few qualitative studies explore Chinese immigrant students’ adaptation (Lee & Chen, 2000), and biliteracy in the home context (G. Li, 2012; Xu et al., 2007). For example, Shijing Xu (2017) presents a four-year study of immigrant Chinese family narratives of their cross-cultural schooling experiences in
Canada and finds that immigrants are often expected to adapt to the local culture and the adaption seems to be only one-way.

Meanwhile, in China, there is a trend of sending children abroad to study because pursuing quality education is parents’ paramount consideration (J. Li, 2001). Accordingly, a great many quantitative studies have noted the trend and covered multifaceted topics including the Chinese students’ motivation to study abroad (Cebolla-Boado et al., 2018), factors that influence their decision to choose a foreign higher education institution (James-MacEachern & Yun, 2017), psychological and sociocultural adjustments (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006), cross-cultural adaptation (Lee & Chen, 2000), and academic adaptation (Meng & Cao, 2018) and so on. These studies have provided valuable findings about Chinese students’ living experiences abroad from diverse perspectives.

Building upon the former studies, this narrative inquiry makes young Chinese visiting students’ international and cross-cultural experiences visible and gets their voices heard, with the hope that the research findings can provide some insights and implications for school education in both Canada and China, especially language education in the two countries. Moreover, the researcher hopes that parents and teachers can gain a better understanding of short-term experiences of studying abroad from young learners’ perspectives. In this way, young ELLs who “have a wide variety of strengths
and needs” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 5) can be fully seen, understood, known, and supported both in their own country and in Canada as the host country.

**Mapping the Thesis**

Chapter 1 is an overview of the study, including the background, purpose, research questions and significance. Chapter 2 examines the literature of previous studies on translanguaging, bi-lingual/cultural acquisition, Chinese visiting students as ELLs and reciprocal learning in international and cross-cultural studies to argue for the need to address the research gap. Besides, it defines the important theories and concepts that I used in my research. Chapter 3 outlines the theoretical framework and research methodology of my thesis, including how I designed the research, why I chose narrative inquiry as the research methodology, my positioning and role as well as the ethical considerations. Chapters 4 to 8 are the core parts of this thesis which tell and retell five main student participants’ stories. In Chapter 9, I unpack a few overarching themes and answer two important questions: “who cares?” and “so what?” (Clandinin, 2006a, p. 52). Chapter 10 restates the contribution of the thesis and relates the narratives to a broader field of second language acquisition and teacher education for implicating the research of bilingualism, and other educational practices in the culturally diverse and globalized educational context. It also points out the limitations of the research study I conducted, future directions, and my personal reflection on the way of learning to be a narrative inquirer.
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews and discusses the theories and concepts in the literature related to translanguaging and bilingualism, bi-lingual/cultural acquisition, research on Chinese English language learners (ELLs) and reciprocal learning in international and cross-cultural studies. By critically synthesizing previous studies related to my doctoral thesis and identifying the research gap, I will justify the need for my study.

Translanguaging: Origins, Development and Conceptualization

Today’s world is becoming more multicultural due to global socio-economic, political, and technological developments (Schwieter, 2011). Mass migration, exchange programs, study abroad and visiting scholars’ projects (Banting & Kymlicka, 2010; Berry, 2013) are forces that transform classrooms and local societies into multicultural learning environments (Holmes, 2006). Based on the data provided by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), “more than 50% of students in the TDSB speak a language other than English at home” (TDSB, 2013, as cited in Fellin, 2014, p. 8). With languages, communities, and cultures becoming hybridized (Canagarajah, 2006), increasing empirical evidence suggests that students have the tendency to draw from multiple available semiotic resources (Cummins, 2005b; Kiramba, 2017; Stille & Cummins, 2013) and flexibly use multiple languages in classrooms and social life. This pattern is known as “translanguaging” in the literature. Initially coined by Williams (1994), the Welsh term Trawsieithu describes a pedagogical practice where students are
asked to alternate the language of input with the language of output (García, 2013a). It was later translated into English as *translanguaging* by Baker (2011) to refer to “the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two languages” (p. 288).

Since the focus of translanguaging transforms the way people conceptualize languages, it is essential to discuss the view of language first. Structuralism suggest that language was a closed and steady symbolic system (Sturrock, 2008), while a cognitive perspective sees language more as a process rather than a noun. Swain (2009) uses “languaging” to “the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language” (p. 98). From languaging to translanguaging, Garcia and Li Wei (2014) refer the prefix *trans* to 1) trans-system/space in which the act of languaging goes “between systems that have been described as separate, and beyond them”; 2) “transformative” as new language practices are created; 3) “transdisciplinary” as it enables “speakers to go beyond traditional academic disciplines and conventional structures” (p. 42). The conceptualization of “trans” in translanguaging guides researchers to attend to speakers’ agency, creativity, and criticality as they move across time and space (W. Li, 2018; Zhu, 2015).

In recent years, more and more educators are developing translanguaging in different contexts and expanding it in new concepts. For example, Hlavac and Xu (2020) propose “translanguaging competence” of world Englishes speakers as “a competence
that involves ‘dynamic, embodied and mediated linguistic and cultural repertoires of multilingual users when they make sense of their worlds through languaging as an act and process of sense- and meaning-making across cultures’” (p. 20). Li Wei (2018) puts forward “translanguaging space” as

a space that is created by and for translanguaging practices, and a space where language users break down the ideologically laden dichotomies between the macro and the micro, the societal and the individual, and the social and the psychological through interaction (p. 23).

Apart from that, Li Wei (2018) also brings forward “Translanguaging Instinct” which emphasizes “the multisensory and multimodal process of language learning and language use” (p. 24). It enables people to “transcend culturally defined language boundaries to achieve effective communication” (p. 25). Those updated conceptualizations of translanguaging enable researchers to understand and interpret people’s language practices as part of human experiences in everyday social life from multiple angles.

**Translanguaging and Codeswitching**

Compared with translanguaging, people may be more familiar with the term “codeswitching” in bilingualism and multilingualism research. According to García (2013), codeswitching refers to a conscious process that is usually defined as the shift between two languages in context. The main difference between translanguaging and codeswitching is that the latter still sees languages as separate systems with clear boundaries while translanguaging sees languages as a continuum and a process (García,
Secondly, codeswitching research takes an outsider’s perspective and pays attention to the different codes of languages, instead of the speakers (García, 2009a). Translanguaging is concerned with how bilinguals use their entire language repertoire to make meaning, and how they communicate across languages and modes by combining all the multimodal semiotic signs at their disposal (García & W. Li, 2014).

From a sociolinguistic perspective, codeswitching is used by language speakers to reaffirm their identity as biculturals and bilinguals (Yim & Clément, 2021) though it is sometimes seen as a sign of linguistic and cognitive deficiency (García & Li, 2014). In recent years, codeswitching research mainly focuses on its use on the Internet (Hinrichs, 2006), the analysis of switching codes from anthropological and sociocultural perspectives (Heller, 2010), interaction and identity (Auer, 2013), conflicts in classroom codeswitching (W. Li & Martin, 2009). As Li Wei (2018) points out, codeswitching and translanguaging are different theoretical concepts and come from different origins. Translanguaging does not intend to “replace codeswitching” (W. Li, 2018, p. 27).

Whereas some researchers are still interested in codeswitching (H. Liu & Wei, 2022; Si & Mark, 2022), some other researchers are showing more interest in the process of meaning making and a holistic view of language use (Goodman & Tastanbek, 2021). I belong to the latter and support the viewpoint that bilinguals have only one integral linguistic repertoire instead of two separate language systems (MacSwan, 2022).

Besides, I am more intrigued by how children speak their minds through all languages
they know (Auer, 1999). As Bailey (2012) suggests, if the focus is social meanings instead of the code or language in use, it is not essential to ask whether a speaker is switching languages or speaking monolingually.

**Understanding Translanguaging from a Cognitive Perspective**

Translanguaging compels us to rethink the relationship between language and cognition which is not a one-named-language-one-thought pattern, but a more multidimensional manner (W. Li, 2018). In that sense, it can reveal the hidden processes of thinking and can help us to know more about bilingual children’s way of knowing the world and expressing themselves. In other words, by studying bilingual children’s translanguaging practices, researchers are more likely to understand children’s powerful learning mechanisms that “allow them to spontaneously revise and restructure their knowledge” (Gopnik et al, 1999, p. 7). Moreover, translanguaging is a cognition tool that mediates children’s thinking, word organization, and sense making of the world (Noormohamabi, 2008).

So far, most empirical research has found the positive impact of translanguaging on cognition and most of the findings are positive (Carroll & Morales, 2016; Kaufhold, 2018; Leonet et al., 2020; Rabbidge, 2019). However, in contrast to these research findings that recognize the potential of translanguaging, the English-Only and French-Only policies in some English language schools and bilingual programs are still popular in Canada (Cummins, 2014). Moreover, working with the Canadian International
Developmental Agency and other institutions, the Chinese National Educational Commission started the first immersion education program based on the Canadian Immersion program in China in 1997 (Qiang et al. 2011; Z. Xu, 2013). Since the 1990s, Chinese government and its local departments of education in many parts of China have been experimenting bilingual education and introducing English instruction in primary school or kindergarten (Hu, 2007; Z. Xu, 2013).

Amid such a trend, I observed the phenomenon of separate bilingualism (Creese & Blackledge, 2010) in some English classrooms in China when I was doing my master’s thesis on Chinese primary school students’ translanguaging practices. Some Chinese parents expected that their children not to speak Chinese in English class and develop the habit of “thinking in English.” Whereas, when the Chinese teacher was explaining grammar rules and the meanings of new words in English, some Chinese students would ask her to reexplain in Chinese because they did not understand. At that moment, I began to reflect on the goal of English language teaching (ELT) and became interested in the gap between Chinese students’ actual language practices in EFL classrooms and the official English-only policy in some English programs. As mentioned in Chapter 1, I was wondering whether children in the ESL context would flexibly make use of their bilingual or multilingual resources. What languages would they speak if they do not understand English words in conversations? If the Chinese visiting students stay in ESL classes in their host countries for one year, would their language practices change
over time? I wish to explore a series of questions and, if possible, examine the role of the first language (L1) in English language learning.

Actually, whether L1 could be spoken in EFL/ESL classrooms has been a heated debate in second language acquisition and foreign language education (Bell, 1995). Quite a few people think that L1 hinders learning L2, but more and more evidence in second language acquisition research reveals that “the more developed a person’s L1 is, the easier it becomes for them to develop additional languages alongside it” (McCracken, 2017, p. 22). With the accumulating research findings from disciplines related to English Language Teaching such as World Englishes, English as an International Language (EIL) and Cultural Linguistics, there has been a shift in how people perceive “the role of their first language and culture, from a ‘problem’ to a ‘resource’ that can be naturally ‘transferred’ into their English language learning and use” (Z. Xu, 2017a, p. 703).

Moreover, regarding the first language and culture as “a badge of linguistic and cultural heritage and identity” (Z. Xu, 2017a, p. 704), translanguaging “allows children to draw on all the languages they know to access new languages or communicate a message using more than one language” (McCracken, 2017, p. 23).

Main Trends in Translanguaging Research

With more than 50% of people globally speaking two or more languages, the understanding of bilingualism and the potential benefits of a bilingual approach to education have increased a great deal (Stoke, 2020). Situated within that background,
translanguaging was put forward in the 1990s and researchers have been exploring its practices in different classrooms with students from diverse countries, ethnic groups, and ages (Song, 2016; W. Li, 2011). According to the person who has translanguaging practices in educational settings, there are two types of translanguaging: teacher-lead translanguaging which means a planned and structured activity by the teacher (Williams, 2003) and students’ spontaneous use of translanguaging (Lewis et al, 2012). Since the participants of my study were young Chinese visiting students, I mainly review students’ translanguaging research here and identify four main trends in this area.

First, researchers have investigated classroom discourses to understand the role of translanguaging in supporting bilinguals and multilingual students’ academic literacy, academic performance, and language awareness (Cummins, 2015b; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García et al., 2017; García & Kleyn, 2016; García & Li, 2014; García & Lin, 2017; Lin & He, 2017). For example, students engage in translanguaging to build conceptual knowledge, generate interest, and peer interaction, and scaffold writing and discussion (Stille et al., 2016). There is increasing evidence of the benefits of translanguaging for developing students’ confidence, explaining grammar structures and vocabulary items, retaining heritage languages (Carstens, 2016; Madiba, 2014; Zavala, 2019), enhancing creativity and cognitive flexibility, conveying meaning and engaging audience (Canagarajah, 2011; Childs, 2016; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García, 2013b; Paulsrud et al., 2017). Meanwhile, more and more researchers are concerned about how
the rich and varied resources that students bring to the classroom can be leveraged and how translanguaging as a tool affords meaning within communities (Pacheco, 2016).

Secondly, researchers are interested in translanguaging and its relationship to biliteracy practices (Hopewell & Escamilla, 2014), social justice (Garcia, 2009b), cultural identities (W. Li & Zhu, 2013) and ideologies from a macro view (W. Li, 2011; Song, 2016). This type of study is contextualized in a period when issues of inequity and marginalization are emerging in multicultural societies (Darvin & Norton, 2021). Thus, the research in this stream aims at legitimizing translanguaging in bilingual programs and asking for equity and protection of minority languages in culturally and linguistically diverse countries like America and U.K. in which there are more and more multilingual speakers (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Findings in this trend inform that the value of translanguaging goes much beyond pedagogy and learning to include linguistic and cultural identity construction (W. Li, 2014a, 2014b). They reflect “post-structuralist thinking and a more critical consideration of the role that power relations, based on the nation-state and colonialism, play in language ideologies” (Poza, 2017, p. 106).

The previous two trends of research call for more space for translanguaging while some studies attend to students’ attitudes toward immersion programs and teachers’ perceptions of mixing languages in the classroom via questionnaires, and interviews. For example, Macaro and Lee (2013) investigate the perceptions of English-only instruction among 798 South Korean English language learners. The findings indicate that neither
university students nor children in South Korea favor the total exclusion of the first language from classroom interaction (Macaro & Lee, 2013). Fourthly, the latest translanguaging research shows interest in multimodality (Canals, 2021; Ho, 2022), social media (Ren & Y. Guo, 2022), multiliteracies (Prada, 2022), deaf students’ use of semiotic repertoire (Iturriaga & Young, 2022), ICT competence (Ou et al., 2022) and other multifaceted topics in classrooms, workplaces, and broader landscapes. For example, Williams (2022) investigates how fifth-grade bilinguals took use of their semiotic repertoires to translanguage in content-based lessons. The study reveals that gestures and oral modes mediate language and content learning.

In short, the four streams attend to different topics related to translanguaging, but they all reflect the core spirit of translanguaging, which includes “the full range of linguistic and semiotic performances of multilingual language users, the alternation between systems, the transmission of information, and the representation of values, identities and relationships” (W. Li, 2018, p. 1222). Besides, they demonstrate the great potential and vitality of translanguaging when it is applied to a wide range of contexts for different interests.

As for the theoretical framework used in the field of translanguaging, researchers mainly draw on sociocultural theory (Engeström, 1987; Mercer, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978), decolonization (Lau, 2020; Rajendram, 2022) and ecological theory (Haugen, 1972) to interpret how translanguaging is positively employed in bilingual programs for literacy
development and explore pedagogical strategies for students engaging in bilingual language practices (Duarte, 2019; Melinda, 2014; Palmer et al., 2014). For instance, Lau (2020) conducts action research about Malawian teachers’ critical approaches to ESL classrooms and discloses that class interactions still show ingrained coloniality, which warns researchers of English hegemony in the global discourse. Besides, researchers are reflecting on more issues such as who has the right to define the standard language, and what values and power relations can be revealed from the linguistic and cultural knowledge taught in everyday classrooms. As Zhichang Xu (2004) articulates, as English becomes the actual lingua franca around the world, “the issues of who speaks what English to whom, when and where, are of increasing importance to language learners, teachers and researchers” (p. 287).

To sum up, previous studies have spared no efforts to present the benefits of blending languages in pedagogical contexts from the sociolinguistic and ecological view with the main purpose of rationalizing translanguaging within bilingual classrooms (García & Li, 2014; Lin & He, 2017), challenging inequities caused by monolingual discourses and empowering language minoritized students (Rajendram, 2021). However, former studies about hybrid language practices in educational settings, families, and society (Alvarez, 2014; Garcia et al., 2014; Zhao & Flewitt, 2020) mainly concentrate on teachers, immigrant children, university international students and ethnic minorities, but there is a dearth of research on young language learners’ translanguaging in a
transnational context. As one group of bilingual children, Chinese visiting scholars’ children are an understudied group in previous studies of translanguaging. What role does translanguaging play in their adaptation to a new environment? When would translanguaging occur and with whom? Those questions are still less examined in previous research. Having said all above, it will be critical to study the translanguaging practices of Chinese visiting scholars’ children as young ELLs with narrative inquiry.

**Bilingual and Bicultural Acquisition**

*Bilingualism, Multilingualism, Multilinguals and Bilinguals*

Since the practice of translanguaging is embedded in a theory of dynamic bilingualism that draws from different contexts (García, 2009b; García et al., 2017), it is imperative to define bilingualism to clarify how translanguaging is situated in academic studies. Bilingualism in the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2022) refers to 1) the ability to speak two languages, 2) the frequent use of two languages, 3) the political or institutional recognition of two languages (Definition of bilingualism, para. 1-3). The term can refer to individuals as well as to an entire society (W. Li & Moyer, 2009). In Canada, bilingualism means the ability to communicate, or the practice of communicating in English and French, which are Canada’s official languages (Cooper, 2019). In my research, the participant children’s bilingual acquisition during the international and cross-cultural learning journey refers to Chinese and English because most of them did not go to French-immersion schools or take French classes during their visit. It is well
worth mentioning that bilingualism is not double monolingualism, but a dynamic continuum that relates to language speakers’ linguistic repertoire (Garcia, 2009a; García et al., 2017). Similar to the definition of bilingualism, the Macmillan Dictionary (2022) defines multilingualism as “the use of more than two languages by a person or group” (Definition of multilingualism, para. 1).

Apart from the definition of bilingualism and multilingualism, a brief review of the research on bilingualism will be helpful to know how this field of study has evolved over time and the historical background in which translanguaging came into being. The study of bilingualism can be traced back to the middle of the 20th century. At first, people thought it was a burden to learn more than one language. For instance, a few studies comparing the vocabulary performance of bilinguals and monolinguals conclude that bilinguals know fewer words in one of their languages than comparable monolingual speakers (Bialystok, 2001). One breakthrough in the field is the research done by Peal and Lambert (1962), who discovered the positive effects of bilingualism on the intellectual functioning of children from a large-scale assessment. The participants were 10-year-old schoolchildren from six French schools under the jurisdiction of the Catholic School Commission of Montreal. Different from previous findings, this study posits that “bilinguals performed significantly better than monolinguals on both verbal and nonverbal intelligence tests” (Peal & Lambert, 1962, p. 1). In recent years, more and more research on bilingualism has proven that bilinguals can do better in metacognition,
problem-solving, executing functions and inhibiting interference information during reading (Blumenfeld & Marian, 2011; Carlson & Meltzoff, 2008).

As an expert in the field of bilingualism and bilingual education, Cummins (1981) raises the threshold theory which hypothesizes the positive benefits of bilingualism will accrue when students reach a level of balanced bilingualism. Cummins has also identified the two major aspects that a bilingual must acquire: Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). BICS mainly includes the vocabulary of conversations in daily life while CALP contains many specialized words and gets correlated with academic success (Cummins, 2000). Cummins points out that children’s mastery of BICS does not mean they can move toward CALP (Cummins, 1999). A second language learner can reach BICS within at most two years but have to spend five to seven years in acquiring CALP in English (Cummins, 2008). The clear difference between BICS and CALP may help to analyze and explain the learning difficulties that the young Chinese visiting students had during their stay in Canada.

As the literature presents, bilingualism and multilingualism are often related to bilinguals and multilinguals. Based on the definition given by the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2022), “multilinguals” refers to “those using or able to use several languages especially with equal fluency, or those having, or expressed in several languages” (Definition of multilingual, para. 1-2). According to Merriam-Webster’s dictionary
(2022), bilinguals are those who “use or are able to use two languages especially with equal fluency” (Definition of bilingual, para.1). However, speaking two languages at the same level of fluency can be a difficult task for some people. For instance, the Chinese children in my research are not balanced bilinguals since the language level of their mother tongue, i.e., Chinese is better than their foreign language, English. Thus, Pontier and Gort (2016) use the term “emergent bilinguals” to describe “young children (aged three to five years) who are in the dynamic process of developing bilingual and biliterate competencies with the support of their families, schools, and communities” (p. 89). According to the definition, some Chinese visiting scholars’ children in my research can be regarded as emergent bilingual children. They were not able to speak or understand English when arriving in Canada as kindergarten children but were able to speak some English when they left. During their stay in Canada, they were also developing their mother tongue, Mandarin.

**A Review of Bi-lingual/cultural Acquisition**

It is significant to differentiate the terms “acquisition” and “learning” before I review the literature of bi-lingual/cultural acquisition because the two terms can be confusing sometimes. According to Krashen (1981), acquisition is the product of a subconscious process that children have experienced when they acquire their first language while language learning needs formal instruction and consists of a conscious process.
There is a growing awareness of the importance of bilingualism and multilingualism in the internationally oriented world today, and the interest in crosslinguistic studies of language acquisition is also increasing (De Houwer, 2017). Accordingly, bilingual acquisition research has gained much development and the topics cover a wide range of issues such as parental strategies in early bilingual acquisition (Juan-Garau & Pérez, 2001), the role of input (Unsworth et al., 2014), comparison between the monolingual and bilingual acquisition of English (Gathercole, 2002), the interaction of phonological systems in child bilingual acquisition (Lleó & Kehoe, 2002), biliteracy practices in the home context (G. Li, 2006) and so on. For example, Cenoz and Genesee (2001) provide a comprehensive overview of the research on early phonological, lexical, syntactic, and pragmatic development in children acquiring two languages simultaneously. The updated research findings contribute to a more detailed description of vital aspects of bilingual development than previously and have clarified some parents’ concerns about bilingual acquisition such as the delay in language development and the confusion between two languages (De Houwer, 2009; Genesee, 2002; Hoff, 2018).

With the accumulating research findings from bilingual acquisition, more and more people begin to realize that acquiring a language is not just about acquiring a formal rule system, it is also about becoming a member of a culture (Werker et al., 1981). In that sense, bilinguals are also biculturals.
When it comes to bicultural acquisition, there are several issues that have been frequently illustrated in previous research. The first one is intercultural awareness (Knutson, 2006) which has been seen as an essential part of language teaching (Baker, 2008). Research interests often lie in investigating the integration of intercultural awareness into classroom pedagogy (Baker, 2012) and providing resources for foreign language teachers and learners on how to develop intercultural awareness (Cakir, 2006).

The second issue is exploring the relationship between language and culture. This is a complicated topic, but most scholars basically agree that language is one of the most important means of symbolizing and internalizing culture (Cakir, 2006; Chen & Bond, 2010; Ji et al., 2004; Nguyen & Ahmadpanah, 2014). According to Zhichang Xu (2017a), the relationship between language and cultural conceptualisations is explored in Cultural Linguistics as a multidisciplinary area of research which attempts to “examine how various language features reflect and embody culture” (p. 704). It tries to comprehend language “as a subsystem of culture” and investigate how diverse language “features reflect and embody culture” (Z. Xu, 2017a, p. 704). Agar (1994) creates a new term “languaculture” to argue that using a language includes background knowledge and local information except for grammar and vocabulary. According to Agar (2006), culture is relational and “links a source languaculture, LC1, to a target languaculture, LC2” (p. 7). Risager (2005) regards languaculture is a key concept in understanding languages as social and cultural phenomena.
There are different research questions and paradigms that are undertaken to investigate the relationship between language and culture. The languages that researchers use to articulate the research findings also vary. For example, Gao (2002) proposes a “1 + 1 > 2” second language acquisition model, which claims that language acquisition is also cultural acquisition. She also articulates that some English language learners will feel more appreciative of their own mother tongue culture and more sensitive to its features than monolinguals (Gao, 2002).

However, it seems that many English language teachers in Asia focus more on improving students’ linguistic and communicative competence rather than intercultural competence (Fang, 2010; Zhang & Wang, 2012). Thus, Zhichang Xu (2014a) advises Asian speakers ought to “understand cultural conceptualisations and develop metacultural competence for intercultural communication” (p. 173). Furthermore, in Chinese academia, there is an increasing publication about assessing and cultivating intercultural communicative competence (Dong, 2009; Song & Fu, 2004; Yao & Du-Babcock, 2020). But most of them are interested in cultivating Chinese university students’ intercultural communicative competence through English courses in higher education (Ge & Wang, 2016; Hu, 2011; Qu & Dou, 2014) with less attention paid to the group of primary school students or middle school students.

The third aspect is the acculturation of immigrants, especially the cognitive and emotional effects of biculturalism and bilingualism for immigrants. For example,
Bacallao and Smokowski (2005) recount Latino immigrants’ second culture acquisition and they observe that biculturalism seems to be a protective factor that reduces assimilation stress, improves sociocognitive functioning and helps with academic achievement.

To summarize, the fruitful findings of bilingual acquisition, bicultural socialization, communicative competence, blending of cultures, identities, and involvement (Chuang, 1998; Nguyen & Ahmadpanah, 2014; Saville-Troike, 1981; Weisman, 2001; X. Guo et al., 2009) have drawn a vivid picture of how language and culture are intertwined. Not much research, however, has specifically explored young Chinese ELLs’ bilingual and bicultural acquisition in an international and cross-cultural context. The next section will take a closer look at the research on English language learners, especially young Chinese visiting students who are the participants in my research.

**Chinese English Language Learners**

According to the Ontario Ministry of Education (2007), ELLs include “newcomers from other countries, as well as children born in Canada and raised in families or communities where languages other than English are spoken” (p. 5). Apart from ESL and EFL (See Chapter 1), there are some other terms to refer to this field (e.g., EIL, ESP, EAL, ELF, ENL) focusing on the need to learn English, and on the teaching
and learning of English specifically. Here I will outline the brief definition of those terms to illustrate the difference and clarify what is special about my participants as ELLs.

The first term is EIL which refers to English as an international language. It means a form of English that is used by people whose first language is not English (Macmillan dictionary, 2022). The second term is ESP (English for Specific Purposes) includes students who are learning English in the context of a certain field, profession, or topic (Belcher, 2009). The third one is EAL which stands for English as an additional language. EAL is a contemporary term that acknowledges that students are already competent speakers of at least one home language (Cummins & Davison, 2007). The fourth term ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) refers to the “way different language ideologies construct English locally” (Pennycook, 2010, p. 681). The last one ENL means English as a native language, but Kirkpatrick and Zhichang Xu (2002) think communication with native speakers are not likely to be “the primary goal for learning English, expect for a minority of users” (p. 278) because the number of non-native speakers continues to rapidly increase nowadays.

I choose the term ELLs to describe Chinese visiting scholars’ children for three reasons and the main reason has been mentioned in Chapter 1. That is the participants are called EFL students when they are in China, and ESL students when they are in Canada. If I use either of the terms (EFL or ESL), it may be unclear which context I have referenced. Secondly, both EFL and ESL may be politically charged (Z.C. Zhang,
personal communication, July 1, 2021), so it is better to avoid the subordinative sense of
expressing English as a language. Thirdly, “ELL” is often mentioned for English
language learning in Canada, and it is used by the Ontario Ministry of Education (2007).
It fits with the context where my participant children studied during the visit. Out of
those reasons, I prefer using the term ELLs to describe the young Chinese visiting
students who are the participants in my research.

Next, I am going to review the three main types of Chinese ELLs overseas:
Chinese international students, young Chinese visiting students and Chinese immigrant
children, which have covered the main groups in the previous research on Chinese ELLs.
The categorization comes from the participant group of former studies and my
observation when I study in Canada.

**Chinese International Students**

Until 2017, Chinese students represented the largest group of international
students in Canada with 74,260 Chinese students studying at Canadian universities,
16,895 in colleges, 28,540 in secondary schools, and 2,715 in primary schools (J. Zhang,
2019). Past studies on Chinese international students have extensively explored their
learning experiences (Zhang, 2014), mentorship (Shen, 2018) motivations for studying
abroad (Chirkov, 2009), sense of belonging in postsecondary institutions (Chen & Zhou,
2019), intercultural communication competence (Meng, 2019; Naoko et al., 2016; Yang
& Mike, 2013), challenges and expectations (Zhou et al., 2017), engagement as
university students (Meng, 2020) and acculturation (Kuo & Roysircar, 2006). For example, Ju Huang et al. (2022) make a narrative inquiry into three Chinese international students’ academic experiences in Canadian universities and find that cultural differences, the first language, and the individuals’ agency influenced how they adjusted to the Canadian academic context (J. Huang et al., 2022). Those qualitative studies of Chinese international students (F. Wang, 2016; G. Zhou et al., 2020; L. Fang & Y. Huang, 2020) have examined the role of identity (Chen, 2014), learning experiences for preparing for tests (Zhang & Beck, 2014), negotiation of academic culture (Windle et al., 2008) and the intercultural challenges (God & Zhang, 2019) in pluricultural classrooms.

In addition to that, many quantitative studies distribute large-scale surveys to investigate Chinese international students’ expectations and academic adaptations (Li et al., 2021; Meng et al., 2018), perspectives of academic policy (Chen, 2020), loneliness and attachment (DiTommaso et al., 2005), social support (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2012), mental health (Lian & Wallace, 2020). For example, by collecting data from the survey, focus group discussion and interviews, Zhang and Zhou (2010) have studied the perspectives, expectations, and experiences of Chinese internationals in the graduate and undergraduate programs at a Canadian university. They conclude that students’ adjustment is related to their “English language proficiency, previous education background, communication with other students and understanding of local culture” (Zhang & Zhou, 2010, p. 43).
To summarize, the previous research on Chinese international students provides broader contextual information and helps to understand their experiences from different perspectives. But a closer look at the literature may reveal several gaps in this field. First, the participants are mainly Chinese college and university students as well as young international students who come to study in secondary schools in Canada with an aim to attend Canadian universities. Very few are young Chinese ELLs in Canada. Second, there is a lack of narrative studies focusing on Chinese international students’ language practices in transnational experiences. Third, some studies regard international students as deficient and vulnerable without discussing their agency and active participation in local communities, learning activities and translanguaging practices. How do Chinese children themselves make sense of the transnational space? Those specific issues are seldom discussed in the previous literature.

As I mentioned in previous sections, some Chinese parents believe that immersing children in the target-language environment is helpful to master the new language because children can naturally acquire English language and culture unconsciously easily (Park, 2009; Song, 2016; Zou, 2021). Besides, Chinese parents usually devote much time and energy to their children’s education and have high expectations because of the traditional Chinese culture which emphasizes the importance of learning (Dyson, 2005; Maehler et al., 2020; Yao, 2015). Hence, some of them tend to send children abroad for more advanced western education (Yang et al., 2020) or choose
English-immersion programs for their children (Trend: Chinese are sending their kids to study abroad, 2016). They are keen on registering in foreign teachers’ classes to let their children be immersed in a pure-English environment (Qiang & Siegel, 2012; Xiong & Feng, 2018). Nevertheless, among Chinese ELLs overseas, young Chinese visiting students’ language learning stories have been paid much less attention in former studies. Therefore, I wish to contribute to this field by building on what scholars have done and by adopting narrative inquiry as the research methodology to understand young Chinese visiting students’ international and cross-cultural experiences over a period.

**Young Chinese Visiting Students**

Before I review the papers about young Chinese visiting students, i.e., Chinese visiting scholars’ children, I would like to introduce the group of Chinese visiting scholars as they are the parents of my participants, and it is impossible to comprehensively understand the children’s stories without the understanding of their family. In Chapter 1, I have briefly introduced who they are but here I will elaborate more on this group. Visiting scholars refer to “scientists and professors who attend universities in other countries to engage temporarily in research or teaching, while also maintaining their affiliation and position at their home universities and returning after their visiting period ends” (Shimmi, 2014, p. 9). They already have doctoral degrees or are professionally trained (Yukiko, 2014).
With the increasing need for national socio-economic and scientific development, more and more Chinese university professors have been sent to western countries including the United States, Canada, and Britain for short-term scholarly visits (Rui, 2014; Xue et al., 2015). To “support Chinese visiting scholars’ professional development, facilitate their socialization to the international academic community, and build world-class universities” (Xue et al., 2015, p. 290), the Chinese Scholarship Council (CSC) was established in 1996 and it is the Chinese Ministry of Education's non-profit organization (CSC, 2022).

According to the Open Doors report (IIE, 2016), China was the top-one country to send scholars abroad to engage in visiting scholar programs from 2015 to 2016 with 44,490 visiting scholars (Fedoruk, 2018). Since visiting scholars from China are among the largest group of researchers in the world to engage in international programs and activities (Fedoruk, 2018), there are some studies about Chinese faculty studying abroad. They mainly discuss mobility (Zou, 2017), professional development (Fedoruk, 2018), academic outcomes and adjustment (Liu & Jiang, 2015; R. Zhao, 2008), collaboration among universities, communities, and Chinese visiting scholars (Miller & Blachford, 2012), and the impact of the cross-cultural learning experiences on their teaching practices after they return to China (Bano, 2020). For example, Han (2020b) remarks on Chinese visiting scholars’ translanguaging on WeChat and adds that it has the functions
of constructing identities as language learners and global citizens and satisfaction as cultural brokers.

Despite a large number of visiting scholars globally, Chinese visiting scholars have received limited attention in academic research (Ai, 2019; Xue et al., 2015). Therefore, there is less research about their children’s lived experiences as young ELLs. Only Han (2020a) notices that some Chinese visiting scholars regularly gather on weekends to find playmates for their children. Due to the difficulty of making friends with the local American children in the neighborhood, these Chinese visiting scholars would arrange weekly special activities for their children to play together and speak Chinese (Han, 2020a).

To sum up, there are very few studies about Chinese visiting scholars’ children who attend Canadian schools as international students. Their schooling time in Canada is shorter compared with that of Chinese immigrant children and Chinese international students in universities and secondary schools, but likewise, they still go to Canadian schools and experience diverse cultures and educational systems during their stay in Canada. In this sense, my doctoral research on Chinese visiting children’s international and cross-cultural experiences may provide implications for Canadian schools in terms of supporting young ELLs, especially in their transition.
Chinese Immigrant Children

Canada is becoming one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse countries in the world, with China being the top source of newcomers (J. Zhang, 2010). According to Statistics Canada (2021), in 2019, China was the second top source country for new permanent residents (30,000). In the international academic community, studies of Chinese immigrant children constitute a rising trend. Although the participants of my research are not immigrant children, it is still meaningful to review the prevailing trends in the research area of Chinese immigrant children as their experiences (Xie & Liu, 2018; Yang & Wang, 2016) may contribute to my understanding of young Chinese visiting students’ international and cross-cultural experiences between Canada and China. For example, there may be some similarities and differences between Chinese immigrant children and Chinese visiting children when it comes to the challenges or difficulties they meet in Canada. But their mindset may be different because Chinese immigrant children will experience a longer time of acculturation (Bourhis et al., 1997).

Since immigration is a vast research field in which educators, psychologists, social scientists, and people from different areas have been working for decades, I will briefly review the prevailing trends, main theories, and methodologies in the study of Chinese immigrant children in the following paragraphs.
Prevailing Trends in the Study of Chinese Immigrant Children. Based on my reading, these studies can be classified into four major categories. The first type is the analysis of Chinese immigrant parents’ expectations or involvement in their children’s education (Li, 2001; Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002) and family language policy (Lan, 2009; J. Li, 2009; Qin, 2009). For instance, in a qualitative study, Zhou et al. (2020) identify five avenues through which Chinese immigrant parents got involved in their children’s education: “participating in activities focused on school subjects, providing a rationale behind their children’s academic focus, supporting extracurricular activities, fostering basic life skills and providing moral education” (p. 1).

The second aspect is the analysis of Chinese immigrant children’s literacy development, intercultural communication, academic achievement, and language maintenance (Blumenfeld & Marian, 2011; Carlson & Meltzoff, 2008; J. Dong & Y. Dong, 2013; G. Li, 2003; Luo & Wiseman, 2002; Zhou, 2014). For example, by drawing on a narrative study of Chinese newcomer families in Canada, Shijing Xu (2011) posits that educational researchers and school practitioners in Canada can learn from the generational family narratives in cultivating “we-consciousness” in diversity (p. 224). The term “we-consciousness” was put forward by Hall and Ames (1999) and it was used in Shijing Xu’s discussion on the Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Program (S.

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This group does not include Chinese children on short visits such as those who are participating in my research.
Xu, 2019) to highlight “intercultural, global competences wherein cultures learn, work, and live together with mutual respect and appreciation in a globally extended and expanded ‘we’” (S. Xu, 2019, p. 725). As Shijing Xu (2017) stresses, acknowledge the role of newcomers as contributors helps to form a mutual “we-ness” among culturally and linguistically diverse communities (p. 252).

The third stream is the summary of the challenges that Chinese immigrant children encounter and the construction of self-identity (Q. Wang, 2006; Ye, 2016). The fourth trend is the exploration of Chinese immigrant children’s adaptability, integration, and acculturation (Cummins, 1981; Lee & Chen, 2000; Sung, 1984; Yeh et al., 2008; Zou, 2002). For example, Sharir (2002) investigates the impact of acculturation strategy, demographic factors, and migration-related variables on the psychological adjustment and family relationships of 152 first-generation Chinese immigrant youth. It reveals that generational differences exist in psychological adjustment and first-generation adolescents report family conflict because of different acculturation strategies.

Main Theories and Methodologies Used in Immigrant Studies. Three significant theories that are frequently used in Chinese immigrant studies are summarized here. The first one is acculturation theory which has been mentioned when reviewing literature about bicultural acquisition. Acculturation consists of four stages when individuals move to a new environment: “marginalization, assimilation, integration, and separation” (Berry, 1997, p. 24).
The second theory that is often used in immigrant studies is social constructivism which emphasizes the understanding of how “interdependent individual and social processes” contributes to human psychological functioning in certain “sociocultural, historical, and institutional contexts” (J. Li, 2009, p. 478). For example, Fang and Huang (2020) use constructivist grounded theory to unpack how Chinese youth in Canada navigate and negotiate their cultural identities. Their findings reveal the fluid nature of cultural identity development in the context of immigration.

The third theory is Bourdieu’s conceptualization of capital which proposes four forms of capital, i.e., economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital that individuals accumulate for gaining a higher position within their field (Bourdieu, 1986, 1997). For example, using Bourdieu's (1986) concepts of capital, field, habitus, and distinction, Cui (2015) interviewed 36 first- and second-generation Chinese Canadian youth in Canada to examine how racism affects the identity construction of Chinese youth in different schools. Overall, Bourdieu’s capital theory has been a popular concept to interpret migration and mobility (Střelcová et al., 2022).

In terms of methodologies, many studies use quantitative methods to perform large-scale surveys on immigrants’ cultural identity and the degree of discrimination in Canada (Maehler et al., 2020; Oxman-Martinez et al., 2012). Meanwhile, some studies use qualitative methods such as case study (Luo & Wiseman, 2000) and phenomenology (F. Wang, 2016) to analyze individuals’ language maintenance and cultural identities.
Narrative inquiry has also been used in research on immigrant children (e.g., Chan, 2009; Clandinin et al., 2011; Connelly et al., 2003; Phillion, 2008; Xu et al., 2007).

To summarize, research on Chinese immigrant children to date has focused on issues such as adjustment and assimilation (Sung, 1984), language maintenance and practices (Curdt-Christiansen, 2004; Luo & Wiseman, 2000), family relations (Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002), schooling experiences (Xu et al., 2007), and identity in classrooms (W. Li, 2014). Moreover, many previous studies on Chinese immigrants have been conducted in the United States and Australia (Cheah et al., 2013; D. Zhang, 2010; Luo & Wiseman, 2000), with much fewer conducted in Canada (Dyson, 2005; J. Li, 2004; S. Xu, 2006; Zhou & Zhong, 2018).

Overall, the research on Chinese international students, Chinese immigrant children and Chinese visiting students has largely unfolded the landscape of Chinese ELLs living and studying overseas. Building on previous studies, my study contributes to translanguaging and bi-lingual/cultural acquisition of the Chinese visiting students as young ELLs during their international and cross-cultural visit between Canada and China by doing a narrative inquiry. Since my doctoral research is contextualized in Drs. Xu and Connelly’s (2013-2020) “Canada-China Reciprocal Learning Partnership Project” (S. Xu, 2019, p. 703), it is necessary to review the publications about reciprocal learning in international and cross-cultural studies.
Reciprocal Learning in the International and Cross-cultural Studies

The idea of reciprocal learning comes from Dr. Xu’s fieldwork on newcomer Chinese education in Toronto and it emphasizes the contribution made by newcomers in shaping a we-ness community (S. Xu, 2017). As Shijing Xu (2006) points out, self-cultivation in Pragmatism and Confucianism (Hall & Ames, 1999) can enable Easterners and Westerners to include one another in the term “we” (Xu, 2006, p. 242).

According to Shijing Xu (2019), “reciprocal learning is both a concept and an approach for international and cross-cultural teacher education and school education and to present the learning outcomes and educational significance of the East-West reciprocal learning programme in teacher education” (p. 703). It is “built around the metaphor of a two-way bridge in which two-way learning occurs” and it “suggests two or more parties involved in learning from one another with mutual appreciation, understanding and respect” (Connelly & Xu, 2019, p. 628). With this concept and excellent schoolwork in the former years, Dr. Xu and Dr. Michael Connelly got the SSHRC funding for a 7-year Reciprocal Learning Partnership between Canada and China from 2013 to 2020 to appreciate different educational experiences from teachers and gain mutual understanding (S. Xu, 2017; Connelly & Xu, 2019). Thus, in the past ten years, the topics in these papers related to the Partnership Project have covered a wide range of issues such as cross-cultural teacher development (Howe & Xu, 2013; Huang & Xu, 2015), pre-service teachers’ Chinese learning (Deng, 2019), English teachers in China
(Xu & Connelly, 2009), academic support in middle school (Stropkovics, 2019), reciprocal learning in mathematics education (Peng et al., 2018), Chinese pre-service science teachers’ cross-cultural experiences (C. Liu, 2019), Canadian inquiry-based science teaching practices (Salinitri et al., 2018), school-based research (Xu & Connelly, 2010), and Chinese socialism in the middle school curriculum (Miller, 2019). They have made a great contribution to the Partnership Grant Project and closely observed how teachers learn and develop themselves in transcultural experience. Moreover, Reciprocal Learning as an exemplar offers useful direction for comparative curriculum studies (Connelly & Xu, 2020; Craig, 2020), education for citizenship (Khoo, 2018), cross-cultural mathematics education (Zhu et al., 2020) and so on.

Though the Project has generated fruitful discussion about the many significant educational issues mentioned above, there is still much work to do in the future. Firstly, what happens after the participants take part in the program is not fully explored in published papers. For example, there is not much follow-up research about Chinese student teachers’ personal practical knowledge after they formally become a teacher in China (Huang & Xu, 2015). In my research, some student participants’ parent(s) came to Canada through the Canada-China Reciprocal Learning Partnership Project (Connelly & Xu, 2019; Xu, 2019; Xu & Connelly, 2017). How do these Chinese visiting scholars’ children adapt to life and learning in China after the visit to Canada? Does the visit influence the Chinese children’s bi-lingual/cultural acquisition in China? These key
questions have not been well addressed in previous research. Luckily, the working experience in Dr. Xu and Dr. Connelly’s Project provides me with the opportunity to get to know a group of Chinese visiting scholars and their children who are much less studied in previous research on Chinese ELLs and translinguaging. Meanwhile, the number of ELLs who come to Canada for a short period of time is increasing (Council of Ontario Directors of Education, 2020) and Chinese visiting scholars’ children are a typical example of this group.

Secondly, future research can further explore how reciprocal learning happens among Chinese and Canadian students. The previous publication of the project mainly focuses on sister schoolwork and pre-service teacher education. Understanding Canadian and Chinese culture and education from children’s perspectives is an unexplored but meaningful research topic.

Summary

With the trend of globalization and the development of the Chinese economy, more and more Chinese parents tend to send their children abroad for better education and believe that their children can acquire new languages in a short time (Hu & Hagedorn, 2014). Some Chinese parents take the chance of being visiting scholars in foreign countries for a short term to bring their children to experience different cultures and education. However, current research has been mainly about describing the general trends of Chinese international students’ studying abroad and investigating their
language development, self-identity, critical thinking, acculturation and parents’ involvement (Blumenfeld & Marian, 2011; Carlson & Meltzoff, 2008; Dyson, 2005; F. Wang, 2016; Lan, 2009; Li, 2009; Zhou et al., 2020). So far, researchers in the field of translanguaging have concentrated on exploring teachable pedagogic resources for bilingual education (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Pacheco, 2016), surveying students’ perceptions of translanguaging in classrooms, multimodal translinguaging and identity issues, rather than the dynamic language practices of young Chinese visiting students outside the classroom. Therefore, situated within the Reciprocal Learning Partnership, my doctoral research aims to fill the gap by studying Chinese visiting scholars’ children in the international and cross-cultural visit, especially their translanguaging practices and bi-lingual/cultural acquisition in the process.

To summarize, Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature, engages in academic conversations and explains how I am going to constructively build on previous research. More importantly, it tries to answer the prime questions: why did I choose Chinese visiting scholars’ children as the participants, instead of other groups? What makes them special and who may benefit from my research? The next chapter will illustrate my understanding of narrative inquiry, research design and procedures as well as the theoretical framework that guides and supports the research.
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I first describe the key conceptualizations in narrative inquiry and clarify why it is an appropriate research methodology to portray young Chinese visiting students’ international and cross-cultural experiences. Then I introduce the research design and procedures, explain the ethical issues, and describe my role and how I position myself in the study. After that, I illustrate how I use the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Connelly, 2004) as a framework to examine the translanguaging practices and bi-lingual/cultural acquisition in my participants’ lived experiences.

Narrative Inquiry as the Methodology

Qualitative research aims to understand participants’ lived experiences, practices, and behaviors and to explain complicated phenomena in depth (Costa & Kallick, 1993; Rahman, 2020). It is inductive and aims at coming to an understanding of the dynamic meanings of a social or human problem in a given situation (Levitt et al., 2017; Maxwell, 2013). To understand young Chinese visiting students’ translanguaging and bi-lingual/cultural acquisition in the international and cross-cultural experiences, this study employs a qualitative design. To be more specific, I used narrative inquiry to make sense of meanings that the participants bring to me (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) to capture the participants’ personal and social experiences as they cross the cultural borders.
Narrative inquiry is the study of how people experience the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) and narrative researchers collect stories and write narratives of experience (Moen, 2006). As Xu and Connelly (2009) state, “story is a gateway, a portal, for narrative inquiry into meaning and significance” (p. 356). However, narrative inquiry is not merely storytelling. Talking about stories is a way of creating meaning in our lives and enlisting “each other’s help in building our lives and communities” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 479).

Narrative inquiry was an appropriate methodology to study young Chinese visiting students’ translinguaging practices and bi-lingual/cultural acquisition in the international and cross-cultural context for the following three reasons:

1) There were cognitive and psychological orientations in the field of second language acquisition in the 1990s when language learners were interpreted as having fixed personalities, learning styles and motivations and those constructs were often studied with a quantitative paradigm (Darvin & Norton, 2021). However, with the trend of large-scale migration and globalization, there comes a shift from cognitive perspectives to a focus on the contextual and dynamic aspects when approaching language-related topics, e.g., motivation (Boo et al., 2015). The transformation has also influenced the trend of bilingualism and multilingualism research (Darvin & Norton, 2021). Scholars pay more attention to personal histories, language practices and identity construction of bilinguals and multilinguals (Fisher et al., 2018). For example, in an
autobiographical study, Casanave (2012) draws a complicated picture of her Japanese learning experiences over eight years, and she maintains that fluctuating motivation is influenced by personal and emotional factors. Analyzing her journals consisting of her learning activities such as vocabulary and syntax, she got the conclusion that dabbling is a low-pressure and active way of informal learning for adult language learners.

Going with that momentum, I hold that narrative inquiry as a research methodology and a way of thinking (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) can help me to gain a more nuanced understanding of children’s dynamic language practices as part of their lived experience “across a diversity of timescales” (Thibault, 2017, p. 82).

2) Showing how people make use of multiple linguistic resources in each social context (King, 2015), translanguaging is commonly connected with the field of sociolinguistics, which emerges out of earlier traditions in historical linguistics and the study of bilingualism and multilingualism (Koerner, 1991). Sociolinguistics studies how people manage their languages in relation to social situations, cultural backgrounds, and goals of communication (Wardhaugh, 1992). Hence, it emphasizes the social context which plays a critical role in speakers’ language use and negotiation of meaning (Mallinson, 2015). Narrative inquiry as a research methodology can help me to gain a deeper understanding of the context and observe how the changes of time and location affect children’s language practices. In fact, there is an increasing number of studies of immigrant children’s language learning using narrative inquiry to explore the social and
linguistic diversity (Pomerantz & Kearney, 2012) and understand translanguaging as a social phenomenon (Slembrouck & Rosiers, 2018).

3) When I reflected on my previous research experiences, I noticed that only abstracting themes from transcribed conversations without a comprehensive understanding of participants’ lived experiences is not enough to answer the current research questions since I cannot gain an in-depth understanding of their language use in daily life by merely analyzing fragmented discourses. As Lapum (2009) says, “my methodological decisions were based on what best fit my substantive research area and my way of thinking and being” (p. 66). If I can make connections with the young Chinese visiting students’ prior learning experience in China, family background, schooling experience in Canada as well as their adaptation after they return to China, I may have the opportunity to enter their living space, listen to their life stories, and make sense of their translanguaging that is created through various cultural, political, and social processes (Sinfree & Alastair, 2007). To achieve that goal, I need to be a narrative inquirer who spends sufficient time with participants in gathering stories and developing a nuanced understanding of participants’ lives for creating plausible explanations (S. Xu, personal communication, April 17, 2021).

As narrative inquiry highlights understanding experiences through the “collaboration between researcher and the participants” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a,
p. 20), the next section explains how narrative inquiry informs the research design and procedures as well as how I approached and worked with my participants.

**Research Design and Procedures**

**Setting and Participants**

My research is contextualized in Drs. Shijing Xu, and Michael Connelly’s SSHRC-funded project entitled “Reciprocal Learning in Teacher Education and School Education between Canada and China” (S. Xu, 2019; Xu & Connelly, 2017). Since the fall of 2019, I have been working as a research assistant for Dr. Xu and Dr. Connelly’s Project. I was assigned the task of observing the language development of the Chinese visiting scholars’ children. When these children were participating in activities organized by the project and having tutoring classes with a Canadian tutor outside of school, I would be a participant observer and make field notes.

In the process of my interacting with the young Chinese visiting students, interesting questions continuously emerged: What languages did they speak with Canadians and Chinese in Canada? Did they have any translanguaging practices? Was their translanguaging different from what I found in Chinese EFL classrooms (Guo, 2019)? As I mention in Chapter 1, these questions formed my initial research puzzles and motivated me to make an inquiry into the complexity and dynamics of translanguaging practices and bi-lingual/cultural acquisition within Canadian and Chinese educational and cultural contexts. Moreover, as Chapter 2 reveals, Chinese
visiting scholars’ children are less studied groups in the field of second language acquisition and international studies. Therefore, taking part in the large Project and reviewing relevant literature helped me to decide who were my main participants – the children of Chinese visiting scholars, who had a short-term visit to Canada.

After I received the University of Windsor Research Ethical Board (REB) clearance (See Appendix A) in September 2021, I contacted five Chinese visiting scholars and their children whom I met through the Canada-China Reciprocal Learning Partnership Project (Connelly & Xu, 2019; S. Xu, 2019; Xu & Connelly, 2017), inviting them to participate in my research. By the time I invited them, all of them had returned to China after the visit to Canada. I read the assent form to the children online and told them that they could discuss with their parents whether they would participate in my research. I sent the electronic consent form to the Chinese parents and suggested them to read with their children. The purpose of my research was not to let my participants understand translanguaging or guide them to have more translanguaging practices. Thus, instead of directly telling the participants academic definitions of translanguaging (Baker, 2011; W. Li, 2018), I explained to them by conveying a broader and simplified meaning of translanguaging, which refers to using multiple languages together such as mixing Chinese and English in writing and speaking. I also listed some examples of translanguaging practices such as using Chinese to learn English, taking notes in Chinese in the Canadian classrooms, translate English sentences or words into Chinese through
online websites and phone apps, speak Chinese words to Canadians at local community or school, read Chinese books and write Chinese sentences/words during their stay in Canada. Rather than exclude those stories that seemed irrelevant to translanguaging, I followed my co-supervisor Dr. Zhang's suggestion of understanding the students’ experience in the everyday sense (Z. Zhang, personal communication, September 11, 2021). Therefore, in the process of inquiry, the definition of translanguaging in my mind also extended beyond the transfer between different languages, which also included the flexible switch between languages and modalities.

The five Chinese visiting scholars and their children whom I met through the Project all gave me permissions, and some recommended their friends who were also Chinese visiting scholars bringing their child to Canada during the visiting period. Through a friendly introduction, I got to know the other three Chinese visiting scholars and their children and connected with them via WeChat, a popular Chinese instant messaging app. They all signed the consent form and accepted my interview online. The three children were the friends, or classmates of the main five student participants, so their sharing offered supplementary information and was helpful in presenting the young Chinese visiting students’ stories from multiple angles. Their names appeared in the five main student participants’ stories, but they were not the main characters.

In this research, Feifei (菲菲), Caicai Fan (凡彩彩), Luna Zhou (周露娜), Little Yangmei (小杨梅), and Ping Li (李萍) were chosen to be the five main student
participants (the names are all pseudonyms) because I got to know them through the Reciprocal Learning Program in 2019 and I witnessed how they enjoyed life and schooling during the visiting period in Canada. I also followed up on how they adapted to schooling and life after they returned to China by chatting with them online.

For the other three student participants (Xuanxuan, Yiyi and Grace), I conducted a semi-structured interview with them and their parents online. It was individual interview and each one lasted for 40 minutes to one hour. I also collected their English homework with permission from the children and their parents. Overall, there were two groups of participants in my study. The first group was those who I met in the Project, and they were the five main participants. I recruited the second group through the friendly introduction of the first group of participants. The total number of participant children in my study was eight and the participating parents were eight.

The participant students’ ages are different, from five to ten, which is a less studied group in previous research. Tables 1 and 2 show the participants’ information of the two visiting groups. The five main student participants were all girls. Except for Feifei, the four main student participants chose the pseudonym by themselves. In Table 2, Xuanxuan was a boy while the other two student participants were girls. The two tables did not mean to make a comparison, but to show the basic information of the student participants.
Table 1 The Five Main Student Participants That I Got to Know Through the Reciprocal Learning Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Grade when arriving in Canada</th>
<th>Arrival Time</th>
<th>Time period of visiting</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caicai Fan</td>
<td>Senior Kindergarten</td>
<td>Jul. 2019</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feifei</td>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>Dec. 2018</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luna Zhou</td>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>Sep. 2019</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Yangmei</td>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>Jan. 2020</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ping Li</td>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>Dec. 2019</td>
<td>11 months and 2 weeks</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Student Participants That I Got to Know Through Social Networks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Grade when arriving in Canada</th>
<th>Arrival Time</th>
<th>Time period of visiting</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yiyi</td>
<td>Junior Kindergarten</td>
<td>Jan. 2020</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xuanxuan</td>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>Sep. 2019</td>
<td>10 months</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>Jul. 2019</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My research mainly attended to young Chinese visiting students, but their parents were also seen as a distinct participant group. The Chinese visiting scholars took their children to visit Canada, so they provided necessary information about the growth of their child as important informants. It is well worth mentioning that during the Chinese visiting scholars’ stay in Canada, they had the funding from China Scholarship Council and kept in touch with the supervisors that they cooperated with. They lived in a rented house with other roommates or in a rented apartment without roommates. Compared with some low-socioeconomic status immigrants and refugees, the Chinese visiting scholars did not have financial pressures when they were in Canada.

Apart from recruiting Chinese visiting scholars and their children, I also sent the consent form to three Canadian informants and asked if they would participate in my
research. They were chosen because they had had direct contact with the Chinese visiting scholars and their children during their stay in Canada. Two of them were English tutors: Stella and Susie (both are pseudonyms). Susie had been to China for three months through the Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Program as a Canadian pre-service teacher, so she got to know the Chinese visiting scholars who came to the University of Windsor through RLP. A few Chinese visiting scholars knew that Susie was good at teaching children, so they paid Susie to tutor the young Chinese visiting students after school for one hour per week. The tutoring class often happened at the UW library or the Chinese child’s home with the presence of the parent. Susie had been tutoring some Chinese visiting scholars’ children every week since 2019. I was allowed to observe some tutoring classes and made field notes as a research assistant of RLP. After the visiting scholars returned to China, Susie continued to tutor these children online every week until June 2021. She was too busy with work, so her younger sister Stella began to take over four Chinese children and tutor them once a week online from July 2021. Each tutoring class lasts for one hour.

I asked Susie if she was interested in my research after I got my REB clearance. She said her younger sister Stella was tutoring several Chinese visiting scholars’ children, so I added Stella’s WeChat with the recommendation of Susie. They were warm-hearted, and both participated in my research as informants to offer information about the Chinese children’s English language proficiency on a voluntary basis. Besides,
all the Chinese visiting scholars gave their consent to the Canadian tutors to talk about their children’s cross-cultural experiences with me.

The third Canadian informant, Dr. Ben, was a professor emeritus at the University of Windsor. I got to know him through RLP. I first met Dr. Ben in August 2019 in Windsor, and soon we became good friends. He is interested in Chinese culture and cross-cultural activities, so he has done much voluntary work for RLP. In that way, he got to know several Chinese visiting scholars through RLP such as Little Yangmei’s and Ping’s mothers. He is helpful and voluntarily drove Ping and her mother to do grocery shopping during their visit to Canada. After Dr. Ben agreed to participate in my research, I had a one-hour online interview with him and listened to his description of Ping’s stories in Canada.

Developing a Sense of Inquiry Through Collaborating with Participants

Before elaborating on the specific methods of collecting field texts, I would like to explain how I developed a sense of inquiry (Clandinin, 2019) through collaborating with my participants since it is indispensable for doing narrative inquiry (S. Xu, personal communication, May 25, 2021).

Since narrative inquiry is methodologically fluid and open, developing a sense of inquiry enables researchers to capture the fluidity of changing contexts and connect with experience through curiosity (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). In my research, a sense of inquiry is vital for me to capture the fluidity and wholeness of children’s lived
experiences that contain complex and dynamic language practices. It is not collecting constellation of conversations or compositions that involve mixed use of languages because they are small and static pieces in children’s life.

In the first year of my doctoral study, I got to know the Chinese visiting scholars and their children when they were in Canada, and we casually talked with each other about a variety of topics such as why they came to Canada and how they thought of life in Windsor. At first, I had no idea when the field texts would be enough to be transformed into research texts and what sense of inquiry meant. Thus, I had to learn by doing and reflecting on my initial research puzzle. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000a) states, narrative inquirers carry the research puzzle with “a sense of a search, a ‘research,’ a searching again”, “a sense of continual reformulation” (p. 124). By taking part in each other’s life, I felt closer to my participants. We supported each other and gradually formed mutual trust, especially when Covid-19 outbreak began in Canada in 2020. The relationship influenced my understanding of the diverse contexts that are embedded within the participants’ life (Clandinin, 2006). For example, I gradually was able to connect the fragmented pieces of stories together for understanding narratively the continuity of children’s life experiences (Clandinin, 2006a).

After the Chinese visiting scholars’ trip to Canada ended, I contacted them through WeChat and asked how their children adapted to schooling in China. The parents were proud to share with me the recent videos of their children’s English singing
and English public speech. I was privileged to see their progress in language learning and personal growth. In that way, I witnessed the Chinese children participating in kinds of activities such as drawing a bilingual poster about Chinese Spring Festival for an English contest and having fun at an English summer camp in Beijing. The parents’ generous sharing gave me more sense of inquiry (Clandinin, 2019) because it helped me to know more about the children’s personalities, interests, relationships with others and extracurricular activities. We had more meaningful conversations and got involved in the cycle of living, telling, retelling, and reliving (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a). More importantly, I learned that the short-term visit to Canada was only an episode of the children’s lives, and their stories were still going on after the trip.

Furthermore, Dr. Xu reminded me of valuing reciprocity in the relationship with my participants. Thus, I kept thinking about how to benefit my participants and what kind of benefits they really needed. For example, when the young Chinese visiting students needed assistance in English language learning after they returned to China, the parents would ask my advice or let me revise the English composition that their children wrote. I have been teaching Chinese students English since 2013 as a part-time teacher in several educational institutions in China, so I am familiar with the English teaching methods and have access to many learning resources. I shared with the Chinese parents and their children some popular English learning resources such as Reading A-Z, Pink Fong, Alphabet Blocks, Learning with Blippi, Yakka Dee and Phonics with Kids. The
parents were grateful and told me that with these resources they could tutor their children at home. There is an old Chinese saying, heart to heart (将心比心). I think it is because the Chinese parents can feel I care about their children’s English learning, mental health, and overall development as a person, so they offered to support my research in many ways. Although sometimes I still felt I walked in the mist and was not sure how to analyze the young Chinese visiting students’ vivid stories, I never lost the sense of wonder or the interest in their ongoing experiences.

Keeping the advice from my supervisor and co-supervisor in mind, I gradually realized that establishing reciprocal relationships with my participants helped to develop a sense of inquiry (Clandinin, 2019). For example, when I sent the first draft of an individual chapter to the relevant child and parent, I suggested that they print it out and read it together. If they preferred reading the Chinese version, I would translate the whole chapter into Chinese for their convenience. After reading the stories, quite a few Chinese parents said that the participation in my research aroused their interest in narrative inquiry and inspired them to reexamine their children’s transnational experiences and language learning. Besides, they added more details about their lives in Canada to the draft so that I was able to co-construct the narrative accounts with them. This helped me to see their way of retelling stories and how the many sides of the world shaped their reality. Naturally, in the process of working with my participants, a sense of inquiry (Clandinin, 2019) emerged, and I felt the inquiry could be endless. I was “still in
the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of experience that make up people’s lives” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a, p. 20).

**Field Text Collection**

As Clandinin and Connelly (1990) point out, “a number of different methods of data collection are possible as the researcher and practitioner work together in a collaborative relationship” (p. 5). In this study, I used the following means to collect field texts: field notes, participant observations, semi-structured interviews, casual conversations, and the children’s artifacts such as their English homework.

As I mentioned earlier, before collecting the stories, I had all the participant children, parents and Canadian informants signed the consent forms on which participants were advised on the steps taken in conducting the research (Braun & Clarke, 2013), research purposes, potential risks or benefits, time length of the research, researcher’s contact information and protection of confidentiality (Mack, 2005). Since the Chinese children were legally under the care of their parents, I obtained informed consent from their parents and the children themselves.

**Interview.** For the first group of student participants, I had casual conversations with them when they took part in some cross-cultural activities in Canada. I wrote down some of our conversations in the field notes when I did observation during their stay in Canada. I have been the research assistant of RLP, so the casual conversations were allowed to be analyzed as secondary data after I gained REB clearance from the
university, permission from Dr. Xu and Dr. Connelly as well as the Chinese children and their parents.

Dr. Xu reminded me that “we must think about how to benefit our participants when doing research, instead of only serving our own research purposes. It should be a mutual process” (S. Xu, personal communication, December 10, 2019). To better benefit the student participants and make our chat more natural and comfortable for them, I asked their parents if the children needed any free online English tutoring. If so, I would be willing to do that online every week. In total, the five main student participants accepted my weekly tutoring session after their visit to Canada and each session lasted for 40 minutes. To improve the children’s English competence, I usually read picture books with the children, reviewed English phonics, played learning videos, and discussed with them the learning content in the class. In the online sessions, I made sure learning came first and the conversations happened in natural settings, instead of assigning the children any extra tasks and observing their language practices. For example, the Chinese children were also practicing their oral English by having conversations with me, which made the research beneficial to them. Considering the dual role, I had informed all the parents in advance that their children might be asked some questions about life in Canada during the session, but the main purpose of the individual session was to help children learn English. The Chinese parents were all appreciative for
my offering the tutoring session, so they agreed immediately. In that way, I followed up with the children’s lives and learning in China and assisted their English learning online.

Moreover, this way of collecting field notes and communicating was appropriate for children research. During the process of reading stories and watching videos online, the Chinese children naturally connected the learning topics with their memories of Canada. At such moments, I would chat with them for a while and make notes about their sharing immediately after class. For example, one time, Luna and I read a story about Halloween in the virtual meeting room, and I asked her “what’s your favorite festival in Canada? What did you do that day?” She began to share with me how she celebrated Halloween in Canada in 2019 (Casual conversation with Luna, October 7, 2021). I also learned from Dr. Xu that I could start the conversational interview or casual conversations with the participant students’ everyday life instead of directly asking children big questions such as “what have you learned from the cross-cultural experiences?” (S. Xu, personal communication, June 25, 2021). Consequently, the conversational interview topics were about their favorite seasons, animals, colors, and movies as well as their life and learning in Canada and China (see Appendix D). Overall, the children’s learning and pleasant experience of participating in my research was the priority.

It is necessary to note that the number of my tutoring sessions totally depended on the children and the parents and there was no unfair treatment caused by the tutoring
since I was willing to tutor all the student participants as long as they needed me. For example, Grace was a grade-7 student who attended a private junior high school in China when I interviewed her. Her English level was way above her grade, and she did not need any extra tutoring. That did not influence her participation in my research at all.

I conducted the individual interviews with parents, and children online to keep their safety and health considering the COVID-19 situation. Interview questions for the Chinese visiting scholars were attached to Appendix B. The conditions under which the interviews take place (i.e., time of day, place) will influence the quality of interviews (S. Xu, personal communication, June 13, 2021). Most Chinese parents and children were interviewed separately in my research when the children stayed in their bedroom while their parents were in another room of their apartment. Only Yiyi was accompanied by her mom in the interview because she was the youngest participant in my research. Furthermore, the way of interviewing children also depends on their parents’ and children’s own willingness. Some Chinese parents hoped I could distribute interview questions into my online tutoring sessions because they did not like their child sitting in front of the laptop for too long, answering all the questions in one hour. I fully understood their concern and agreed to ask 1-2 questions in each tutoring session. While some other Chinese parents did not mind that, so I could interview their child for one hour and finish all the prepared questions. All the Chinese students and parents chose WeChat or Voov meeting (which is called Tencent Meeting in mainland China) to
conduct the individual interviews. We mainly spoke our mother tongue, Chinese, in the one-hour interview. I audio recorded and transcribed it after the interview. Then I shared my interpretation in the form of a story with the participants, to check whether I misunderstood their opinions.

Apart from interviewing Chinese visiting scholars and their children, I also interviewed the three Canadian informants: Stella, Susie, and Dr. Ben with the purpose of gaining supplementary information about the English language development and cultural acquisition of the Chinese visiting scholars’ children. Before the interview, they all signed the consent form. Each online interview lasted for one hour and the interview questions were attached to Appendix C. To summarize, I interviewed eight Chinese visiting scholars’ children and some informants including three Canadians and eight Chinese visiting scholars.

**Field Notes and Observation.** When writing field notes, the attention was directed toward temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000b; Clandinin & Caine, 2013). In this study, the field notes consist of the time and place of the conversations, the people who are involved, the topic and the languages that people speak in the conversation, the background of the conversation, and detailed information such as people’s interactions and clothes.

Working as a research assistant for RLP since the autumn of 2019, I have been writing field notes about language expressions of some Chinese visiting scholars’
children. In the process, I learned that field notes were made based on researchers’ experiences of life space, but they were not equal to researchers’ judgment, bias, or emotions (Emerson et al., 2011). If there were any thoughts that arise, I wrote them down in a right-hand column and reflect on myself, instead of being carried away by them. In that way, I tried to avoid mixing my comments with the observational text.

There were two groups of participants in my study. For the first group who I got to know through Dr. Xu and Dr. Connelly’s Project, I contacted the two Canadian tutors (Stella and Susie) and got consent from them to observe their online English tutoring class in a non-participant way. Only with the Chinese parents’ and their children’s permission, did I get the invitation link to the meeting room. Therefore, I took notes of the Chinese children’s language expressions and audio recorded some online English classes.

**Secondary Use of Data.** Since the fall of 2019, I have been working as a research assistant for Dr. Xu and Dr. Connelly’s SSHRC-funded project (S. Xu, 2019; Xu & Connelly, 2017). In the project, I made field notes about the young Chinese visiting students’ language use during their stay in Canada. Hence, I applied for the amendment and got approval from Dr. Xu and Dr. Connelly to use those notes. I also had the Chinese visiting scholars’ consent and their children’s assent to allow me to use these field notes.
**Artifacts.** I collected the participant children’s schoolwork, English exercise books, drawings, and compositions with their consent. Chinese visiting scholars took photos of their children’s schoolwork and sent them to me via WeChat except for Dr. Mei (Little Yangmei’s mother), who mailed a whole package to my home in China. I scanned her daughter’s artifacts and mailed the package back to Dr. Mei with gratitude. I also read policy documents related to Chinese and Canadian foreign language education, such as the documents published by the Ontario Ministry of Education (2007). The analysis of artifacts and official documents was combined to provide background information of the sociocultural settings of this research such as the curriculum that the young Chinese visiting students took when they were in Canada.

**From Field Text to Research Text**

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000a), research texts consist of a “chronicled or summarized account of what is contained within different sets of field texts” (p. 131). To transform research texts from field texts, I first categorized the fieldwork into several types: transcribed interviews and conversations, my field notes, children’s artifacts, and WeChat communications with the Chinese visiting scholars. Then I placed these in chronological order for each participant and then identified meaningful events.

The “three-dimensional” framework (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a, p. 50) helps to connect the stories with one another and establish a meaningful inquiry space. I read
and reread the field texts within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a) to examine the participant students’ experiences and uncovered “some common themes and narrative threads” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a, p. 83). Furthermore, Dr. Xu suggested I see the trip to Canada as one stage of the Chinese visiting students’ life-long experience (S. J. Xu, personal communication, June 13, 2021). I followed the advice that showed narrative thinking and highlighted the continuity of children’s lived experiences.

In the process of collecting and analyzing field notes, I realized that the children were living in a world that could be only interpreted in their own narrative threads. For example, I once asked Ping Li3, “Is there anything you feel difficult or challenged when you were in Canada? Can you give me an example of that?” I thought her answer would relate to the pressure from learning English or missing her family members in China. But she just calmly said, “I cannot give you an example because everything is fine to me” (Ping Li, field notes, October 10, 2020). This seemingly surprising answer was a wonderful opportunity to start the inquiry of why she said that and to get “the narrative understanding of knowledge and context” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 4). As Dr. Xu advised, I should not interpret the field texts in a top-down way or use a benchmark to evaluate participants but understand why it was like that (S. J. Xu, personal communication, July 2, 2021). Such moments happened many times when I talked with

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3 All the children’s names in this thesis are pseudonym.
the children, and I saw them as momentous catalysts for me to change my mindset from making assumptions to actively listening to what my participants were saying and understanding them with a sense of inquiry (Clandinin, 2019). Apart from that, ongoing negotiation with participants allowed me to create and revise research texts that both critically and deeply represented narrative inquirers and participants’ experiences (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p. 13). I sent the whole chapter to the participant student and their parents, inviting them to read together and checking whether they would like to add more details or delete some paragraphs that might make them uncomfortable. After several rounds of revisions and discussions, both the participants and I felt their stories were told in the most appropriate way.

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) point out that “as a narrative inquirer, it is important to have a better understanding of what it means to undertake a life study and live in an ethical way” (p. 483). The next section will explain how I protected and respected the participants by considering those ethical issues.

**Ethical Considerations**

**Confidentiality and Member Checking.** Participation in this study was voluntary, and no one withdrew from my research. I avoided specific descriptions of the participants’ personal information. For example, the name of Chinese visiting scholars’ workplaces and the schools which their children attended are all pseudonyms. All the names of the children, their parents and the Canadian informants in this dissertation are
also pseudonyms. For the young Chinese visiting students, I verified the research materials related to them with their parents. In that way, they had control over what was documented for research and how their confidentiality was protected.

**Possible Benefits and Risks Analysis.** There are several possible benefits for my participants. First, I offered free English tutoring for the participant children if their parents wished to improve their children’s English proficiency. As mentioned earlier, I tutored them phonics, picture book reading and basic English grammar knowledge, according to the needs of parents and children themselves. I did not evaluate the Chinese visiting scholars’ children but assisted with their English learning when needed. For example, I proofread several Chinese children’s English compositions and English speech before they participated in school-organized English competitions.

The second benefit for the participants is that they could gain new perspectives of reflecting on the cross-cultural experiences and language learning via participating in my research. For example, the open-ended interview questions can help to enhance their international and cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. In addition, Chinese visiting scholars may send their children to study abroad in the future. By participating in my research, they can make better preparations before and during their next visit.

The risks were minimal in my research. For example, all the interview questions were sent to the participants before the interview, so they could skip those they did not like. I also attached the questions that I would ask the Canadian informants to the
consent form so that the Chinese parents would know what might be asked about their
cchild in my interview with the Canadian informants.

_Researcher’s Role and Positioning in the Study_

As Clandinin (2006a) contends, narrative inquirers cannot exclude themselves
from the inquiry but need to find ways to make an inquiry into “participants’
periences, their own experiences as well as the co-constructed experiences developed
through the relational inquiry process” (p. 47). The relationship between the participants
and me influenced how I collected the field texts, analyzed them, and presented the
research texts in my thesis.

I was a novice narrative researcher and a participant observer who lived in the
life space of the participants in this study. I am very appreciative of the opportunity
which allows me to approach several Chinese visiting scholars and their children through
the project. When these Chinese visiting scholars had questions or problems regarding
their work and life in Canada, I was willing to assist them. By using the word
“assisting,” I hoped to express that I did not see myself as more powerful or
knowledgeable than them. In fact, we shared many things in common. We all came from
China, and we had arrived in Canada not a long time ago. I arrived in Canada in the
summer of 2019 and many things in Windsor were new to me, too. A similar experience
enabled me to resonate with them when encountering difficulties in life and work. For
instance, before one Chinese visiting scholar and her daughter left Canada in November
2020, I went to local pharmacies to buy masks for them as it was during COVID-19. Out of kindness and reciprocity, I gradually built a trusting relationship with these Chinese visiting scholars and their children.

Though they all returned to China after the short-term visit, we keep in touch with each other through WeChat. The places of our interaction and the form of our interaction were changed from face-to-face conversations to online chat. We still shared our life stories with one another, and I voluntarily tutored some Chinese children online every week from January 2021 to April 2022. By integrating learning and collecting field notes in the class, the young Chinese visiting students and I became more and more familiar with each other and I tried to benefit the children as much as possible.

However, there should be a boundary between the participants and me because being friendly does not mean that we must share everything with each other (S. Xu, personal communication, May 14, 2021). Clandinin (2006b) also maintains that the narrative researcher has a dual role: in an intimate relationship with the participant and in a professionally responsible role in the scholarly community. I attempted to set the boundary and lessen the time burden on participants. For instance, I did not frequently send messages to the Chinese visiting scholars because I know they were busy with university work in China.

It is worth clarifying that although I got to know the first group of participants when I was a RA for the larger project, the prior relationships did not cause a burden to
parents or their children for several reasons. First, through Dr. Xu and Dr. Connelly’s Project, I learned how a researcher develops and handles the relationship professionally and ethically with the participants. Second, my research did not focus on evaluating the children’s English level. Although I tutored some of the children, my role was more like a friend rather than a teacher because the children knew that I would not give them any English tests and the tutoring session was different from formal teaching at their schools in China. Third, my supervisor Dr. Xu and co-supervisor Dr. Zhang have rich experience working with parents, children, schoolteachers, principals, and pre-service teachers in international and cross-cultural settings with cultural awareness. With their supervision and guidance, I got the consents from parents and children to participate in my study.

**My Philosophical Worldviews.** I situate myself in social constructivism. According to John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell (2017), constructivists observe the culture-sharing group’s engagement in activities. The goal is to understand lived experiences and connect with social and historical factors to make meaning of complex phenomena. This worldview influences the current research design (J.W. Creswell & J. D. Creswell, 2017). In my research, I am interested in exploring how young Chinese visiting students interact with Canadians and Chinese through translanguaging in the international and cross-cultural experiences. Hence, the research does not aim to prove any hypothesis or determine the relationship among variables. Rather, it focuses on the in-depth exploration of real-life experiences including how the student participants
constructed meaning through flexible language practices and what cultures they acquired through interacting with the surrounding world.

**Theoretical Framework: Three-Dimensional Space of Narrative Inquiry**

As Xu and Connelly (2009) assert, the intellectual sources of narrative inquiry originate from Dewey (1938, p. 67), Schwab (1970, 1973) and Polanyi (1958). Carrying on Dewey’s concept of experience, Clandinin and Connelly (2000a) develop the “three dimensions of temporality, personal/social and place” (p. 50). Next, I will explain how the three-dimensional framework was used to understand the young Chinese visiting students’ international and cross-cultural experiences between Canada and China.

**Temporality**

According to Connelly and Clandinin (2006), events under study are in temporal transition and participants’ stories should be understood temporally. As narrative inquiry is “a way of thinking about life” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 478), I attempted to understand the lived experiences of Chinese visiting scholars’ children with continuity and remind myself that everyone is subject to “temporal and contextual contingencies” (Conle, 2000, p. 16).

Moreover, the sense of temporality was not only demonstrated in the analysis of the whole experience but also identified in the analysis of the children’s translanguaging and bi-lingual/cultural acquisition. I analyzed the languages they spoke when they just arrived in Canada, when they had stayed in Canada for several months and when they
were going to leave Canada. Apart from that, I often reminded myself of temporality by asking questions like “during the young Chinese visiting students’ stay in Canada, what did they learn from school? Did they acquire specific English words or cultures at a certain time? Are there any connections between their experiences in Canada with their learning after returning to China?” Connecting the participants’ past, present and future enabled me to see their learning within a broader scope. As I have already mentioned elsewhere in this thesis in a previous section, the Chinese visiting students’ trip to Canada was one stage of their life-long experiences, so the stories happening during this period were analyzed with what they were like before and after their visit to Canada.

**Personal/Social**

Sociality refers to the “milieu and conditions under which people’s experiences and events are unfolding” (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p. 4). As Clandinin (2006a) claims, “people are individuals and need to be understood as such, but they cannot be understood only as individuals. They are always in relation, always in a social context” (p. 46). In the international and cross-cultural experiences, the society the participant children lived in changed from China to Canada and they would go through the transition from Canadian society to Chinese society when they return to their motherland. In the transition, who did they talk with and what languages did they speak? In their socialization, what cultural knowledge did they learn? Taking sociality into consideration
helped me to answer those questions and understand how the social context shaped the lives of the Chinese visiting scholars’ children.

More importantly, different from university international students or immigrant children who live in Canada permanently, the young Chinese visiting students have different motivations to learn English and have different access to social and cultural mobility networks (I. González, personal communication, April 3, 2021). Storying and re-storying with the dimension of sociality helped me to capture something special in the participant children’s social and personal lives.

Place

Place refers to “the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequences of places where the inquiry and events take place” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). Considering the transnational context of my research, I understood that the young Chinese visiting students had different language practices and interpretations of cultures in different locations. For example, a Chinese child may be seen as a shy and silent student at the Canadian school, but they can be quite talkative when staying with their parents or Chinese friends at home.

It is well worth mentioning that the three dimensions were not used separately or only used in analyzing the texts. Instead, the framework was applied throughout the research including the design of interview questions, field notes taking and the analysis of field texts (S. Xu, personal communication, July 2, 2021). For example, I followed Dr.
Xu’s advice of asking the children what preparations they made before the trip, how they felt when they just arrived in Canada, how often they contacted families and friends in China and so on (S. Xu, personal communication, May 3, 2021). Moreover, as the research assistant of RLP, I knew some Chinese visiting scholars’ children had interactions with the local Canadians such as carving the pumpkin on Halloween. Those stories were great clues for the participants to recall their memories and became the key moments or events that were often highlighted and rearranged to establish a meaningful inquiry space (J. Huang, 2017). In this way, the field texts collected were juicy stories with plots, feelings, opinions, and thoughts as well as diverse relationships among people, places, things, and events in different relationships (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995).

To sum up, the three-dimensional framework (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a) captured the lived and experiential data (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994) of young Chinese visiting students’ bilingual and bicultural acquisition from the past to the present and future, in personal and social dimensions at different locations. It helped me to think deeply about how the participants’ experiences were shaped by sociality, temporality, and place, which in turn, “shaped who they were and shifted their future stories” (Casey & Schaefer, 2016, p. 10).

In addition to the three-dimensional framework (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a), I also drew on the theories and concepts from second language acquisition to help me
understand young Chinese visiting students’ translanguaging practices and bi-
lingual/cultural acquisition such as the Silent Period (Krashen, 1981) and Critical Period
(Eric, 1967). Krashen (1985) defines the silent period as the pre-stage of acquiring a
second language the learner is unable or unwilling to speak in the second language.
Iddings and Jang (2008) find in their research that the student was actively engaged in
second language learning during the silent period.

To summarize, Chapter 3 introduces my understanding of narrative inquiry, the
reasons why I chose it as the research methodology, research design and procedures, the
researcher’s role and positioning, ethical considerations, and the theoretical framework.
The next five chapters (Chapters 4 to 8) will present the life stories of five main student
participants during and after their trip to Canada. It is worth clarifying that when the
children had translanguaging practices, I present the bilingual version of their words in
the following chapters. When they only spoke Chinese with me, I present the English
translation. When they only spoke English with me, I present the verbatim transcript in
English. Thus, in the next five chapters, some quotes are bilingual, and some are only in
English. The clarification is important as it helps to differentiate when the young Chinese
visiting students tended to have translanguaging practices with whom, under what
circumstances and for what reasons.
Chapter 4 FEIFEI – “Why Doesn’t She Talk?”

“Fill it with your dreams, drama, and doodles. And always remember to let your inner dork shine through” (Russell, 2011, p. 1).

Prelude of Feifei’s Story

Feifei was a 7-year-old girl when she arrived in Windsor, Canada, in December 2018. When her mom took her to a Canadian school in South Windsor, she was assigned to grade 2. Her mother, Dr. Xie, is a university professor in East China. When the RLP team was preparing for the 6th Annual International Conference on West-East Reciprocal Learning in Education (the Conference for short), Dr. Xie, as a visiting scholar in the project, was invited to participate in the preparation of the Conference in September 2019. I was the research assistant working with the registration group, so we became familiar with each other.

It was on September 20, 2019, that Dr. Xu’s research assistants and graduate assistants organized the orientation party at the Faculty of Education, University of Windsor (UW). According to Xu (2019), through the RLP, every fall, about 20 Chinese teacher candidates “come to the University of Windsor to audit courses in the pre-service teacher education program at the Faculty of Education and observe K-12 classes in local Windsor schools” (p. 2). Dr. Xie and Feifei were also invited to the party. It was the first time that I met Feifei. She looked quiet and shy. She did not talk with me, except when
Dr. Xie asked her to say hello to me (Field notes, Faculty of Education, UW, September 20, 2019).

The Conference was successfully held in October 2019. One month after the conference, Dr. Xie invited me and another Chinese research assistant to have a hotpot dinner in her rented apartment. Hence, I got the opportunity to visit Dr. Xie and Feifei in their home. It was 5 p.m. in the afternoon of November 25, 2019. I knocked on the door of Dr. Xie’s apartment and Feifei opened the door. She said “hello” and looked at her mom Dr. Xie who was busy in the kitchen. I replied “hello, Feifei” and Feifei beamed, without saying more words. Hearing my voice, Dr. Xie walked out of the kitchen and invited me to sit on the sofa. “The meal is almost ready. Have a seat,” she said. I sat on the sofa which was next to a white dining table. I was going to chat with her for a while, but she went straight into her bedroom after opening the door for me. It was only when Dr. Xie announced “Dinner is ready. Come and have hotpot,” that Feifei opened her bedroom door, walked out, and took a seat beside her mom. Dr. Xie introduced me to Feifei, “This is Haojun. You met before at the Faculty of Education in September 2019. Do you remember?” Feifei nodded. During the meal, Dr. Xie put some beef, carrots, and mushrooms into Feifei’s bowl. She did not eat much. I asked her, “do you like hotpot?” She nodded and answered, “yes” and then focused on eating. Seeing that, Dr. Xie explained, “she is doing very well in the Canadian school and likes going to school. The
only problem is that she does not talk much. I don’t know why either.” Feifei did not add up anything to that but quickly finished her meal.

After the meal, her Chinese friend, Grace came to visit her, and Feifei opened the door for her. She was quite excited to see Grace coming and she beamed with joy. “快来，我有东西给你看！” (“Come on! I have something to show you”) Feifei said to Grace. Holding hands, they entered Feifei’s bedroom and began to play. Grace was also a Chinese visiting scholar’s daughter who was in grade 5. She and Feifei met and became good friends during their stay in Canada. Grace’s father and Dr. Xie got to know each other through a WeChat group that included many Chinese visiting scholars in Canada. During their stay in Canada, they lived in another apartment near Dr. Xie’s. On weekends, Grace and Feifei often visited each other’s apartments and played for a while. But I did not know Grace at that time. After they entered the bedroom, I was cleaning the table with Dr. Xie. She chatted with me in Chinese, and I translated her words as follows.

I feel very strange about Feifei’s silence. She was kind of like, just now you asked her a question and she would reply briefly. She was talkative in China, but not here. I know some Chinese visiting scholars’ children in Windsor. They were outgoing and had a lot to say when we hung out together, but I had no idea why Feifei was not like that. You can ask her some questions about her school and life in Windsor to see if you could find out the answer. (Field notes, Feifei’s home, November 25, 2019)

Gaining permission from Dr. Xie, I knocked on the door of Feifei’s bedroom and entered after I heard “please come in.” Feifei and Grace were sitting on the floor covered
with a soft rug, playing with a golden toy dog. I was looking for a spot to join the two girls. Then I sat beside Feifei and asked, “哎？你们在玩什么呢？” (“Hi, what are you playing at?”) She did not answer my question, just smiling, lowering her head, and pressing the button on the back of the toy dog to play a short piece of merry music. The toy dog could walk by itself on the floor while playing music. Then Feifei laughed and I understood that she meant “I’m playing with this toy dog.” To continue our conversation, I asked the second question in Chinese, “能介绍一下你的好朋友吗?” (“Could you please introduce your good friend?”) Feifei gently answered, “她是 Grace，比我大，我三年级了，她五年级.” (“Her name is Grace. She is older than me. I am in grade 3. She is in grade 5.”) “So, you two are good friends.” I commented. Grace managed a slight smile and Feifei just nodded. The conversation seemed to come to an end again, so I had to look for a new topic.

Looking around Feifei’s bedroom, I saw some picture books and comics on the floor. I casually opened some and found that several English comic books had long sentences, so I asked Feifei, “这些故事你都能看懂吗？是不是因为从很小就开始学英语了？” (“Can you understand these stories? Was that because you started learning English at a very young age?”) Feifei did not answer my question but continued to play the music from her toy dog and laughed. She seemed to be immersed in her own world with the toy dog. It sang “shake shake shake” while the dog was shaking its head to the music. After a few seconds, the music was over and Feifei answered my question in
Chinese, (“一年级在学校开始学的，不过我在幼儿园的时候就学了一些简单的，像 apple 这种。”) “In grade 1, I began to learn English at school but since kindergarten, I had learned some simple words like apple or something.” Hearing that, I praised her English competence, “哇，那你的英语一定很好了!” (“Wow, your English must be great!”) Feifei smiled and briefly responded, “还行.” (“Not bad.”) I sensed that she behaved more relaxed when we talked about English learning. I guess that was because she felt confident in her English language competence.

Then I picked up one comic book Dogman and asked, “Where did you get these interesting books?” Feifei replied, “Borrowed from the school library”. I flipped through the book quickly and commented, “This looks hilarious.” Feifei nodded, “Um~” and kept playing with her toy dog. Getting no more response from her, I put Dogman back on the floor and randomly chose another comic book Dork Diaries (Russell, 2011). I asked if she could read it to me. She grinned and said, “This is my favorite. Of course, I can read aloud.” And then she read one page of the book fluently and correctly with standard American English (Field notes, Feifei’s home, November 25, 2019).

Bringing Dr. Xie’s puzzle, I continued a casual chat with Feifei in Chinese. Here I translated our conversation into English.

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4 At the beginning of this chapter, I quoted the words from Dork Diaries (Russell, 2011). One of the reasons why I quoted was it was Feifei’s favorite literature when she was in Canada.
Haojun: Your reading is amazing! Do you like the school here? (Feifei nodded). Can you understand what the Canadian teachers were talking about in class?

Feifei: Sometimes I can, sometimes I cannot. But if I force myself to carefully listen, I can understand most of the English.

Haojun: Wow, so do you still need to take the ESL class? Since you already understand what people were talking about at school.

Feifei: I still need to go to the ESL class because I did not talk in my class. (She scratched her head and tittered awkwardly.)

Haojun: [I was confused about the difference between the ESL class and “her class,” so I continued to ask.] Wait what? Sorry, what does that mean? In your class?

Feifei: [She tittered.] Means I don’t talk in Ms. Bella’s class. But I do talk in Ms. Emily’s class, which is the ESL class.

Haojun: Why? You don’t like Ms. Bella?

Feifei: No. I am shy. [She shrugged and gave me a bashful smile.]

Haojun: Oh, I see. Is the ESL lesson difficult for you?

Feifei: Not really. But some English writing can be difficult in some cases.

Haojun: Oh. So, what is the ESL class like? What do you do in class?

Feifei: Everyday Ms. Emily will tell us a story. The homework is very easy and there is just a little homework.

Haojun: OK. Have you made any good friends at Kingswood?

Feifei: I don’t talk much in class. I don’t speak a lot of English at school.

Haojun: Really? Why? [I was surprised to hear that because she didn’t directly answer, “Yes, I have,” or “No, I haven’t.”]

Feifei: I don’t know.

Haojun: Is that because you cannot understand what Canadians are talking about?

Feifei: I can understand, in most cases. [It goes back to what she mentioned earlier in this conversation.]

Haojun: Then why not talk with them?

Feifei: I don’t know. I just don’t want to speak English. (Field notes, Feifei’s home, November 25, 2019).

Similar to her response at the dinner table, Feifei briefly answered my questions, so at that time I felt the information I got from the conversation was very limited. Then I turned to talk with Grace who told me that she had been to America before the visit to Canada. After chatting with Feifei and Grace for 20 minutes, I returned to the kitchen.
where Dr. Xie was doing the dishes. Then I retold Dr. Xie the conversation. Dr. Xie sighed and said, “it had been almost a full year since Feifei came to Canada. She still would not talk in school after such a long time” (Field notes, November 25, 2019).

“Why has Feifei not talked in her Grade 3 Class?” This has been a puzzle for both Dr. Xie and me since I started my narrative inquiry into their cross-cultural lived experience in Canada. This home visit and Dr. Xie’s words made me wonder why Feifei was so quiet after she had been in Canada for almost a full year. However, during Feifei’s visit to Canada, I did not have much chance to chat with her, so I knew little about her. After she returned to China at the end of December 2019, the puzzle of “Why doesn’t she talk?” still lingered in my mind and I was curious about Feifei’s adaptation to her school in China: Did she talk more after returning to China? Thus, I contacted Dr. Xie, asking about Feifei’s recent situation. If she needed any assistance in English learning, I could do free online tutoring for her. Meanwhile, I also let Dr. Xie know my dual role as both an English tutor for the child and a graduate researcher for my doctoral thesis. If Feifei mentioned her life in Canada to me, I might write her words down after the tutoring session as notes. Dr. Xie agreed and accepted my offer right away.

The first online session was on January 16, 2021. I sent the meeting link to Dr. Xie at 7:28 p.m. in Beijing Time and saw Dr. Xie and Feifei at 7:30 p.m. Feifei looked lively and said hello to me first. I said hello and asked her how everything was going. She first asked me 你在加拿大吗? (”Are you in Canada?”) I replied, 我回国了，因
For the pandemic ("I am back in China because of Covid-19."). Then she told me in Chinese that she missed her life in Canada because the Canadian teachers were nice and there was less homework. Apart from that, she also liked big snow in Canada because, in her hometown, there was no snow even in January. I tried to comfort her by saying that she may have the opportunity to go to another country with her mom again in the future, or she could study abroad as an undergraduate student (Casual conversation with Feifei, January 16, 2021). Feifei sighed and said "maybe." Since she mentioned snow in Canada, I picked a story named Little Owl’s Snow written by Srinivasan (2011) for Feifei to read at my first English tutoring session with her. After reading the story, I selected 10 English words from the story and let Feifei write them down in her notebook. Before the class ended, we reviewed all the key words and had a 5-minute casual talk about her schooling in China and her memories of Canada. It was the schedule for a typical 40-minute English tutoring session between Feifei and me.

Since then, I had been meeting Feifei online almost once a week (except for holidays) and we would read English picture books, chat and share exciting things happening in our life. In the process, she recalled more details and stories about her life in Canada. In October 2021, both Feifei and her mom Dr. Xie agreed to participate in my research. In the one-hour online interview, Dr. Xie shared more intriguing stories with me about Feifei’s international and cross-cultural experiences between Canada and China. After the interview, Dr. Xie sent me quite a few pictures of Feifei’s artifacts with
Feifei’s permission, including her homework done in Canada and her diaries. With a great number of field notes, interview transcripts, and artifacts, the puzzle of Feifei not talking turned into a vivid story of her international cross-cultural schooling, which I will tell and retell in the following sections. More importantly, my inquiry into this puzzle also reveals her translinguaging and bilingual/bicultural acquisition from a holistic perspective.

“I came on Christmas and left on Christmas”

The First Half of 2019: From Mountainview to Kingswood

Dr. Xie told me in our online interview that before the trip to Canada, Feifei did not want to go abroad because she knew little about Canada and was unwilling to leave her father and classmates (Interview with Dr. Xie, October 8, 2021). In our online tutoring session, Feifei shared with me her thoughts about her visit to Canada: “Before going to Canada, I did not have any requirements or high expectations of the visit to Canada because I just got to know this country from my mom” (Casual conversation with Feifei, October 7, 2021). Dr. Xie encouraged Feifei to go to Canada with her, saying there were abounding games and activities in Canadian schools, so Feifei changed her mind. By the time she left China, Feifei had attended a Chinese primary school in grade 1 for four months (from September 2018 to December 2018) and learned some Chinese pinyin and characters. She had learned English for one year at an English training center in her hometown, so she knew some simple English words about food and
weather. Dr. Xie believed that the English context was essential for English language learning, but Feifei did not have many opportunities to speak English in China. Thus, she thought that Feifei might forget the words she learned at the center. For example, at the beginning of the one-year visit, Dr. Xie found that Feifei did not answer basic questions such as “Where are you from? How old are you?” when she was asked by her Canadian teacher (Interview with Dr. Xie, October 8, 2021).

“I just don’t want to talk. I don’t know why.” Dr. Xie told me in the online interview that with a friend’s recommendation she and Feifei lived in South Windsor when they just arrived in December 2018, so that Feifei could attend the Mountainview Public School, known as a good school among newcomer families. Feifei was placed in grade 2 because she was born in 2011. But she was in grade 1 at her Chinese school before coming to Canada. As a result, her grade in the Canadian school was one level higher than that in China. Two months later, Dr. Xie found it was not convenient to go to the University of Windsor (UW) since she did not have her own car (Interview with Dr. Xie, October 8, 2021). Thus, in March 2019, Dr. Xie and Feifei moved to a neighborhood near the main campus of UW and Feifei went to Kingswood Public School near the university. I checked the school’s official website, and it said it has just over 600 students. The students enter the school at 8:35 am and the dismissal time is 2:55 pm.
Feifei retold her first school day at Kingswood while we were chatting online. By that time, she had returned to China for almost 2 years but she still remembered some details such as meeting an Indian boy on the school bus. She said,

那个男孩问了我一些简单的问题，像 What’s your name? 这种的，我告诉他我名字了。因为我去加拿大以前学过一点英语，所以我可以听懂简单的问题。到学校之后，有个加拿大老师让我把东西放在一个柜子里，把我带到 Ms. Bella 的教室去了。但是我不记得为什么从那时候起我就不怎么说话了。

(The boy asked me some simple questions like “what’s your name?” I told him my name. I had learned some English before I came to Canada, so I could understand simple questions. After I arrived at school, a Canadian teacher asked me to put my things in a locker and led me to Ms. Bella’s classroom. But I don’t remember why I did not talk much since then.) (Casual conversation with Feifei, December 23, 2021)

Earlier in our online chat, Feifei explained her silence in the Canadian school to me in Chinese. It was after she returned to China for nearly 16 months. I translated her original words into English as follows.

I just don’t want to talk. I don’t know why. I might be a little bit shy. But that’s fine. No one would isolate me just because I did not talk much at school. I could do anything I want after class. After school, I always finished my homework quickly as there was only one piece of homework per day. There was no such homework that I did not know how to do. (Casual conversation with Feifei, April 28, 2021).

Compared with the brief answer she provided in her bedroom in Windsor Canada in November 2019, Feifei, back home in China, offered more details about her Canadian school life. It appeared that she did not see her quietness as something that affected her Canadian schooling experience because she had fun in her own world inside and outside school. After school, she always finished homework quickly and had much time to do things she enjoyed. This was verified by Dr. Xie who told me in our interview that Feifei
did not have burdens or pressure from the schoolwork because she always finished her homework with ease (Interview with Dr. Xie, October 8, 2021).

**The Translation App, ESL Teacher, and Fun Classes.** Even though Feifei did not talk much at school and could not completely understand English in the first few months, she was still able to communicate with her Canadian classmates and teachers because her Chinese friends in Ms. Bella’s class could translate for her. Moreover, Dr. Xie told me in our interview that the Canadian teachers used a phone app to do the translation. Feifei mainly relied on phone translation in the first two months. But she was able to understand about half of the English that Canadian teachers said at school by the time she lived in Windsor for three months (Interview with Dr. Xie, October 8, 2021). When having the online tutoring session with me, Feifei recalled the support she gained at Kingswood. She said it in Chinese, and I translated it into English as follows⁵.

> Having Chinese classmates around me was a particularly important thing as it made me feel safe. My classmates Amy and Mike translated for me. Mike is a Chinese Canadian who was born in Canada, so he can understand Chinese. Amy’s parents are also Chinese professors just like my mom. (Casual conversation with Feifei, December 23, 2021)

> The translation app and Chinese peers’ help were the means that enabled Feifei to feel comfortable at Kingswood. More importantly, she told me that the Canadian teachers would not force her to answer questions or do presentations in class (Casual conversation with Feifei, December 23, 2021).

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⁵ When the quotation of children’s words are all English in this dissertation, it is mostly my translation, and their original words were all Chinese (except where otherwise stated). When their original words had both English and Chinese, I provide the bilingual quotation.
conversation with Feifei, October 7, 2021), which created a more relaxing atmosphere for Feifei’s schooling. She particularly liked her ESL teacher, Ms. Emily, and talked with her about everyday topics such as food, weather, and favorite toys. Feifei recalled her ESL teacher when we were chatting online. She said, “Ms. Emily would tell us many interesting stories such as fairy tales and the magic world in ESL class” (Casual conversation with Feifei, October 28, 2021). Feifei shared with me her feelings about taking ESL class and an amusing story about Ms. Emily. She said,

ESL 班里的同学都不怎么会说英语，所以我自己不会显得那么奇怪。而且我的英语比 ESL 班里的其他同学好，所以我感觉更自信。我跟 ESL 班的 Ms. Emily 聊得比较多，然后 Ms. Emily 就告诉了我的班主任 Ms. Bella 说我 ESL 班上跟她 (Ms. Emily) 经常说话。Ms. Bella 就很惊讶地问了一句 What? Is she just afraid of me? 当时我也正好在那嘛，就听到了 Ms. Bella 的问题，我也没回答，就这样笑了一下。(The students in the ESL class were not good at English, so I would not feel I was a strange or special student in the class. Moreover, my English was better than other ESL classmates, so I feel more confident there. I also talked more with Ms. Emily in the ESL class. Ms. Emily told my teacher, Ms. Bella, that I talked a lot with her in the ESL class. Then Ms. Bella looked surprised and asked, “What? Is she just afraid of me?” I was there when they were talking about this, but I didn’t answer that question, just smiling like this.) [Feifei made a bashful smile and tried to show me how she reacted at that moment.] (Casual conversation with Feifei, December 9, 2021)

Feifei also told me she liked all the Canadian teachers at the Mountainview and Kingswood Public schools, but her favorite is Ms. Emily because the ESL class was really fun for her. Feifei recalled a classroom activity in the ESL class to explain why she liked this class the best in Chinese. Here is the English translation.

Ms. Emily gave us some handouts and guided us to read the steps of making toast one by one. She even gave each of us some slices of real bread and some jam and butter. We can spread strawberry jam on one side of the toast and spread butter
on the other side of the toast. It was so yummy! You can try it by yourself at home! (Casual conversation with Feifei, February 3, 2022)

Feifei also enjoyed other hands-on classes at Kingswood. For example, in the P.E. class, she played hula hoops and jumped into them step by step while doing the rock-paper-scissors game with her classmates. Feifei shared her memories of P.E. class with me as follows.

The main task of the P.E. class in Canada was to play and at the same time, it helped to improve our health by doing interesting games. If I didn’t understand the game rules, I would ask other classmates. My principal was very nice because she arranged for me to a class where there were Chinese friends. (Casual conversation with Feifei, November 18, 2021)

In P.E. class, Feifei also got help from her Chinese peers. Besides ESL and P.E. classes, she also relished the art class. She said to me, “my favorite class is art. Learning in Canada is so fun” (Casual conversation with Feifei, July 8, 2021). She told me that she liked to draw pictures and it cost her a lot of time after class. Not only in the art class, Feifei also drew pictures in the Social Studies class, which was also taught by her homeroom teacher Ms. Bella.

**Safety at Home.** Feifei learned about safety education in Social Studies at Kingswood at the beginning of March 2019. She was assigned the homework named “Safety at home” after that class. She finished the homework sheet, submitted it to Ms. Bella, and got feedback. When we were having the online tutoring session in December 2021, Feifei took the initiative to retell the story about “safety at home” by sharing her
screen with me (as Figure 1 shows). I provided the complete English translation in the brackets.

Feifei: 这节课是教你怎么在家安全用电的。这里有些水，然后一个人触电了。这是个插头，他的手碰到插头了。我当时想解释我画的什么意思。但是那时去加拿大没多久，还不会拼这个单词 electricity。所以我就写了“Don’t…” 哈哈，嘻嘻嘻。

Haojun: 这个作业是要交的吗？
Feifei: 对，所以老师帮我完成了这个句子“electrical plug.” 再给你看一个！这是一个玩具车和一个人。我就写了“toys (trip on them)”

Haojun: 真棒！你还知道 trip 的这个意思呢（“绊倒”），我以前只知道它有“旅行”的意思（我一边说着，一边在 Feifei 的画旁打了一个蓝色的勾，以示肯定）。Feifei: 我朋友 Amy 告诉我的。这还有一个呢！这是一个装了热水的水壶，嘿嘿（一边在电脑屏幕上画一边咯咯地笑）。我当时是这么写的 “Don’t play hot wed.” (再次大笑并打出这行短句) 哈哈哈，我当时不知道怎么拼“water” 所以我写了这个“hot wed.” 嘿嘿嘿。

(Feifei: This class is about how to safely use electricity at home. There is some water, and the man gets an electric shock. This is a plug, and he touches it with his hands. I wanted to write down the explanation of what I drew on the worksheet. But it was not long after I arrived in Canada, and I did not know how to spell the word “electricity.” So, I just wrote down “Don’t…” Haha. [She chortled.]
Haojun: Did you need to submit the homework sheet?
Feifei: Yes, so [when the homework was given back to me from the teacher] the teacher helped me to complete the sentence with “an electrical plug.” Let me show you one more. This is a toy car and one man, so I wrote down “toys (trip on them)” [She typed the words below her doodle.]

Haojun: Great! You know the word “trip” can mean “you knock your foot against something and fall or nearly fall.” I used to know it means “travelling.” [I drew a blue tick beside Feifei’s third doodle to give her positive feedback].

Feifei: My friend Amy told me that meaning. Here is one more. This is a kettle with hot water in it [She guffawed when she typed the sentence). Here is what I wrote at that time “Don’t play hot wed” [She laughed again and typed the short sentence]. I didn’t know how to spell “water” at that time, so I wrote it like this, “hot wed.” Hee Hee.) (Casual conversation with Feifei, December 7, 2021)

Figure 1
By the time Feifei returned to China for two years, she recalled how she drew four things that children should not do at home in Canada. While explaining the meaning of her drawing to me, she wrote down the corresponding English sentences below the doodle. Figure 1 was what she presented on her laptop when we were chatting online in 2021 whereas Figure 2 was the homework sheet that she submitted to the Canadian teacher in 2019. There were also two parts in her homework sheet: her drawing and the English explanation. In Figure 2, even though Feifei spelt some words incorrectly such as “hat wed” and “taeb,” she still made an attempt to spell them according to the pronunciation. Her Canadian teacher helped with the meaning construction by completing the sentence and providing the correct spelling of words such as “hot water” and “table.”

Figure 2
Moreover, the homework sheet demonstrated how various symbols worked together to make sense of meaning. For example, in Figure 2, Feifei used the slash over her doodle, which can be seen on some traffic signs. The red slash usually indicates people cannot do something, e.g., no left turn or no right turn. Feifei naturally borrowed it to express the meaning of “don’t do these at home.” She transferred what she saw in daily life to her written worksheets, which manifested her ability to use linguistic and cognitive repertoire to make meaning. Figure 1 and 2 demonstrated multimodal features and semiotic resources which Feifei used to get messages across in her artifact. Besides, when she was explaining to me the meaning of her doodle in two languages, the process of how she finished the homework and the meaning of those missing words on the worksheet reemerged in our conversation. The story of “safety at home” showed that
what Feifei wanted to say and what she knew was much more than what was written on the worksheet.

**Lexia and the Canadian Tutor.** Dr. Xie told me in the interview that she was anxious and confused about Feifei’s silence in the first few months at the Canadian schools. At the end of March 2019, Feifei’s homeroom teacher, Ms. Bella, reported this issue to Dr. Xie in the parent-teacher conference. Ms. Bella also found Feifei did not talk much in class, despite that she encouraged Feifei many times to speak English. She even allowed her to do a short presentation in Chinese, but Feifei still did not want to talk.

Then Ms. Bella analyzed the assessment report and told Dr. Xie, “Feifei’s reading, and writing were strong, and her English level was beyond her grade. But she had better stay in ESL program as she could learn more English vocabulary. She did not often speak but she was able to write the words down” (Interview with Dr. Xie, October 8, 2021). After the parent-teacher conference, Dr. Xie reflected on Feifei’s silence and compared her behaviors when she stayed with Chinese friends. Dr. Xie told me in our interview that, Feifei was very chatty with her Chinese friends and family members, but the Canadian classroom and school were new to her. She still did not talk much at school even if she could understand what her Canadian classmates and teachers were talking about. (Interview with Dr. Xie, October 8, 2021)

But Dr. Xie was relieved that Feifei’s English reading and writing were beyond her grade. Dr. Xie owed Feifei’s excellence in spelling words to Lexia, which was a “computerized reading program that provides phonics instruction and gives students independent practice in basic reading skills” (Lexia core 5 reading, 2022, para. 2).
Through designing games about phonics that are effective to teach children the relationship between sounds and spelling, it aims to “accelerate the development of literacy skills for students of all abilities” (Lexia core 5 reading, 2022). Lexia was used in Kingswood and became one of the young Chinese visiting students’ favorite things in the Canadian classroom. Dr. Xie told me in our interview that Feifei acquired English phonics in the process of playing games and getting the level up in Lexia.

In the first few months of 2019, Feifei spent much time on Lexia. The teacher would give each student an account, so Feifei can compete with other classmates. She was extremely interested in playing it and she got the rewards when she won the game. Every time she arrived home, she would play Lexia. Her level in the program was rising and her English pronunciation had largely improved in the process. (Interview with Dr. Xie, October 8, 2021)

As the parent, Dr. Xie realized the role of Lexia in facilitating Feifei’s English learning. In our online chat, Feifei also mentioned that her favorite thing in the Canadian classroom was the iPad because it had Lexia (Casual conversation with Feifei, December 23, 2021).

Dr. Xie told me in our online interview that even though Feifei made improvements in English reading and writing in the first few months of 2019, she seldom spoke English at school or at home. To enhance Feifei’s English speaking, Dr. Xie hoped to find a local Canadian as a native speaker of English to practice oral English with Feifei. Soon after the meeting with Ms. Bella, Dr. Xie got to know Susie through the RLP. Susie was a Canadian pre-service teacher at the Faculty of Education, University of Windsor, and she had the experience of visiting China for three months through RLP.
Hearing about Susie’s experience in China and her expertise in teaching children, Dr. Xie hoped Susie could tutor Feifei as she needed to practice her oral English. Susie was interested in that, so she agreed. Then the face-to-face English tutoring class began at the end of March 2019. The weekly tutoring class would last an hour after school on the first floor of Leddy Library on the UW campus (Interview with Dr. Xie, October 8, 2021).

I got acquainted with Susie through RLP in September 2019 and we soon became good friends. I invited her to participate in my research as an informant in October 2021. She agreed at once and recalled the situations when she had just begun to tutor Feifei. She told me through WeChat that Feifei was very coy and reticent in the first tutoring class. But Susie reassured her by saying “that’s ok. I am going to be your teacher. We will play games and have fun.” Then Susie started to let Feifei read Peppa Pig which was one of Feifei’s favorite books. They would identify some words in it together (e.g., cucumber) and Susie would ask Feifei several questions about the story. Susie commented, “Feifei observed English very well and her ability to learn English was great for her age” (Interview with Susie, October 23, 2021).

**Start Writing Diary and Reading Comic Books.** While Susie started to tutor Feifei, a change was happening to one of Feifei’s daily routines: writing her diary. Dr. Xie told me in our interview that there was an evolving process of Feifei’s English diary writing. She did not write English long paragraphs at the beginning. Feifei had been writing Chinese sentences with the suggestion of Dr. Xie since she arrived in Windsor in
December 2018. Dr. Xie advised her to write one to two Chinese sentences for practicing Chinese every day. In April 2019, Feifei told Dr. Xie that she did not want to write Chinese sentences anymore as there were too many Chinese characters that she did not know how to write. She said to Dr. Xie, “It is very troublesome to write both Chinese characters and pinyin in a sentence. It does not look pretty. Writing English sentences is more natural to me.” Then she asked if she could write English sentences instead. Dr. Xie was quite happy to hear that, so she agreed that Feifei could write whatever she wanted in English (Interview with Dr. Xie, October 8, 2021). Then Feifei began to write her English diary in April 2019 and there were only one or two lines at the beginning. Meanwhile, she began to borrow books from the school library. Her favorite books included *Dork Diaries* (Russel, 2009, 2011), *The Baby-Sitters Club* (Martin, 2005) and *Dog Man* (Pilkey, 2016). In our online chat, Feifei told me that she took pleasure in reading comic books because they were fun and made her laugh (Casual conversation with Feifei, October 28, 2021).

As noted before, Feifei started to write English diaries four months after she arrived in Windsor. She acquired the humorous style and the comedic graphic formats from the comic books. Moreover, she started to create her own stories in the diary. For example, in May 2019, Feifei read one more book of the *Dogman* (Pilkey, 2016) series

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6 To know how the comic books influenced young Chinese visiting students’ English learning, I bought *Dog Man* (Pilkey, 2016), *The Captain Underpants* (Pilkey, 1997), *The Baby-Sitters Club* (Martin, 2016), and *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (Kinney, 2017), and *Dork Diaries* (Russel, 2016). These books were my participant students’ favorite books in Canada.
and found there was a “dino bunny” written by 80-HD (a robot built by Petey), so she made up a new story in the form of comics when she was at home. As Figure 3 shows, there were three main characters in the story of Dino-Bunny, the baby dinosaur, a police officer, and a man with an M hat. In the original Dogman, there was a character whose hat had the word “chief,” and the Dogman had a hat with a crown on it. Thus, Feifei added new elements and changed the letter as she liked (Feifei’s artifact, May 25, 2019). She acquired a lot of English colloquial and informal words from Dogman (Pilkey, 2016), such as “hee-hee” and “Haw Haw,” but Dino Bunny was Feifei’s story. It was a self-motivated and free creation without any restrictions or structured instruction from parents or teachers. She seemed not to talk much at the Canadian school, but she used English writing to develop her linguistic practices in informal contexts and make space for self-expression.

Figure 3

Feifei’s Creation – Dino Bunny
In short, Feifei devoted a great deal of time to reading English comic books, so her funds of knowledge and bilingual repertoires were influenced by what she read. In formal language education, teachers often emphasize the role of reading in enhancing students’ writing. In Feifei’s case, she did not write the English diary or read English comic books for any specific purposes such as memorizing key words or practicing sentence structures. She just fancied funny stuff and found that writing an English diary was more comfortable and convenient for her. It happened to be an activity which perfectly integrated reading with her other hobby, drawing. As a result, for Feifei, translanguaging and bi-lingual/cultural acquisition was a spontaneously occurring phenomenon and it was self-directed and creative. Besides, she gained full support from her mom, who totally respected her language choice in writing the diary.

Apart from reading and writing, Feifei also made progress in English listening. Dr. Xie told me in our interview that Feifei could understand most of the English in daily life after half a year in Windsor for half a year (Interview with Dr. Xie, October 8, 2021). When Feifei came back to Kingswood in September 2019, she became a grade 3 student. She remembered that she had not played the Lexia very often since the new semester began. She told me the reason while we were chatting online: “it was so slow to achieve the next level, as I was already level 13. My Canadian teacher even lowered the level in my Lexia account because she thought my speed of getting levels up was too fast” (Casual conversation with Feifei, November 11, 2021). As the new semester started, the
day of leaving Canada was also approaching. Feifei cherished the last four months in Canada (from September to December 2019) and enjoyed herself in different places, at different times, and with different people.

*In the Second Half of 2019: Continuing with the Thrilling and Rewarding Experience*

**Caicai’s First Day.** The fall semester of 2019 began and Feifei’s tutoring class with Susie was continuing. She liked Susie as she wrote in her journal: “I like my teacher, Ms. Susie, not like, I love her” (Feifei’s diary, October 5, 2019). She enjoyed having the tutoring class with Susie and even helped her younger Chinese friend Caicai Fan with the tutoring class. Caicai was in Senior Kindergarten at Kingswood during her stay in Canada and her mom, Dr. Chen, was also a Chinese visiting scholar who came to Windsor through the RLP program. Thus, Dr. Chen and Dr. Xie got to know each other through the program. Caicai and Feifei also became good friends although there was a three-year age difference between them. Since October 2019, Caicai had been tutored by Susie. Her stories will be told in the next chapter. On October 1, 2019, Caicai’s first class with Susie started at the Leddy Library and Feifei kept a record of what happened that day in her diary (Figure 4).

Figure 4

*Feifei’s Diary – Caicai’s First Day*
In the tutoring class, Feifei played the role of an interpreter, and she drew three persons on the right side of the page as Figure 4 shows. I used black arrows and names to label each person. Feifei was speaking Chinese to Caicai who looked smaller behind her. Caicai was only 5 years old in September 2019 while Feifei was almost 8 years old. By that time, Susie had been tutoring Feifei for half a year. Here Feifei’s role changed. At the Canadian school, she was the one who might need a translation from her Chinese classmates and the Canadian teachers (using a translation app on the phone). But in Susie’s tutoring class, Feifei was able to help Caicai, a younger Chinese visiting student, with English learning. On the right side of the page, Feifei wrote down both English and Chinese in one sentence: “like chinese 一二一二.” She used “一二一二” (which actually means “one two one two”) to refer to the content that she translated for Caicai.
Similarly, people often use “bla bla bla” in English. She drew many letters (e.g., r and e) surrounding Susie to show that she was speaking English.

Furthermore, in Figure 4, Feifei expressed her love for the Canadian tutor and her friend Caicai. On the left side of her diary, she wrote in English, “But today I have a piano class so I can just help her 30 minutes. I’m sad because I love Susie. I just want to stay with her more time.” There were three lines of “waaaaaa” on the left page, which indicated Feifei’s strong emotions of sadness. This was a Chinese character “哇” (wa in pinyin), which was often used to describe the crying sound. Her diary described fascinating things in her daily life about her friend, herself, the Canadian tutor, and an important character: her mom, Dr. Xie.

The Two Pages That Condensed the Style of Feifei’s Diary. Figure 5 showed that Feifei missed her mom because her mom was not at home when she wrote the diary. As mentioned in the prelude of this chapter, on October 5, 2019, Dr. Xie was busy with the Conference at the university, so she asked another Chinese visiting scholar to take care of Feifei in her apartment. Then Feifei wrote down her feelings on that day.

Figure 5

*Feifei’s Diary – News, Small Bag, Nice Noodle, and My Mom*
Dr. Xie was not at home on that day for several hours, so Feifei was sad and there was “caty” sad dance on the right page. On the same page, the “snoopy” happy dance was also eye-catching as she tasted yummy noodles. In *Dork Diaries* (Russell, 2011), there was also Nikki’s snoopy happy dance. Nikki was the main character of *Dork Diaries* (Russell, 2011). Thus, the happy dance in Feifei’s diary could be seen as an imitation of the comic books she read. Beside each cartoon character, she wrote down the feelings of the little girls such as “I’m so happy” or “I’m so sad!” Furthermore, she wrote different fonts for different purposes. For example, there were three capitalized and bolded words “OMG,” “SAD” and “LOVE,” which also emphasized her strong emotions of happiness and sadness. The style of capitalizing English words could also be found in the *Dork Diary* that she read. When she wanted to convey her love of noodles, she wrote, “I like it, so I use this kind of English to whrite it.” Even though this was her
own diary, she was explaining why she used a wavy font for the “nice noodle.” It could be seen as her automatic way of verbalizing thoughts while writing in English.

On the left side of the page, she told jokes by showing the good and bad news. The ability to tell English jokes might be seen as a sign of English acquisition as Swain (2009) mentions that “aspect of second language learning that is a major challenge to advanced level second language learners is the use and understanding of humor” (p. 101). Additionally, she employed double brackets for the title of her diary, which was not commonly seen in English writing. It was more of a standard for drafting a Chinese or Japanese article or book title. She had attended the Chinese primary school for four months before the trip to Canada, so she had learned some writing conventions in Chinese. Moreover, she wrote “buiterfal” in the story of “small bag.” Actually, she meant “beautiful”, and I knew her spelling was the combination of pinyin and English letters based on the pronunciation of the word. It was the tenth month of her stay in Canada when she wrote this diary. Even though there was no Chinese character on the two pages, they still revealed traces of translanguaging that could not be easily observed at the first sight.

In summary, Feifei’s diary was driven by the need of expressing real emotions and meaning. She was not asked to use certain sentence structures or keywords to make a sentence, which was often seen in EFL or ESL classrooms. Aside from reading and writing at home, Feifei kept taking the weekly tutoring class with Susie and they got
along well with each other. Therefore, Feifei and Dr. Xie were both invited to the
Halloween party held at Susie’s house on October 31, 2019. Another two Chinese
visiting scholars (Dr. Chen and Dr. Lin) and their daughters (Caicai and Luna) were also
invited.

Use Sign Language to Say, “I know.” Stella is the younger sister of Susie, so
she was at the Halloween party, too. She recalled what happened that day in our online
interview and shared with me some intriguing stories about Feifei. She said,

It was the last day of October 2019. The Chinese children went trick or treating
and they got a bunch of candy. We let them dump all candy in the living room
and they tried some of the new candy. Feifei dressed up as a witch. I remember
she was sitting on the couch with other Chinese children, eating snacks. My
father saw that and told Susie, “Can you tell Feifei? She’s not allowed to eat on
the couch. The snacks are tiny. They’re gonna get in the cracks.” This is so
funny. Feifei was in grade 3 at that time, but she turned to us, and she went like
this (made an OK sign with her right-hand fingers, nodding at Susie and my
father). Obviously, she got it. She can understand and she doesn’t need a
translator. (Interview with Stella, November 9, 2021)

Stella’s retelling of the story shows that Feifei could understand what Canadians
were talking about. By the time she went to Susie’s house for Halloween, she had been
in Windsor for 10 months. She used a gesture, which was also a non-linguistic mode of
meaning, to send the message “I know.” It further revealed that young ELLs like Feifei
complemented oral meanings in their own ways such as body language.

“She is poking me.” In our online interview, Stella shared with me one more
story which happened between Feifei and her at the Halloween party in 2019.
Stella: Another thing that happened was cute. Feifei was sitting next to me at the table. We were eating pizza and her mom was across the table from me. And suddenly, I just felt like someone like poking. I looked at Feifei, yeah, she’s poking me on my left arm. So, I look at her I was like “do you need something, you want more pizza and, you want more juice?” And she just looked at me and she’s smiling at me. And I was like “OK. This is odd.” I turned away and she’s poking me again. I’m like, “what do you want?”

Haojun: Have you figured out why she poked you?
Stella: I don’t know. Cross the table, her mom, Dr. Xie, was just smiling at me and Feifei. I think it’s because her mom could tell that Feifei was comfortable around me. But it’s hard to see because she doesn’t speak a lot of English. But she was smiling. She’s very happy. I could tell that she can understand, and she wanted to say something. But she was just staring at me at that time. (Interview with Stella, November 9, 2021)

Stella had no idea why Feifei poked her, but she knew Feifei felt comfortable being around a group of Canadians at the Halloween party. In our online chat, I asked if Feifei remembered why she poked Stella on that day, but she had forgotten (Casual conversation with Feifei, January 13, 2022). Feifei might not talk much in English, but she would not sit there like a tree. She had her own way to interact with the surrounding world, especially when she felt comfortable. After recalling the story of “poking me,” Stella continued to share with me her understanding of Feifei’s behavior, “when the children are comfortable with you, they’re better able to show their personality” (Interview with Stella, November 9, 2021). Different from the gesture of “I know” conveying the message of “I got it,” Feifei’s poking at Stella might serve more for recreation and interacting with Stella. It also proved that Feifei felt comfortable at the Halloween party, so she began to show more of her personality, which was consistent with what she presented in her diary. In the two stories “I know” and “poking me,” Feifei
did not say anything, but the meaning was expressed. Furthermore, she presented a seemingly different Feifei from what she behaved at Kingswood.

At the Canadian school, she did not talk much with her classmates and teachers, except for her ESL teacher Ms. Emily and her Chinese friends Mike and Amy who translated for her when needed. But Feifei’s limited English oral output at school did not frustrate her or cause a negative effect on her schooling. In fact, many memorable events happened at Kingwood during Feifei’s visit to Canada.

**Celebrating Birthday at School Was Unforgettable.** Like many other children, Feifei regarded her birthday as a big event as it was mentioned several times in her diary in October and November. She looked forward to it and was getting more and more excited when it was approaching her birthday. For example, she wrote in English,

> My birthday party will be beyond AWESOME! Just imagine a fabulous party with a band DJ, ice cream and a humongous birthday cake. I think everything will be so unbelievable. I need to pinch myself to make sure I’m not dreaming. OUCH! That hurt. I just pinched myself. (Feifei’s diary, November 5, 2019)

Feifei used some specific words in her diary, which were not commonly seen in English textbooks in Chinese elementary schools, such as *pinch, humongous, loyal, adorkable, awesome, sundae, all-you-can-eat* and *unbelievable*. The style and tone of this short passage were like that of *Dork Diaries* (Russell, 2011), which was her favorite book in Canada. She attached great importance to her birthday, so when I asked her in one of our online tutoring sessions, “Was there any interesting or unforgettable thing at Kingswood?” Feifei immediately recalled the memorable day of celebrating her birthday.
at school in the middle of November 2019. By the time of this conversation, she had
returned to China for around two years. She said to me,

我的生日在十一月嘛，我很喜欢那次加拿大老师和同学在学校帮我庆祝生日。他们准备了糖然后围着我唱 “happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you.” 那天我简直太开心了。我还从校长那得到了一支铅笔呢，看！让我给你展示展示（Feifei拿起铅笔，通过电脑摄像头展示给我看，一边说一边转动这支小巧的彩色包装的铅笔）。这上面还有粉色和蓝色的气球呢！我把这只笔带回家了。 (My birthday is in November. I really like the day that the Canadian teachers and classmates celebrated it at school for me. They prepared candy and surrounded me, singing “happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you.” I rejoiced on that day. I even got a pencil from the principal. See! Let me show you. [She showed me a pencil and rolled it in front of the camera on her laptop, to show the colorful painting on it.] It has pink and blue balloons on it. I brought the pencil to my home in China.) (Casual conversation with Feifei, December 23, 2021)

Feifei recalled how her Canadian classmates and teachers celebrated her birthday at school. She brought the birthday presents home and then wrote it down in her diary. I saw the entry about her birthday from the pictures that Dr. Xie sent to me through WeChat. Interestingly, Feifei’s diary not only included joyous facets of life but also “tensions” between her and her mom.

“Today I cried.” As mentioned earlier, Dr. Xie and Feifei moved out of a house in South Windsor in March 2019 and lived in an apartment near the campus of UW until they left Canada. It was in the rented apartment that Feifei wrote about many trivial things happening between her mom and her. As Figure 6 shows, Feifei wrote down why her mom was unhappy on November 21, 2019.

Figure 6

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Feifei’s Diary – Today I Cried

The plots were not complicated, and it seemed like a short story, whereas this page comprised a lot of information. First, Feifei used varied sizes for some English words to further highlight her emotions even though some sentences were already capitalized. For instance, in her mom’s words “YOUR TEACHER SAID YOU NEED TO PRACTICE EVERY DAY!!,” the phrase “every day” was bigger than the other words in the sentence. She emphasized her mom’s tone and stressed words by using different font sizes in writing. Secondly, Feifei combined illustrations and English paragraphs in her diary. She also wrote down one sentence beside the illustration to explain what her drawing meant. In the speech bubble, there was an unhappy face and
two exclamation marks at the end, which was adorable. The features were similar to the
*Dork Diaries*, but Feifei used an amusing style and symbols to tell her own life stories.

More interestingly, there was a second person “you” in her diary. She wrote in
brackets “I know you don’t like your mom when she got mad at you, too!” Who was
“you?” Was Feifei talking to her friend? In *Dork Diaries* (Russell, 2011), there was also
the second person “you”, but it meant the author Rachel Renée Russell was talking with
readers. Feifei’s diary was unseen by others during her stay in Canada and she even told
her mom not to read her diary. Curious about the “you” in Feifei’s diary, I asked her in
our online tutoring session, “what do you mean by ‘you’ in your diary? Are you talking
with someone?” Feifei replied, 就是未来的我，我在加拿大写日记时经常这么干，
以后我长大了就可以再读这些日记了 (“That is the future me. I often did that when I
wrote my diary in Canada. Then I can reread it when I grow up”) (Casual conversation
with Feifei, December 9, 2021). Multiple temporalities folded when she wrote her diary
because it kept a record of what happened in the past and included the words that she
planned to tell the “future her.” That might be inspired by the *Dork Diaries* (Russell,
2011), which mentioned,

one of the best parts about a diary is that you can look back at all the silly things
you said years, months, weeks, days and even hours ago. A diary is almost like a
time machine to both your past and your future. You can write an entry to your
future self, then come back and read it later. (p. 166)

Influenced by *Dork Diaries* (Russell, 2011), Feifei’s diary had a narrative nature
that transcended different time periods. The story of “Today I cried” was written on 21
November 2019. Four days later, I was invited to have a hotpot at Dr. Xie’s apartment as mentioned in the prelude of this chapter. While Feifei and I were sitting on the floor in her bedroom, she said to me, “I don’t talk much at school, but I often tell jokes when I stay with Susie” (Field notes, Feifei’s home, November 25, 2019). When I reread the field notes I made on that day, I became curious about the joke that Feifei told her Canadian tutor, Susie, so I asked Susie any jokes that Feifei told her in our online interview in 2021.

“How can you be cold when you are fat?” Susie was impressed by Feifei’s humor and the jokes she told, so she quickly recalled one of the jokes that Feifei made during their tutoring class in December 2019 (by that time, she had been tutoring Feifei for 9 months).

Susie: Feifei was learning English well when she was in Canada and she would be sarcastic in the English language, which is hard to get sarcasm for beginners. She would joke with me in sarcastic ways. I remember once it was the beginning of December, and I was wearing a winter jacket. We were having the tutoring class at Leddy Library in the afternoon. I was like “I’m so cold” and she looks at me, she goes, “how can you be cold when you are fat?” She’s smiling and giggling. I was like, “do you think I’m fat?” She goes, “maybe?” She was joking with me, and I couldn’t believe it. She was in grade 3, but I find her English is always a level above.

Haojun: I see, it’s cute and you did not feel unhappy about that joke. So, would you suggest Chinese teachers teach students more adjectives to describe body size instead of “fat”?

Susie: Yeah, I think it was a little bit of Chinese culture. People would just tell me I was fat on the street in China. They’d be like “you are so beautiful but so fat.” It’s a little bit of joking. Feifei jokes with me and that is the way we interact. I think she’s comfortable with me. So, she can be herself a little bit. That’s okay.
It’s kind of like when it happens, it happens. I wouldn’t teach them straight up. So, I think it’s a comfort level with the kids.

Haojun: Comfort level. That’s a good point. I can understand Chinese children because “fat” might be the only word that they learn at public schools to describe people who are not skinny. Most Chinese children just have not learned other words such as thick, plump, or chubby. You know Feifei so well, so you know her saying “fat” does not mean she was disrespectful. It’s a tacit agreement.

Susie: Yeah. Like I get they (kids) are not trying to be disrespectful like there’s a difference between disrespectful and joking. And I can tell that difference. It all depends on what voice and tone they’re saying. (Interview with Susie, October 23, 2021)

Feifei felt comfortable with her Canadian tutor, and she even made jokes about her. Their dialogue was not the traditional initiation-response-feedback pattern, but a simultaneous and active communication that had a recreational function. In one of our online tutoring sessions in 2022, I mentioned the joke to Feifei, and she added, “I know Susie would not be mad at me even though I said she was fat in the joke” (Casual conversation with Feifei, March 17, 2022). It is true that Susie did not feel offended, and she even saw the joke as a linguistic development because she believed that getting sarcasm in another language is not easy.

The joke presented a new Feifei who was not hesitant in front of her Canadian tutor but did not talk much at the Canadian public school. When her English was improved to a certain level and when she interacted with the people that she was familiar with, she would tell jokes and act funny, just like many other children. The joke of “fat” reminds me of the joke that Feifei wrote in her English diary and her interactions with Stella at the Halloween party. It appears to be common sense that a person might behave
differently in different places and at different times, but through the deep inquiry, what I sensed from Feifei’s performance at home, school and community was her stable personality and habitual ways of interacting with the surrounding world. Behind the different language practices in different places and times, it was something unchanged and essential such as Feifei’s sense of humor.

More importantly, in the process of telling and retelling Feifei’s stories in Canada, the puzzle of “Why she doesn’t talk” did not bother me as much as before because I tried to see the world in her eyes rather than mine in the inquiry. I gradually entered intimate relationships with Feifei and people around her. The more I inquired, the more I felt that there was nothing unusual about Feifei, who seemed to be quiet at the Canadian school and did not speak much English. In fact, she was not a shy person but might be a shy English speaker when she was in Canada.

“I’M SUCH A DORK!” As the date neared for leaving Canada, Feifei’s English diary also came to an end. There was also an ending part on the last page of her diary (as Figure 7 shows), which formed a complete structure as a whole.

Figure 7

*Feifei’s Diary – The End of My Dork Diary*
On the left side, she recorded her response after her mom asked her to take a bath. She spelt “crazy” as “KA-RA-ZEE,” which is an exaggerating way to manifest her strong emotions and sign of her acquisition of not only the language, but also the ways in which she expressed herself to make an emphasis on the word. Then Feifei also wrote, “But I just said it in my head no one can hear me but me.” I underlined this sentence as it might be useful to respond to the initial puzzle “why doesn’t she talk?” In some cases, she preferred to express her thinking and feelings in her head or in a written way, instead of verbal communication.

“I could talk with my pen.” Feifei’s memories of the last school day at Kingswood also proved that. She shared with me while we were chatting online through two languages. She said,

我可以用笔谈嘛。最后一天上学的时候，我有个加拿大同学跟我说“I’ll miss you.” 我就在桌子上写了“I will miss you too. Wish you all the best.” 她看到就明白我意思了，后来全班同学还给我写了贺卡作为离别礼物。还有很多
巧克力，我都拿回家了。（I could talk with my pen. On the last school day at Kingswood, one of my Canadian classmates said to me, “I’ll miss you.” Then I wrote down on my desk “I will miss you too. Wish you all the best.” She saw that and understood what I meant. Later my classmates wrote the farewell card and gave it to me as a present. They also gave me many chocolates, and I brought them home.) (Casual conversation with Feifei, November 4, 2021)

Feifei appreciated what her classmate said on the last school day, so she responded in her own way: talk with a pen. At the end of her trip, she got a farewell card with the signatures of her classmates and some chocolate. Dr. Xie shared the picture of the farewell card with me through WeChat in October 2021. It was a black card with yellow and silver signatures on it. Feifei’s Chinese friend Mike wrote, “我会想你的！Your my ABFBFFE! Good luck! – Mike 😊.” I checked with Feifei when we were chatting online and she told me the two short sentences meant “I will miss you! You are my best friend and best friend forever!” (Casual conversation with Feifei, March 17, 2022).

Happy times flew. Feifei flew back to China on an early plane at the end of December 2019 after Christmas. In her own words, “I came on Christmas and left on Christmas” (Casual conversation with Feifei, May 5, 2021). Passing the station of “Canada,” Feifei’s stories were still ongoing since the moment that she landed in China.

Lived Stories in China After the Trip: Sparking Blissful Memories of Canada

At the end of December 2019, there was an outbreak of Covid-19 in China, so the government asked the Chinese people arriving from overseas to self-quarantine at home for 2 weeks. After two weeks of self-quarantine at home, Feifei went back to her Chinese
school in her hometown. In the middle of January 2020, Feifei took the final exam at her Chinese school in her hometown and got full marks on the oral English test. In the test, Feifei was asked to read a short poem, some simple English words, and the English alphabet, which was quite easy for her (Casual conversation with Feifei, September 9, 2021). She said the Chinese and math tests were more difficult, but she tried her best to complete them. She had a good mindset and did not care about the scores of the final exam. Her parents did not have specific requirements for her on the exam scores, either (Casual conversation with Feifei, September 9, 2021). Dr. Xie shared her thoughts with me in our interview about Feifei’s adaptation after they returned to China.

Some challenges in adults’ eyes might not be a big thing for children. Students at a young age like Feifei have the advantage of adapting to a new environment. Furthermore, although the learning at Kingswood was different from that in China, Feifei was still learning in Canada in the year from 2018 to 2019. She was not merely playing or wasting time in Canada for a whole year. (Interview with Dr. Xie, October 8, 2021)

After the final exam in January 2020 ended, the winter holiday started and Feifei went to piano class, badminton training, and swimming class. During that winter vacation, she was not studying all day long with anxiety and pressure. But when Feifei went back to school after the winter vacation, she began to feel the differences between Canadian and Chinese education.

**Comparing Chinese and Canadian Teachers and Classmates**

“Everything about Canada is great!” In China, students begin a new academic year in September every year. Feifei became a grade-1 student in China in September
2018, so she was a grade-2 student when she returned to her Chinese school in February 2020. In September 2020, she would be a grade-3 student. Dr. Xie recalled that in the first month of the new semester, Feifei told her several times that she did not want to go to school because it was not fun, and she felt overwhelmed (in her own words “压迫感”) when she entered the classroom, and it was not as free as that in Kingswood (Interview with Dr. Xie, October 8, 2021). When we were having online tutoring session, Feifei shared with me more about her experiences in Canada including her favorite people and things. Her sharing with translanguaging helped me to understand why she did not want to go back to her Chinese school when the new semester started in 2020. She said,

关于加拿大的一切都特别棒！我都喜欢。我在那玩的很开心呀。我最喜欢的就是加拿大的老师们。每个老师都很好。他们不会给学生布置那么多作业。而且每次只要我说英语的时候，他们都会鼓励我，比如“You are great.” 他们也不会那么凶或者对学生很严。如果同学表现不好，老师就提醒一下他们，从来不会在班上训他们。像我的 ESL 老师 Emily 就很好，她知道我喜欢看 Dork Diaries 就送了我一本。我还带回国了！加拿大老师比中国老师温柔 100 倍。中国老师会让我们做很多作业和卷子。而且我有时会因为纪律问题被（中国）老师批评。我在加拿大第二喜欢的是我的学校。我的加拿大同学们都很好。有时候我会想加拿大的同学和老师，比如我看到生日的时候他们送我的这支铅笔。（Everything about Canada is great! I love everything about Canada. I had fun there. The best thing I love in Canada is the teachers. Every Canadian teacher was wonderful. They did not assign much homework to students. Furthermore, they encouraged me a lot. Each time when I spoke English, they would say “you are great.” They would not be very strict with students or mad at them. If the students did not behave well, the Canadian teachers just reminded them, never criticizing them in class. My Canadian teacher Ms. Emily was very nice. She knew I loved reading Dork Diaries, so she bought one and gave it to me as a gift. I brought it to my home in China. Canadian teachers were 100 times gentler and tender than Chinese teachers. Canadian teachers would let us do many exercises and test papers. I was sometimes criticized because of discipline issues at the Chinese school. The second thing I
love in Canada is my school. My Canadian classmates were all nice. Sometimes I miss my Canadian classmates and teachers, such as when I see the pencil that I got on my birthday in 2019. (Casual conversation with Feifei, October 14, 2021)

Feifei quoted “you are great” in English when she recalled the interactions with her Canadian teachers. She had a great impression of Canada, including the teachers, classmates, and her experience of celebrating her birthday at school. Additionally, she told me that she missed the P.E. class in Canada very much. She said, “The P.E. class in my Chinese school was boring and tiring. We were asked to move the ball and run on the playground. I counted the number of P.E. classes within one week. It was much fewer than that in Canada” (Casual conversation with Feifei, August 5, 2021).

*Fun Reading at Home*

On school days in China, Feifei finished most homework at school and went home at 5:30 p.m. After dinner, it was a relief to read English comic books such as *The Baby-Sitters Club* (1-9) and a popular English learning magazine for Chinese students named *Teen’s English Space*. Feifei often recommended the books she liked to me, and I would buy some to understand why she liked them. For example, on March 3, 2022, I told Feifei that I bought the fourth book of the series *The Baby-Sitters Club*. Then we had the following conversation in which she had a lot of translanguaging practices.

Feifei: 第五本的时候它这个画风就感觉变了。
Haojun: 第五本 Impossible Three. 感觉和 Dogman, Dork Diaries 画风不同。
Feifei: 让我来看看哈。啊，它这个上面就是，比较好笑的，我给你看啊，哈哈哈！（开始细声地大笑，并朗读漫画书上的内容）它这个说 Hi, my name is Candy. Candy Cane. No no joke. I got my fire from the babysitter agency. I am supposed to … my little brother tomorrow and 什么什么. Will you
be babysitting for him? Er. Um. I see. I will be here at 5 5 5, 2321. I don’t know what this means. And he said I just got to ask her on a date. Then another person said I have another date. Then it became hilarious. Oh, I am “Winston Churchill.” Lol. It was “Winston Churchill.” Winston Churchill seems to be a celebrity or a president or something. It was “Winston Churchill.” They said they would come with “Winston Churchill” to “babysit.” It sounds really fun.

Haojun: Yeah, but those who do not get it may wonder what is fun about that, especially when they do not know what the point is.

Feifei: Here, this one is especially amusing. “With Winston Churchill.” That, that, because with “Qiu Ji Er” [She translated the name “Churchill” into Chinese. It has no special meaning, just three transliterated Chinese characters], “Winston Churchill. Winston Churchill.” How to translate the name?
Haojun: [in Chinese pinyin] Wen sen te? [I heard it wrongly as Vincent, so I gave her the wrong transliterated Chinese characters.]
Feifei: Oh, it should be “Wen Sen Te Qiu Ji Er” [The six transliterated Chinese characters of Vincent Churchill]. It is really fun [Then she began to shriek with laughter]. It said, “come with Winston Churchill.”
Haojun: Haha. What do you think the funniest part is?
Feifei: Must be “Winston Churchill.”
Haojun: Oh, I see. Because it is impossible to let Vincent Churchill be a babysitter. Which book are you talking about?
Feifei: The second one. It is The Truth about Stacey.) (Casual conversation with Feifei, March 3, 2022)

Feifei was amused by the name “Winston Churchill” in the series The Baby-Sitters Club (Martin, 2015). It is obvious that I did not get it at the beginning, so I tried to let her explain to me why it was so funny about the name. Feifei repeated the name of Winston Churchill and asked me how to translate it into Chinese because she believed that once I knew the Chinese name and who this person was, I could understand why it sounded ridiculous. In the original book, the name was Winston Churchill, but I had not read that book and did not know the full name of Churchill, so I misheard it as Vincent Churchill. Luckily, it did not affect the mechanism of the joke, and Feifei was still entertained by the name.

As our conversation revealed, to get the point, readers must have some basic knowledge about who Winston Churchill was and the job of a babysitter. It could be seen as one cultural difference because, in China, very few Chinese teenagers work part-time after school, not to mention babysitting. Before the age of 18, most Chinese students study at school without doing any part-time jobs because their parents will pay for their
living expenses for them. However, doing part-time jobs such as babysitting is commonly seen among British, Canadian, and American teenagers. Feifei knew there was a huge gap between the job and Winston Churchill, who was the Prime Minister of Great Britain. Thus, she could easily get the point and it also disclosed her bicultural acquisition.

In this story, Feifei demonstrated how she capitalized on her linguistic and socio-cultural resources to entertain herself while reading the English comic book. While retelling the plots and explaining to me why they sounded funny, she integrated two languages in dynamic and flexible ways. Except for Chinese and English, Feifei also encountered other languages such as Japanese in her extracurricular reading. She once showed me one page in *Teen’s English Space* (as Figure 8 shows) in our online tutoring session. Feifei pointed to the Japanese words on the page and asked me about the pronunciation. I translated her words into English: “Do you know how to pronounce ‘ginger duck fairy’ in Japanese? Look at the duck. It is so cute!” I answered, “I learned Japanese as my second foreign language, so I can teach you how to read them in Japanese. This trilingual journal is so lovely.” She pointed to the next page and said, “My mom subscribed it for me. Look at the fox and the frog. They are silly but adorable” (Casual conversation with Feifei, March 10, 2022).

Figure 8

*The Cartoon Illustration on Feifei’s English Magazine – Teen’s English Space*
The characters were created by a Japanese illustrator ぽん吉 (Ponkichi) in 2007. The artwork was named 野菜の妖精, which meant wild vegetable fairies. Feifei loved those illustrations and asked if I could teach her some Japanese so that she could read these words and sentences. I taught her some simple Japanese words such as the Ginger duck fairy and Vegetable duck as Figure 8 shows. Although she was not in Canada, she still kept reading English journals and comic books after school. However, she did not continue to write a diary in English after she returned to China. She told me, “Once in a while I write down what happened at school in Chinese after I came back, but I did not keep the habit of writing diaries. I don’t have time and I don’t want to write it anymore” (Casual conversation with Feifei, December 9, 2021).

Despite that, Feifei felt English learning in China was easy for her. She believed that she “had advantages compared with her classmates” (Casual conversation with Feifei, June 9, 2021). I asked her in our online tutoring session what her advantages were, and she replied in Chinese, and I translated her answer as below.
My English is good when I am in China. In the unit quiz, I often got full marks or 97/100. The test was easy, and the questions were like stringing English words together into sentences. When I was in Canada, my advantage was that my Chinese was good. I am not an introverted person in China. I will raise my hand in class to answer questions when I am in China, but I would not do that in Canada. (Casual conversation with Feifei, November 11, 2021).

Her sharing showed that she had different explicit behaviors in Canadian and Chinese schools. It also corresponded with what Dr. Xie told me in her rented apartment in Canada: “Feifei was more talkative in China” (Dr. Xie, personal communication, November 25, 2019). Moreover, Feifei analyzed her different advantages in the two countries. In China, her English was much better than her peers in class, so she was confident to answer questions. However, in the Canadian school, her advantages of speaking Mandarin very well could not be seen nor used, so she did not raise hands in class.

**Interacting with the Canadian Tutors Online**

In the online interview, Dr. Xie told me that after the trip to Canada, she had also invited Susie, the Canadian graduate student who had visited China through the RLP, to tutor Feifei once a week. Susie had been tutoring Feifei since 2019 but the tutoring became online after Feifei returned to China. Feifei told me when we were chatting online about the English words that she learned from Susie, such as “tutu” and “bless you” (Casual conversation with Feifei, February 3, 2022). When Susie was busy with work, her younger sister Stella would tutor Feifei instead. As the story of “She is poking me” mentioned, Stella got to know Feifei at the Halloween party in October 2019.
“His pants ripped.” Stella started to tutor Feifei online in the summer of 2021. When asked “is there anything interesting that Feifei shared with you,” Stella told me a story about “pants ripped” in our online interview in November 2021.

When children are interested in telling me something and engaging in the story, they’ll do whatever it takes to tell me, even if they don’t know how to say it in English. So, in one of our classes in July 2021, I was like, “tell me what anything interesting happened at school.” Feifei was like, “oh yes there was.” She started laughing. She is like, “a boy was dancing in our P.E. class.” She paused for a while and she said, “the boy did the splits.” She looked at me and I was like “what did he do? What happened to him? Did he rip?” She kept laughing and for a while, she told me about this kid who did the split in class and ripped his pants. Everybody was laughing at him. I was like “you shouldn’t laugh at him.” Feifei was like, “no, he was happy.” (Interview with Stella, November 9, 2021)

The story of “pants ripped” revealed Feifei’s sense of humor and her ability to retell something fun with her Canadian tutor. Furthermore, Stella observed that if the young Chinese visiting students wanted to tell her something, they would try different strategies and use kinds of resources such as online translation. I was interested in that, so I asked Feifei in one of our online tutoring sessions, “did you know the two English words ‘split’ and ‘ripped’ before you told Stella the story?” Feifei told me as follows.

我用网页翻译，输入中文句子“某人劈叉时裤子破了,” 然后就马上出现英语句子了: someone’s pants ripped when he did the split. 我就几个词不会，其实我就说 got broken 什么的也可以. 你看，我用的是这个网站。(I used the website to search for the Chinese translation. Just type the Chinese sentence “某人劈叉时裤子破了” and then the English sentence would immediately show up: someone’s pants ripped when he did the split. There were only a few words that I did not know how to say in English, but I could use other phrases like “got broken.” See, this is the website I used for translation7.) (Casual conversation with Feifei, January 6, 2022).

7 The website is similar to Google Translate.
Feifei was aware of how to use practical strategies such as replacing “ripped” with a simpler and more familiar word “got broken” to convey the same meaning. While she was retelling me the process of how she shared the story with Stella, the ease of her translanguaging also indicates her confidence, intuition, and sophistication (Orellana & García, 2014) in using modern technology to share her personal experience. Feifei’s translanguaging shows that it could happen even if it seemed to be unseen or not easily observed. For example, if a third person were in the online tutoring class with Stella and Feifei when they were talking about the story of “pants ripped,” the person might not hear Feifei speaking Chinese because she just typed Chinese sentences and got the English translation from the website on her laptop to support her storytelling. More importantly, Stella did not mind the young Chinese visiting students doing that as she believed children’s interests and engagement were a tremendous priority. As she said, “just like that story of pants ripped. Feifei really wanted to tell me about it. She went out of her way to translate. You have to allow and provide the translation for her” (Interview with Stella, November 9, 2021).

**English Learning in China**

Feifei was confident in English learning after she returned to China from the trip to Canada. Compared to her classmates, she had a better sense of English being used in authentic situations. But she found she did not adapt to the British English that was
taught in her school. For example, Feifei told me about her experiences of “learning a
different version of English” at her Chinese school.

英语书上说 either 应该发 /ˈaɪðə/，老师也这么教，但是我发的是 /ˈiðə/ 因为
我发美式的。还有个，如果你问加拿大人 “Where is the toilet?” 他们可能一
脸懵，因为他们用 “washroom.” (Our English textbook says the word “either”
should be pronounced as /ˈaɪðə/ and our English teacher also taught it like that.
But I pronounce it as /ˈiðə/ because I speak American English. I know another
example. If you ask Canadians “where is the toilet?” they may feel confused
because they use the word “washroom” (Casual conversation with Feifei,
November 18, 2021).

Feifei noticed the difference between British English and American English.

Also, she observed the authentic use of English she acquired in Canada vs. the English
language being taught in her Chinese school. Apart from words, she also realized the
way to answer English questions in daily conversations was “taught” differently in
Canada and China.

“can 问 can 答.” In one of our casual conversations online, we watched a small
episode of an English video from the movie Shrek (2001) directed by Jenson and
Adamson. It was one video from a YouTube channel named “Learn English with TV
series.” I often use the channel’s videos to show my participant children how English
was spoken in real life. Our discussion about “can 问 can 答” (问 means ask while 答
means answer) happened after she watched the short video.

Haojun: The video mentioned how to order food in English. For instance, we can
say “Can I get a cheeseburger, please?” 这听起来像个问题，但是服务员其实
不会回答 “yes, you can” or “no, you can’t.” (It sounds like a question, but
actually the waiter would not answer “yes, you can” or “no, you can’t.”)
Feifei: 对，如果这是个英语考试里的选择题的话，大部分同学都会选错。他们会用 “yes, you can” 或者 “no, you can’t” 来回答，因为我们英语老师总结了一条规则——如果一个问题是以 can 开头的，你就应该用 can 回答，也就是 “can问 can答。” 类似的还有 “do问 do答。” (Feifei: Yes. If this is a multiple-choice question in our English test, most students will choose the wrong answer. They will choose “yes, you can” or “no, you can’t” because my English teacher summarized a rule – if a question starts with “can,” you should answer it with “can.” Similarly, if a question starts with “do,” you should answer it with “do.”)

Haojun: 你觉得这个规则有用不？(Do you think the rule is useful?)
Feifei: 说有用也有用，说没用也没用吧。(Yes and no. You can say it is useful. You can also say it’s not useful.) (Casual conversation with Feifei, November 18, 2021)

Feifei mixed English and Chinese to explain the rule that her English teacher in China summarized. As a grade-4 student, she knew the difference between authentic English and prescriptive English taught in her Chinese school. She was also proud that she knew authentic English use while most of her classmates did not know.

The Chinese Translation of “Any.” Not only the way of answering questions in daily life, Feifei was also confused about grammar knowledge taught at school. One time, she asked me a question about the two different translations of the word “any” (一些，任何的) when we were having the online tutoring session.

Feifei: 学校教的 any 是 “一些、任何的” 的意思，比如 I don’t have any apples. 它翻译的是 “我没有一些苹果”，但是不应该是 “我没有任何苹果吗？” (In our school, we learned two meanings of “any” as “some; no thing or person of a particular type exists, is present, or is involved in a situation.” For example, I don’t have any apples. It is translated into Chinese as “I don’t have some apples.” But shouldn’t it be, “I have none of the apples?”)

Haojun: 你在哪看到的这个翻译呢？(Where did you see the Chinese translation?)
Feifei: 我的英语书上写的。例句是 Do you have any apples? 翻译成 “你有一些苹果吗？” 不应该是 “你有任何苹果吗？” 就回答 I don’t have any 什
么什么。 (My English book has the Chinese translation of words. For example, “Do you have any apples?” was translated into “do you have some apples?” in Chinese. But I think the word “any” should be translated into “an amount or a number of something, however large or small.” Then you can answer “I don’t have any + something.”)

Haojun: [思考一会后说] Do you have any…? 应该是 “你有一些什么什么吗？”回答 I don’t have any … 就是 “我没有这些东西。” 这是否定句和问句里面 any 的用法。(Let me see [think for a while]. I think “Do you have any…?” means asking someone if he or she has something. The answer “I don’t have any…” means “I don’t even have the smallest number of things you mentioned.” It shows how the word “any” is used in negative statements and questions.)

Feifei: 哦懂了，但是我们学校教的、书里写的 any 都是翻译成“一些。”虽然单词表的 any 写了“任何的”这个意思，但是翻译从来不用。(Oh, I see. But my Chinese school and the English textbook just translated “any” into “some” in sentences. Although the other Chinese translation of “any” – “no thing or person of a particular type exists, is present, or is involved in a situation” was provided in the glossary, this meaning was never used (in translating some English sentences into Chinese). (Casual conversation with Feifei, January 6, 2022)

I was bemused by Feifei’s struggle and began to doubt if it was necessary to dwell on the difference of “any” between the two sentences: “I don’t have any apples” and “Do you have any apples?” Certainly, I was not intending to be critical of her question about “any,” but became interested in why she asked this question. Therefore, I shared this example with Feifei’s father through WeChat after class and hoped to know more about the English education that Feifei received at school. Her father told me that the English learning at Feifei’s school mainly served for formal tests, so it was more like rote learning (Interview with Feifei’s father, January 7, 2022). His reply seemed to show that the English education that Feifei accepted in Canada and China has different purposes and caused different effects.
On the penultimate day of December 2021, Feifei told me a piece of good news in our online tutoring session. She may go to the UK with her mom who applied for a new visiting program in the UK. Although she was not sure whether her mom could get the opportunity, Feifei looked forward to visiting a foreign country because she had fun in Canada (Casual conversation with Feifei, December 30, 2021). In our later online chat, I asked if she would worry about the adaptation to a foreign country and if she could quickly adapt to the learning after she returned to China when the trip ended. Feifei did not see that as a concern at all. She said,

I could bring some Chinese and math examination papers when going to the UK. I had the experience of going abroad. I wouldn’t worry or feel scared because I already know what foreign countries were like. Similar to Canada. We would still live in an apartment. I may not need the translation app anymore. (Casual conversation with Feifei, February 6, 2022).

Her positive experience in Canada influenced her willingness to go for a new international and cross-cultural visit in the future. Hearing her expectation for the next trip, I responded, “so, nothing to worry about your English next time.” Feifei nodded and began to recall her little tricks related to English when she was in Kingswood. She sniggered and said,

Yeah. Actually, in the second half year of 2019, I could understand what the Canadian teachers and students were saying at school. But they could not understand my mother tongue. Sometimes I just pretended that I did not understand the English they spoke. Hee Hee. It was fun because they thought I did not know but in fact, I knew. (Casual conversation with Feifei, February 6, 2022).
Feifei was proud that she could understand English, but the Canadians could not understand her native language, Chinese. When asked if she had any suggestions for young Chinese visiting students who may go to Canada in the future, she offered her advice.

I would tell the young Chinese students who can visit Canada that “Don’t be nervous. Just enjoy life in Canada, because there is only one piece of homework in Canada every day, but in China, you will have much homework to do.” (Casual conversation with Feifei, December 30, 2021)

Feifei had a positive impression of Canada, so she hoped the students who had the opportunity to go to Canada could enjoy the happy life she did when she was in Windsor. In February 2022, she started the new semester. In the first week of the new semester, Feifei shared with me her feelings about schooling when we were chatting online, “I don’t want to go back to school. I still hope to stay at home. None of my Chinese teachers are fun” (Casual conversation with Feifei, February 18, 2022). It was similar to what she told her mom when she just returned to her Chinese school at the beginning of 2020. After the trip to Canada, Feifei’s life in China from 2020 to 2022 looked like a Möbius strip whose beginning matched with the ending and formed a closed curve, but when taking a closer look at the surface of the strip, there were numerous vivid moments that constituted her pleasant, colorful, joyful, and continuous lived experiences. The curved strip was expanding to a larger space as Feifei grew up with love, fun, challenges, friendship, playing, learning and good wish.
Summary

Feifei’s narratives began with the question “why doesn’t she talk?” She was a grade-1 Chinese student when she arrived in Canada. Compared with some other young Chinese visiting students in my research, she was not very talkative in cross-cultural communication, but that did not mean she was silent at any time on any occasion. At Kingswood, she gleefully chatted more with her Chinese friends and her ESL teacher. After around half a year in Canada, she was able to understand most English at school, but sometimes she would pretend not to understand just for fun. Gaining support, encouragement, and help from her Canadian teachers and classmates at Kingswood, her mom Dr. Xie as well as the Canadian tutors Susie and Stella, Feifei had the freedom of being less talkative and felt relieved about that. She did not have to speak English all the time at school and her “quietness” did not affect her schooling experiences in Canada.

It is worth sketching that Feifei’s diary presented a different self-image and tone from that in her interactions with her Canadian classmates and teachers at school. It was like a third space other than school and home, which was private and indispensable. Through making a narrative inquiry into Feifei’s life, I was privileged to see this space and her translanguaging in action. As the Dork Diaries said, “keeping a diary isn’t just about describing what kind of person you are. It’s also about discovering what kind of person you are” (Russell, 2011, p. 58). It was the main reason why I cited a sentence from Feifei’s favorite English book, Dork Diaries (Russell, 2011), at the beginning of
this chapter. Lastly, it is worth mentioning that many conversations I had with Feifei in English language tutoring sessions were translated into English from Chinese. She was more at ease to speak in the language she preferred, and perhaps felt comfortable speaking with me in Mandarin as well as having translanguaging practices.

There was a younger Chinese visiting student appearing in Feifei’s diary, Caicai Fan, who was a kindergarten child at Kingswood during her stay in Canada. As a very young Chinese visiting student, how would she communicate with Canadians? What language knowledge and culture did she acquire in Canada and China? The next chapter will tell Caicai’s stories that provided meaningful perceptions of her international and cross-cultural experiences.
Chapter 5 CAICAI – STORY OF A KINDERGARTEN CHILD

Prelude of Caicai’s Story

Caicai Fan was born in 2014, so she was only 5 years old when she arrived in Canada with her mother, Dr. Chen, in the summer of 2019. She comes from a city in southwest China and both her parents work at a local university. Similar to Feifei’s mother, Dr. Chen also volunteered to help with the Sixth Annual International Conference on West-East Reciprocal Learning in Education, held at the University of Windsor from October 2 to 4, 2019. I was in the Registration Group of the conference, so I got to know Dr. Chen. Assigned the task of following up language learning of the Chinese visiting scholars’ children by Dr. Xu in the fall semester of 2019, I had the opportunity to interview Dr. Chen in January 2020 and got to know more about Caicai after that.

After Dr. Chen and Caicai returned to China in July 2020, I kept in touch with them through WeChat. In January 2021, Dr. Chen told me through WeChat that she found there was a decline in Caicai’s English since they returned to China because there was no English environment. Caicai forgot many English words as she did not use them in daily life (Dr. Chen, personal communication, January 27, 2021). Hearing that, I pondered what I could do for Caicai. Thinking of my teaching experience as a part-time English teacher in some educational institutions in China (since 2013), I asked Dr. Chen if I could tutor Caicai for free to improve her English. At the same time, I might spend 5
minutes asking her some questions about Canada each time. Dr. Chen was delighted and agreed at once. Thus, our weekly English tutoring session began in February 2021, and it lasted for 40 minutes each time. I often played English videos about fairy tales, picture books, and phonics in the online session, which was basically the same as how I tutored Feifei. I tutored Caicai until April 2022 and we gradually built a trustworthy relationship in the process.

In October 2021, I asked Dr. Chen and Caicai if they would like to participate in my research. They agreed immediately and Caicai made the pseudonym for herself. She liked colorful things and one meaning of Cai in Chinese is “variegated color” (Mandarin-English Character Dictionary, 2022). Then Dr. Chen and Caicai signed the consent form, and I interviewed Dr. Chen online through Tencent Meeting in the middle of October 2021. In the interview, Dr. Chen told me she went to Canada on January 20, 2019. At that time, she was afraid that she could not handle taking care of her daughter alone abroad, so she did not bring Caicai to Canada with her at the beginning. Caicai missed Dr. Chen very much in the first half of 2019, so she came to Windsor in August 2019 with her father to visit Dr. Chen. During the summer vacation, Dr. Chen found that she almost adapted to life and work in Windsor, and it was workable to look after Caicai in Canada. Besides, Caicai cherished the time with her mom, and she wished to stay with Dr. Chen longer. As a result, after the summer vacation, Caicai stayed in Windsor while her father returned to China. In September 2019, Caicai began her schooling in
Kingswood senior kindergarten. Before the trip to Canada, Caicai could not recognize the 26 letters in English alphabet. Consequently, when Caicai just came to Canada, she could barely understand any English (Interview with Dr. Chen, October 15, 2021).

As a 5-year-old Chinese girl who barely had any English language knowledge or skills, how would Caicai explore the space at kindergarten and at home? This chapter will retell Caicai’s stories through the three-dimensional framework and make an inquiry of how she understood the international and cross-cultural experiences between Canada and China.

**Unfolding Caicai’s experiences from September 2019 to July 2020 in Canada**

**Adapting to the Canadian Kindergarten**

As mentioned earlier, I interviewed Dr. Chen face to face in January 2020 as a research assistant for the RLP. It happened in the afternoon at the Leddy Library, University of Windsor. The interview lasted for an hour and both of us spoke Chinese. Dr. Chen told me that Caicai was the only Chinese child in her class at Kingswood senior kindergarten and she was frustrated at the beginning because she could not understand English at all. Dr. Chen recalled Caicai’s first week of schooling in September 2019 and shared with me more details in the interview.

“**Mom, how can I improve English quickly?**” On the third school day, Caicai came home and asked Dr. Chen a surprising question, 妈妈，我怎么才能快速提高英语? (“Mom, how can I improve English quickly?”) Dr. Chen thought this did not sound
like a question raised by a 5-year-old girl, so she asked Caicai, 为什么这么问呢? (“why do you ask that?”) Caicai responded, 因为等我学好了英语，我就可以和加拿大同学玩了，也能和老师聊天了，现在我一点都不听不懂他们在说什么，我不想再听了 (“because when I learn English well, I can play with Canadian classmates, and I can talk with my teachers at kindergarten. Now, I understand nothing about what my teacher was saying, and I did not want to listen to what they were saying anymore.”) Dr. Chen felt Caicai became anxious about the language issue, so she told Caicai, 别担心，你可以自己玩呀，而且有很多办法都可以学好英语，妈妈会帮你的。比如你可以每天就记一个单词，放学回来告诉我 (“Don’t worry. You can play by yourself at kindergarten. On the other hand, there are many ways to improve English. Mom will help you. For example, you can try to memorize one word per day and tell me the word after you get home.”) (Interview with Dr. Chen, January 20, 2020). Dr. Chen explained in our interview as follows.

That strategy may help her to attentionally listen to what Canadians were talking about. Therefore, when I picked her up at the bus station every day after school, she would tell me what happened in kindergarten in Chinese and the word that she remembered. In the second week, she became less anxious. In the third week, she began to ask me the meaning of some very short English sentences. (Interview with Dr. Chen, January 20, 2020)

Since Dr. Chen suggested Caicai memorize one English word per day, she developed the habit of listening actively and carefully to what her Canadian teachers and classmates were saying. In the process, she acquired so many words that Dr. Chen did not know. Dr. Chen shared many examples with me in our face-to-face interview.
19 年 9 月底吧我记得，有一天下午我去接 Caicai 放学回家，在回家的路上
她问我，“妈妈我来考考你吧，你知道 mole 是什么吗？”我还真不知道，所
以我问她，“是那个 shopping mall 吗？”“不是。”“好吧，我再猜猜，是不是
more 啊？”“也不是。”最后她告诉我 mole 是一种动物。她不知道怎么拼这
个词，但是她知道意思。哦！我还想起来一个！有一回我们在校车的那个
站等校车来，我送 Caicai 去上学。我看到一个加拿大小男孩也在那等校
车，他在玩自己的手套，手套上有一只绿色青蛙图案，我就问 Caicai, is that a flag? Caicai 还纠正我说“不是 flag 是 frog.”而且我发现，她的语法在口语
中也是对的。比如有一次，我问 Caicai,“你想和我一起玩 rock paper scissor
吗？”“不是。”“Ok. I will guess again. Is it ‘more?’”“No.” She finally told me the answer, “it is an animal, mole.” She did not know how to spell
the word, but she knew how to pronounce it. Oh, I got another example. One day
we were waiting for the school bus, and she saw a boy playing with his gloves.
There was a green frog on the gloves, so I asked “Caicai, is that a flag?” She
answered, “no, it’s a frog, not flag.” I also noticed that her English grammar was
correct in oral communication. For example, one time, I said “do you want to
play rock, paper, scissors?” Caicai corrected me, “Mom. It’s rock, paper,
scissors.” I asked why and she said, “use your little brain to think. There are two
sides on the scissors, right?”) (Interview with Dr. Chen, January 20, 2020)

On their way home, Caicai became the little teacher for her mom, and she played
the English language game with Dr. Chen through translanguaging. English learning was
extended from the kindergarten to a larger space and the two languages became a unified
knowledge for her to share what she had learned at school. In addition to answering the
questions from Caicai, Dr. Chen had been teaching her some basic English words in
daily life on their way home since September 2019. In the interview, Dr. Chen told me
more details about the content that she taught Caicai on their way home and how she
helped Caicai to adapt to learning at Kingswood kindergarten.

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Every school day, I picked her up at the school bus station at 3 p.m. and when we walked home, I would point at the house numbers and car numbers to read with her. For example, if the number is 490B, she could learn the letter B and 4, 9, 0. Near the sidewalk, there was grass, leaves, trees, stones, and dogs. I would teach her the names of these objects in a real context. In the first week, we walked along the left side while in the second week, we walked on the right side. Then the numbers and letters changed, so Caicai could practice more. In the first week, it took her a while to count and think about how to say numbers. For instance, if she saw five, she could not say five immediately but counted like “one, two, three, four, five. It’s five.” In the second week, she did not need to count from one but was able to say the numbers and letters quickly.” (Interview with Dr. Chen, January 20, 2020)

Dr. Chen integrated learning into Caicai’s daily life after school such as numbers and the English alphabet. Although Caicai could not understand English very well in the first month, she never showed any unwillingness to go to kindergarten. Dr. Chen recollected that on the last Saturday of September 2019, Caicai asked Dr. Chen, 为什么又是星期六？我想去幼儿园 (“Why is it Saturday again? I want to go to kindergarten”) (Interview with Dr. Chen, January 20, 2020).

**Susie’s English Tutoring.** In addition to normal classes at Kingswood and Dr. Chen’s teaching after school, Caicai also began to take Susie’s tutoring class every week in October 2019 as Dr. Chen believed that Caicai needed to further improve her English to better adapt to the schooling in Canada. She got to know from Dr. Xie that Susie was good at teaching children. Thus, Dr. Chen first asked Susie if she would like to tutor Caicai in the fall semester of 2019. Susie agreed and then started the tutoring in October 2019. It was also mentioned in Chapter 4 that Feifei wrote down Caicai’s first class with Susie in her diary and she sometimes helped to translate in Caicai’s tutoring class.
As the research assistant of RLP, I was lucky to have the opportunity to observe one tutoring class on October 24, 2019, with the permission of Dr. Chen, Susie, and Caicai. It was a chilly day and the leaves on the trees started to fall. The class began at 5 p.m. and it was on Thursday. Dr. Chen picked up Caicai at the bus station and then they arrived at the Leddy Library to wait for Susie and me. Caicai did not speak much English during the class. She did not answer some questions asked by Susie such as “How was your school? What did you do at school? Did you see the leaves on the tree? Look, what color is the leaf?” Even though she answered some simple questions, she said in a small voice that I could hardly hear. When Caicai had difficulties understanding English words, Susie searched for the real pictures of the words on her phone and showed them to Caicai. After the class, Susie told me,

Dr. Chen hoped Caicai could get extra support, so I would read for her and let her identify the words in the picture book. For example, I would ask, “could you find fruit? She would respond, “banana, strawberry.” Caicai was younger than Feifei, so she knew fewer English words. She would read from memory. If I show her any books that she has not read yet, there will be an issue. (Field notes, Leddy Library, October 24, 2019)

It was my first time observing Caicai’s class and I thought she was too shy to communicate with Susie, but after the class, Dr. Chen told me that Caicai was not shy at all. She would talk a lot with people once she was familiar with them. I was wondering how Caicai communicated with her Canadian teachers and friends if her English was limited. Dr. Chen said, “there seems to be no barriers among the children at Kingswood. They still have fun and play together” (Field notes, Leddy Library, October 24, 2019).
“I can play every day.” “Play” was a word that repeatedly appeared in Caicai’s story, and it was also the main “task” for Caicai to accomplish at kindergarten. There was a large block of time for her to play in her daily kindergarten routines. As mentioned above, even though she did not understand what the Canadians were talking about at Kingswood, she would not feel the school was not fun. Caicai explained that in our online chat in Chinese and I translated her words into English as follows.

I can play every day. The teacher would not force me to do anything. I love the Canadian kindergarten because most of the time, I did not need to say anything. I did not need to talk when I had lunch, played with blocks, rode the bike, or when the teacher was telling us stories. I could do whatever I want such as reading or painting. Some books were used for coloring. Some had images of monsters, planets, flowers, and animals. (Casual conversation with Caicai, October 23, 2021)

In a relaxing and comfortable environment, Caicai sometimes played by herself as Dr. Chen suggested, while sometimes she participated in her Canadian classmates’ playing. The activities and games were all child-initiated. In one of our online tutoring sessions, Caicai told me how she had fun at the Canadian kindergarten. Here is the translation of her sharing in Chinese.

There were so many materials and toys in my kindergarten. Some children liked to play with blocks and build castles. They also made stories about what they built. They loved playing house, but I thought it was boring and childish. They also made a story about Holmes. There was a princess, a monster, a king, and a queen, An evil lady lied to the queen and king, saying that Holmes was wicked. Unfortunately, the king trusted the lady, so he put Holmes in jail. I built that jail, but I saved Holmes in the end. (Casual conversation with Caicai, April 17, 2021)

Caicai knew her classmates were doing role play and she joined in making interesting stories. As Caicai’s Canadian teacher, Ms. Linda, wrote on the report card,
“Caicai is aware of how to make and keep friends. She usually approaches her peers with a smile and is friendly. She usually graciously allows peers to join her play and willingly shares her materials” (Teacher’s comments on the report card of Caicai, July 1, 2020).

**Second Favorite Holiday in Canada.** Besides playing with friends at Kingswood, Caicai also experienced her second favorite holiday in Canada, Halloween, at school. She recalled her observations of Halloween decorations in 2019 and the fun activities that she participated in during the week. Caicai shared these beautiful memories with me in our online chat.

Caicai: I love Halloween because there was no light and only pumpkin light. People can go trick or treat. If there were no candies, toys would be given to children. Moreover, our kindergarten would be beautifully decorated during festivals. I noticed that a witch was shaking her head in the corner, but it was fake too because I found a remoter that could control all the monsters and ghosts in our kindergarten.

Haojun: that sounds scary. Would you fear them?
Caicai: Kind of. There was blood on their mouth. But I know they were fake. Like the witch I just said. I found a button on her back and her body was not soft at all.

Haojun: OK. Did you also have class on that day?
Caicai: We only had class in the morning. In the afternoon, children prepared for the trick or treat, which was at around 6 or 7 p.m. At school, we also played ring toss. The student who tossed the ring on the cone got the present.

Haojun: What did you win from the game?
Caicai: Stuffed animals.

Haojun: OK. Sounds fun. What else did you do during the week of Halloween?
Caicai: we would be taken to a library every week. During the week of Halloween, the teacher in the library read us a story about the haunted house. We borrowed books from the library and after I read, I would return them.

Haojun: Can you understand the words in these books?
Caicai: Just reading the pictures was already incredibly fun for me. For example, my favorite story was named “Holidays.” The story talks about a girl who played
outside by herself during the holiday. She wore a headband and a lovely dress. Playing for a while in the park, she went back home and enjoyed the breakfast made by her parents. Afterward, she ate candies and sat in the living room. She was sleepy, so she took a nap and there was no homework for her. The next day was Halloween, and she got a lot of candies which were stored by her very well. The end. (Casual conversation with Caicai, November 27, 2021)

Caicai was impressed by the Halloween decorations and activities at her kindergarten. Besides, the Canadian teacher read picture books about Halloween to the children and she mainly made sense of the story through the pictures in the book.

*Everything is Coming Up Roses*

**Student of the Month Award.** From September to November 2019, Caicai made great progress in English, especially in vocabulary and listening. Therefore, she received the Student of the Month award on December 2, 2019. The certificate recognizes Caicai for outstanding achievement during November for diligence. Dr. Chen was proud of Caicai and attended the assembly. On that day, Dr. Chen left a thank-you note for the Canadian teacher on a communication booklet: “Ms. Linda, thank you very much for encouragement on Caicai. She is noticeably assured, and I really appreciate your help.” Ms. Linda replied to it, “Caicai is more confident and has been more willing to speak English. We are proud of her, too” (Communication booklet, December 2, 2019). Dr. Chen used this communication booklet to leave messages to the teacher Ms. Linda when Caicai attended the Canadian school. In our face-to-face interview in January 2020, Dr. Chen told me that Caicai was excited to get the award. She said to Dr. Chen after the assembly that “妈妈你必须得把这个证书带回中国，其他的加拿大小朋友都没有这
个呢” (Mom, you must bring the certificate to China. Other Canadian children did not have this) (Interview with Dr. Chen, January 20, 2020).

Winning the award of Student of the Month, Caicai was more motivated to learn English and perform well at school. According to Dr. Chen, in December 2019 (i.e., Caicai’s fourth month at Kingswood kindergarten), Caicai could retell three or four full English sentences to her on their way home from the bus station. In our face-to-face interview at the Leddy Library, Dr. Chen recalled that one day in the middle of December 2019, Caicai told her a story about snow boots on their way home.

我的一个加拿大同学跟老师说 Ms. Linda, I am so cold. My feet are cold. 老师就回答那个女生 Honey, these are not snow boots. They are rain shoes. You should put on your snow boots. 所有的小朋友听到老师这么说以后都笑啦。 (One of my Canadian classmates said to the teacher, “Ms. Linda I am so cold. My feet are cold.” The teacher told the girl, “Honey, these are not snow boots. They are rain shoes. You should put on your snow boots.” All the children laughed after Ms. Linda said that.) (Interview with Dr. Chen, January 20, 2020)

 Hearing that, Dr. Chen continued to ask Caicai, 为什么小朋友们都笑了? (“why did the children laugh?”) Caicai replied, 因为她穿的是 rainboots, 不是 snow boots. 那她的脚指头肯定很冷呀. (“because the girl wore rainboots rather than snow boots. Her toes must be cold.”) At that moment, Dr. Chen felt Caicai’s English really improved to an upper level compared to that at the beginning of September 2019 when she just knew how to say “hello” and “bye” (Interview with Dr. Chen, January 20, 2020).

There Was a Big Tree in My Classroom. Caicai’s improved English and confidence in speaking English benefited her socialization at school. As Ms. Linda
commented in the middle of December 2019, “Caicai is playing side by side with friends, which is mature as her English develops” (Communication booklet, December 17, 2019). Besides, Caicai interacted with the facilities and surrounding environment at kindergarten. She fancied the decorations at her school. When we were having the online tutoring session, she recalled the settings of Kingswood.

The most entertaining part of my kindergarten is that our classroom is well-decorated. So many different zones for us to play in and we could choose the area we liked. For example, we planted some vegetables at school, and there were different rooms with carrots, mushrooms, and tomatoes in them. You know what? There was a big tree in my classroom. It was wrapped in plastic bark and all the kids loved that tree. It had beautiful crystals on it, and it looked so tall, almost reaching the ceiling. We call it gem tree. I climbed it up and the tree even reached other rooms and the blue sky (Casual conversation with Caicai, September 25, 2021)

Caicai often excitedly talked a lot about the school environment with lifelike details, and I thought all her descriptions were real at first. For example, in September 2021, she described a big tree at Kingswood kindergarten. Yet at the end of January 2022, Caicai told me “What I shared with you before about the various rooms and big tree at Kingswood was all my dream. I often made those dreams when I was in Canada” (Casual conversation with Caicai, January 29, 2022). By this time, she had returned to China for one and a half years. Suddenly I realized her previous descriptions of the kindergarten decorations were not always authentic, so it became hard for me to distinguish reality from her dream in some cases.
Luckily, I could check what Caicai said from other sources. Some of Caicai’s words were verified by her mom Dr. Chen. For example, in the online interview, Dr. Chen told me that “the Canadian teachers let the children plant vegetables or observe tadpoles, which was favored by Caicai. She planted some carrots at Kingswood” (Interview with Dr. Chen, October 15, 2021). Caicai did an excellent job in gardening, so she got a certificate given by Ready-Set-Go. READY, SET, GO! was established in 1996 and forms a partnership with families of young children (ages birth to six) living within the downtown core. In connection with the Greater Essex County District School Board, the program taught children how to garden in their classroom (Ready Set Go, 2022). Dr. Chen took a picture of the certificate and shared it with me through WeChat in October 2021. The certificate said, “It was awarded to Caicai in recognition of completing the Growing Gardens Program that aims to strengthen exploration and literacy skills for children in junior and senior kindergarten” (Ready-Set-Go certificate, December 3, 2019).

**Winter Activities in Canada.** Kingswood school planned daily outdoor learning experiences and provided children with daily opportunities to explore and interact with nature (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). Therefore, Caicai also enjoyed herself outside the classroom, especially in wintertime. She shared with me her activities on snowy days in Canada. I translated her words into English as follows except when she had translanguaging practices.
Caicai: The Canadian children and I climbed up the hill and slid down. In winter, the grass was icy, and the puddle froze too. We went skiing on the grass ice and spun on it. We jumped up and down on the puddle which had dirty water and ice. My snow pants got wet, and the pants were as 100 times thick as the pants I wear today. We also played snowball fight and made the snowball harder by adding ice to it. There was a tap near the yard, but it was too cold. The tap water became ice, too. The ice from tap water or the icicle from the tree would be the raw material that could be added to the snowball. I found some hard ice and rub it, and I threw it toward a snowman.

Haojun: You must wear gloves when playing with the snow, right?
Caicai: Yeah. Otherwise, your hands would have frostbite.

Haojun: What would the Canadian teachers say to you when you were playing?
Caicai: 老师会看着我们，当我们打雪仗的时候，她会说 be careful. 因为地上有那种尖尖的冰，所以如果撞到冰柱子上就会很危险的了. (She watched us when we played snowball fight. She would say, be careful. There was sharp ice on the ground, so it might be dangerous if we hit the icicle.)

Haojun: Do you understand “be careful” at that time (the winter of 2019)?
Caicai: They had the translation app and it could show Chinese “请小心” (which means “please be careful”). If I want to say anything to the teacher, I can speak Chinese on her phone, and it will translate into English. In that way, my teacher could understand me. (Casual conversation with Caicai, December 18, 2021)

In Caicai’s eyes, the slope in the backyard was a hill and she loved to climb it with Canadian children. She also mentioned her teacher used a phone translation app to remind all the children of being careful while playing with the snow. The app also played an important role in other young Chinese visiting students’ adjustment to a new Canadian school, which was mentioned in Feifei’s story. In such cases, the Canadian teachers were using a translator to communicate with young Chinese ELLs and validating their L1, instead of forcing them to speak English only.

**My Water Bottle Is No.** In Caicai’s schooling experience in Canada, the Canadian teachers at Kingswood kindergarten played a significant role. Dr. Chen told me
in the face-to-face interview, “Caicai was encouraged and praised by her Canadian teacher every school day at kindergarten, so she really liked to go to school” (Interview with Dr. Chen, January 20, 2020). In the story of the water bottle, Caicai was able to express herself clearly and gained help from her teacher. I mentioned that story when we were chatting online through Tencent Meeting.

(Haojun: Feifei told me that one time you cannot find your water bottle, so you said to your Canadian teacher “My water bottle is no.” Caicai: Yeah, it took me so long to find it. Finally, I found it in my locker. Haojun: Did you look for it by yourself or did your teacher help you? Caicai: I asked my teacher for help. I said, “my water bottle is no.” She could understand what I was saying, so she helped me.) (Casual conversation with Caicai, December 18, 2021)

Although the sentence “My water bottle is no” was not 100% correct, Caicai got help from her Canadian teacher who was patient and helpful. Dr. Chen shared with me more about the evaluation of Canadian teachers and Caicai’s personality.

Caicai wanted to excel and that was her personality. I knew some children who did not care about the scores of tests, but Caicai was not like that. She hoped to be the best student in class. Thus, she cared about what her teacher said about her and whether the teacher had paid attention to her. If the teacher encouraged her, she would try hard to perform very well. We were lucky because Ms. Linda and other educators at Kingswood kindergarten really loved the teaching job sincerely. As a parent, I can really feel that they hoped all the children could grow happily and healthily. With their support and patience, Caicai made great progress. Even Caicai could not express her gratitude in fluent oral English, she knew everything. (Interview with Dr. Chen, January 20, 2020)
The Canadian teachers’ encouragement and kindness motivated Caicai to try her best to perform well in kindergarten. She hoped to be the best student, so she made efforts in learning English and adapting to an unfamiliar environment in Canada. Dr. Chen’s words were verified by Ms. Linda’s comment on the report card. It said,

Caicai is a self-motivated learner, who approaches learning tasks with confidence. She often tries to extend her learning, by choosing to practice and apply her learning. This is exemplified when she would choose to complete learning provocations and extend them so that they are more detailed and complex (i.e., creating symmetrical designs with pattern blocks, and cutting out detailed snowflakes). (Teacher’s comments on the report card of Caicai, July 1, 2020)

With earnest efforts and help from the Canadian teachers and Dr. Chen, Caicai won the Student of the Month and the certificate from Ready-to-Go in December 2019.

This Is My Castle. Coming to Canada for five months (from August to December 2019), Caicai could confidently speak complete English sentences and ask Dr. Chen what they meant in certain contexts. For example, Dr. Chen told me in the interview that one day in January 2020, after she picked Caicai up at the bus station in the afternoon, Caicai asked her a question about a castle.

Caicai asked me, “妈妈，一个朋友告诉我 This is my castle. 这是什么意思？”我就继续问，“是什么时候这个朋友这么问你的呢？”“我们在外面玩，他在地上玩雪的时候。”噢，我就把这句话翻译给 Caicai，告诉她，“你的朋友是想说‘这是我（搭）的城堡。’” (Caicai asked me, “Mom. A friend told me, ‘This is my castle.’ What does that mean?” I asked Caicai in what kind of context the friend said that. Caicai explained, “when we were playing outside, he played with the snow on the ground.” I understood the meaning of that sentence and then translated it into Chinese for her. “Your friend means that he built the snow castle.”) (Interview with Dr. Chen, January 20, 2020).
Caicai gained a contextualized understanding of “This is my castle” through translanguaging and her mom’s translation. Since Caicai’s schooling at Kingswood began in September 2019, the sidewalk from the bus station to Caicai’s home had become a natural space in which translanguaging and bilingual acquisition naturally aroused. Outside school, Dr. Chen was a good helper in Caicai’s learning. At school, Canadian teachers played a crucial role in Caicai’s adaptation to schooling in Canada.

**Having Fun at the Canadian Kindergarten**

**Listening to Stories and Watching English Videos.** At Kingswood, Caicai was interested in drawing and spent more time in the art area in the classroom. As Ms. Linda commented on the report card,

Caicai confidently moves through the room using various centers but shows a particular love for creating at the art center. She takes pride in her accomplishments and proudly presents them to her educators. She can answer questions related to her work (i.e., What is it? What’s on it?). (Teacher’s comments on the report card of Caicai, July 1, 2020)

According to Ms. Linda’s report, Caicai was able to answer English questions about her paintings, which showed her progress in both English listening and speaking. Apart from that, Caicai also learned early literacy in kindergarten through listening to stories. She recalled how she had class at Kingswood and shared the experience with me in our online tutoring session. She said,

Ms. Linda often read stories to us, and I loved listening to the stories. The children all took their shoes off and sat on the carpet in a circle. The teacher sat on a small chair. Each time I sat beside her so that I could see the pictures in the

Reading stories was a significant part of early childhood literacy education. Caicai liked to listen to stories and more than that, she acted as an active participant in class discussions. As Ms. Linda wrote on the report card, “she often raises her hand to answer questions or to volunteer for a turn” (Teacher’s comments on the report card of Caicai, July 1, 2020). Besides, the Canadian teacher also played a series of English learning videos for the children. Caicai told me the content of these learning videos in our online chat. She mixed two languages as follows.

我记得有个系列的视频里面有个火车，一个人从火车上跳下来。这个人有不同的职业，比如 farmer, teacher. 然后场景会根据这个人的工作变，比如变成 farm 或者 school. 还有一些其它的场景比如 zoo, park, market, bookshop. (I remember in one video, there was a train, and a person jumped out from the train. The person has different jobs such as a farmer or a teacher. Then the scene would become the place he works such as a farm or a school. There were also scenes like the zoo, park, market, and bookshop.) (Casual conversation with Caicai, November 27, 2021)

When Caicai recalled the content of the English video, she listed the words that she learned about occupations and workplaces through translanguaging. Apart from videos, she also used Lexia on the iPad at kindergarten. I have introduced Lexia in Feifei’s story. Caicai completed Lexia level 4 in the first half of 2020 and Dr. Chen glued the certificate on Caicai’s notebook. According to the official website of Lexia core 5, Level 4 meant Caicai could tell the ending sound in a word, match vowel letters and sounds, choose a beginning letter to make a word, find a picture to match a
So far, Caicai’s adaptation to schooling at the Canadian kindergarten was relatively smooth. She had experienced a period of feeling anxious and upset because she could not understand English. Luckily, with the support and patience of her mom and her Canadian teachers such as Ms. Linda, Caicai enjoyed every school day and loved Kingswood kindergarten. Things were getting better and better. Apart from normal learning at school, Caicai also accepted Susie’s weekly tutoring class at Leddy Library.

*Explore and Grow in A Larger Space Outside of School*

The first time that I observed Susie’s tutoring class, I thought Caicai was quiet and shy because she seldom spoke English with Susie. However, Dr. Chen told me “Caicai was not shy at all once she got familiar with you” (Field notes, October 24, 2019). Curious about that, I decided to observe Susie’s tutoring class with Caicai again at Leddy Library in January 2020. By that time, Susie had been tutoring Caicai for almost four months. This time, the tutoring class was not in the desk area on the first floor but in the children’s room which was close to the desk area. In the room, there were some big shelves with boxes of games for children and picture books wrapped in plastic bags. Caicai looked more excited and relaxed this time. At the beginning of the class, Susie let Caicai pick one picture book from the shelf, and she chose one book named “Ready to read (Go set for Kindergarten!),” written by Rosemary Wells (2001). Then Susie started
to read the book for Caicai and asked her some simple questions such as “What color is it? Where is the book?” Caicai was able to answer most questions and pointed to the word Susie mentioned (Field notes, Leddy Library, January 20, 2020).

**Icky Sticky Bubble Gum.** I observed for half an hour and then left the room in which Caicai and Susie were still having the tutoring class. Then I began to interview Dr. Chen in the discussion area of Leddy Library. Dr. Chen shared with me some videos of Caicai’s singing English songs through WeChat and she told me that Caicai learned an English song every week from the community library teacher. She would sing the English song to Dr. Chen after she arrived home and Dr. Chen would record these songs on her phone. In the first video that Dr. Chen shared with me, Caicai was singing a song named “Icky sticky bubble gum.” The song is a fun movement song with action for preschoolers, kids, and toddlers. It pretends to blow a bubble and have the gum stick to someone’s head, elbows, knees, and mouth. In the video, Caicai was in black pigtails, wore a black dress, and sang the song with actions. She first clapped her hands and paused for three seconds, thinking about the lyrics, and singing “ickey sticky bubble gum, bubble gum, bubble gum.” Then she breathed in, acting like she was blowing the bubble gum. She even coughed because the breath she took in was too big for her, but the cough did not affect her performance. After coughing, she continued to sing, “My hands and my knees. Oh, my knees.” Caicai began to turn around with her hands put on her knees. “Pull pull pop.” She stopped and acted like she pulled something from her knees.
Afterward, there was the second round of the song with some repetitive lyrics. Caicai sang, “icky sticky bubble gum, bubble gum, bubble gum. My hands and my toes.” She bent over and crouched, saying, “Pull pull, pop,” which looked like she was pulling the gum from her toes. In the ending part, Caicai sang, “My shoulders, my belly, my toes. Wash my hands.” She imitated the sound of pushing the hand sanitizer as “/ts/” while doing the action of washing her hands. “And throw it into the garbage.” She pretended to throw the paper towel into a dustbin (Field notes, Leddy Library, UW, January 20, 2020).

In the second song that Dr. Chen showed me on her phone, Caicai was singing, “rolling rolling, rolling rolling, down down down, down down down. Big big, big...... (think for a while) small, small small. Rolling, rolling, rolling, faster faster faster, rolling, rolling rolling, slow down, slow down” with the melody of Frere Jacques Round (which is recomposed as *Two Tigers* in the Chinese nursery rhyme). Dr. Chen said, “just for several weeks, Caicai learned how to say body parts and food in English as well as other commonly seen words by singing English songs” (Field notes, Leddy Library, January 20, 2020).

**Tell Stories to Stuffed Animals and Teach Them.** In our interview, Dr. Chen also told me that Caicai not only learned songs from the library teacher but also developed the habit of reading books from the beginning of the fall semester in 2019. Caicai would borrow English picture books from the school library, community library,
or the Leddy Library (Dr. Chen borrowed the books for her) every week. The books she read contained different topics such as “after school,” “shopping fun,” “my family visit,” “plants,” “making blueberry jam,” the Berenstain Bears series, Halloween, Christmas, and so on (Interview with Dr. Chen, January 20, 2020). Dr. Chen kept recording the books Caicai read on the School Reading Log, which includes the date, title, and rating. Dr. Chen told me that she would tell the story to Caicai in English first and then translate it into Chinese. The third time, Caicai would use Dr. Chen’s phone or laptop to record the stories in her own words in Chinese. If she did not understand the English sentences in these books, she would look at the pictures and describe the details and plots shown by the pictures. Then she would share her recording of storytelling with her father who was in China (Interview with Dr. Chen, January 20, 2020).

During the interview, Dr. Chen also showed me some video recordings on her phone about Caicai’s storytelling to her stuffed animals. According to Dr. Chen’s memory, Caicai started doing role play with her stuffed animals when she could speak. Hence, before the visit to Canada, she already had the habit of telling stories to the stuffed animals at home. After she came to Windsor, Caicai still kept the habit. In our face-to-face interview, Dr. Chen showed me a video in which Caicai was teaching math and she asked in Chinese, 谁知道答案？请举手 (“Who knows the answer? Please raise your hands”). The video was taken in January 2020 by Dr. Chen at their rented apartment. In another video that was also recorded in January 2020, Caicai looked
confident and was immersed in her English language teaching. She asked her stuffed animals in English, “Do you understand? It is easy. Oh, you don’t know? Really? Have a try” (Interview with Dr. Chen, January 20, 2020).

When Caicai was doing role play, her English expressions did not serve for real communication since the “audience” could not give her response. But it could be seen as a rehearsal and preparation for real communication in daily life. Though her teaching at home looked informal and was hardly noticed except for her mother, it was a phenomenal way to express her knowledge bilingually and freely. To know more about that, I asked her how she taught her dolls when she was in Windsor. Caicai recalled her teaching in our online chat after she returned to China.

Caicai: 我会给我的娃娃讲故事，这些故事都是我自己编的，比如新版《龟兔赛跑》。我会先把娃娃放在小椅子上然后拿出彩色的粉笔，一个小黑板还有板擦。除了讲故事，我也会教它们英语。如果我不知道有的词用英语怎么说，我就直接说中文。我会问它们 What’s your favorite food? What’s your favorite color?”

Haojun: 但它们是娃娃不会说话，怎么回答你的问题呢？

Caicai: 我就假装它们在回答呀，其实是我自己的声音，比如我就回答 My favorite color is yellow. My favorite food is pizza.

Haojun: 那你也给它们奖励一分或者在黑板上画一朵小红花吗？比如它们答对的时候。

Caicai: Yes. 我会给它们用英语做上标记，我有六个娃娃所以坐在右边的就是 F。我在黑板上写下 ABCDEF 然后如果谁答对了就在后面打个勾。

Haojun: 那快下课的时候你也会数一数它们谁得的分最多吗？

Caicai: 会呀。得分最高的娃娃就可以得到糖果。那些娃娃的肚子或衣服前面有小口袋，所以我就会奖励他们糖果，把糖放在它们的小口袋里面。

Haojun: 毛绒玩具和娃娃是哪里来的呢？妈妈买给你的吗？

Caicai: 有些是我在万圣节赢得的奖品，有些是我收到的圣诞节礼物。

(Caicai: I would tell stories to my stuffed animals and those stories were made up by myself, such as a new version of “Hare and Tortoise.” I first put my dolls on
small chairs and then took out some colorful chalk, a blackboard, and an eraser. I also teach them English. If I did not know some English words, I would speak Chinese. I would ask them, “What’s your favorite food? What’s your favorite color?”

Haojun: But they were stuffed animals which could not speak. How did they answer your questions?
Caicai: I pretended they were answering, so actually it was me answering the questions, like “My favorite color is yellow. My favorite food is pizza.”

Haojun: Did you also give them one point or draw a red flower on the blackboard if their answer is correct?
Caicai: Yes, I numbered them with the alphabet. I had six stuffed animals, so the one sitting on the right was F. I wrote down ABCDEF and gave them one checkmark if their answer was right.

Haojun: Would you count who got the most marks at the end of the class?
Caicai: Yes. The stuffed animal who had the most marks got candies. The stuffed animals and dolls had small pockets in front of their belly or clothes, so I would award them with candies.

Haojun: Where did the stuffed animals and dolls come from? Did your mom buy them?
Caicai: Some were the prizes that I won on Halloween, and some were the presents for Christmas that I received. (Casual conversation with Caicai, October 6, 2021)

Caicai was imitating what her Canadian teachers did at school and she answered her own questions in her mini class. Everything in Canada seemed wonderful but Dr. Chen’s visit was going to end in February 2020. However, the plan was influenced by Covid-19 and their flight was cancelled. Dr. Chen had to buy new air tickets.

Unfortunately, several plane tickets were cancelled again and the policy of going back to China was changing and becoming increasingly strict. After the March break of 2020, Kingswood was closed due to Covid-19. Thus, Caicai had to stay at home most of the time, felt bored, and expected to go back to school. In total, her on-site schooling only
lasted for about half a year (from September 2019 to March 2020) although she stayed in Canada for nearly one year (from August 2019 to July 2020).

**Staying at Home in the First Half of 2020**

**Having a Good Time at the Backyard.** From March break to July 2020, most of the time, Caicai learned at home, drew pictures, and told stories to her stuffed animals. In the fall of 2020, Caicai would be a grade-1 student in China. To help Caicai get prepared for the transition, Dr. Chen began to teach Caicai at home until they left Canada in July 2020. In our online interview, Dr. Chen recalled the days when she taught Caicai at home after the March break of 2020.

Caicai could keep learning from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. and only took several breaks in the morning. She was very concentrated the whole morning. During Covid-19 in the first half of 2020, Caicai attended the online courses offered by Kingswood and I taught her some pinyin and simple math because she would go to primary school after she returned to China. (Interview with Dr. Chen, October 15, 2021)

Caicai studied hard at home with Dr. Chen’s teaching, and she could sit for a long time, focusing on learning. But that did not mean that all her time was spent in studying. Since she could not go back to school, the backyard became Caicai’s playground where she had fun with her mom and their Chinese roommates such as Xuanxuan and his mom Dr. Song. In one of our online tutoring sessions, Caicai told me that they did so many interesting things in the backyard.

One day in April 2020, we weeded the backyard. Then we made some s’mores with the roommates. Xuanxuan put some sugar on the smore which was a little overcooked. Some smoke appeared but it was still delicious. I liked the chocolate
in it, and it tasted like a chocolate cookie. (Casual conversation with Caicai, July 13, 2021)

Caicai interacted with other young Chinese visiting students such as Xuanxuan at home. Like what Caicai did at kindergarten, she also planted some vegetables in the backyard with Dr. Chen. Some interesting dialogues between her and her mom naturally happened there, such as the following one. Caicai recalled those conversations and retold them to me while we were chatting online.

Caicai: 我经常跟妈妈在后院里聊天。当她单词读错的时候我会纠正她。简直太好玩了！我记得疫情期间，我们在后院摘萝卜和葱。妈妈问我，“你都看见了什么？”我当时口误，说成了 the cloud is blue。我妈妈就说，“闹闹闹闹闹五。”我笑死了。因为我知道妈妈说错了，她其实想说 no no no no，但是她把 no 说成了“闹五。”

Haojun: 你有教妈妈正确的读音吗？
Caicai: 我听加拿大人都说的是 no，但是我妈妈说的“闹五。”当时我自己英语也不是那么好，所以只是觉得很奇怪——到底是“闹五”还是 no 呢？最开始我是跟妈妈学的，但我去幼儿园以后发现我的加拿大同学都说的是 no，不是“闹五，”所以我回家后就纠正妈妈的发音了。

Haojun: 太棒了，那你就是妈妈的小老师了。

(Caicai: I often chatted with mom in our backyard. When she pronounced the words wrongly, I would correct her, which was hilarious. It was one day during the pandemic. We were pulling out the radish and green onion in our backyard. My mom asked me, “what did you see here?” With a slip of tongue, I said, “the cloud is blue.” Mom replied, “now now now woo.” I laughed because I know mom was pronouncing it wrongly. She wanted to say, “no no no no,” but she pronounced it as “now woo.”

Haojun: Did you teach her the correct pronunciation?
Caicai: I heard Canadians say “no” while my mom said, “now woo.” At that time, my English was not very good, but I still felt strange. Is it “now woo” or “no”? At first, I imitated what my mom said but when I went to kindergarten, my Canadian classmates all said “no” rather than “now woo,” so I came home and corrected my mom’s pronunciation.

Haojun: Great. Then you are the little teacher for your mother.) (Casual conversation with Caicai, June 5, 2021)
Before the self-quarantine at home, Caicai already began to correct her mom’s English pronunciation which was not perfectly standard. In the first half of 2020, she stayed at home most of the time, so she interacted more with her mom. She played the role of a little teacher of Dr. Chen at the backyard, just like what she did on their way home from the bus station in the second half of 2019.

The backyard was a wonderful site for Caicai to get close to nature, including plants and animals. It was also a fabulous place where she felt the differences in the four seasons in a year. One time we discussed “my favorite season” when we were having the online tutoring session. Then we had the following conversation.

Haojun: 你最喜欢的季节是什么呢？
Caicai: Spring 因为 spring 非常漂亮，花都开了闻起来很香。妈妈和我在春天的时候出门，我们还在草地上滚来滚去~
Haojun: 哈哈，那冬天呢？你可以堆雪人什么的。
Caicai: 冬天下雪了所以我们可以堆雪人。要是太穷了，没有胡萝卜，就拿树干，然后沾一点东西，削成萝卜的形状，插上去就行了。
Guo: 那你有没有 make a snowman?
Caicai: 我们后院有大大的雪人，跟轩轩哥哥堆的。我带着手套去堆。
Haojun: 太好了，那你知道 snow angel 吗？（我一边问，一边在线搜索 snow angel 的图片。）
Caicai: 哦我知道这个，我在冬天的时候在加拿大做过一个 snow angel。你可以像这样动你的手和脚（她在摄像头前用力挥动手臂，并抬起自己的脚）。这样你就可以在雪地里面留下印子了。你还可以加翅膀或者在头上加触角呢。
Haojun: 对，那秋天呢？
Caicai: 秋天的时候落叶就像下雨一样的落下来，外面铺了一层落叶，我躺在落叶上，落叶可以把我埋起来。落叶也可以堆起来像小山一样，堆得特别多，我就和轩轩哥哥一起爬上去。我们被落叶堆的山给盖住了，被落叶山盖在里面了。我们还可以伸出头。我被叶子盖住，要几分钟才能伸出头，因为（落叶）太厚了！
(Haojun: Which season is your favorite?)
Caicai: I like spring because it is beautiful. Flowers bloomed and smelled great. My mom and I went out in the spring. We rolled on the lawn.
Haojun: Haha. What about winter? You can make a snowman.
Caicai: It is snowy in winter so we can make a snowman. If you don’t have money to buy a carrot, you can just use a twig and sharpen it in the shape of a carrot. Then use it as a snowman’s nose.
Haojun: Did you make a snowman in Canada?
Caicai: We made a big one in our backyard. Xuanxuan and I made it. I wore my gloves.
Haojun: Wonderful. Do you know the snow angel? [I searched on Google Images to show Caicai what a snow angel looked like.]
Caicai: Oh, I know this one. I made that in Canada in winter. You can move your arms and legs like this [she began waving her arms and lifting her foot in front of the camera], which leaves a print in the snow. You can even add wings or tentacles on the head.
Haojun: Right. What about fall?
Caicai: The leaves were falling like the rain. Our backyard was covered with leaves, and I lay on them. The leaves can even cover me. They can also be piled up like a hill. Xuanxuan and I were covered in the leaves hill, but we could put our heads out. It took me some time to put my head out because the leaves were very thick.) (Casual conversation with Caicai, July 20, 2021)

Caicai mentioned Xuanxuan who also attended Kingswood in grade 2. He was the roommate of Caicai and Dr. Chen. Xuanxuan’s mother, Dr. Song, was also a Chinese visiting scholar in Windsor. Caicai depicted what the backyard was like in different seasons and the activities she did in each season. Her descriptions were vivid and creative. A new personalized meaning was given to the four seasons because they were not only natural changes every year but also connected with Caicai’s life in Canada. As one Chinese visiting scholar in my research pointed out, “culture is about how local people live” (Interview with Grace’s father, October 31, 2021). In that sense, Caicai was immersed in Canadian culture when she was experiencing four seasons in her backyard.
**Favorite Festival in Canada.** In the first half of 2020, Caicai mostly stayed at home except for celebrating her favorite festival in Canada: Easter. It was like a dessert in Caicai’s life before she left Canada. In our online tutoring session, she recalled the experience of celebrating Easter at Kingswood kindergarten and shared it with me in Chinese. I translated her words into English as follows.

Caicai: I like Easter best because you can look for painted eggs and you can eat snacks. We played games at kindergarten on Easter in 2020. Those grade-5 and grade-6 students used hay to build up a tall haystack, which was the same height as mine. We were asked to turn around so that they had time to hide candies in the haystack. We can also do makeup. My mom painted my face like a rabbit, but my friend thought I was a little mouse.

Haojun: Who said you looked like a mouse?

Caicai: Feifei and one of my Canadian classmates. She drew a cat on her face and chased me in the kindergarten.

Haojun: That sounds fun. Do you know how Easter (复活节) got the name? Bring what or whom back to life?

Caicai: bring eggs back to life because something will hatch from the eggs. There are so many things in the eggs, such as toys, food, dolls, and so on. The small eggs contain snacks while the bigger eggs contain toys or dolls, ornaments, or things that you can hang on your schoolbag.

Haojun: What if everyone wants the big egg?

Caicai: We can play games to win the egg. Some people hang the eggs on the tree in a basket. There was a rope that tied the basket. We can climb the tree and get the basket. Some baskets were empty, but some had many painted eggs. We took turns picking the basket. Mom was there when I played the game, so she translated the rules for me. Through the game, I won a basket that had many colorful eggs, candies, and toys. (Casual conversation with Caicai, August 27, 2021)

Caicai talked about the activities on Easter, including face painting, hunting eggs, playing games to win colored eggs, and so on. She did not know the meaning or history

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8 The Chinese translation of Easter means “the festival of bringing someone back to life.”
of Easter, but it did not influence her fun experience on that day. Dr. Chen did the translation for her, so she could participate in the game and win a big prize.

As mentioned earlier, due to Covid-19, Dr. Chen’s plan of going back to China was delayed and it was until July 2020 that she finally flew back to China with Caicai. After the summer vacation of 2020, Caicai would start grade one in the primary school affiliated with the university where her parents worked. Having a one-year living experience in Canada, how would Caicai adapt to schooling in China? What was her transition experience from kindergarten to primary school?

**Following Up on Caicai’s Ongoing Experiences in China**

*Adaptation to the Primary School in China*

**Two Main Challenges.** Before Caicai went to primary school in China, Dr. Chen was worried because she thought that Caicai was not ready for being a primary school student. Dr. Chen told me in our online interview that on the first school day at the primary school, Caicai’s Chinese teacher asked her to stay for a while after school because she had something to talk about with Dr. Chen. The conversation between the teacher and Dr. Chen happened at the beginning of September 2020. Dr. Chen recalled that in our online interview in October 2021. She said,

> After the other 45 students in the class left school, the teacher said to me, “There was a serious problem with Caicai. She often cut in the teaching in class, which

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* In Chinese, this stage is called 幼小衔接 which is important for children at senior kindergarten and grade-1 students in the elementary school. If the transition goes smoothly and the children are well prepared for the elementary school, they are likely to develop social skills, thinking and learning habit very well.
was not good.” Actually, I was happy to hear that, because it showed Caicai paid attention to the class and wanted to participate. She built that habit in Kingswood since the Canadian teachers all encouraged the children to express themselves and actively interacted with teachers. However, I also understand the teaching style was different in China, and I had not taught Caicai the different class rules yet. Although this reflects the cultural differences between Canada and China, I believe it is important for individuals to exert agency. Taking the initiative to adjust to differences in different contexts and environments is necessary. Thus, on that day, after I got back home, I talked with Caicai, “it is a good thing that you want to answer questions in class, but you need to raise your hands and wait for your teacher to call you. If she does not let you answer the question, you can think of the answer in your little head without saying it. Speaking it out will interrupt the teaching.” In only one week, she changed and adjusted to new class rules quickly. (Interview with Dr. Chen, October 15, 2021)

Caicai got used to speaking directly in Canada, but the Chinese teacher saw it as an interruption which interfered the normal teaching. Though Dr. Chen regarded it as a positive sign of Caicai’s active participation in class, adjustment was still necessary. Thus, Dr. Chen taught Caicai how to politely participate in class at the Chinese primary school and Caicai learned it quickly.

The first problem was solved but the second challenge soon appeared: Caicai found that most of her Chinese classmates had learned everything before class. Dr. Chen told me in our online interview that in the first week of September 2020, Caicai was in an upbeat mood. However, in the second and third weeks, she was not as optimistic as before because her classmates knew the answers before the teachers taught them. Her grades in the unit quiz were not bad, such as 95 or 96. But most of her classmates got 98 and 99, which were better than hers. Dr. Chen told me that “Caicai was not as confident
as before because she was in a highly competitive learning environment at school”

(Interview with Dr. Chen, October 15, 2021).

To help her adjust that, during the National Day Holiday of 2020 (from 1 Oct. to
7 Oct.), Caicai’s parents did not go anywhere else, but stayed at home to help Caicai
learn the content of grade 1 and went over all the important knowledge within one week.
Dr. Chen told me in our online interview that after the National Day Holiday, Caicai got
100 in three subjects in the mid-term exam: math, English, and Chinese. “With the
experience of catching up, Caicai regained confidence and became more motivated as
she knew that if she studied hard, she could change the situation” (Interview with Dr.
Chen, October 15, 2021).

I was quite surprised that Caicai could keep learning during the seven days of the
National Day Holiday. She was only a 6-year-old girl in the fall of 2020. Dr. Chen
partially attributed Caicai’s self-discipline and the ability to keep focused for a long time
to the year of learning and living experiences in Canada. Dr. Chen told me in the online
interview as follows.

Caicai relies more on herself in problem-solving, compared to her Chinese
classmates. She finishes her homework by herself and never complains about
getting up early in the morning. Her self-management ability is great and has high
self-discipline. She was like that when we were in Canada, especially in the first
half of 2020. After returning to China, she also has a high standard for herself:
being a good student in her primary school. (Interview with Dr. Chen, October
15, 2021)
When Caicai began her study at Kingswood kindergarten, she wanted to perform well and be the best student. It was the same after she returned to China and began schooling at the Chinese primary school. It shows her personality and consistent academic pursuit.

**I Don’t Have Time to Miss Them.** In our online interview, Dr. Chen also shared with me more about Caicai’s daily schedule since she became an elementary school student in China. Since the fall semester of 2020, Caicai gets up at 6:40 a.m. in the morning. She washes her face, brushes her teeth, and gets ready for breakfast. Dr. Chen does not need to urge her to hurry up because Caicai has formed the habit and knows what to do every morning. Then she goes to school accompanied by her father or Dr. Chen. She usually arrives at school at 7:30 a.m. (Interview with Dr. Chen, October 15, 2021). After school, Caicai needed to do many exercises to improve her grades in exams. In our online chat, Caicai shared with me the difference between the Canadian kindergarten and the Chinese primary school that she attended. She spoke in Chinese, and I translated her words as bellow.

The kids in Canadian kindergartens are just playing and they have no homework. Even if there was homework, it was so easy for me. The homework was like drawing a picture or painting some leaves you picked. I like the Canadian homework. It is unlike the exercises in my primary school. Now I have so much homework to do and every day I write more than 1 billion words. Sometimes I need to write homework until 10 p.m. and then I need to get up at 6:45 am, have breakfast quickly, and go to school. I don’t even have time to miss my Canadian teachers and classmates. The Chinese teachers in my primary school are stricter and more serious than the Canadian teachers. If students do
not follow class rules, the Chinese teachers will be severe and cranky. Only
those students who perform very well can get rewards, but in Canada, all the
children in my class can get rewards. I wish I could go back to Canada to attend
primary school and celebrate 100 times Christmas in a year. I also want to
celebrate Halloween many times so that every day will be a holiday. (Casual
conversation with Caicai, December 25, 2021)

Caicai perceived the difference between the Canadian kindergarten and the
Chinese primary school from the teachers, homework, and mechanism for rewarding.
She used hyperbole (writing more than 1 billion words) to emphasize the heavy
workload. Besides, she mentioned that only the best student could be praised by the
Chinese teacher, which encouraged her to study hard for being a top student in her class.

In our online chat, I also asked Caicai “Which one do you think is more
interesting? Kindergarten or primary school? “She shared with me her thoughts as
follows.

Caicai: I feel the Chinese primary school is great because we can play
basketball. We also do the charity bazaar, and the money will be donated to
more schools. Then the schools can buy more new chairs and desks for children.
We bring things from home and sell them.
Haojun: What about your classmates in Canada and China? Any differences?
Caicai: My Canadian classmates in kindergarten were very polite because they
would say “I want to go to the bathroom” rather than “I want to poop or pee.”
But some of my Chinese classmates in grade one would say it in a very direct
way. Oh, if I went to Canada, I could communicate with Canadian children.
Haojun: You could not communicate well in the past?
Caicai: I only spoke a little bit of English at that time. The English words that I
currently think are quite easy like clothes were hard for me at that time.
Haojun: What else do you think is quite easy now?
Caicai: like hair and food. I know many English words about food. (Casual
conversation with Caicai, October 23, 2021)
Caicai listed things she liked about the Canadian kindergarten and the Chinese primary school that she attended. She assessed some English words as easy after she returned to China, and she felt more confident in English communication if she had another chance to go abroad.

**Keeping Reading and Doing Well in Chinese Writing**

So far, Caicai had adapted to her schooling in China by overcoming two main difficulties. Dr. Chen attributed it partly to the independence and self-direction that Caicai developed during her stay in Canada. Furthermore, Caicai also kept a good habit that she formed when she was in Canada: reading. Dr. Chen told me in the online interview that since the beginning of the fall semester in 2020, Caicai would read stories before she slept. Usually, it is the parents who tell their children stories, but for Caicai, she preferred telling stories to her mom and after that, Dr. Chen would read another one as a reward. Caicai read a variety of books such as Four Great Classical Novels and adventure stories. They are the four novels commonly regarded as the greatest and most influential of pre-modern Chinese fiction. They are *Journey to the West*, *Outlaws of the Marsh*, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, and *Dream of the Red Chamber*, which were all written during the Ming and Qing dynasties (Zhou, 2021).

Owing to a large amount of reading, Caicai’s Chinese compositions were often praised as model writing in her class because of the beautiful words and values reflected. Her Chinese teacher often posted Caicai’s composition as a model in the class WeChat
group to let other Chinese students learn from her. For example, Caicai wrote an excellent composition named *E-books helped to realize the mountain children’s reading dreams*. It was written when Caicai was in grade one. It was on January 20, 2021, that Caicai dictated the composition in Chinese, and her mom Dr. Chen typed on the computer. Dr. Chen shared it with me through WeChat, and I translated it into English as follows.

During summer and winter vacations, my mother would do fieldwork in the mountain areas, and she often brought me with her. Each time, my mother would bring some picture books, so that I could read the picture books by myself when she was working. While I was reading, some local Chinese students would come to me and read with me, showing great interest in my books. My mother saw that, and she asked the children, “Do you like reading books after school?” They all said yes, but it was a pity that there were not many interesting books at the country school or at their home. Mother thought for a moment and asked, “If there are books in your school, will everyone read them?” The children said together, “yes.” On that day, after we got home, my mother discussed with my father and planned to donate some books to the students in the mountain areas. Since then, my family has donated books to schools in the mountains every year. Many students liked the books we donated. To express their gratitude, some students wrote letters to us. When reading the letters, my mother found that although we donated books every year, they still could not meet the needs of local students. Hence, my mother thought of buying iPads and e-books and storing e-books on these devices. Then the e-books can be updated constantly, and students can read more books. With e-books, students in the mountains can read a variety of books. I am happy for them. Thanks to information technology, students in the mountain area can read their favorite books and change the situation of poverty through reading and learning. (Caicai’s artifact, January 20, 2021)

In the story about electronic books, Caicai showed her kindness and the generosity of her parents. The English reading habit that Caicai developed during the one-year visit to Canada also benefited her Chinese reading and writing.
Learning English in China

Compared with the Chinese language, Dr. Chen found that Caicai’s English was not as good as before. When Caicai was in Canada, she would retell what happened at Kingswood in English sentences, but after returning to China, she seldom spoke English at home. Moreover, Caicai forgot some English words and it took her long time to think about how to say something in English. Dr. Chen told me in our online interview that “Caicai only has one or two English classes at her primary school every week. After the visit, I noticed that she was losing her ability to speak English fluently. There is no time to have enough English input” (Interview with Dr. Chen, October 15, 2021). In the interview, Dr. Chen also told me about Caicai’s time arrangement after school on normal school days.

Every day, she has a lot of math and Chinese language homework. Sometimes after she finishes homework at home, she needs to play the piano. There is even no time to do physical exercises. She is already exhausted, but she still wants to perform well in her class. Thus, she has to make more effort than other children. (Interview with Dr. Chen, October 15, 2021)

Having to do homework and extra exercises, Caicai had no time to study English every day. On weekends, she went to other arts training classes such as the piano or Chinese calligraphy class as she was interested in them. Thus, she could not squeeze more time into English learning.

The Children’s Songs are Killing Me. Another possible cause of Caicai’s declining English level was that she did not like the learning content in English class. It
was on January 22, 2021, that Caicai was chatting with me online through Tencent Meeting. She was in the living room while Dr. Chen was doing housework beside her.

Caicai showed me the English textbook that she used at her Chinese school.

Caicai: unit 1 我们学 my family, unit 2 boys and girls, unit 3 学 My friends.
我们 unit 4 学 in the … 这个单词我不会. Unit 5 我们学 in the park. Unit 6 我们学 Merry Christmas. 还学了 card present. new year. 还有 Christmas.
Haojun: 第四单元学什么？我可以教你怎么说。
Caicai: 妈妈，你能帮帮我吗（Dr. Chen 正好从 Caicai 的桌子旁走过）
Dr. Chen: community.
Caicai: unit 4, in the community. Unit 6, bookshop, hospital, and park.
Haojun: 这英语课本对你来说难吗？
Caicai: 后面的儿歌要人命了，太多了。
Haojun: 老师要求每个同学都要会唱吗？
Caicai: 必须会唱这些歌。还有一些贴纸，我们可以贴在课本上。
Haojun: 嗯，看起来是一本有趣的课本。
Caicai: 这些单元很烦人，我不想读。
Haojun: 为什么不？
Caicai: 因为太多了！你看到了吗？（一些长条的纸条贴在课本上第一页）我们有很多家庭作业要做。还要背诵很多古诗（打开另一本教材，里面贴着几张小纸条，上面印着中国古代诗词）。
(In Unit 1, we learn about my family. Unit 2 talks about boys and girls. In Unit 3 we talk about my friends. In Unit 4, we learn about in the … I don’t know this word in the title. In Unit 5, we learn about “in the park.” In Unit 6, we learn about Merry Christmas. We also learned about card present, new year, and Christmas. Haojun: Just now you said unit 4. What is that about? I can teach you.
Caicai: Mom, can you help me? [Dr. Chen just walked by Caicai’s desk.]
Dr. Chen: community.
Caicai: Unit four, in the community. Unit 6, bookshop, hospital, and park.
Haojun: Is this book difficult for you?
Caicai: The songs for children at the end of the textbook are killing me. Too many songs.
Haojun: Does your teacher ask every student to sing it?
Caicai: We have to learn how to sing the songs. There are also some stickers, and we can stick them to the textbook.
Haojun: Good. Looks like it is a fun textbook.
Caicai: These units are annoying, and I do not want to read them.
Haojun: Why?
Caicai: Because there are too many! Did you see them? [Some small pieces of paper were glued on the first page of her textbook.] We have so much homework to do. We need to recite Chinese poems. [She opened another textbook and there were pieces of paper with Chinese poems on them.]} (Casual conversation with Caicai, January 22, 2021)

Caicai did not like the songs in the textbook because there were too many and the teacher required all the students to master them. It was quite different from her attitude toward learning new English songs from her library teacher when she was in Windsor.

After Dr. Chen told me that Caicai’s English was not as good as that when she was in Canada, I hoped to do something for her. Thus, as mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, I asked Dr. Chen if Caicai had time to take my weekly online English tutoring session. Dr. Chen was aware of my dual role and agreed right away. In the online session, I played Caicai’s favorite videos such as Alpha Blocks and Yakka Dee. We also discussed things she liked, such as her favorite animals, schooling in China, her English learning, and her memories of life in Canada.

**Reminiscing About Days in Windsor.** In a relaxing and pleasant atmosphere, Caicai recalled the days in Canada and shared with me her feelings and thoughts. For example, on July 21, 2021, we were watching a video about English phonics. It was about the sound of the letter D and an image appeared in the video as Figure 9 shows.

*Figure 9*

*Screenshot of the Phonics Kids Video of the Letter D*
Haojun: D, d, duck. D says /d/, /d//d/ duck. (as Figure 9 shows)
Caicai: I have seen this.
Haojun: Seen what?
Caicai: Here is a shape of the maple leaf, which reminds me of the Canadian flag. I can see the letter D, so I remember the ducks near the Detroit River. There were geese on the lawn. I also bought a souvenir of a deer in Canada and there was a label with the Canadian flag on it, too. (Casual conversation with Caicai, July 27, 2021)

Dr. Chen told me that during their stay in Canada, Caicai usually played with other young Chinese visiting students by the Detroit River such as Feifei (Interview with Dr. Chen, October 15, 2021). I was surprised that one year after the visit, Caicai still remembered so many details, such as the geese and the label of the Canadian flag on the souvenir.

After the summer vacation, she became a grade-2 student in her Chinese primary school in September 2021. There are two semesters in Chinese public schools: Spring and Fall semester. The Spring semester often starts after the Spring Festival which is usually in February while the Fall semester often begins in September. In our online session, I asked her if she wanted to go to Canada in the future, she said, “I got to know from mom that there were the first and second waves of Covid-19 in Canada, so I did not want to go to Canada again.” Instead, she hoped to visit Switzerland because she heard
from her classmates that it was a beautiful country (Casual conversation with Caicai, September 11, 2021).

**Transliteration of Words and Discussion About Phonics.** Apart from the nostalgia for life in Canada, Caicai also shared with me her understanding of the transliteration of words in Chinese and English (e.g., “可乐” and cola). Transliteration means “writing words or letters in the characters of another alphabet” (“Transliteration,” 2022). The syllables or sounds of the words and letters remain the same (Lingual Consultancy Services, 2019). For example, on September 25, 2021, we were reading a picture book about baby animals. I mentioned the news about elephants in Yunnan in 2021 (China’s herds of wandering elephants heading home after a month-long trek) and played a short video about it on YouTube. After watching the video, Caicai asked me an interesting question that prompted our discussion as below.

Caicai: 我有个问题，“云南新闻”用英语怎么说？
Haojun: Yunnan News，因为云南就是 Yunnan. (Caicai思考了一会，没有说话，然后继续提问)
Caicai: 我还有个问题，你知道先有哪个词的吗？是云南还是 Yunnan?
Haojun: 这是个好问题我从来没想过哎，我猜应该是先有汉语的“云南”吧，然后才是英语的 Yunnan。云南是中国的一个省。所以我们可以跟外国人介绍 Yunnan。能知道你为什么这么问吗？难道还有那种先有英语再有中文的词？
Caicai: 当然有啦，比如沙发就是先有的 sofa. 先有我们的“高考”然后英语里才有 gaokao.
Haojun: 你还知道高考这个词呢？
Caicai: 妈妈告诉我的。

(Caicai: I have one question. How to say 云南新闻 [Yunnan News] in English?)

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10 The translation of cola in Chinese, 可乐 (in pinyin, it’s ke le).
Haojun: Yunnan News. Because 云南 is Yunnan. [Caicai paused for a while and continued to ask.]
Caicai: I have another question. Do you know which word was first created, Yunnan or 云南 [in pinyin, it’s “yun nan”]? 
Haojun: That is a good question and I have never thought about that before. I guess 云南 in Chinese came first and then we say Yunnan in English. This is a province in China, so we can introduce it to foreigners about it. May I know why you ask this question? Are there any English words appearing first and then we have them in Chinese? 
Caicai: Of course. Like 沙发 [in pinyin, it’s “shā fā”] comes from the sofa. Our 高考 [in pinyin, it’s “gāo kǎo”] comes first and then there is gaokao in English. 
Haojun: Wow. How do you know the word gaokao? 
Caicai: My mother told me. (Casual conversation with Caicai, September 25, 2021)

Caicai was interested in the question of “Which word was first created? The English word or Chinese word?” Thus, she made examples of sofa and gaokao. Gaokao (高考) is the National College Entrance Examination, which is a standardized college entrance exam held annually in mainland China.

Her questions about Yunnan News demonstrated that there was a pattern in Caicai’s mind, so she would ask comparable questions each time when she came across the paired words in Chinese and English. It could be seen as a terrific opportunity to explain where the words came from and how English and Chinese developed by integrating the words from other cultures and countries.

Summary

Caicai was only 5 years old when she arrived in Windsor, Ontario. She was nervous and anxious at the beginning because she understood little English. But she found that she did not need to speak much English and she had the freedom to play
whatever she liked at school. Caicai was especially impressed by the decoration and environment at Kingswood kindergarten. She actively explored the space and had fun in learning activities that were play-based. Dr. Chen played a key role in Caicai’s adaptation to the Canadian school and learning. Her suggestion of memorizing one word per day and teaching Caicai simple English words and math on their way home facilitated Caicai’s language acquisition. Starting from one English word, Caicai gradually strung simple sentences together to create a message and share what she had learned at kindergarten with Dr. Chen after school. Moreover, she accepted English tutoring from Susie every week at the Leddy Library at UW. With the instruction from Dr. Chen, Susie, the library teacher, and the encouragement from her Canadian teachers at kindergarten, Caicai won the certificates because of her performance and progress. Furthermore, she enjoyed Canadian festivals including Halloween, Christmas, and Easter.

It was a pity that Caicai could not go to kindergarten in almost the first half of 2020 and the plan of returning to China was set back due to Covid-19. She had to study at home with the accompany of Dr. Chen and formed good learning habits such as self-management and reading. She taught her stuffed animals, recorded the stories she read, and drew pictures at home. Besides, the backyard became the best field for Caicai to interact with nature such as the animals and the four seasons. After returning to China in the second half of 2020, Caicai began her schooling in the Chinese primary school and
encountered two main challenges: “interrupting teaching” and falling behind her classmates. With the instruction of Caicai’s parents and the good habits that she developed during her stay in Canada, she got satisfactory marks in the exams and regained confidence. She did an excellent job in Chinese reading and writing, whereas her progress in English learning was slow. In our weekly online tutoring session, she compared Canadian kindergarten and Chinese primary school from her perspective. Most of her words were in Chinese and she did not have much mixed use of English and Chinese, given that she appeared to be losing her command of spoken English. Moreover, Caicai started to evaluate some English language rules and had the awareness to compare Chinese and English vocabulary based on her language learning experiences.

This chapter takes a narrative approach to contextualize Caicai Fan’s international and cross-cultural experiences between Canada and China. Caicai went to senior kindergarten at Kingswood in September 2019, when another young Chinese visiting student, Luna Zhou, also entered the same school in grade two. The next chapter will present Luna’s translanguaging and bi-lingual/cultural acquisition in narrative unity in a three-dimensional space from the past to the present and future, in personal and social dimensions, and different places in two countries.
Chapter 6 LUNA – STORY OF A 9-YEAR-OLD STUDENT

Luna Zhou is from the southern China. Both her parents work in the same university in China. She first came to Canada in September 2019 with her mother, Dr. Lin, who came to the University of Windsor as a visiting scholar through the RLP. In December 2019, they returned to China. During her three-month stay in Canada, I met Luna several times when she and her mom attended the cultural activities organized by the RLP. I was also lucky to observe one of her English tutoring classes given by Susie, which was the same as the observation that I did in Caicai’s story in Chapter 5.

After Luna returned to China, I sometimes chatted with her mom Dr. Lin through WeChat about Luna’s adaptation and learning at the Chinese school. From Dr. Lin, I got to know that the improvement in Luna’s English was not obvious. Thus, in February 2021, I asked Dr. Lin if Luna needed free online English tutoring. I could help Luna with English reading for free but I might spend several minutes each time asking her questions about her experience in Canada. Dr. Lin did not mind my dual role and agreed at once. Since then, I began to tutor Luna every Wednesday at 7 p.m. online through Tencent Meeting, except for special circumstances (e.g., she went travelling or got sick). It was similar to how I tutor Caicai Fan and Feifei online every week. Each online class lasted for 40 minutes, and she often sat in front of a desk in her living room.

11 The tutoring ended in April 2022 as I had to focus more on writing the thesis. Dr. Lin and Luna showed full understanding of the decision. Dr. Lin was appreciative for my one-year work in assisting Luna’s English learning.
with her mom working beside her. When seeing things related to Canada during the online class, Luna would recall her living and learning experiences in Windsor and share with me her recent feelings at her Chinese school.

At the end of September 2021, I contacted Dr. Lin and Luna after I got the REB approval, asking them if they would like to participate in my research. Both agreed right away and signed the consent form. Dr. Lin chose the family name for Luna and Luna suggested the first name by herself, which constituted her pseudonym in my research – Luna Zhou. Dr. Lin accepted my interview online through Tencent Meeting in October 2021. From her, I got to know more fascinating stories happening during Luna’s three-month trip to Canada. Dr. Lin also shared with me a lot of pictures through WeChat about Luna’s English homework in Canada and China. Through collaborative dialogues, I worked with Dr. Lin to tell and reflect on Luna’s personal narratives. This chapter will tell Luna’s stories in chronological order with a focus on her translanguaging, bilingual/cultural acquisition, and her own understanding of the three-month trip.

**Prelude of Luna Zhou’s Narratives**

Dr. Lin introduced some basic information about Luna in our online interview. For example, Luna had been learning English for 3 years by the time she left China, and she could recognize all the English letters and greet in English. But she seldom spoke it in daily life since “there was no English-immersion environment” (Interview with Dr. Lin, October 8, 2021). Dr. Lin said Luna, who was in grade 2 at that time, knew little
about Canada before the visit. Hence, Dr. Lin introduced to her that Canada had many amusement parks, and it would be fun to live there (Interview with Dr. Lin, October 8, 2021). Before departure, Dr. Lin was a little worried that Luna may be unwilling to go to Canada because she did not know much about this country. But actually, “there was no need to be worried because I was happy to go to Canada.” Luna told me about her feelings before the trip in our online chat (Casual conversation with Luna, October 27, 2021).

After arriving in Windsor, Dr. Lin submitted some files about Luna to Kingswood Public School, where Feifei and Caicai Fan attended, in order to let Luna attend the school. They rented apartment near the University of Windsor. Dr. Lin told me in the online interview that she taught Luna some short but useful English expressions before going to school, such as “I want to go to the washroom” (Interview with Dr. Lin, October 8, 2021).

Dr. Lin recalled the first day of Luna’s schooling at Kingswood. She took Luna to school where Luna did an English Language Test as an initial language assessment. A Canadian teacher told Dr. Lin that Luna had some difficulty understanding English, so Luna might refuse to go to school because of this issue. Hearing that, Dr. Lin promised Luna would overcome the difficulties in English learning and the limited English competence would not influence her willingness to go to school. Then, the Canadian teacher advised Dr. Lin to pay attention to her daughter’s mental health and adaptation
after schooling began (Interview with Dr. Lin, October 8, 2021). After taking the English test, Luna was assigned to Ms. Clare’s grade 2 classroom. Her three-month life and schooling in Canada started and she summarized the trip as 有笑也有泪 (“it was a trip with laughter and tears”) when we were having the online tutoring session in September 2021 (Casual conversation with Luna, September 22, 2021).

A Trip with Laughter and Tears

Being More Helpful and Generous than Before

As the child of Chinese university teachers, Luna goes to the primary school affiliated with the university, and she was the group leader in Class 1 (the pseudonym for her class in China) before she went to Canada. She was proud of that honor because she could assist her teachers in collecting group members’ homework. In contrast, the first week Luna went to Kingswood was not pleasant because she could not understand what the Canadian teachers and classmates were talking about. At that time, Dr. Lin was worried whether Luna might not want to go to school because of that. After all, the Canadian teacher had predicted it might happen when he did the language test for Luna. However, Dr. Lin told me in the online interview that in the first week of schooling, Luna always looked forward to going to Kingswood and did not appear to be frustrated by failing to understand English at school (Interview with Dr. Lin, October 8, 2021). On the fourth school day, Luna told Dr. Lin that there was no need to worry because she
would stick to it no matter how hard it was. Dr. Lin retold Luna’s words in our interview and I translated them into English as follows.

Luna said to me, “before I came to Canada, all my Chinese classmates and teachers encouraged me, so I will show the spirit of our Class 1 in Canada. I am the representative of Class 1, and I will learn as much as possible and try my best to perform well in Canada.” (Interview with Dr. Lin, October 8, 2021)

Dr. Lin was amazed to know Luna came to Canada with a sense of mission, which largely supported her in the first week of schooling. Moreover, she was lucky to be chosen as the “little teacher” at Kingswood and she was quite honored to have the title. At the end of September 2019, I happened to hear that she was talking about being a “little teacher” at an orientation party for the Chinese teacher candidates in the Faculty of Education building, UW. I mentioned this party at the beginning of Feifei’s story in Chapter 4 as well. Feifei and her mom Dr. Xie, Luna and Dr. Lin were also at the party.

I Am the Little Teacher. That day was the first Friday of Luna’s schooling at the Canadian school. During the break of the orientation, I noticed that Luna asked Feifei in Chinese, “我这周是班上的小老师哟，你在Kingswood当过小老师吗?” (I am a little teacher in my class for this week. Have you ever been a little teacher at Kingswood?) Feifei did not say anything but shook her head. Luna held her head high and proudly said with a smile on her face, “我是Ms. Clare班的小老师” (I am the little teacher in Ms. Clare’s class.) Hearing the conversation between Feifei and Luna, I was wondering why Luna was so proud of being a little teacher in Kingswood, so I wrote down the question in my field notes “What does ‘being a little teacher’ mean to Luna?
Why is she so proud of that?” (Field notes, Faculty of Education, University of Windsor, September 20, 2019).

When I reread the field notes that I made on September 20, 2019, I became more curious about “the little teacher.” So, I asked Luna online about this in February 2021. Luna was excited to tell me about that and she recalled how she became the little teacher as well as her responsibilities as the little teacher for the week. She said,

Every week Clare 老师会从一个盒子里抽一个同学的名字。我们的名字都写在一个个木头小棒上，然后有一次下课了我摸了一下这些小棒，因为我不知道是干嘛的。Clare 老师就让轩轩（Luna 的同班同学）告诉我不可以动那个小棒，轩轩用中文给我翻译了我才知道，哦！原来这个是用来决定谁是本周的小老师的。我特别幸运刚去就被抽中当小老师了！当小老师的那一周，我可以坐在一个高高的椅子上。其他小朋友们都坐在地毯上。我拿着一个长长的棍子，棍子的前面有个手指。我就拿着这个棍子指着黑板上的日期教加拿大同学说“Today is 某某某 day,” 比如说“Today is Monday.” 那第二天就是 “Today is Tuesday.” (Every week the students’ names were drawn by the teacher Ms. Clare from a box. Our names were written on small wooden sticks and one time I touched one stick after class because I did not know what they were used for. Ms. Clare told Xuanxuan, my Chinese classmate, that I should not do so, and then Xuanxuan translated for me. He said to me in Chinese “不能动那个小棒” [you cannot touch the sticks]. From Xuanxuan, I knew it was because that was used to decide who would be the “little teacher for the week.” I was very lucky to be chosen as the little teacher when just starting my schooling in Canada. When I was the little teacher, other classmates sat on the carpet while I could sit on a higher chair. I used a long stick with a finger on the top to point at the date on the blackboard and taught my Canadian classmates to say “Today is 某某某 day” [someday]. For example, “Today is Monday.” Then the next day, I taught them to say, “Today is Tuesday.”) (Casual conversation with Luna, February 4, 2021)

As mentioned in Chapter 5, Xuanxuan and his mother lived in the same house with Caicai Fan and her mother. He was also one of Luna’s best friends at Kingswood and he attended the school two weeks earlier than Luna, so he was an important
character in Luna’s story. In Ms. Clare’s classroom, the wooden sticks with students’ names on them seemed attractive to Luna. Before going to Canada, she was the group leader in Class 1 in China, so she could collect homework from her group members. In Canada, she was also willing to do something for her class. The responsibility of the group leader in China and the “little teacher” in Canada was different, but Luna felt proud of herself because she was helpful in both Chinese and Canadian classrooms. Moreover, the position of “little teacher” gave her much confidence because she could “teach” Canadian children simple English words, phrases, and short sentences. Even though she was a young English language learner who had just come to Canada, she was given the opportunity to lead the class in practicing days of a week in English. Luna was pleased to “take the job” and be in the limelight. The episode of “little teacher” reveals how Luna’s past experiences in China influenced her performance at Kingswood. It also demonstrates the temporal, personal-social, and place dimensions because Luna, as a group leader in Class 1 in China, came to a foreign country with a mission and she was learning to socialize with her peers and Canadian teachers at Kingswood.

**Local Customs and Culture at School.** Luna was not familiar with the Canadian teachers or classmates when she just began schooling at Kingswood, so she learned a lot from her Chinese classmate Xuanxuan who came to the Canadian school earlier than her. In our online chat, Luna recalled her first meeting with Xuanxuan, who was cheerful to see a Chinese friend joining Ms. Clare’s class in September 2019. He
warm-heartedly introduced the “风土人情” (local customs and culture) of Kingswood in
detail to Luna. Luna explained the term “风土人情” to me when we were chatting
online.

Haojun: 学校还有“风土人情”？我以为国家或者城市才有？
Luna: 当然有啦！当我生某个加拿大同学的气的时候，轩轩就让我冷静下
来，告诉我这个人不好惹。那我就不生气了呗。他还告诉我班上谁很好相
处，那我就可以跟这些人交朋友了。大部分他说的都是对的，只有一次我
因为他被老师责备了。10 月初的一天，轩轩说他发明了一个心情探测仪。
仪器有各种颜色可以检测人们当天的心情怎么样。如果灯是绿色的，代表
心情很好，如果是红的就说明这个人很生气。轩轩让我在 Clare 老师身上试
试，我一看，灯是绿色的哎！说明老师今天心情不错。而且那天 Clare 老师
还跟我说 Your haircut is beautiful, Luna。我就真的以为老师心情很好了。然
后轩轩告诉我今天的作业可以乱写，反正老师心情好。我照做了，结果就
“悲剧”了，老师让我重写作业！我“恨死”轩轩了！
(Haojun: Does a school have “local customs and culture?” I thought only
countries or cities had that.
Luna: Of course, there was! When I was angry with one Canadian classmate,
Xuanxuan would let me calm down and tell me that this boy was not easy to get
along with. Then I would not argue with him. Xuanxuan also told me who was
nice and friendly in our class, so I would try to make friends with those
classmates. Most of his words were correct. But only once I was blamed by Ms.
Clare because of him. It was one day at the beginning of October. Xuanxuan said
he invented a “mood detector” with different colors of light. He showed me the
instrument that can test whether people are in a good or bad mood today. If the
person is angry, the light will become red. Xuanxuan let me try it on Ms. Clare
and I saw the light turned green, which meant Ms. Clare was glad today. I
thought it was true because that day Ms. Clare said to me “Your haircut is
beautiful, Luna.” Then Xuanxuan told me I can just do my homework at will and
there was no need to be careful as Ms. Clare was happy today. I did so and
“tragedy” happened. I was punished to rewrite the homework. I “hated”
Xuanxuan!) (Casual conversation with Luna, October 7, 2021)

The story about “local customs and culture” and “the mood detector” showed the
young Chinese visiting students’ way of making sense of peer relations in Canada, which
was an important part of their cross-cultural and international experiences. Most of
Xuanxuan’s sharing was useful and “proved to be true” for Luna except for the “mood detector.” Although Luna said she “hated” Xuanxuan, the word “hate” did not mean real hatred but a kidding way to end her storytelling about the misunderstanding caused by “the mood detector.”

Xuanxuan and her mom, Dr. Song, also participated in my research, so I was allowed to chat with Xuanxuan online through Tencent Meeting. He told me that Luna was one of his best friends at Kingswood and he recalled their interactions in the Canadian school.

周露娜和我在学校互相帮助，我们俩擅长不一样的事情。她会在家里先准备好一些英语，这样在学校有需要就可以用上。比如她会在家先学“Excuse me, I want to go to the bathroom.” 然后再来学校教我这句话。我在学校可以教她数学。我还跟我妈妈学了“Can I play with you?” (Luna Zhou and I supported each other. We were good at different things. She would first prepare the English knowledge that she might need at school. For example, she learned some useful expressions at home, and when she got to school, she taught me to say, “Excuse me, I want to go to the bathroom” in English. I taught her math at school. I also learned “Can I play with you?” from my mom at home.) (Casual conversation with Xuanxuan, November 19, 2021)

Xuanxuan’s words filled in more details about the interactions between the two young Chinese visiting students. They first learned some practical English sentences at home and exchanged them at school. When they supported each other, translanguaging happened in a natural way.

**Fight for the Homework.** Xuanxuan liked to play with Luna so there were many interesting stories happening between them. In our online chat, Luna recollected one intriguing story about “fight for homework.”
It was one day in the second week of October 2019, and I went to school. After I entered the classroom, Xuanxuan said he would like to see my homework. I refused because I thought he wanted to copy mine. If so, my teacher Ms. Clare would be angry with me. I said no to him, but Xuanxuan still wanted to snatch my notebook. Then I held it tightly and did not agree. At this time, Ms. Clare saw our “fight.” She misunderstood me and thought I was not a helpful and friendly student. I almost burst into tears and got prepared to apologize to Xuanxuan after class. What made me surprised was that after class Xuanxuan came to my desk and said sorry to me first. He explained that he just wanted to know how to do the homework because he was confused about the requirement. He added, “I would try my best to learn English so that I can help you in the future. I am sorry and it is my fault.” I was so touched by that, and I accepted his apology. (Casual conversation with Luna, October 7, 2021)

As mentioned earlier, before Luna came to Canada, she was the group leader in Class 1. After her schooling at Kingswood began, she hoped to be teachers’ assistant and “a perfect student in teachers’ mind” (Casual conversation with Luna, September 8, 2021). That was why she cared so much about how Ms. Clare thought of her, and she felt so frustrated when she was misunderstood by Ms. Clare. However, Luna did not expect that Xuanxuan would apologize first after the “fight” and make peace with her. He even promised he would try hard to learn English. Luna forgave him and helped him to understand the English requirement in the homework. The story, which started with an English language problem, demonstrated interactions between Chinese children and between the Canadian teacher and the young Chinese visiting student. Limited English levels may lead to the failure of understanding homework and a series of misunderstandings. But the native language can negotiate the tensions among the young Chinese visiting students and resolve disputes. In other words, this story between Luna
and Xuanxuan was initiated by their second language (English) and ended with their first language (Chinese). Both languages played distinct roles in Luna’s Canadian schooling experiences. Those stories showed that Luna’s socializing with her peers at Kingswood was filled with temporary “conflicts,” mutual support, friendship, and the moments that she learned to be more “generous and helpful.”

**My Friend and the Apple.** When asked “what have you learned from Kingswood public school?” Luna told me in our online chat that “我变得更加慷慨助人了” (“I became more generous and helpful than before”) (Casual conversation with Luna, October 7, 2021). The activity of taking turns to be a “little teacher” for one week and learning from a Chinese classmate has helped Luna to be “more helpful and generous.” Apart from that, Luna did some homework sheets that described scenes of being helped. For instance, on October 28, 2019, Ms. Clare told a story named “Big Pumpkin” to the students at Kingswood because it was close to Halloween. The story talked about a witch who tried to get the pumpkin out of the field. Vampire, mummy, and ghost came, and they tried one by one. They all failed and then a bat came, proposing that they should work together to pull out the pumpkin. The method worked out, and they ate the pumpkin at the witch’s house in the end (Silverman, 1995). Ms. Clare assigned a homework sheet to students after reading the story to students.
On the homework sheet (Figure 10), Luna wrote down how her Chinese friend helped her to get the apple when she was in China. The name of her friend was blocked to ensure confidentiality.

Figure 10

*Luna’s Homework – Think About a Time When You Needed Help*

The story that Luna wrote happened before she went to Canada, and she retold it in written English when she was in Windsor. In Figure 10, Luna wanted to write “one two three” in the left circle, but she confused English words with Mandarin pinyin. She used Mandarin pinyin “wan tu srer” to spell the three English words “one two three,” even though “tu srer” were not correct pinyin either. It was still a positive sign of language acquisition at play although Luna lacked phoneme-grapheme correspondence (I. González, personal communication, October 31, 2022). Ms. Clare rewrote the
sentences in the short paragraph on the right side of the paper as a feedback which demonstrated what Luna could do and could not do with English.

The story that Luna wrote looked confusing because of the misspelled words. But she was trying to spell the words according to how they sounded to her. As Gort (2012) mentions, the youngest students’ writing starts through talk. For example, the word “jiaegp” (jump) shows an integration of Mandarin pinyin and English phonics since Luna knew the Chinese character “jiang” and the English letter p that says /p/. Then she combined the first half “jia” from pinyin with the rest “egp” to create a new translanguaging word “jiaegp” (jump). At the first sight, readers may attribute her creation to the chaotic use of two languages and assess Luna’s homework as incomprehensible. If the criterion for young learners like Luna is mere whether they can write English correctly, then their beautiful inner world and complex lived experiences will be ignored. After all, “ELLS” is just one of the labels attached to them. In real life, they are children, good helpers, little teachers, or newcomers with valuable previous experiences.

To summarize, the homework showed that bilingualism is part of Luna’s lived experience. It also guided Luna to connect the storytelling within the Canadian classroom with her life experiences of being helped by her friend outside the classroom.
Three Stories about Halloween

Mummy Stand up. The Pumpkin. No! The Witch. Besides accomplishing the homework when it was close to Halloween, Luna also created a story about the big pumpkin at her own apartment, after Ms. Clare read the story “Big Pumpkin” at Kingswood. As shown in Figure 11, there were many words repeatedly appearing in the short paragraph. Luna wrote “mad” as “mab,” and she did not use punctuation, for example, periods and commas, very accurately. But this short piece of writing showed one correct syntactic structure of English sentences. I speculated that Luna might want to say, “the witch sees the pumpkin here. The ghost sees the pumpkin here. The witch is mad because this is my pumpkin.” She drew four Halloween characters under the short paragraph, and they had different facial expressions. The ghost and mummy had smiles on their face because they found a pumpkin, but the witch was not happy because her pumpkin was found by others.

Figure 11

Luna’s English Writing About Halloween
As shown in Figure 11, Luna’s writing seemed unfinished, but it appeared to be much better than the last sample. It seemed to epitomize many plots about the Halloween pumpkin. The two words “Pa!” and “No” pertained to certain actions and responses of the characters. She might want to say, “suddenly the mummy stands up and walks toward the pumpkin to eat it. ‘Oh No,’ said the witch, ‘my pumpkin!’” To check if my speculation of the story fitted with what Luna had tried to tell de facto, I showed her the picture and invited her to retell the Pumpkin story to me in our online chat. She was elated to retell the story to me in Chinese and I translated her words into English as below.

A witch saw a pumpkin. She wanted to eat it by herself. But the ghost and mummy saw the pumpkin too. The mummy raised the pumpkin and crashed it on the ground. Pa! It shattered into pieces, so the witch was unhappy. (Casual conversation with Luna, December 15, 2021).
Luna was not copying the original story but crafted a new story in her own words with drawings and symbols. The piece of artifact demonstrated her creativity and how she made meaning of the story that Ms. Clare told the students at school.

**Trick or Treating.** On October 31, 2019, Kingswood public school prepared fun activities for students and teachers. According to Luna’s memory, there were ghoulish adventures, scares, and fun to be explored at the school.

我记得我们在学校就要糖了。那天我们没上课因为老师让我们刻南瓜。她在桌子上铺了塑料纸, 放上南瓜, 我们可以随便刻成自己喜欢的样子, 然后我们把南瓜掏干净。掏完了里面是空的, 我们就放上蜡烛点亮。老师把灯全都关了, 还教我们唱了一首关于万圣节的歌。我和同学们一起唱“trick or treating.” 唱完了之后, 我们就把蜡烛拿出来, 洗干净南瓜, 因为等一下要用的。然后我们就被分成两组, 一组留在教室里面, 一组出去别的班级要糖。你可以自己选择在哪一组, 我选出去要糖。我们被带到一个教室, 那里有塑料门和万圣节装饰。很多同学都在教室里等着我们过去, 而且他们也说“trick or treating!” 这是上午的活动。午饭后, 我们还可以继续在学校里面玩, 像体育馆和图书馆都可以去。我们玩了很多万圣节的游戏, 真是愉快的一天! (I remember we had trick-or-treating at school. On that day, we did not have class because the teacher let us carve the pumpkin. She put plastic paper and many pumpkins on the desks. We carved the pumpkins as we liked and then we cleaned the pumpkin to make sure it was empty inside. Afterward, we put a candle inside the pumpkin and lightened it. Then the lights were turned off. The teacher played a song about Halloween, and I sang “trick or treating!” with my classmates. After we sang the song, we took out the candle and washed the pumpkins to make them clean. Later we were divided into two teams. One team stayed in the classroom and the other team went to other classrooms to do trick or treat. You can choose the team you liked, but I chose to go for trick or treat with my teacher. We were led to other classrooms where there was a plastic door and Halloween decorations. Many Canadian students were waiting for us in the classroom, and they also said, “trick or treating!” That was the activity for the morning. After we had lunch, we can still explore the campus such as the gym and library. We played games about Halloween, and it was really a joyful day!) (Casual conversation with Luna, September 8, 2021)
Luna extensively experienced the cultural activity of Halloween at the Canadian school in the last week of October 2019. She regarded Halloween as a big event, so she decorated her bedroom at the dormitory after she came home. Dr. Lin shared with me the pictures of two decorations (Figure 12) that Luna made for Halloween in 2019. The right one was a brown skull on the door of Luna’s bedroom while the left one was a white hand with some red paint on the bottom. Those decorations were not commonly seen in traditional Chinese culture because they meant unluck, horror and death.

Figure 12

*Luna’s Artifacts of Halloween in 2019*

In our online interview, Dr. Lin told me more details about how Luna prepared for Halloween in October 2019.

I did not prepare much for Halloween, but Luna had many ideas about it. At the end of October 2019, she made many artifacts and decorate our home to create the atmosphere of Halloween. She put the skeleton on the door and sang a song about Halloween after she came home. I was wondering how she could memorize so many English words in the song. Did she really know the meaning of the words? I was not sure. If we adults wanted to check the meaning, we can look it up in the dictionary. She never did that, but she seemed to be able to differentiate
the mummy from the ghost. Maybe her Canadian teacher has taught the students keywords with pictures so that Luna knew what ghosts looked like. (Interview with Dr. Lin, October 8, 2021)

Dr. Lin’s words showed that Luna probably acquired English vocabulary through singing songs (or the Canadian teacher’s storytelling about the “Big Pumpkin” and showing students pictures through PowerPoint in class). As it were, the Canadian schooling experience influenced her life and learning at home.

Apart from school and home, she also experienced Halloween culture in Susie’s house at the end of October. I have mentioned Susie in both Chapters 4 and 5 as she was not only the tutor for Feifei and Caicai but also for Luna. In October 2019, Dr. Lin got to know Susie was tutoring some Chinese visiting students, so she asked if Susie could tutor Luna with some simple English every week, and Susie agreed. Susie recalled her first impression on Luna in our online interview. She assessed Luna’s English as “broken” when they first met (Interview with Susie, October 23, 2021), but she was glad to tutor Luna. At the end of October 2019, Susie invited Luna, Dr. Lin, Caicai, Dr. Chen, Feifei and Dr. Xie to the Halloween party. I mentioned the party in Feifei’s story as well.

Susie’s weekly tutoring class for Luna started in October 2019 and it was often on Monday afternoon, around 4:30 p.m. The site was often at the university library or Luna’s home. Susie told me in our online interview that in the tutoring class, Luna was often excited to share how she felt and what happened in her life, and her schooling at Kingswood (Interview with Susie, October 23, 2021).
Huahua. Ola is Ding! In the fall semester of 2019, Dr. Xu asked me to observe some tutoring classes of Chinese visiting scholars’ children as a research assistant of the Reciprocal Learning Program. Thus, with the permission of Dr. Lin, Susie, and Luna, I observed one tutoring class at Luna’s apartment on November 25, 2019. By that time, Susie had been tutoring Luna for nearly two months. During the class, Dr. Lin was in the living room and there were three people in Luna’s bedroom: Susie, Luna, and me. Luna was happy to see me coming to observe her class and she even brought me a chair to invite me to sit down. I sat between the two beds in the room while Susie and Luna were sitting in front of her desk. The two beds were behind the desk and the bedroom was not very big, so I could hear their conversations clearly (Field notes, Luna’s apartment, November 25, 2019). The class began with Susie’s question: how was your weekend? Luna started to retell the plots of Frozen 2 that she watched on the weekend.

Luna: Yesterday, we go to watch the Frozen Two.
Susie: Yesterday, you went to watch Frozen Two?
Luna: yes. I go to watch and Anna very loudly. So “Wake up! Wake up!” And Elsa frozen is give the Anna hug. So “come on,” so the... is frozen. The ice ship. (“So...?” Susie tried to say something but cannot interrupt her) Anna and Ola sit the ship, go the river.
Susie: Who did you go see the movie with?
Luna: (she did not answer the question but kept telling the story) very loudly. I know the Anna very loudly. And very little loudly. So, and very loudly. “Wake up! Wake up!”
Susie: So, you copy Anna.
Luna: Yes.
Susie: How about Sven? Was Sven in the movie?
Luna: Ola is the snowman.
Susie: Olaf is the snowman. How about the reindeer in the movie?
Luna: The huahua (imitating the sound of river), Anna so give my hand. Huahua, Ola is “ding!” (imitating the sound of touching)
Susie: What’s ding?
Luna: Er... Or the Ola hand. I can “dwoon!” Ola hand is “didi.” Anna is the Ola hand touch the Anna nose. (used many gestures while retelling the story)
Susie: Anna took all the arms and used it to touch her nose.
Luna: (Nodding) And “huahua, ship, hoo.” (imitating the sound of ship sailing on the sea)
Susie: Was it a good movie?
Luna: Yes, good movie. Do you like Frozen? I’m very like.
Susie: Oh, I like it. (Field notes, Luna’s apartment, November 25, 2019)

Susie’s warm-up question initiated Luna’s interest in retelling the plots of Frozen II because she liked the movie. Her storytelling contained many onomatopoeias because Luna did not know enough English words to narrate the movie in detail. As an observer, I was not sure what Luna was describing because I could not understand her English, and I had not watched the movie yet. Although she was not able to describe some plots in English, she repeated the main characters’ lines in the movie Frozen II and promptly used sound effects, gestures, and facial expressions to make herself understood by her Canadian tutor. Furthermore, Susie asked many prompting questions and patiently listened to Luna’s retelling of the movie. They co-constructed and negotiated meaning with multimodal elements.

It is well worth mentioning that what Luna orally expressed in daily life also appeared in her written English, such as the story about the pumpkin. In her writing, the two words “Pal!” and “No” contained hidden plots, which have been mentioned before.
Since I had the opportunity to observe how Luna communicated with a Canadian, I was able to reasonably guess the meaning of her writing. If Feifei’s writing could be said as coming from her large amount of reading, then in Luna’s story, her writing was mainly influenced by her oral English, i.e., “you write what you say.” So far, everything in Luna’s life and learning in Windsor seemed to be fine, as she went very well with her Canadian tutor and her classmates at Kingswood. However, when she retold her experiences in Canada to me in our online tutoring sessions, she mentioned many times that there was a strict teacher, Ms. Clare, who impressed her during the three-month visit to Canada. There were some misunderstandings and fun stories between Ms. Clare and her. Luna shared with me some stories when we were chatting online.

**Why Are You Scared of the Bell Ringing?** One time, during the online tutoring session, I asked Luna in Chinese, “在加拿大的时候谁是你最喜欢的老师呢?” (“who was your favorite Canadian teacher when you were in Canada?”) She did not name any Canadian teachers but told me a story about Ms. Clare. It happened after the bell rang when it was recess time at Kingswood. She responded to me mostly in Chinese.

Luna: 加拿大老师都挺好的, 但是我不喜欢我的班主任 Ms. Clare, 因为她老是误会我, 而且看不到我的长处。她会说很多很多英语, 我又听不懂。 （嘟起嘴, 稍微低下头, 委屈地小声说）是，我知道那时候我英语差得要命，但是我的老师根本就不知道我擅长数学、跳舞、语文还有运动。她以为我去学校就是在那“游手好闲”, 一天光在那玩了。根本不是这样的！其实我在加拿大是很愿意帮助别人, 很希望为大家做事情的！她对我 “知之甚少。” 我还记得她怪我听到铃声之后叫得太大声，呃, 我忘了铃声用英语怎么说的。

Haojun: 噢~是 bell. I am sorry to hear that. 你刚刚说到铃声?
Luna: 就是学校的铃声嘛，不是打铃了就下课休息了吗？好像是 12 月的一天，早上一节课下了之后，我被突然响起的铃声吓到了。然后 Ms. Clare 就很生气，因为她觉得我老一惊一乍的。

Haojun: 不过你说你英语当时不是很好，那你怎么知道老师生气了呢？

Luna: 有轩轩帮我翻译啊，而且我看老师表情就知道了。Ms. Clare 走过来，跟我说 “Why did you scream? Why did you do that? Luna. You don’t need to be scared of it because it’s not spooky. It’s not a monster. Why are you scared of the bell ringing?”

(Luna: The Canadian teachers were all nice, but I did not like my class teacher, Ms. Clare, because she always misunderstood me and ignored my strengths. She spoke a lot of English, but I had no idea about what she was saying. [Luna pouted and lowered her head when saying this, so her voice became low and a little fuzzy.] Yes, my English was poor at that time, I know. But my teacher did not know the fact that I was good at math, dance, Chinese, and sports. She thought I just came to school for playing all day, which was not true [in an aggrieved tone]. In fact, I was very willing to help others and to do something for my class in Canada [she emphasized the whole sentence with a louder voice and dragged out the phrase “was very willing to”]. She knew little about me. I remember she blamed me for screaming after 铃声 [the bell] rang. I forgot how to say 铃声 in English.

Haojun: Oh, it is “bell.” I am sorry to hear that. Did you just say the bell rings?

Luna: the school bell rang, and then we can have a rest. It was one day in December 2019. In the morning after a class ended, I was frightened when the bell rang because it just happened suddenly. Then Ms. Clare was angry since she thought I was startled easily and dramatic.

Haojun: But you said your English was not very good at that time. How did you know that she was angry with you?

Luna: Xuanxuan can translate for me. Besides, I can tell from her facial expressions. Ms. Clare walked toward me and said to me “Why did you scream? Why did you do that? Luna. You don’t need to be scared of it because it’s not spooky. It’s not a monster. Why are you scared of the bell ringing?”) (Casual conversation with Luna, April 28, 2021)

Luna was often afraid that she may be blamed by Ms. Clare, so she was strained, just like a bird startled by the mere twang of a bowstring (惊弓之鸟). Meanwhile, she aspired to make a great impression. She thought the teacher was strict with her, often
misunderstood her, and did not see her strengths in multiple aspects such as dance and Chinese. Luna shared with me more about her frustration.

I knew how to do math problems, but my English was not good when I was in Canada. Thus, my math looked poor. The Canadian teacher was kind of wasting my talent on a trivial job. (Casual conversation with Luna, April 28, 2021).

Luna felt that her Canadian teacher did not see her strengths in other subjects.

She had her least favorite Canadian teacher, which was quite different from other young Chinese visiting students in my research since they all described their Canadian teachers as “patient, gentle, friendly, helpful, and never blame students.” For example, Xuanxuan told me during our online chat that his favorite Canadian teacher was Ms. Clare.

She often organized fun activities for us to practice English. I took part in an English short play, and I got the role of a baby bear in the story “Goldilocks and Three Bears.” I made the props for the play by myself, and it was really a wonderful experience. It happened at the beginning of September, before Luna came to our class. (Casual conversation with Xuanxuan, December 24, 2021)

Xuanxuan’s words showed that even in the same class, the young Chinese visiting students might have different evaluations of the teacher. Dr. Lin, from a parent’s perspective, shared her impression of Ms. Clare with me in our online tutoring session.

I think this Canadian teacher was strict because I saw one time, she asked her students to stand well and line up during the break. Only when all the students were quiet and followed the rule, they were allowed to go on walking. But the teacher was very responsible and thoughtful with students. She would check if Luna’s lunch were warm or not. If it were cold, she would heat it up in the microwave and make sure the rice was suitable for my daughter to eat. Moreover, she used IPAD translation to communicate with Luna when necessary. I did not go to Kingswood every day, so I was not sure everything Luna described was 100% true. Sometimes she liked to exaggerate things to show her feelings. (Interview with Dr. Lin, October 8, 2021)
As Luna’s mother, Dr. Lin saw different aspects of Ms. Clare and she knew her daughter’s personality and the habit of exaggerating things in colloquial expressions. She mentioned that Ms. Clare used IPAD for translation when there was a language barrier between Luna and her. The translation app was also useful to Caicai and Feifei, which was mentioned in Chapters 4 and 5.

Do You Hate Me? Why? In Luna’s schooling days, misunderstandings happened from time to time between her and Ms. Clare. In the story of bell ringing, Luna had a grievance whereas she shared with me a misunderstanding that made her laugh in our online tutoring session.

(One day in December 2019, a Canadian classmate wore a pretty hat and Ms. Clare said to the girl, “it’s a nice rabbit hat. You look like a rabbit.” On the second day, I wore a blue hat to school too. I walked toward Ms. Clare and stood in front of her. I pointed to my hat. I wanted to say “hat,” but my English was not good at that time. I was so nervous, and I cannot make sentences, so “hat” becomes “hate.” Ms. Clare asked me, “do you hate me? Why?” She looked confused and I knew I said it wrongly. Then I pointed to my hat and explained, “no, no. Hat, hat.” With my gestures, Ms. Clare finally got me.) (Casual conversation with Luna, September 22, 2021)

Luna confused the two English words hat and hate, causing an amusing misunderstanding between Ms. Clare and her. But she finally cleared things up. In some other circumstances, Luna did not successfully express herself, so she might be
misunderstood by the Canadian teacher. I asked her why not turn to the Chinese
classmate, Xuanxuan, for help and let him translate, Luna said that she did not even
know how to ask for help sometimes. There were only two Chinese visiting students in
Ms. Clare’s class, and the other student, Xuanxuan, had an English competency
comparable to Luna’s (or poorer than hers, according to Luna’s memory) (Casual
conversation with Luna, October 7, 2021). Misunderstandings caused by limited English
language competence were one of the challenges that Luna encountered in her cross-
cultural and international experiences in Canada. But the challenge also meant
opportunities for Luna to acquire some English words when interacting with her
Canadian teachers and peers at Kingswood. In the process of clarifying confusion, the
words might be more impressive for Luna and lasted longer in her memory.

**Memories of The Snow in Canada**

Despite the misunderstandings in the interactions with Ms. Clare, Luna still had
fun at Kingswood in general. Dr. Lin shared with me several videos through WeChat in
January 2022. In one video which was recorded in the wintertime, Luna enjoyed herself
in the backyard of Kingswood. It was a chilly day, and the ground was covered with
snow. She first climbed up a slope at a slow pace because she might slip on the icy
ground. After she climbed high on the slope, she sat down and slid down with her arms
open, saying “yeah” in the process (Dr. Lin, personal communication, January 22, 2022).
In Chapter 5, Caicai also mentioned her activity of climbing the slope in the backyard of
Kingswood in wintertime. The two children’s stories about snow converged at the same place (the school backyard) during a similar period (the winter of 2019). As Dr. Lin told me in the online interview,

Children at Kingswood liked to play in the yard, especially on snowy days. The same as Luna. She even learned how to swing in Canada. She did not need another person to push her on the swing and she could still swing very high. (Interview with Dr. Lin, October 8, 2021)

As the big snow came, the day of leaving Canada was also approaching. On December 25, 2019, the RLP team held a farewell party for the Chinese teacher candidates as they were leaving Canada. Dr. Lin and Luna were invited to the party since they were going to return to China as well. The three-month visit witnessed Luna’s great progress, and she left Canada with her mom after the farewell party. Meanwhile, her life and schooling in China began with new narratives, adaptations, difficulties, meaning making, tensions, and persistence.

Spatial and Temporal Relationships in the Interwoven Lives in China

Making Great Efforts in the Adaptation to Schooling

After Luna returned to China, the final exam at the Chinese primary school was looming. But she got sick and was not able to go to school. At the beginning of January 2020, the Chinese students at her school were all preparing for the final exam and every day there was a test to assess if the students had mastered all the knowledge learned in the semester. Dr. Lin told me in our online interview that the knowledge and skills in the
tests were all new to Luna, instead of reviewing content (Interview with Dr. Lin, October 8, 2021).

**Free One-Day Tour to the Teacher’s Office.** Although the Chinese teachers in Class 1 had some made-up classes for her after school, Luna still found it hard to learn so much knowledge in a brief time, especially the Chinese Language course. Luna recalled that it took her several weeks to catch up on the Chinese Language course after she returned to Class 1. She told me in our online chat about how she studied very hard to learn Chinese after the trip to Canada. I translated her words into English as below.

When I just came back, it was in January 2020. I cannot write even one Chinese character. I had to catch up quickly. It was not fast at all. Do you know how tough it was? Every day I was given a “free one-day tour” (免费一日游) to the teacher’s office. I had to read at least 4 Chinese texts and memorize the characters every day. Sometimes there were six texts for me to learn. I studied very hard, and it was not easy at all. (Casual conversation with Luna, November 3, 2021)

It was an intensive learning process as Luna had to memorize pinyin and Chinese characters in a fleeting time. Dr. Lin told me in the online interview that Luna’s Chinese teachers thought she was good enough to take the final exam but Luna herself did not want to attend the exam (Interview with Dr. Lin, October 8, 2021). Considering Luna’s mental and physical health, Dr. Lin agreed that she did not need to take the final exam.

Despite many learning tasks after Luna returned to China, she was glad to see her friends in Class 1 again. In our online chat, I asked her “what is the biggest reward of the visit to Canada?” and she gave me a surprising answer. I translated her words into English as below.
The biggest reward that I gained from this trip was so many gifts that my classmates gave me. In the first week that I returned to Class 1, my Chinese classmates said they all missed me, and they gave me pencils, notebooks, snacks, calendars, erasers with fruit smell… A lot of presents and just too many to count. (Casual conversation with Luna, November 3, 2021)

On a time scale, Luna perceived her biggest gains from the cross-cultural and international experiences after the trip, instead of something happening during the trip. It might be attributed to her understanding of the word “reward.” Receiving warm welcome from her friends contributed to her adaptation to the Chinese school. In terms of the social-personal dimension, peer interactions played an important role when she came back to school.

In the first half of 2020, with the help of her parents and Chinese teachers, Luna gradually caught up with other students in Class 1. The cost was that she studied hard and had a busy schedule every day. There were many tests as before, but Luna often got satisfactory marks in English exams. She said to me,

英语很简单啊，我们的课本就像《in the zoo, black, red, crocodile, the tiger, the monkey, the rabbit, the cat》这些。考试也很简单，我们班平均分都是 97. (The English was very easy. The textbook was like, “in the zoo,” “black, red,” and “crocodile, the tiger, the monkey, the rabbit, the cat.” The exam was so easy. The English average score in my class was 97.) (Casual conversation with Luna, April 28, 2021).

Luna listed some words that were taught in the English class, and she thought English learning was easy for her. The coming of the summer vacation of 2020 put an end to Luna’s grade two.
**Days of the Week.** In September 2020, Luna began the fall semester as a grade-three student. Apart from doing homework after school, she kept the habit of doing exercises and she would play badminton or ping pong after she finished the homework (Dr. Lin, personal communication, January 22, 2022).

In April 2021, when I asked Luna how she was doing recently, she made a new sense of the days of a week according to the pronunciation in Chinese and English. She shared it with me while we were chatting online.

Luna: **Tuesday** is the day that feels like vomiting. **Wednesday** is the day that everything is over. For instance, there is already much homework, but students are asked to rewrite it. **Thursday** means I’m done for today. **Friday** means “fight!” because there is the word “fight” in some phone apps. Cheer up and keep studying hard. It is close to the weekend. The two words “fight” and “Friday” both start with letter f. **Saturday** means I can run wild and play whatever I like while **Sunday** is a blue day. It is also the busiest day because, after Sunday I have to go back to school.

**Haojun:** Why does **Thursday** sound like crying?

**Luna:** Because the pronunciation is very similar to “死定了,” which means “dead.”

**Haojun:** OK. How about Monday?

**Luna:** Monday is a busy day and that feels like vomiting. **Wednesday** is a doomed day, which means everything is over. For instance, there is already much homework, but students are asked to rewrite it. “Wednesday” sounds like “wandan” [means “we are done for”]. **Thursday** means “oh, bad luck.” **Friday** means “fight!” because there is the word “fight” in some phone apps. Cheer up and keep studying hard. It is close to the weekend. The two words “fight” and “Friday” both start with letter f. **Saturday** means I can run wild and play whatever I like while **Sunday** is a blue day. It is also the busiest day because, after Sunday I have to go back to school. [She is making the sound of crying.] I can be happy only for one day in a week and that is **Saturday**. The rest days are all sad.
Haojun: Why is Thursday related to crying?
Luna: Because “thurs” sounds like the voice turns around. There is a Chinese character “si,” which means dead. The pronunciation of “si” has the third tone, which also sounds like the voice turns around. Crying is related to death.
Haojun: OK. How about Monday?
Luna: Monday is a busy day, and the next day of Monday is Tuesday. I have a book named *Learning English with fun* and I read it last semester. It says, getting up in the morning very late and coming to school very busy. Take a nap at the noon. Homework many. I learn four or five words from the book every day.

(Casual conversation with Luna, April 21, 2021)

Luna’s meaning-making of seven days of the week has been influenced by the book she read, Chinese and English pronunciation, and her schooling experiences in China. She gave each school day new meaning based on her feelings from Monday to Sunday in the Chinese school. Compared with that, when she was in Ms. Clare’s classroom as a “little teacher” in Windsor in 2019, she used the long stick to teach her Canadian classmates “Today is Monday.” Thus, her language practices and meaning making changed as the location, sociality and time changed. In this episode, Luna’s English and Chinese did not compete with each other but were employed based on her own needs to make meaning and facilitate communication.

Besides, Luna wanted to express that there was only one day in a week that she felt pleasant. With the intense study and heavy load, Luna told me in our online tutoring session that she hoped to go to Canada again even though some Canadian teachers might be as strict as Ms. Clare. The main reason was that “there will be much less homework”

(Casual conversation with Luna, April 28, 2021).
Luna was busy with schoolwork after she returned to China, but she liked to go to school because she had a number of good friends in Class 1. As a talkative, outgoing, enthusiastic, and optimistic girl, she would chat with her friends after class and even write their stories in her journal.

**The Bad Luck Days of Kong Yinan.** Luna liked to make jokes and make up a series of stories about her friends. On June 16, 2021, she shared with me one funny story that she wrote that month. She held her notebook in front of the camera, turned several pages and read the story to me – The Bad Luck Days of Yinan Kong (孔一南倒霉记):

Day 1. Yinan Kong is Luna’s classmate, and it is a pseudonym. Luna’s storytelling was written in Chinese, but when she added an English comment at the end (I used the bold type).

第一天：作文风波。一天，孔一南正在课上睡觉，老师让我们写一篇语文作文。下课铃响了，老师让小组长收作文，我是小组长，所以我就开始收。我数了一下，只有 5 个人的还差 1 个。我正在想到底是谁没交呢？这时我看到我的同桌孔一南还在睡觉。我试着叫醒她但没成功，所以我就报告老师了——孔一南没交。老师清点作文，的确只有 53 份，但是我们班有 54 个人。突然坐在我后面的同学注意到孔一南还在睡觉，所以她就大喊：“醒醒！孔一南！交作文啦！”老师也试着把她摇醒，同学们都围过来大声鼓掌，过了好久才把她叫醒。孔一南醒了以后开始“灵魂三问”——

“我是谁？我在做什么？我在哪？”我跟她解释，“你上课没写作文，所以你要按照黑板上的要求抄五遍！”

*I feel this is a good make every student happy story but make teacher angry story.*

(Day 1: the story of composition. One day, Kong Yinan was sleeping in class while our teacher asked us to write a Chinese composition. When the bell rang, the teacher let group leaders collect students’ compositions. I was the group leader, so I began to count the compositions I collected. There were only five and
I was wondering who had not handed in yet. I looked at my desk mate, Kong Yinan who was still sleeping. I tried to wake her up but failed, so I told the teacher that Kong Yinan did not hand it in. The teacher checked the compositions and only found 53. There were 54 students in Class 1. Suddenly, the student who sat behind me also noticed that Kong Yinan was sleeping, so she shouted “wake up, Kong Yinan. Hand in your composition!” The teacher also shook her, and we even loudly applauded. It took us a long time to wake her, and Kong Yinan just said, “Where am I? What am I doing? Who am I?” [She started to giggle] I explained to her, “You did not write the composition, so you need to copy it five times according to the requirement on the blackboard. Ha Ha Ha!”

I feel this is a good make every student happy story but make teacher angry story.) (Casual conversation with Luna, June 16, 2021)

Luna wrote down the story after she returned to China. Her mixed use of two languages to retell the story and comment on it presented “intermingle linguistic features” (García, 2009b, p. 51). Although the grammar was not exactly correct, she relied on translanguaging to comment on the story about her Chinese classmate.

Apart from writing stories about her Chinese friends, in her free time, Luna also participated in games and activities organized by her school, the university where Dr. Lin worked, or other educational institutions. For example, in July 2021, Luna planned to go to Beijing for an English summer camp. The summer camp lasted for two weeks in July and Luna shared with me her feelings after she came back home in August 2021.

我的英语进步很大，你知道吗？我完全可以听懂夏令营的外教说什么了。我还问她“Do you need any help?” 然后我就帮老师打扫教室。我的外教老师说我是特别棒的小助手。

(I have made great progress in English. Do you know? I could totally understand what the foreign teacher said in the summer camp. I asked her, “do you need any help?” Then I helped to clean the classroom and my foreign teacher said I was a terrific helper.) (Casual conversation with Luna, August 9, 2021)
When Luna retold her experiences in the two-week summer camp to me, she integrated the English question into the short Chinese paragraph. She was as helpful as she was in Canada. Compared with the English level when she was at Kingswood, Luna felt she made great progress in English because she could understand the foreign teacher at the summer camp. Things seemed optimistic, but Luna was not always confident in English, especially when she did not get positive feedback from her classmates and teachers in China.

“I went to Canada for nothing.” Waving goodbye to the summer vacation of 2021, Luna ushered in the fall semester and became a grade-four student. On December 5, 2021, Dr. Lin’s university held activities for students to participate in because that day was International Volunteer Day. It was a sunny day. Luna and her mom went to the campus where there were games set on the playground. Luna took part in an English word chain game in which the players needed to say and spell an English word beginning with the same letter as the last speaker's word. For example, “not - tree - eat - tell.” Luna got the second prize, and Dr. Lin was satisfied with that because the other players were all Chinese university students. Dr. Lin told me through WeChat that “I tried to remind Luna of the word ‘yellow’ when it was her turn to spell a word beginning with the letter ‘y,’ but she spelled ‘yoga’ by herself. The Chinese university students in the same round all praised, ‘wow your English is really good and you know so many words that we are not familiar with’” (Dr. Lin, personal communication, December 6,
2021). However, Luna seemed unhappy about that experience. One week after the activity, she told me about her feelings in our online chat as follows.

Luna: 最近我没信心了。我过去的长处都消失不见了。不管我再努力，我都赶不上同学。他们的英语比我好一万多倍（声音变低，听起来有些沮丧）。
Haojun: 为什么这么说呢？你刚刚在游戏里面拿了第二名呀！是第二名还不够好吗？
Luna: 我拼错了一个词，把 shirt 拼成了 shird。因为我没注意到这个词里面没有浊化，我以为有浊化。但是你知道什么让我最伤心吗？我同学说我没拿到第一名，说明去加拿大是白去了，花了这么多钱还有三个月的时间。
Haojun: 谁说的？这不是真的。你看你拿了第二名，还打败了那么多大学生呢！这很棒呀！
Luna: 我所有的同学都知道游戏结果了！他们说我在单词游戏里犯了一个愚蠢的错误。我英语老师也说，“乖乖，这个词 shirt 很简单呀，你怎么把 t 写成了 d 呢？”

(Luna: Recently I am not confident. My past strengths of mine are gone and no matter how hard I try; I am not as good as my classmates. Their English is ten thousand times better than mine. [She said in a muffled voice, sounding upset.] Haojun: Why do you say that? You just got the second prize in the game last week. Is the second prize not good enough?
Luna: in the game, I spelled “shirt” as “shird” because I did not notice there were no voiced sounds in the word. But do you know what makes me most frustrated? My classmates said, I did not get the first prize and it proved that I went to Canada for nothing. So much money was spent, and three months were wasted on the trip.
Haojun: who said that? It’s not true. Don’t be sad. You got the second prize and you beat many university students. That was awesome!
Luna: all my classmates knew the result that I got in the game. Everyone knew it! They said I made a silly mistake. My teacher said, “the word shirt is simple, but you spelled t as d.”) (Casual conversation with Luna, December 10, 2021)

Winning the second prize in the game should be a pleasant thing. However, she was frustrated because of the comments “you made a silly mistake” and “you went to Canada for nothing.” It negated the whole cross-cultural and international experiences that Luna went through. Dr. Lin told me in the online interview that Luna cared so much
about how others evaluated her (Interview with Dr. Lin, October 8, 2021). It was not surprising that others’ comments influenced her self-esteem and self-evaluation.

From the personal-social dimension, the story of “you went to Canada for nothing” reveals that the three-month trip to Canada became a pressure for Luna after the visit ended because her classmates and teachers in Class 1 had higher expectations for her, especially her English competence. But Luna did not lose motivation or kept feeling frustrated. Two weeks after the English game, she became happy again as her Chinese friends helped her in English and comforted her. Luna told me in our online chat that “my mindset is good. My friends helped to spell the English words and we had fun together. I could quickly adjust the mood. No worries” (Casual conversation with Luna, December 22, 2021). The story revealed the fluctuation of Luna’s learning and emotional state, which were affected by interactions with her Chinese classmates.

Though time went by, her memory of the three-month trip to Canada did not fade away. In one of our online chats in October 2021, I asked Luna if she wanted to go to Canada in the future. She said, “of course. I love Italian restaurants and the western food in Canada. I ate salad, pizza, beefsteak, chicken leg, and fruit in Canada. Canada is really fun” (Casual conversation with Luna, October 27, 2021). But the second time I asked a similar question in our online chat in December 2021, she gave me a different answer.

Haojun: which country do you want to go to in the future?
Luna: England because J.K. Rolling was there, and I can bring Harry Potter books back to China.
Haojun: Last time you said you still wanted to go to Canada because it was fun. Do you change your mind?
Luna: Canada is fun and not fun. The fun is to play with snow. The not-fun part is that my teacher Ms. Clare cast a shadow upon my mind (留下阴影).
Haojun: Well, maybe you can attend other schools in Canada. How about the United States? I remember you told me last month that you wanted to buy some high-tech products from the U.S. and use them at home.
Luna: No no no. Covid-19 is too serious, and it is not safe in the U.S.
Haojun: So, what advice would you give to your friends if they are going to Canada?
Luna: (sigh) I would tell them: have fun and enjoy the days in Canada! After you return to China, you will not be happy anymore. (Casual conversation with Luna, December 9, 2021).

Her suggestions were similar to Feifei’s as both suggest future visiting students enjoy a happy life there. In addition, the conversations above show that her reasons to go or not to go to a country are simple and may change over time. Besides, her impression of Canadian teachers was also a crucial factor influencing her future decision of going to Canada or not. To sum up, the past experiences of visiting Canada, the updated news, the pandemic, and any new interests all have an impact on Luna’s preference for foreign countries that she would like to visit in the envisioned future.

“I always follow class rules.” It seemed that the dimension of sociality was conspicuous in Luna’s schooling and life in both Canada and China. She loved to interact with people, no matter what level her English was or whether she was new to the surrounding environment. For example, apart from the Chinese peers in Class 1, Luna also interacted with the Chinese teachers, who were especially important in Luna’s schooling. Dr. Lin told me in the online interview that Luna was eager to get praise from
her teachers (Interview with Dr. Lin, October 8, 2021). I was interested in her
impressions of Chinese teachers after the trip to Canada, so I asked her about the
difference between Chinese and Canadian teachers during our online chat in December
2021. Luna shared her opinion with me.

Luna: Canadian teachers will be satisfied if you try hard to do things. One time, I
drew a picture, and I thought it was poorly drawn. But my Canadian teacher said
“You are great. It was very creative.” She knew how to appreciate my drawing
style. In Chinese teachers’ minds, you must do an excellent job and get things
right. But Chinese teachers are gentler, and they never criticize students.
Haojun: but not everyone can do things well. Then how are Chinese teachers
dealing with that situation?
Luna: Then the students will be punished to copy our class rules many times.
Haojun: there are many rules in your class?
Luna: There are 25 class rules in Class 1.
Haojun: does the Canadian school have the same rules?
Luna: No, students do not need to sit upright in the chair. They can even leave
their seats sometimes. After class, they can climb high, run fast, or play on the
swing very high in the school backyard. We are not allowed to run fast outside
the classroom in China, because it may be unsafe. (Casual conversation with
Luna, December 13, 2021)

Unlike other young Chinese visiting students, Luna thought Chinese teachers
were gentler than Canadian teachers. Connecting with her impression on Ms. Clare, it is
not hard to understand why she said that. Luna’s sharing also indicated that she
consciously abided by the rules in Class 1 as she cared about how her Chinese teachers
and classmates commented about her.

A Bilingual Hand-Written New Year Poster. In February 2022, Dr. Lin told
me through WeChat that Luna felt good in her final exam, and she independently drew a
bilingual hand-written New Year Poster (Figure 11) about the Chinese new year (Dr.
Lin, personal communication, February 10, 2022). It was one of the English homework for winter vacation assigned by Luna’s English teacher. Luna told me in our online chat that she designed the format, drew the outline, colored the symbols, searched English words for the translation, and wrote down all the Chinese characters and English translations by herself (Casual conversation with Luna, February 17, 2022).

Figure 13

*Luna’s Bilingual Hand-written New Year Poster*

On the blackboard in the poster, Luna listed the words for the new year such as lantern, blessing, new clothes, and so on. On the right corner, there was a board showing food for the new year, including the coin bag and dumplings. Luna’s Canadian teacher once praised her painting as “very creative” when she was in Canada in 2019. More importantly, the bilingual hand-written New Year poster was independently accomplished by Luna, just like how she decorated her bedroom for Halloween when she was in Windsor in 2019. It showed part of her bilingual and bicultural acquisition and the
ability to deploy linguistic and semiotic resources to introduce one of the biggest Chinese festivals. In February 2022, Luna’s English teacher announced that Luna’s bilingual hand-written poster won the first prize, and she also won the Star of English for the 2021 autumn semester. Luna told me in our online chat that there were only three students winning both awards in her class (Casual conversation with Luna, February 17, 2022). She emphasized “only three” and I could tell she was so proud to win the two awards.

**Summary**

Luna Zhou went to Canada in September 2019 and returned to China in December 2019. With the sense of mission given by Class 1, she strived to perform well at Kingswood. Luckily, she was honored to be the “little teacher” twice. She was faced with English language difficulties, cultural differences, and other personal issues in her schooling and life in Canada. For instance, during her school days, there were misunderstandings with her peers and Canadian teachers, which brought her “tears and laughter.” Luckily, her imperfect English speaking and writing did not hinder her from enjoying everything in Canada. She drew flexibly upon all the linguistic and cognitive resources at hand to socialize in the Canadian social-cultural context. As an enthusiastic and extroverted young Chinese visiting student in Canada, she acquired English vocabulary and Canadian culture through engaging in activities and Canadian festivals such as Halloween inside and outside of the classroom. She showed her creativity as a
young English language learner in the process of “constructing and inhabiting the transnational social space” (W. Li & Zhu, 2013, p. 546).

After she returned to China, Luna continued to participate in various kinds of activities such as an English summer camp in Beijing and the English vocabulary game at the university campus. As a member of Class 1, Luna cared about other people’s comments and had peer pressure on academic performance. She was still creative in meaning-making of the English words though she had to study hard, do much homework and take tests at school. Overall, in Luna’s cross-cultural and international experiences between Canada and China, the sociality dimension was quite prominent because she actively engaged with the Canadians and Chinese.

So far Chapters 4, 5, and 6 tell and retell the stories of three young Chinese visiting students who attended Kingswood public school in Windsor. The next chapter will present the stories of Little Yangmei, who was a 7-year-old girl. She came to Canada with her mom and attended Riverside school in Toronto in 2020. With different locations, social interactions, and time, would her translanguaging and bi-lingual/cultural acquisition be different from Feifei, Caicai and Luna? Chapter 7 will unfold Little Yangmei’s narratives about her experiences between Canada and China.
Chapter 7 LITTLE YANGMEI – STORY OF A GRADE-ONE CHINESE STUDENT

Before the One-Year Visit to Canada

Little Yangmei was born in 2012 in southwestern China. Her mom, Dr. Mei, is a university professor who got her PhD at a Canadian university. I got to know Dr. Mei through my supervisor in the spring of 2019. In the middle of August 2019, I had the opportunity to meet Dr. Mei and her daughter Little Yangmei in Windsor. It was my first time meeting her. She was six years old, and she came for a summer camp. One afternoon, Little Yangmei, Dr. Mei, her friend Dr. Ben, who was a retired Canadian university professor, and I went to the Ojibway park together. Little Yangmei was quite talkative along the way, talking about the ducks she saw. Dr. Mei told me the summer camp would last two weeks and after that, she and Little Yangmei would fly back to China (Field notes, Ojibway Park, August 16, 2019).

In the fall semester of 2019, I became a volunteer for the Sixth Annual International Conference on West-East Reciprocal Learning in Education, as mentioned in the earlier chapters. In October 2019, Dr. Mei attended the conference, and I was excited to see her again. During the tea break of the conference, she told me that she succeeded in applying for a program at a university in Toronto and was going to work there for one year from January 2020 to January 2021. More importantly, her daughter Little Yangmei would come to Canada with her in January 2020 and live with her for a
One-year visit. I was glad to hear the news and stayed connected with Dr. Mei through WeChat.

One-Year Visit to Canada: From “don’t want to come” to “don’t want to leave”

The First Two Months in Canada: Strong Mood Swings

Start Schooling but Get Homesick. On January 10, 2020, I asked Dr. Mei through WeChat how they were doing in Toronto and how Little Yangmei felt in the unfamiliar environment. Dr. Mei told me that Little Yangmei was reluctant to come to Canada because she believed she could learn more in China and she was afraid that her academic ability was not good enough to cope with schooling in Canada. Furthermore, she would miss her family members very much if she left her hometown (Dr. Mei, personal communication, January 10, 2020).

Dr. Mei told me through WeChat that they flew to Toronto on January 9, 2020 and lived in a rented apartment located in a middle-class community where most residents were Caucasian. Dr. Mei did not choose the communities where most residents were Chinese immigrants because she was afraid that her daughter would rely too much on her Chinese classmates at school during her stay in Canada (Dr. Mei, personal communication, January 10, 2020). Before coming to Canada, Dr. Mei searched for information online about the neighborhood and got to know that the Riverside Public School situated within the community ranked in the top 10 in Toronto.
The school that Little Yangmei attended was the Riverside Public School, which was only a 10-minute walk from their rented apartment. On the first school day, Little Yangmei still suffered from jetlag and felt like she was dreaming during the daytime. Dr. Mei took Little Yangmei to school and introduced her to her Canadian teacher Mr. Mason. He said to Little Yangmei, “Welcome to our class! We are so glad to meet you!” Little Yangmei looked shy and did not speak much English. She was arranged in grade 2 at the Riverside Public School but she was in grade 1 at her Chinese school, which was comparable to Feifei’s situation when she just arrived in Windsor.

When I asked Little Yangmei about her first school day in Canada in our online chat after she returned to China for half a year, she recalled that she was the only Chinese student in Mr. Mason’s class. Mr. Mason was around his thirties, and he was very gentle and kind. Nonetheless, Little Yangmei felt uneasy at the new school especially when she was asked to write an English passage about “your weekend” as the homework. It was a Friday and Mr. Mason told the children to submit the writing next Monday. She told me when we were chatting online, “I just arrived in Canada! I don’t know how to write at all, whereas, for them (the Canadian children), it must be easy” (Casual conversation with Little Yangmei, August 20, 2021).

On the first homework that Little Yangmei submitted on January 13, 2020, she drew a girl singing songs and a beautiful house. There were geese and it was a sunny day. She wrote under the pencil drawing, “I can see a cat and a geious. I can see a sun. I
can see a haos” (Little Yangmei’s artifact, January 13, 2020). I read more of her homework finished in the first few months of her schooling in Canada, and I made a table to “decode” her writing and see the difference between the words she spelt and the correct ones. Analogous to Luna Zhou’s writing, Little Yangmei mixed Chinese pinyin with English words when she just arrived in Canada.

Table 3 Words in Little Yangmei’s Writing in the First Month

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words in Little Yangmei’s writing</th>
<th>Correct words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>frz</td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>geiou</td>
<td>Girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haos</td>
<td>House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wekeand/wekind</td>
<td>Weekend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chiken sop</td>
<td>chicken soup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mach</td>
<td>Much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sgIrr</td>
<td>Scared</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dr. Mei told me in our telephone interview that Little Yangmei started to learn English around five years old, but she had not systematically learned English phonics by the time she visited Canada (Interview with Dr. Mei, October 21, 2021). Nonetheless, Mr. Mason commented on her first assignment as “Excellent writing” (Little Yangmei’s artifact, January 13, 2020).

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12 In October 2021, Dr. Mei mailed me a big bag which contained more than 100 Little Yangmei’s artifacts. I scanned these artifacts and mailed the package back to Dr. Mei in November 2021. Some of the artifacts are Little Yangmei’s diary with dates, so I got to know what happened at what time and under what contexts during her visit to Canada in 2020.

13 Dr. Mei is quite busy as a university professor, so she usually accepts my interview on her way to the airport or on the way home. For example, on October 20, 2021, Dr. Mei was going to attend a national academic conference in a Chinese city which was far from the university she worked, so she asked me to call her on the way to the airport.
On school days, Dr. Mei would send Little Yangmei to school before 8:30 on foot. In the afternoon, she would wait for Little Yangmei at 3:10 p.m. at the school playground. While she was waiting, she tended to chat with the parents who also came to pick up their children (Interview with Dr. Mei, October 21, 2021). Usually chatting with other parents for ten minutes, Dr. Mei would see Little Yangmei walking out of the main building of her school and then share her activities or interesting things happening that day on the way home, just like what Caicai Fan did with her mom. For example, at recess, she liked to play on the monkey bar by herself. In Chinese, it is called 攀爬架. According to Oxford Languages (2022), it refers to “a piece of playground equipment consisting of a horizontally mounted overhead ladder, from which children may swing.” In the beginning, she dared not climb it, but she saw other Canadian children all climbing very high. Therefore, Little Yangmei made an attempt and found it exciting. Gradually she fell in love with it and the monkey bar became her favorite area at recess time (Interview with Dr. Mei, October 20, 2021).

Dr. Mei also told me on the phone that throughout the first month, Little Yangmei was very homesick, so she called her father every day and called her grandparents every week to talk about how she felt about Canada. When she was calling her family members, she constantly compared Chinese and Canadian schools and got some conclusions. She spoke Chinese with her family and Dr. Mei retold Little Yangmei’s evaluation of education in the two countries as follows.
Little Yangmei believed that the education in China is better because it emphasizes students’ learning. Canadians do not treat study seriously and don’t assign homework to students. There is basically no homework except for reading for 20 minutes. It is unlike China. Chinese teachers will attach great importance to students’ homework and students will do math exercises every day. (Interview with Dr. Mei, October 20, 2021).

When Little Yangmei just came to Canada, she thought the Canadian school did not pay as much attention to students’ learning as her Chinese school because there was not much homework. That was her first impression of schooling in Canada. Although she had participated in two summer camps in Canada in 2018 (Vancouver) and 2019 (Windsor), she did not have the experience of attending a Canadian school for more than one month.

Dr. Mei remembered clearly that on January 21, 2020, it was close to the Chinese New Year and Little Yangmei burst into tears after she came home. She wailed and sadly told Dr. Mei that she really wanted to go back to China. She said, “Canada is not as lively and busy as China. I don’t have other family members here. I really miss my Chinese teachers and classmates as well as my grandparents and father.” Dr. Mei soothed her by saying “you can write to them, and I will take a photo of what you write. Then they will know you miss them.” Hearing that, Little Yangmei wrote a letter while she was sobbing. Gradually, she calmed down and stopped crying after she finished the letter (Interview with Dr. Mei, October 20, 2021).
It was Chinese New Year’s Eve on January 24, 2020, so Little Yangmei’s homesickness reached its peak. To make Little Yangmei feel pleased, Dr. Mei took her to a gala show the next day (the first day of Chinese New Year according to the lunar calendar). Little Yangmei was cheerful to see the show and wrote down her first spring festival in Canada (Figure 14).

Figure 14

*Little Yangmei’s First Chinese New Year in Canada*

As Figure 14 shows, she spelt “Chinese” as “chenis” because she spelt the word based on its pronunciation. There were Chinese people wearing traditional Chinese costumes and a dragon dance on this piece of work (Little Yangmei’s artifact, January 24, 2020). It shows that Little Yangmei still missed her family, but she started to enjoy
the fun of life in Canada. Dr. Mei also mentioned in our telephone interview that at the beginning of February, she received an email from Mr. Mason, which was about the learning content for the next few months. I found the printed version of the email in the package that Dr. Mei mailed me, and part of the email said,

we will be embarking on our first formal fiction writing of the year, beginning with a unit on realistic fiction. Providing your child with examples of real-life stories can help them craft realistic fiction. You can also encourage them to tell you stories from their own past or even stories from their day at school. (Mr. Mason’s email, February 2, 2020)

The email was very useful for Dr. Mei because she was going to help with Little Yangmei’s English writing. Besides, as a parent, she could know the main teaching and learning content in Mr. Mason’s class in the next months.

First Family Day, Skating and Skiing. Dr. Mei knew that Little Yangmei might not be good at socializing because she just came to a new environment and did not feel confident in speaking English. In order to help her make new friends in Canada and relieve her homesickness, Dr. Mei would hang out with her friends¹⁴ who were also Chinese and had kid(s) (Interview with Dr. Mei, October 20, 2021). It worked very well because Little Yangmei had fun with these playdates and wrote them down in her diary. For example, I found one of her diaries was about her first family day in Canada. On February 17, 2020, Dr. Mei and Little Yangmei went skating with Dr. Mei’s friend, and the friend’s son, Jackson. Little Yangmei’s hometown does not have much snow except

¹¹ Dr. Mei completed her PhD degree in Canada, so she got to know some Chinese friends in Toronto while she was a doctoral student.
for the mountain areas with high altitudes, so it was a completely novel experience for her. After she came home, she wrote down her first family day and drew a self-portrait as Figure 15 shows.

Figure 15

*Little Yangmei’s Self-portrait and First Family Day*

The diary “My First Family Day” on the right side included a mixed use of Chinese characters, pinyin, drawings, Dr. Mei’s feedback, and English words (Little Yangmei’s artifact, February 17, 2020). It presents that “I like family day because it is so fun. I and my friend Jackson went to skate. It is my first time going skating in Canada. It is so easy, and I know how to play skate. I know how to do ice skating.” She inserted a Chinese sentence “实在是太好玩了” (it is so fun) to emphasize how much fun she got from skating. She did not know the word “skate” so she replaced it with Mandarin pinyin and character “hua 滑”, which is actually not correct (it should be “hua 滑 冰”). Next to
the self-portrait and Chinese pinyin on the left side, Dr. Mei added the English translation “7 years”, “easy” and “Canada.” Little Yangmei did not know how to write “Canada” in Mandarin, so she combined the Chinese pinyin with the other two characters that she knew as 加 na 大 (Little Yangmei’s artifact, February 17, 2021), which is commonly seen in young Chinese students who just begin to learn Mandarin. The two bilingual pieces of paper illustrated how Little Yangmei actively engaged in activities and leveraged her semiotic resources toward new language practices.

**March Break to June: Studying at Home**

**Reading and Writing at Home.** At the end of April, Covid-19 became more and more serious in Ontario. Dr. Mei told me through WeChat that after the March break, the Toronto District School Board asked all the students to stay at home because cumulated cases of Covid-19 and deaths substantially increased from mid-March 2020 (Urrutia et al., 2021). Several days before the March break, Mr. Mason emailed all the parents his suggestions to promote learning during the school closure. He listed many items that children and their parents could do at home such as read every day, write diaries, and cook every day, work with numbers, do physical exercise every day, watch some movies together and so on (Mr. Mason’s email, March 13, 2020).

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15 Greater Essex County District School Board had a similar announcement. Thus, the same thing happened to Caicai who had to stay at home in the first half of 2020 after March break. It was mentioned in Chapter 5.
Hearing the news, Little Yangmei was initially delighted because she did not need to get up early in the morning, but after several days, she felt bored at home. Dr. Mei was anxious because there was no English-immersion environment for Little Yangmei. Dr. Mei recalled her thoughts at the beginning of March and shared them with me through WeChat. She said, “we flew all the way here to learn culture and English. Suddenly, it became self-learning. So, I had to make a plan and help my daughter to keep learning. For example, every day, she did one page of exercise in the *Complete Canadian Curriculum*” (Dr. Mei, personal communication, April 30, 2020). Dr. Mei made a schedule with Little Yangmei, which was similar to the regular class time at Riverside so that Little Yangmei could study at home. I saw the schedule because it was also mailed by Dr. Mei in October 2021. I turned the information on the schedule into a table as below.

Table 4 Little Yangmei’s Daily Schedule When Staying at Home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Learning task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:45</td>
<td>Language (Chinese and English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45</td>
<td>Recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 – 11:00</td>
<td>Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30 – 12:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30 – 1:30</td>
<td>Music (play the piano)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30 – 1:45</td>
<td>Recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:45</td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00 – 3:15</td>
<td>Dismissal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Important (I): read with mom, draw with mom.
• Urgent (U): wash dishes, water flowers, help mom to cook.
• Finish I+U things first every day.
The table demonstrates that Little Yangmei needed to first accomplish the important and urgent things every day when Riverside school was closed due to Covid-19 from March 21 till the end of June 2020. Meanwhile, she kept the habit of writing English diaries because, in the early parent-teacher conference, Mr. Mason proposed that Little Yangmei practice more in writing. Dr. Mei thought it was a great idea, so she encouraged Little Yangmei to write down what happened in her life and after that, she would read and help to revise Little Yangmei’s writing (Dr. Mei, personal communication, April 30, 2020). For example, on March 27, 2020, Little Yangmei made a milkshake with the help of Dr. Mei. Afterwards, she wrote it down in her diary. She said,

Dear Grandparents, 亲爱的爷爷奶奶, I miss you. I am so happy to give you this letter. I am safe in Canada. Today my mom and I stay at home. We did not go outside but I do not care because staying at home is so fun! We make milkshake with blueberry and strawberry. I love you. (Little Yangmei’s artifact, March 27, 2020).

She had the Chinese translation of “dear grandpa and grandma” at the beginning of the letter, which showed the audience of her writing. Fluidly shifting between English and Chinese, she introduced what she did at home. Dr. Mei told me through WeChat that apart from writing diary, Little Yangmei would read by herself or read with Dr. Mei, which was also suggested by Mr. Mason. However, due to Covid-19, the school library was closed and there were not many books in the rented apartment. To find books for Little Yangmei to read, Dr. Mei took use of all the resources she had, and Little Yangmei
wrote down the efforts that her mom made (Dr. Mei, personal communication, April 30, 2020). On April 10, she wrote as follows.

We read books every day. It is so fun! We don’t have many books, so where can we get books? My mom asked our neighbor. They gave me some books. I find some books in my wardrobe. I put all books in my room. I wish I grow up I can have my own library. I like to read! (Little Yangmei’s artifact, April 10, 2020). Little Yangmei developed the habit of reading and she enjoyed that. She did not see it as a mission or burden but as a fun activity. She read both English and Chinese books.

**Weekly Meeting with Mr. Mason Online.** Dr. Mei told me in the telephone interview that since April 2020, Little Yangmei had been seeing Mr. Mason online every Thursday for an hour. Mr. Mason also uploaded learning materials such as science and math videos to Google Classroom and posted the weekly homework there (Interview with Dr. Mei, October 20, 2021). During the second week of online teaching, Mr. Mason required the students to write about their favorite food and food around the world. Through the project, Little Yangmei got to know Polish dumplings and salsa.

Meeting with Mr. Mason and following his suggestions in the email, Little Yangmei felt less bored and kept learning at home. I was impressed by the Canadian teacher’s patience in accompanying his students during the pandemic. Dr. Mei shared with me more about Mr. Mason when we were chatting through WeChat on the last day of April 2020.
Mr. Mason was a wonderful and experienced teacher as he cared about the students’ mental health and learning. He also advised the children to write three diaries per week because the period of time should be recorded and would become precious memories. He also assigned some projects for students to do. I know in the next two months the students were going to introduce one family heritage and tell a story about heroes in their mind. Little Yangmei liked him and wrote him letters sometimes. (Dr. Mei, personal communication, April 30, 2020)

Dr. Mei told me more about Mr. Mason in our telephone interview that he not only asked the students to write diaries but also uploaded his own weekly journal to Google Classroom as an example. During the weekly meeting, he would highlight the key elements in the diary: when, how, who, where what. With the instruction of Mr. Mason, Little Yangmei kept writing her diary that included things that happened in her daily life and some made-up stories. Little Yangmei would choose some well-written diaries and tape them on the wall at her rented apartment (Interview with Dr. Mei, October 20, 2021). Many of Little Yangmei’s diaries start with “Dear Mason.” For example, on May 3, 2020, she wrote as follows.

Dear Mason, I miss you and your class. Today I will show you again what I do at home. I stat at home wath my mom. I draw every day because is I love drawing and we make milkshake with strawberry and blueberry and pancake. P.S. I want to know custons around the world. (Little Yangmei’s artifact, May 3, 2020)

Little Yangmei spelt “with” as “wath” and mistook “customs” as “custons.” But she made great progress in English writing compared with that in January. She was interested in customs around the world, which revealed her cultural sensitivity and awareness of multiculturalism. Moreover, she often used “Dear …” to start her writing, so she was clear about the audience (Mr. Mason, her grandparents, or her father) and
purposes of writing such as telling her teacher what she saw in the park or telling her father how much she missed him.

At the end of our conversation on WeChat, Dr. Mei said, “two months later, the summer vacation will come. You can come to visit us in Toronto” (Dr. Mei, personal communication, April 30, 2020). I was glad to accept the invitation and planned to visit them in August.

**Visiting Little Yangmei’s Home in the Summer Vacation**

I finished a doctoral online course in July 2020 and got some free time after the course. Previously, Dr. Mei invited me to visit her and Little Yangmei in Toronto several times. She said, “come and travel around the city. You can live in my apartment, and we can enjoy delicious food” (Dr. Mei, personal communication, May 23, 2020). Therefore, on August 14, I traveled from Windsor to Toronto to visit with Little Yangmei and her mother, Dr. Mei.

**The Book Can Move!** At noon, I arrived at their apartment as Dr. Mei sent the address to me through WeChat. It was summer vacation, so Little Yangmei did not go to school. She opened the door for me and said “welcome.” It was an extremely hot day, so I felt cool when entering the apartment with an air conditioner. Then I put down my backpack on the couch and sat down. Piles of English books scattered on the tea table and couch: *The Captain Underpants*, *Dogman*, *Spiderman*, *Harry Potter*, *Charlotte's Web*, and so on. I was surprised to see so many English novels and comic books, so I
asked her, “Can you understand all of them?” Little Yangmei nodded, sat next to me, and began to introduce these books in Chinese. I translated our conversations into English as follows.

Little Yangmei: There are some words that I don’t know, but that’s ok. Just need to know a general idea and the main plot. As long as there are illustrations in the book, I can read it.

Haojun: Awesome! When did you start reading these books? Since you came to Toronto in January?

Little Yangmei: No, in the beginning, I could only read very simple picture books. But since June, I had started to read comics and chapter books that were difficult for me in the past.

Haojun: Which one is your favorite?

Little Yangmei: Um… *Dogman* is funny. Let me show you. It can move!

Haojun: (I am confused about that, so I ask) What? The book can move?

Little Yangmei: For example, these two pages. (She put her right thumb on the corner of the right side of the page and put her left hand on the middle of the left side of the other page. Then she began to flip the right side of the page and added sound effects of “shoo, shoo, shoo” with her mouth.) You flip like this and then you can see characters jumping and running on the page. Have you seen it?

Haojun: Yes, wow! That is so interesting. (Field notes, Little Yangmei’s apartment, August 14, 2020)

While Little Yangmei was flipping the page, I saw the Dogman jumping up and down, trying to fetch a red ball. With Little Yangmei’s sound effects, the static comic book had become an animated cartoon. It was my first time seeing the images becoming animated in a book, so I was totally blown away. I asked Little Yangmei, “Can you let me try?” Little Yangmei handed the book to me and suggested, “You can add your own sound effect.” Taking the comic book, I saw the cover had a cat and a Dogman in batman’s costume. It was named *Dog Man: For Whom the Ball Rolls*. I tried to flip the pages quickly and made the sound effect of “whoosh, whoosh.” Then Little Yangmei
was amused by my sound effect, and she chuckled (Field notes, Little Yangmei’s apartment, August 14, 2020).

Hearing our conversations, Dr. Mei walked by and added “Little Yangmei has a high tolerance of ambiguity so I seldom ask her if she could understand the words in these books. She just read by herself. She loves *Dogman* not because this book has fewer words or sentences on one page, but because she was fond of hilarious things.” After 10 minutes, Dr. Mei’s voice came from the kitchen, “Lunch is ready. I ordered some Chinese food from a popular restaurant. Come on and have a try.” Both Little Yangmei and I ate a lot of spicy fish, mutton kebabs, and ribs. After lunch, we all took a nap and went outside for a walk at about 6 o’clock. Then we went back home at 7:20 p.m. Before I went to bed, Dr. Mei gave me a T-shirt and said, “it can be a pajama. Very comfortable. Good night.” The white T-shirt had the English letters “I ♥ Canada” on it (Field notes, Little Yangmei’s apartment, August 14, 2020).

**Pizza Day, Birthday Card, and The Best Canada Day.** On the second day, I woke up in the morning and found that I was the only one at home. I looked around to check if Little Yangmei was at home. In her bedroom, the books were all scattered on the floor. On the radiator, there listed several children’s books, which looked like a mini library. The books include *Activity Picture Dictionary*, *See Under the Sea*, *Charlie Bucket*, *Green Eggs and Ham*, *The Canadian Kids’ Guide to Outdoor Fun*, *Stuff you Need to Know about the Human*, and *Can You See What I See*. It suddenly occurred to
me that Dr. Mei told me yesterday she would send Little Yangmei to a summer camp organized by the community. I sat in the living room and noticed three pieces of paper and a world map were taped on the wall, next to the television (Field notes, Little Yangmei’s apartment, August 15, 2020). The first piece of paper was Little Yangmei’s diary about pizza day¹⁶, written on March 3, 2020. She drew two characters (her mom and her) with speech bubbles. She wrote,

One day is Pizza Day my mom gave me lunch and I jas ate yogurt and my mom is vave argu. She sad, “way are you dot ate you lunch?” I sade “today is Pizza Day. Pizza is so yome and I is teme teme” mom sade “Oh!” (Little Yangmei’s artifact, March 3, 2020)

The diary told a true story, which was verified by Little Yangmei when we were chatting online after she returned to China for about one year. I invited her to retell the story to me and she was glad to do so. From her retelling, I got to know what happened on Pizza Day and why her mom was not happy. Dr. Mei prepared the lunch box, but she found Little Yangmei did not eat it. Little Yangmei explained why, and Dr. Mei stopped being “angry” (Casual conversation with Little Yangmei, March 26, 2022).

The second piece of paper that I saw at Little Yangmei’s apartment was a pink card for her father. She wrote in English, “Dear Dad, You are a grant dad. I don’t care you are not handsome, but you have your own good things. vary smart & strong! Thank you be my dad. Happy Birthday Day!” and Chinese, “祝爸爸生日快乐” (father, happy

¹⁶ According to the introduction of the school’s official website, pizza day is one of the fundraising events organized by its school council members.
birthday) (Little Yangmei’s artifact, June 20, 2020). She wrote down her longing for her father far away.

The last piece of paper once stuck on the wall was about “The best Canada Day.”

She used two pages to describe the incredible experiences on July 1, 2020. She wrote,

July first is Canada day!!!! Before Canada day, my godmother invited me. She gave my mom and me a Canada T-shirt and firecracker. The next day, we wore the T-shirt. At 7:30, we went to the to see the fire crack and set fire crack. My mom’s friend Jillian and her daughter Isla went with us. I went play with Isla. We set firecracker. Then I heared someone said, “May I sit beside you?” I saw a girl and she said that. I said, “yes” and then she said, “Do you want to be friend with me?” “yo” I said. We watch the firecrak. After that, Isla went back. She have more firecrak. We set together. Isla mom said, she have mighk wand (what, my wish come true!) we play mighj wank and we said god buy. It is the best canada day. (Little Yangmei’s artifact, July 1, 2020)

After reading the diary, I realized that the T-shirt given by Dr. Mei was the one Little Yangmei mentioned and it was related to Canada Day. Little Yangmei celebrated it with her mom, mom’s friend, and other children. Compared with her writing in January, she included more details and the length of the passage also increased. More importantly, her real-life experiences in Canada had emerged from her writing, flowing around the apartment, the local parks outside, the lake, and more places where she set foot with her mom, friends, more Chinese and Canadians in Toronto.

Family Heritage Artifact and Heroes in Mind. On the second day of my visit, around 4 p.m., Little Yangmei and Dr. Mei came back home. Dr. Mei went to the kitchen to prepare our dinner, and she let me play with Little Yangmei for a while. I chatted with her about learning in Canada.
Haojun: Now it is summer vacation, and you don’t need to go to Riverside school. Are you happy about that?
Little Yangmei: Not really. Taking online classes is just fine. I miss my teacher and classmates.
Haojun: What activities did you do when taking classes online? Were there also games?
Little Yangmei: We did projects. Let me show you. (She opened the laptop and showed me the slides she made) This is about your family artifact. I introduced the lucky charm necklace to my classmates and Mr. Mason. (On the left side of the slide, there were three paragraphs with sub-headings: “what is it? Where it come from? Why is it important to you?” She wrote, “It is a lucky charm necklace\textsuperscript{17}. The pendant is made of gold and jade in a shape of oval. It is a gift from my grandma’s sister when I was born. It has Chinese character ‘longevity’ in the middle. It is important to me because I wore it every day before I went to kindergarten. Then I wear it when I travel all the time to bless me.” On the right side of the slide, there was a picture of the necklace with four traditional Chinese characters: 長命百歲, which meant “live a long life.”)
Haojun: Wow, that was pretty. What artifacts did your classmates present?
Little Yangmei: A Pakistani girl showed us her mother’s waistcoat.
Haojun: Amazing! You have learned a lot from them. What else did you introduce to them?
Little Yangmei: In June, we talked about heroes, so I told them Mulan\textsuperscript{18}’s story. (She clicked and another slide appeared. On the right side, it was Mulan’s movie poster. On the left side, she wrote down the sources, a summary of the story, obstacles, and what inspires her. She wrote, “Mulan was very very brave. She prepared very well. She replaced her father to join the army.”) Did you see the dragon here? It’s Mushu. It can help Mulan. (She pointed to the poster)
Haojun: Yeah. I have watched the movie and I love it. You really did a good job. (Field notes, Little Yangmei’s apartment, August 15, 2020)

The lucky charm necklace and Mulan showcased Chinese culture and Little Yangmei was able to introduce them in the weekly meeting with Mr. Mason and her

\textsuperscript{17} It is a traditional Chinese gift to baby in the family to wish them a long and happy life. Usually, it's made of silver or gold.

\textsuperscript{18} Mulan was a legendary folk hero from the Northern and Southern dynasties era (4th to 6th century AD) of Chinese history (Wikipedia).
classmates. After she showed me these slides, I went to the kitchen to ask if Dr. Mei needed any help. We prepared dinner together and enjoyed pork bone soup, banana milkshake, potatoes, and sliced beef. On the third day, I visited Dr. Mei’s university and Art Gallery alone because Little Yangmei had a tennis class at a local park. On the fourth day, I finished the wonderful visit and returned to Windsor.

**The Second Half of 2020: Back to School!**

In September 2020, Little Yangmei became a grade-3 student, and she was elated to go back to school. She told Dr. Mei that she wanted to work in both Canada and China in the future because she would be able to master two languages very well. Dr. Mei told me in the telephone interview that the teacher was changed to Ms. Nora who was also a nice teacher around her fifties. As the fall semester began, Dr. Mei sometimes emailed Ms. Nora, asking about Little Yangmei’s learning at school. Ms. Nora told Dr. Mei that she called Little Yangmei “an absent-mind professor” because she was intelligent but forgetful. Little Yangmei was excellent in math, but her erasers and notebooks were often scattered on the floor of the classroom (Interview with Dr. Mei, October 20, 2021).

**Two Unhappy Things.** At the end of October 2020, there was a second wave of Covid-19 in Ontario, so I contacted Dr. Mei to ask if she and Little Yangmei were doing well in Toronto. Dr. Mei told me in WeChat that parents at Riverside school could choose to let their children stay at home or go to school. She chose to send Little Yangmei to school even though the second wave was well underway with cases soaring.
across Canada. Dr. Mei explained that it was because Little Yangmei loved to go to school, and she felt bored at home. Besides, her school only had 3 or 4 cases. However, there were two things that Little Yangmei was unhappy about after she went back to school. The first thing was the closure of the school library because she could not borrow books every week (Interview with Dr. Mei, October 28, 2020). The second thing was that she could not play monkey bar every day because it was fenced. Only on weekends or after 6 p.m., children were allowed to play on the monkey bar. It was one of the restrictions during the pandemic. She missed the days before March break when she could play it at recess (Interview with Dr. Mei, October 28, 2020).

**Wear a Mask! – I Am Good.** Except for the two unhappy things, Little Yangmei also told me one thing that irritated her in the fall semester of 2020. When she mentioned this, we were reading a picture book online after she returned to China for seven months. The book was *Floppy’s Phonics: Saving the Pudding Wood*, in which some residents held banners to protest against cutting the woods. The banner reads, “Save Pudding Wood and Protect Animals.” I asked her if she had seen such banners in Canada and she recalled the experience of being annoyed (Casual conversation with Little Yangmei, September 11, 2021). She said she had seen many Canadians protesting at the center of Toronto and opposing wearing masks in September 2020. She even saw some banners mentioning Chinese people. I realized this was serious, so I put the picture book aside and discussed the protest that was against restrictions linked to the coronavirus disease.
Little Yangmei: It was during the pandemic, but they did not want to wear a mask. That was way out of line.
Haojun: Did you see what the banner read? Like “Chinese people go back to your country?”
Little Yangmei: I heard people saying that, but we walked by quickly. We went to a store and buy something. When we came out of the store, mom and I saw many people protesting.
Haojun: What do you think of wearing masks? What would happen if people did not wear a mask?
Little Yangmei: Actually, you are protecting yourself if you wear a mask. You think you are fine, but maybe your community or neighbor will suffer.
Haojun: How do you know others will be influenced?
Little Yangmei: My science teacher told us a true story about a poisonous insect. He once stepped on it and the bug was dead. He thought it was not a big deal, but he got allergic for three days since the bug had stings with poison. The story tells me that never belittle or neglect your own behavior as a person. Sometimes, you think you are fine, but it’s not a matter of fact. (Casual conversation with Little Yangmei, September 11, 2021)

Little Yangmei connected what she learned at the science class with the issue of whether wearing a mask was necessary. Besides, she felt offended by the racist comment when some people were protesting against restrictions related to Covid-19. On that day, after she came back home, she drew a picture of the protest and the pandemic as Figure 16 shows.

Figure 16

Wear a Mask! – I Am Good
The picture has three panels separated by black lines. The left side consists of many countries which looked like M&M beans and donuts with national flags. The numbers on the left corner of each panel indicated things happening during the pandemic in chronological sequence. At first, the ball on a bed with the Chinese flag reminded other countries by saying “Leave here as soon as possible! There is a virus!” whereas other countries did not take it seriously, so they said, “It’s fine.” In the second stage, the other countries lay on the bed and became patients whereas China was recovering and donated masks to these countries. In the third phase, on the right side, a girl with a loudspeaker was calling people to wear a mask, but the crowd replied, “I’m good.” It can also be translated into “That’s ok” to show rejection. I mentioned the protest to Dr. Mei in a telephone interview, and she added, “yes, we saw a protest at Yonge-Dundas Square. About one hundred people did not wear masks and they called for an end to the lockdown” (Interview with Dr. Mei, October 20, 2021).
It Is Toooooooooooo Scary! Little Yangmei’s life and schooling were influenced by the pandemic, but she also experienced something fun in October 2020. The diary Little Yangmei wrote in that month mentioned some cultural symbols about Halloween. For example, on October 26, 2020, she wrote,

Dear Diary, Today I’m in school. And today at recess, a boy is said some scarey story. I hear he said a scary zobies, goast, and moster!!! It is rally scarey and I said “Ahhh!!” I qunkly run away and then the bell start to “Brrrrrrr!!” Back in class my teacher are teaching math. (Little Yangmei’s artifact, October 26, 2020)

Her running away showed her reactions when hearing scary things. Speaking of scary things about Halloween, Little Yangmei told me on the phone¹⁹ that she was so scared of a horrific movie Ms. Nora played for the students at school on October 30, 2020. Ms. Nora told the students if they thought the movie Coraline (2009) was horrifying, they could leave the classroom (Interview with Little Yangmei, October 30, 2021). Little Yangmei left the classroom at that time, and she still clearly remembered the plots one year after she returned to China. On our phone call, Little Yangmei spent 10 minutes retelling the story of Coraline in Chinese, and I translated it into English as follows.

There was no blood in that movie, but still very scary. The movie is about a little girl who lives in an old house with her parents. One day she went out to play, and then she met a boy and a cat. The boy said that his grandmother's sister disappeared when she was young. The girl went home and felt scared, but her parents were busy and just told her to explore the house. The girl walked around

¹⁹ It was 3 p.m. in the afternoon of October 30, 2021. Little Yangmei’s father was driving her and Dr. Mei to Little Yangmei’s grandparents’ home. On the way, Dr. Mei agreed to let me chat with Little Yangmei on the telephone about her experiences in Canada.
and found a door on the wall. She opened the door and discovered another world in which there was also a father and mother. But their eyes were sewn with two buttons. The next day, the girl entered the fake world again and the father asked her if she wanted to stay in the world forever. If so, she needed to sew her eyes with buttons. She refused and ran away. However, when she returned to the real world, her parents were gone. At this time, the cat came and told the girl how to save her parents. The girl had to look around for her parents. Suddenly, she encountered three ghosts, one of whom was the grandmother’s sister, i.e., the boy’s grandmother. They all had buttons on their eyes, and they warned the girl “never listen to the woman. Otherwise, you will be like us, trapped in this world forever! They will sew your eyes and you cannot go back to your own world.” (Interview with Little Yangmei, October 30, 2021)

I felt the air getting colder and colder and someone with sewed eyes seemed to stare at me somewhere when Little Yangmei retold the story to me on the phone. I was also scared of the plots, so I hoped to change the subject. Then I asked her, “What is Halloween about, in your opinion?” Little Yangmei told me, “It is a scary culture because it has monsters and vampires. Now, I don’t like it very much… I was talking about the movie Coraline” (Interview with Little Yangmei, October 30, 2021). The signal was sometimes weak in our call, so there were seconds of silence. After I heard Little Yangmei’s voice again, she continued to retell the movie in Chinese. I translated her words into English as below.

    The three ghosts became three angels and said to the girl, “destroy the button key, and then no one will die here.” The girl and the boy destroyed the key together. Finally, they all came back to the real world and drank tea there. (Interview with Little Yangmei, October 30, 2021)

    It was a relief that the movie had a happy ending. While I was calling Little Yangmei, Dr. Mei heard our talk and added up more details on the phone. She said,
I remember that day when I picked her up at the playground, Little Yangmei told me that she wrote a “sugar rush” at school. It means if you eat too much sugar, you will get crazy. She rejoiced on that day because Ms. Nora said children could go trick or treat with some precautions. (Interview with Dr. Mei, October 30, 2021)

Hearing Dr. Mei mention trick or treat, Little Yangmei grabbed the phone and told me more about that day. She told me that she dressed up as a witch with a black cloak and wore a mask (Interview with Little Yangmei, October 30, 2021). Her diary written on November 12, 2020, also mentioned her Halloween experience in Canada.

Figure 17

Little Yangmei’s Diary – Back to the Story

She drew a little girl wearing a dress with lace and flowers on the hem. The cartoon character had two orange and black pigtails on her head. I knew it was her because I have seen her costume pictures that Dr. Mei sent to me through WeChat. Dr.
Mei told me on the phone that to let Little Yangmei experience trick-or-treating while following the restriction policies, she took Little Yangmei out and walked around the neighborhood for 20 minutes to see if there were any pumpkin baskets outside of the doors. Luckily, they got some treats packaged in separate bags (Interview with Dr. Mei, October 30, 2021).

I Always Made Mistakes in the English Quiz. On November 16, 2020, I made a phone call to interview Dr. Mei about Little Yangmei’s recent schooling and life in Toronto. It was a sunny afternoon and Dr. Mei just picked up Little Yangmei from her school. Dr. Mei told me that before this trip, Little Yangmei had been to Canada twice to attend the summer camp. The first time was when she was 5 years old, and the summer camp was in Vancouver. She could not understand English at all, so she did not speak. The second time to attend a summer camp was in 2019 in Windsor. I continued to ask Dr. Mei how Little Yangmei felt about this trip and whether there was any difference compared with the former two trips. Since Little Yangmei was with her, Dr. Mei told Little Yangmei my question and I heard Little Yangmei’s answer from the phone: “没什么不同，只是要戴口罩，洗手和保持（社交）距离。哦！我现在能猜到一些词的意思了，但上学期我英语真的很差” (Nothing different, just needing to wear a mask, wash hands and keep social distance this time. Oh, I could guess the meaning of some English words now but last semester my English was really poor) (Interview with Little Yangmei, November 16, 2020). Then Dr. Mei gave the phone to Little Yangmei, and we
began to chat mostly in Chinese. I translated our conversations into English except for the ones when Little Yangmei had translanguaging practices.

Haojun: Hi, Little Yangmei, nice to hear your voice. How about the summer camp in Windsor in 2019? Did you feel much better than the first one in Vancouver?
Little Yangmei: Still cannot understand part of the English that the Canadian children and teachers said. They spoke very fast and sometimes interrupted others’ talking.
Haojun: Did you talk with them in the summer camp?
Little Yangmei: I dared not to speak English. I rarely spoke English because I was a little bit shy. I was only 6 years old at that time (in 2019 in Windsor). However, on the last day before the end of last semester, all of a sudden, I could write English compositions because my teacher said, “you could write what you say in daily life.” English writing is not difficult at all now. Previously I did not like writing English stories at all but since then, I started to make up many stories by myself in my notebooks. The protagonist was a girl named Yangmei.
Haojun: Sounds great. Currently, Covid-19 is still serious, but your mom told me you still hoped to go to Riverside school. Can you tell me why?
Little Yangmei: 因为好玩呀! 有同学没带 snack 的时候老师就会把一些 snack 放在一个 box 里面，然后我们在 snack 中随便拿一个，而且老师给我们吃 pizza。学校有 pizza day。这一天你不用带食物。如果你给学校钱的话，学校会给你一个披萨，再加一个喝的，你想要哪个 chocolate milk 或者一个 milk。(Because it is fun! When some students do not bring snacks, the teacher will put some snacks in a box, and we can take one from the box. Moreover, the teacher gives us pizza to eat. There is a pizza day in our school. You don’t need to bring lunch on that day. If you pay for the pizza, the school will give you some pizza and a drink. You can choose from chocolate milk or milk.)
Dr. Mei: (Hearing that, Dr. Mei added) Before March break of 2020, every week, there was one pizza day. You need to pay 7 Canadian dollars.
Little Yangmei: (said in an aggrieved tone) But I remember for several weeks, the teacher did not call my name. I did not know why!
Dr. Mei: Mayb...
Haojun: I am sorry to hear that. Until now, you have spent 10 months in Canada. Is there anything you feel difficult or challenging?

Little Yangmei: Everything is great except for the quiz. Every Friday, there is a quiz in my class. Last time, I got one wrong in the English and math quiz.

Haojun: Not bad. How about the other children in your class?

Little Yangmei: I remember after we got the quiz results, a girl came to my desk and glanced at my quiz paper. Then she showed me her quiz marks. It was 12 out of 12 in English and 13 out of 13 in math. She did do very well in the quiz, but I felt she looked down upon me.

Haojun: Oh, all right. Next time, you can do more preparation and also get a full mark.

Little Yangmei: (Abruptly, she raised her voice) The first time I got full marks but for the rest, I always made mistakes in the English quiz. Every time I checked before submitting, but still got the words wrongly! (said in a wronged tone) Since the second quiz, I have been making mistakes in every quiz!

Dr. Mei: (comforted Little Yangmei and took the phone to explain the quiz to me.) The quiz aims to check if the students master the words that they learn that week. The words are all phonics words. For example, this week, they have learned “ow & ou” combination, and then the words will be grow, announce, follow, clown, house, and so on. There aren’t many connections among these words. The day before yesterday, she came home with 20 “ow & ou” words, but she only knew the meaning of 7 words.

Little Yangmei: Sometimes the teacher will dictate long words and I do not know how to spell them. Several times in the quizzes, I just misspelt one English letter, just one. Almost correct.

Dr. Mei: Don’t worry. I will help you. We can do a dictation at home before your teacher gives dictation at school. (Interview with Little Yangmei, November 16, 2020)

The conversations contained a lot of information. Firstly, Little Yangmei had her own way to differentiate real stories and fiction. She used “Little Yangmei” when writing things truly happening in her life while “Yangmei” was the fake name for fiction. It correlates with Mr. Mason’s email in February 2020, which mentioned that the students were going to learn and write realistic fiction. Secondly, Little Yangmei seemed to be perturbed by the quiz about English words as she could not get full marks. Dr. Mei
explained to me that it was because of the education that Little Yangmei accepted before the visit to Canada. Since she became a primary school student in China in the fall of 2019, she hoped to get full marks in main subjects such as math and Chinese (Dr. Mei, personal communication, May 28, 2022). I checked the artifacts that Dr. Mei mailed and found the worksheets of word dictation in October and November 2020. I noticed that some words were difficult for young ELLs such as allowance, eggshell, shepherd, leather, and shortcut. She usually got 8/12, 9/12, and 11/12 but on October 9, she got a full mark when the phonics combination was a_e and words were like cage, cave, and sale (Little Yangmei’s dictation worksheet, October 9, 2020).

Are You Métis? No, I Am From China. Hearing Little Yangmei’s unhappiness about the quiz, I quickly transferred to another topic: friends. I asked her if she had made any new friends. On the phone, Little Yangmei told me that she still often played on her own, just as what she did in the first half year (Interview with Little Yangmei, November 16, 2020). She explained to me after she returned to China for one year while we were chatting on the phone, “I was shy, so I took the initiative to play by myself at school. I liked to read books at school because it would be very boring if I just played with toys. I did not want to play anymore, so reading became more attractive to me” (Interview with Little Yangmei, October 30, 2021). Despite that, she did try to make friends. But she encountered some girls who were “mean” to her.
Recess 的时候我想跟 Tina 玩，她就跟我说 You play with Anna. 还有个女生 Rachel 她都忘了我们是二年级的同学。就是我跟她说 We are classmates before. 然后她就说 Really? But you don’t look like my classmate. 然后我说 You forgot? I am your classmate. 她说 yes. 我说 what?

(I wanted to play with Tina at recess, but she said to me “You play with Anna.” Another girl Rachel even forgot we were classmates in grade 2. I told her “We are classmates before.” Then she asked, “Really? But you don’t look like my classmate.” I asked, “You forgot? I am your classmate.” She replied “yes,” and I asked, “what?”) (Interview with Little Yangmei, November 16, 2020).

Interestingly, Dr. Mei provided a different version of Rachel’s reply and added on the phone, “She said no. I heard that.” Then, Dr. Mei continued to explain to me that adults were usually more patient in listening to Little Yangmei and talking with her in a way that she could understand. By comparison, her Canadian peers did not have that much patience especially when she could not express herself fluently and clearly in English (Interview with Dr. Mei, November 16, 2020). But Little Yangmei still made a few new friends at school. For example, her diary mentioned a new friend called Sarah.

I didn’t have a friend. Most of time, I just play zombie tag slowly. During the Lunch rest, I was lonely. I play by myself. But today I got a new friend. Her name is Sarah. She is a Black girl with curly hair, and little ponytail and she is my campmate, and her voices are soft. At the end of school, Sarah and I are builed a house and I didn’t know my mom are calling me. (Little Yangmei’s artifact, October 7, 2020)

Dr. Mei commented in the diary, “I am glad that you have a good friend now!”

Furthermore, to Dr. Mei’s relief, Little Yangmei did not suffer racism at Riverside school even though there was a global pattern of rising racism and hate crimes against Asian minorities during the ongoing pandemic (Mao, 2021). The main reason was that some Canadian classmates did not even know Little Yangmei was Chinese. Little
Yangmei told me on the phone that last month a girl in her class asked her an interesting question: “Are you a Métis?” Little Yangmei replied, “No, I am from China.” Dr. Mei explained that “maybe the skin color of Métis and Chinese is similar, so the girl mistook Little Yangmei as Métis. She got tanned in the summer vacation” (Interview with Dr. Mei, November 16, 2020). After school, she wrote the event in her diary (Figure 18).

Figure 18

*A Girl Always Thinks I Am Métis*

I was surprised to hear that Little Yangmei was mistaken by her classmate as Métis. By that time, I did not know much about Métis except for the fact that they are a group of Indigenous people in Canada, so I asked Little Yangmei if she could teach me more about Indigenous people and their history. On the phone, she introduced what she learned from her Canadian teachers.

We learned the history in social study class. So, in the past, Indigenous children were taken to residential schools, and they were treated badly. They were not allowed to speak their own languages. They did not have enough food to eat so many kids starved to death. The invaders killed Indigenous people randomly and they brought infectious diseases. Besides, I know the Orange Shirt Day. If they
take away my favorite cloth, I will say “sorry, sir, this is my cloth. I’ll be really mad and sad.” (Interview with Little Yangmei, November 16, 2020).

I learned from Little Yangmei about the history of residential schools and Orange Shirt Day. Moreover, I read the artifacts that Dr. Mei mailed me, in which there were some handouts about settler communities from 1780 to 1850. They were about the settlement map, Indigenous people of Canada, and the early settler life were also introduced (Little Yangmei’s artifact, September 23, 2020). Moreover, Dr. Mei told me through WeChat in 2022 that Little Yangmei had stereotypes about Canada before the one-year visit. After she lived there for a while, she told Dr. Mei that she had “a lot of aha moments” such as the moment of realizing many people’s skin colors in Canada were not white (Dr. Mei, personal communication, April 23, 2022).

**Changes Are Happening.** Dr. Mei also told me on the phone that she found many changes happened to Little Yangmei. First, she grew bolder in socialization. She had little courage to greet or talk with other children in the first half of 2020, but as her English improved, she was not shy in chatting with some Canadian children when they hung out at the local park near our apartment in Toronto. Secondly, her perceptions of education had changed. In the first two months of her arrival in Toronto (January – February 2020), Little Yangmei believed that study was the most important thing but in the second half of 2020, she deemed physical education as important as academic performance. Thirdly, Dr. Mei sensed that Little Yangmei expanded her horizons and became more sensitive to multiple cultures because her Canadian teacher would tell the
children stories behind kinds of festivals around the world (Interview with Dr. Mei, November 16, 2020). Dr. Mei told me on the phone,

Like this month, there are at least two main events: Diwali and Remembrance Day. Riverside school introduced the meaning of the festival and the memorial day such as doing a presentation and giving students the plastic poppies. When Little Yangmei made a new friend at school, she would come home and look for the country on the world map. Then she would point to the country and show me where it was on the map. For example, her friend Fernanda came from Brazil and Little Yangmei said to me, “Mom, Fernanda comes from Brazil. It is in South America.” (Interview with Dr. Mei, November 16, 2020)

The world map that I saw in Little Yangmei’s apartment played a role in helping her to know about the world and her friends from diverse cultures. In November 2021, I read Little Yangmei’s artifacts and her diary about Remembrance Day. She learned a poem *In Flander’s Field* and wrote in her diary about that day as follows.

Dear Diary, On Remembrance Day, my teacher said we didn’t say happy Remembrance day. But most of people don’t wear a popie in my class, but my teacher gave every one a popie sticke. I learned that we had to stop everything that I was doing at 11:00 am because World War I end up at 11 month at 11 day and at 11 time. (Little Yangmei’s diary, November 13, 2020)

The meaning was effectively expressed in the diary: she knew the history and meaning of Remembrance Day and got a poppy sticker from her teacher.

**Progress in English.** Little Yangmei enjoyed being immersed in diverse cultures at Riverside, but she did not like ESL class as the course went slowly and she felt she could not learn much in the program. Dr. Mei explained to me on the phone that “in the fall semester, Little Yangmei thought the ESL class was easy except for her not getting full marks in the weekly English dictation” (Interview with Dr. Mei, November 16,
2020). Dr. Mei was not worried about Little Yangmei’s English learning because she preferred speaking more English than Chinese since the beginning of the fall semester, especially when the school was just dismissed.

According to Dr. Mei’s observation, Little Yangmei made obvious progress in English since she followed the suggestion of Mr. Mason. Dr. Mei told me on the phone, In the first half of 2020, Little Yangmei needed guidance when she wrote the diary but after the fall semester began, she could quickly and independently write a one-page English diary. The progress was great because there was evidence. I could compare her writing in February and September. Furthermore, when she made the phone call to her grandmother, she would read English books to her grandmother and translate them into Chinese. When she chatted with her grandmother about what happened at Riverside, she used direct quotes of the English sentences or words that her Canadian classmates or teachers said. (Dr. Mei, personal communication, November 16, 2020)

Little Yangmei’s shift between different languages was flexible and depended on who she was talking to and the purpose of the communication. On the next day of my calling, Little Yangmei accepted an English Language Test at Riverside school to update her progress as an English language learner, and the results were printed out on the elementary progress report card. When I was reading the artifacts that Dr. Mei mailed me in October 2021, I found the report card and noticed its date. There were four main dimensions (Oral, Reading, Writing, and Orientation) with three levels on the table: Emerging, Developing, and Consolidated. She got “Emerging” in listening, speaking, meaning, reading fluency, school, and community environment, learning environment,
personal/social environment, and language conventions. In terms of form and style, she got “Developing.” Ms. Nora left the comment,

   Little Yangmei is a model student. She always puts forth her best effort and is excited to share her ideas with the class. She is an English language learner, and this is reflected in her written and oral work. But it is evident that she clearly understands what the goal of the task is. Little Yangmei is able to extend her understanding of oral texts by connecting the idea to her own knowledge and experience. She has read a variety of literary texts, graphic texts, and informational texts. She maintains positive motivation and perseverance. (Little Yangmei’s progress report card, November 18, 2020)

   The assessment offers a summary of Little Yangmei’s learning after she lived in Canada for 10 months. The point that stood out to me in the progress report was that she could connect ideas to her knowledge and experiences, as revealed in her diaries as earlier texts (Little Yangmei’s progress report card, November 18, 2020).

   **Winter Activities in Toronto.** As mentioned earlier, Dr. Mei had some close friends in Toronto. Therefore, during her visit to Canada, she would spend time together with her friends from time to time. Their children could play with Little Yangmei often in local parks, ski resorts, skate rinks, farms, or at someone’s house. On December 9, 2020, Dr. Mei told me that recently Little Yangmei did not play tennis but skated a lot. They went skating with Dr. Mei’s friend Ms. Wen, who fell on the skating rink and had a slight cerebral concussion (Dr. Mei, personal communication, December 9, 2020). One time, in our online chat after Little Yangmei returned to China, she retold the story to me when I asked her “What did you do in the last month of 2020? It is also December now.
So almost one year.” Then we had the following conversations in which she had many translanguaging practices.

Little Yangmei: 去滑冰了. (I went skating.)
Haojun: with parents or friends?
Little Yangmei: 没有啊，我妈怕摔，因为没有头盔了. 她有个朋友被摔出去了. (No. My mom was afraid of falling. My mom’s friend Ms. Wen fell because she did not have a helmet.) So, my mom have a friend, so first my mom don’t have the helmet. So, she hurt her head. But it wasn’t a big thing. But then her friend come to skate. When she skate, she was not careful. So, her head get hurt too. But that was serious, because she asked a lot of questions, again and again. 她暂时失忆了，失忆的意思是问人家“上不上学，为啥我穿这个衣服，你知道我叫什么吗？”她就是不知道她怎么摔倒的. (She lost memory, which meant she asked questions like, “do you go to school? Why am I wearing this? Do you know my name?” She had no idea how she fell.)
Haojun: Oh my, was there blood on her head?
Little Yangmei: no. Well, it hasn’t. It wasn’t going to skate. She was at school, she was running and she got something in his下巴咋说? (how to say jaw in Chinese?)
Haojun: jaw, or chin.
Little Yangmei: so, she got something in her jaw. And then blood, a lot of. 然后她缝了四针,下巴. (Then she got four stitched on her jaw.)
Haojun: so, she went to the hospital?
Little Yangmei: yeah. 给你一个温馨提示,滑冰一定要戴帽子. 不然后果自负. (Here is a warm reminder. You must wear a helmet when skating. Otherwise, it’s at your own risk.) (Casual conversation with Little Yangmei, December 26, 2021)

One year after the accident, Little Yangmei still remembered the questions asked by Ms. Wen and retold the story in two languages. When she did not know how to say jaw in English, she turned to me for help to complete her storytelling. In the end, she answered my question in English but switched to Chinese for giving me a sweet reminder.
Celebrating Birthday Before Christmas! In the last month of 2020, I was planning to fly back to China as Covid-19 was very serious in Canada. Meanwhile, I was concerned about Little Yangmei’s health, so I asked Dr. Mei if Little Yangmei still went to school considering the situation. Dr. Mei had the same concern, but Little Yangmei insisted on going to school because her birthday was coming up, and she knew the Canadian school would celebrate children’s birthdays in class, just like how Feifei’s class celebrated her birthday at Kingswood. However, Little Yangmei’s birthday was after December 25, and she could not celebrate her birthday at school since Canadians would be enjoying their Christmas vacation by that time.

To celebrate her birthday in Ms. Nora’s class, Little Yangmei strongly asked Dr. Mei to remind Ms. Nora of celebrating her birthday before the vacation. Ms. Nora agreed and on December 9, she told every student in her class that they would celebrate Little Yangmei’s birthday ahead. Everyone sang the birthday song and Little Yangmei was satisfied. To give back, Little Yangmei decided to prepare Christmas cards for every classmate and her Canadian teachers at Riverside school. Then Dr. Mei and Little Yangmei spent two hours writing cards and putting all those cards in Costco’s transparent plastic bags. On each card, Little Yangmei wrote down the blessing sentences and her Gmail. The next day, Little Yangmei brought them all to Ms. Nora and everyone was delighted (Interview with Dr. Mei, October 20, 2021). But Little Yangmei told me while we were chatting online that Riverside school was closed after Christmas
2020, so she had to study at home again from January 2021 until the day she left. She did not have the opportunity to say goodbye to Ms. Nora and her classmates face to face (Casual conversation with Little Yangmei, August 20, 2021).

Little Yangmei was unwilling to leave Canada in February because living in Canada was fun and more importantly, she hoped to introduce the Chinese New Year and Spring Festival to her Canadian classmates. However, Dr. Mei’s visit ended, so they flew back to China at the beginning of February 2021. Here is an interesting contrast: before coming to Canada, Little Yangmei was unwilling but after a one-year visit, she was reluctant to leave.

Returning to China: Interwoven With Old and New memories

When Little Yangmei and Dr. Mei returned, China’s travel restriction policies required all the travelers who enter China to quarantine in a hotel for two weeks, after which they have to spend two weeks at home. Dr. Mei told me through WeChat that Little Yangmei introduced the Chinese New Year and Spring Festival online to Ms. Nora and her Canadian classmates during the quarantine. To some extent, her wish came true (Dr. Mei, personal communication, February 25, 2022).

Adapting to the Schooling in China

Finally Remembered to Bring Her Homework. When the winter vacation ended, Little Yangmei returned to the Chinese primary school. In the first week of schooling, she forgot to do her homework as she was still in the transition period. It was
not until May 2021 that Dr. Mei told me through WeChat that finally Little Yangmei remembered to bring her homework with her after school (Dr. Mei, personal communication, May 7, 2021). It was similar to how Ms. Nora described her: “an absent-minded professor.”

In May 2021, Dr. Mei told me that Little Yangmei’s phonics was not learned systematically, so she still spelt words wrongly. By that time, she had returned to China for three months. Hearing that, I asked Dr. Mei if Little Yangmei needed online tutoring in English phonics for free. Dr. Mei was also informed about my dual role, and she agreed that we could start after the summer vacation began (Dr. Mei, personal communication, May 7, 2021). Therefore, since July 2021, I had been tutoring Little Yangmei when she has time (until April 2022). Similar to my tutoring with Feifei, Luna Zhou, and Caicai, we first went over the phonics and then read a picture book together.

In the process, Little Yangmei’s memory about Canada would be stimulated and she would keep talking for several minutes, sharing her feelings and understandings of the experiences in Canada. For example, on July 9, she told me about the differences between Canada and China.

Normally, in the Chinese classroom, you cannot walk around, and you have a fixed seat during the lesson while in the Canadian classroom, you can do these things after reading a certain book. At Riverside school, I could sit wherever I liked in the classroom. I really miss the monkey bar. I call it the monkey game because who climbs highest can win the game. My Chinese school has some facilities but considering students’ safety, we cannot play those parallel bars. One more difference between Canada and China is that I was less popular and had
fewer friends in the Canadian school. (Casual conversation with Little Yangmei, July 9, 2021)

In her eyes, there were many differences between Canada and China, such as the class rules, activities, and her popularity at school. Dr. Mei told me on the phone that it took a whole semester for Little Yangmei to adapt to schooling at the Chinese primary school. Her backpack became much heavier and there were many Chinese characters that she did not know how to read in the textbook. Compared with Riverside, the Chinese primary school that Little Yangmei attended in China had more competition (Interview with Dr. Mei, October 20, 2021). In our online chat, Little Yangmei told me more about her English learning at the Chinese school.

Gradually, I caught up in the main subjects, including Chinese and math. For sure, English is easy for me. We must write English letters in the printed font, like those letters in our English textbook, otherwise, it would be counted as wrong. But I tend to write cursive ones. For example, the letter y is like this $y$. My teacher does not allow the cursive letters. In the future, if you take exams in Canada or other countries, nobody will care if you write letters in italics or in a cursive way. Canadian teachers would not care about that, either. So, I cannot understand why we must write letters like that. (Casual conversation with Little Yangmei, July 16, 2021)

Little Yangmei noticed the difference between English letters writing in her Chinese and Canadian schools. She did not like the rule that students must write English letters in the printed font, instead of her favorite cursive.

_The Inspector Octopus Received a Strange Wedding Invitation_

After finishing the final exam in June 2021, Little Yangmei had more time to play during the summer vacation. Meanwhile, we started our tutoring session in July
2021. In August, Dr. Mei told me that Little Yangmei was going to join an English storytelling competition soon and the story that they chose was named “wedding.” Dr. Mei hoped that I could help Little Yangmei with the storytelling such as correcting her pronunciation and tones when necessary. Before we met online, Dr. Mei sent me the speech draft through WeChat (Dr. Mei, personal communication, August 9, 2021). At 11:17 a.m., I met Little Yangmei at Tencent Meeting and she looked excited. After chatting for several minutes, I invited her to tell me the story to me. She was glad to do that and began to act out the story with emotions and actions in front of the camera.

Dear distinguished judges, My name is Little Yangmei. My story is Number. 4: The wedding. The inspector Octopus received a strange invitation: Dear Inspector Octopus, Our wedding will be held at the Ridge Hotel in Mariana Trench on October 25th. It will be a great honor to have you here. Yours the Eels. At this very moment, there are two questions in his mind: who are the eels as I never know such a creature named Eel? "Maybe it’s a trap!" ...... But the inspector Octopus was so curious that he still left for this weird wedding without telling sergeant Squid. Just as he arrived at the Ridge Hotel, a voice came from behind suddenly: "Thank God, inspector Octopus, you made it on time!" Two silver slender fish said, swimming towards him happily. Then the inspector Octopus was told the whole story: more than ten years ago, it was him who rescued Miss Eel from an evil jellyfish in the Mariana Trench......The inspector Octopus asked, "But why don’t I know you?" "Of course, you don't know us," the Eel couple laughed. "It didn't take long for our eels to hatch, ↑ and then we set off to the land. Then, we went upstream↑ and grew up in freshwater. After that, ↑ we returned to the sea again...... The wedding began. Inspector Octopus stood in front of the couple↑ with a relaxed smile and announced:|| “By the power vested in me, by the laws of the Ocean, I now pronounce you husband and wife!” (Little Yangmei’s speech, August 9, 2021)

She acted so well that I could not help applauding after the storytelling. Before I pointed out some pronunciations that she needed to improve, she first reflected and said,
“I know I speak too fast, so people cannot hear it clearly. Some words are hard such as *sergeant* and *curious.*” I encouraged her, “It’s ok. Since we all know the problem, next we will fix it together” (Casual conversation with Little Yangmei, July 9, 2021). She had a self-evaluation of her oral English, and it showed her metalinguistic awareness. After she read the words with me, I suggest she put herself into the story and imagine she were the octopus so that she could perform the story more vividly. Then we had the following conversation translated from Chinese.

Haojun: How would you feel if you receive an invitation from an eel? You may think it is odd. Or you may wonder “who is it?”
Little Yangmei: I know what an eel looks like. I watched documentaries in Canada. I also read a book in which a shark was attacking a man. The man survived in the end. I know that every year, a large number of sharks will be hunted and killed. I am so lucky to be born a human. Otherwise, I will be killed or eaten by human beings after several years, just like sharks. It is the same with bear. If bears are found in the area where humans live, there will be consequences because some people will kill bears for their own safety.
Haojun: Oh, my. That is cruel.
Little Yangmei: Here’s one more. I like snow fox. They are so pretty. But they will suffer a lot once they are caught by people.
Haojun: That is too bad. I am so sad to hear this. (Little Yangmei’s speech, August 9, 2021)

Little Yangmei had learned about the conservation of nature in Canada, so the awareness of protecting animals was activated after the one-year trip when we discussed about wild animals. Actually, she mentioned nature more than once in our online chat and she always had insights on the topic. For example, on September 11, we were reading a book named *Saving the Pudding Woods* and there was one after-reading question: why did the people protest? Then Little Yangmei answered the question in
English with correct grammatical structures: “Because people think the pretty wood was beautiful and some of them haven't go to pretty wood before, so they want to go to the pudding wood. But if it chops to make houses, they cannot see the pudding wood anymore.” Then she commented in Chinese, 我觉得人类已经占据了地球上这么多的空间。为什么他们还要占野生动物的家呢？(I think human beings already occupy so much space on earth. Why are they still invading wild animals’ homeland?) (Casual conversation with Little Yangmei, September 11, 2021). By the time she had returned to China for seven months, she was capable of expressing her critical reflection on humans’ behavior of destroying nature with fluent English.

Little Yangmei tended to connect what she had seen and learned in life with the learning content in class. It seems to be a commonly seen instinct among children. At the end of the summer vacation, she performed the story about the inspector octopus and won the third prize in the national English storytelling competition.

**Chinese and Canadian Senses of Humor are Different**

Since I started tutoring Little Yangmei, I had been using a dialogic and encouraging way to talk with her online. Hence, she shared with me not only her experiences in Canada but also her understanding of Chinese and Canadian cultures based on the picture books we read. For example, on August 28, 2021, we read a book named *Elmo's Tricky Tongue Twister* (1998) and Little Yangmei laughed many times in class. She shared with me her knowledge of jokes in Canada and China.
Haojun: “笑话”你知道怎么说吗? (Do you know how to say, “joke” in English?)

Little Yangmei: joke. 加拿大就有 knock knock joke. 我们中国没有 knock knock joke. 就是那些比较冷的笑话. 要不我给你说一下，都是回答问题的那种. 他们（加拿大）的笑话跟我们的不一样，但也都是回答问题. 比如说，有个傻子掉到河里了，你救还是不救? (Canada has “knock knock joke” while we Chinese do not have “knock knock joke,” which is a dry and cold joke. Let me tell you about it. Both Chinese and Canadian jokes are about answering questions, but the Canadian joke is different from ours. Though it also needs to answer questions. For example, there is a fool falling into the river. Will you save him or not?)

Haojun: 救呀! (Of course, save the man!)

Little Yangmei: 那傻子也是这样想的. 哈哈，就是说这个问题其实很傻. 有的笑话是发音会比较搞笑. 可是呢，我们中国的搞笑就是 make fun of people. 所以刚刚这种问题最好别回答. (That fool thinks so, too. Haw Haw. Actually, this is a silly question. Some jokes include funny pronunciation. However, the funny thing about Chinese jokes is to make fun of people. So, you had better not answer such questions like the one I just asked.)

Haojun: 哈哈对，而且要说明 I am just joking. Don’t be serious. 口语中这个很常见，比如 Are you serious? Seriously? (Lol, yeah. When making such jokes, you may need to say: “I am just joking. Don’t be serious.” This expression is also common in oral English such as “Are you serious? Seriously?”)

Little Yangmei: seriously 好像就是让别人觉得你说的更好笑，有时候比如说 I hit my head, seriously. (It seems that the word “seriously” will make others think what you say is funnier. For instance, sometimes you say, “I hit my head, seriously.”)

Haojun: 对哦，你刚刚说加拿大的幽默跟我们不同，他们的幽默是什么样的? (Yes, you just said that Canada's humor is different from ours. What's their humor like?)

Little Yangmei: 他们真的有一种幽默是 knock knock joke. 中国没有 knock knock joke. (Canada really has the humor named “knock knock joke” while China does not have “knock knock joke.”)

Haojun: 这个词怎么写? (How to write that word?)

Little Yangmei: knock knock 没有中文. 就是会说 knock knock who is there? 我也是（从）那些书上看到的. (There is no corresponding Chinese translation for “knock knock.” It goes like this: knock knock who is there? I got to know this from a book.)

Haojun: 它的大概意思是什么? (What does it mean?)
Little Yangmei: 大概是意思是敲敲门的笑话。比如说 knock knock 然后他们有时候会说 who is there? Amelia. Amelia who? Amelia takes your banana! [She grinned.] (The general idea is “a joke of knocking on the door.” For instance, knock knock, and then they will say: who is there? Amelia. Amelia who? Amelia takes your banana!)

Haojun: 这是书上的笑话是吧? (Is this joke written in the book you read?)

Little Yangmei: 我自己编的，因为 knock knock 可以随便创造，你随便想说啥。 (I made this joke by myself because you can create “knock knock” as you like. Whatever you want to say.)

Haojun: 就问是谁对吧? 后面再说什么? (Just ask “who is it?” Right? Then what’s next?)

Little Yangmei: 首先你说一个单词，然后后面有一个句子就里面有你的单词。我要问你的话，你可以说 Knock knock. 你说. (First, you say a word, and then you say a sentence which includes your word. If I ask you, you can say “knock knock.” You try.)

Haojun: knock knock. (I even knocked on the table twice and pretended it was the gentle knock on the door.)

Little Yangmei: who is there?

Haojun: it’s David.

Little Yangmei: 要不你回答 peanut. 你试试用 peanut. (Why not answer peanut? Try to use “peanut” to answer the question.)

Haojun: it’s peanut.

Little Yangmei: peanut who?

Haojun: peanut butter?

Little Yangmei: 或者你可以说 peanut pie. (Or you can say peanut pie.)

Haojun: 最后那句话是什么意思? 笑点在最后一句话是不是? (What does that last sentence mean? Is the funny point in the last sentence, isn't it?)

Little Yangmei: 对，笑点是在最后一句话. (Yes, the point is in the last sentence.)

Haojun: 为什么最后一句话好笑? (Why is the last sentence funny?)

Little Yangmei: 因为前面都没用，都是在那里做个开头。最后一句话是说你的笑点在哪。比如说如果你说 old lady. 就可以这样: knock knock. Who is there? The old lady. The old lady who? The old lady who swallow a fly. [Then she chuckled.] 一个老太太，有一个老太太吞下了一个苍蝇。其实 the old lady who swallow a fly 是一本书. (Because the front sentences are useless, just functioning as a beginning. The last sentence needs to show the point. For example, if you answer the question with “old lady,” you can make a knock knock joke like this one. Knock knock. Who is there? The old lady. The old lady who? The old lady who swallow a fly. [Then she chuckled.] In fact, “the old lady
who swallow a fly” is a book.) (Casual conversation with Little Yangmei, August 28, 2021)

I became the student in terms of learning about the mechanism of making a knock knock joke, just like how I learned from Feifei about the hilarious thing (Winston Churchill) in the book *Baby-Sitters Club: The Truth About Stacey*. Little Yangmei read many books in Canada, so it was easy for her to select the example from her repertoire to tease and joke. Enjoying the verbal humor reveals the extensive reading fosters her English language learning and the development of discourses (Davies, 2003). The example sentence that she made about the use of “seriously” was also interesting and showed her pragmatic awareness. She also knew that it was not necessary to translate English into Chinese in some cases because that would lose the mechanism of the joke in another language.

Such interesting discussions about jokes and sense of humor often appeared in our online session. As Swain (2009) emphasizes, “humor is very much part of everyday life” (p. 102). On September 25, we were reading a book named *Tawny Scrawny Lion* written by Jackson (2001) online. In the story, a rabbit and lion went fishing near a river to make a carrot stew and the word “bank” appeared. Then I asked a “silly” question.

Haojun: *bank* 是银行的意思吗？(Does bank mean “yin hang?”) [The Chinese translation of bank, which means an institution where people or businesses can keep their money (Collins English Dictionary).]

Little Yangmei: bank 是岸, 我记得不是有一个是 “为什么河岸好有钱?” 英文的解释就是因为河岸是 bank, bank 和银行 bank 同音. (“Bank” is “An”20” I remember a question “Why is the riverbank rich?” The English explanation is

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20 The fourth tone. It means riverbank in Chinese. 268
because the riverbank is **bank** for short. And the **bank** has the same pronunciation as that “bank” which refers to a financial institution.)

Haojun: 这个在哪里看到的？很有意思（Where did you see this? Very interesting.）

Little Yangmei: 那是我妈妈给我讲的一个谜题. (It is a puzzle my mother told me.)

Haojun: Where did she tell you the joke? In Canada?

Little Yangmei: What joke? 这只是一个谜题. 而且中文的回答你知道吗? 因为在河岸的流水往前流, “前” 和 “钱” 同音. (What joke? This is just a puzzle. And do you know the answer in Chinese? Because when the river flows forward. In Chinese, “forward” it is homonymous with “money”. They are both “qian.”) (Casual conversation with Little Yangmei, September 25, 2021)

Little Yangmei got kinds of information and knowledge from different sources, such as books and communication with her parents. She knew the answer of the puzzle “Why is the riverbank rich?” in two languages. The homophones and puns were interesting to her and her translanguaging was like playing with two languages and constructing fun meaning.

**“Can you teach me some Japanese?”**

On November 13, 2021, Little Yangmei and I were having the English tutoring session online. She had new interests and cannot wait to share with me. I translated her words into English as follows.

Recently I become more interested in detective stories and animation such as Detective Conan and Sherlock Hound. Can you teach me some Japanese? Please! I want to watch Japanese cartoons and movies, such as Miyazaki Hayao’s movies” (Casual conversation with Little Yangmei, November 13, 2021).

My second foreign language happened to be Japanese, so I taught her greetings in Japanese, such as こんにちは (Kon ni chi wa). Little Yangmei repeated “Kon ni chi wa” and praised, 日语字真漂亮，你太厉害啦！能再教我一个吗? (How beautiful
Japanese characters are! You are the best! Can you teach me one more?) I taught her another expression to say good morning in Japanese and she repeated it. Then it suddenly occurred to her that she once watched a short fun video about greetings in English and Japanese. Little Yangmei said, 然后鞠躬。同时，一个美国人打招呼说 hey, buddy. 然后美国人的手就打到日本人脸上来了 (A Japanese guy says こんにちは and then takes a bow. At the same time, an American man says ‘hey, buddy.’ Then the American guy hit the face of the Japanese guy because he is still bowing) (Casual conversation with Little Yangmei, November 13, 2021). She mixed three languages to retell the video that she had seen on the phone. Then I responded, “yeah, that is fun. How do we greet in Chinese?” To my surprise, she did not answer, 你好 (ni hao, which means “hi” in Chinese) but “Hello, hello” (Casual conversation with Little Yangmei, November 13, 2021). At that moment, I vaguely felt that globalization or westernization influenced Chinese children’s language use.

“Elmo doesn’t think that’s true,” Elmo says.

On December 5, 2021, we were reading a book named We’re Amazing 1,2,3! (Kimmelman & Nelson, 2017) in the online tutoring session. The three main characters were Abby, Elmo from Sesame Street, and Elmo’s friend Julia There was one sentence in the story – “‘Elmo doesn’t think that’s true,’ Elmo says.” Immediately, Little Yangmei had a question about the expression, and we began to discuss.
Little Yangmei: 咋不说 I 啊？为什么说 Elmo？我觉得应该是 I don’t think that’s true 吧？比较幼稚的人一般才这么说吧。中文里面就是“俺”或者“我本人。” (Why didn’t he say “I?” Why did he say “Elmo?” I believe he should say “I don’t think that’s true.” Usually, only childish people will say it in that way. In Chinese, we say “an” or “I myself.”)

Haojun: 哈哈。我看过一个三国演义的短视频，就是关羽给刘备说了一堆话，然后张飞只说“俺也是。”这个告诉我们要有文化。（Ha-ha. I watched a short video of the Romance of Three Kingdoms. Yu Guan said a lot of words to Bei Liu, and then Fei Zhang only said, “me too” to show agreement on Guan’s words. This episode reminds us of the importance of education and knowledge, otherwise, you can only say: “me too.”)

Little Yangmei: [giggles] 英文里如果没有文化的话，该用 I 的时候就弄成 me 了，该用 me 的时候就说成 I 了。Caveman 就是那样的，他们随时都说 me。Me don’t think it’s true。在 Ook and Gluk 里面，那是一个搞笑故事。他们俩是来中国学武术的。 (If a person is not well-educated or does not have any knowledge, the word will become “me” when “I” should be used, and you will say “I” when “me” should be used. Caveman is like that. They always say, “me. Me don’t think it’s true.” In Ook and Gluk, which is a funny story, two characters came to China to learn martial arts.)

Haojun: 怎么拼的那个故事？我查一下。(How do you spell the title of that story? Let me search it on Google.)

Little Yangmei: Ook and Gluk。就是 Dav Pikey。和 Dogman 是同一个作者。他写过很多，你看。（The author is Dav Pikey, which is also the author of Dogman. He wrote many books. See.) Dragon, Dumb Bunnies, Captain Underpants, Dogman. Cat Kid Comic Club. Ricky Ricotta’s Mighty Robot. [She is reading the names of Dav’s works, which popped out on the website.] Ook and Gluk。它最后一页还有教怎么说 Caveman 的语言。最后有点搞笑。是祖先，还有一个他的后代。最后还问了个问题说 what's the greatest man? 他们都觉得自己是 greatest man。最后他们两个就打起来了。结果后代把祖先给杀了，后代自己都没了。（The last page of Ook and Gluk even teaches you how to say Caveman’s language. I think it’s a little bit funny in the end. There is an ancestor and a descendant of him. Finally, a question was asked, “what's the greatest man?” Both the ancestor and the descendant felt they were the greatest man. In the end, they fought. As a result, the descendant killed his ancestor, and then there was no descendant.）(Casual conversation with Little Yangmei, December 5, 2021)

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21 The dialect in Shandong province in China. It means “I.”
Little Yangmei felt confused about the use of the third person in the sentences such as “‘Elmo doesn’t think that’s true,’ Elmo says.” Then she made an example of how to say “I” if someone was not very well educated, which she learned from a comic book. After I told her about the short video of Romance of the Three Kingdoms, she quickly associated it with the comics The Adventures of Ook and Gluk (Pilkey, 2011). Her reading experiences, my sharing about the short video and discussion about the use of the first or third person were all interwoven in the conversation with translanguaging.

**The Wildest Imagination of the Winter Olympic Games**

In February 2022, there was a big event in China – Beijing Winter Olympic Games. Little Yangmei followed the ranking of countries’ golden medals every day and she loved watching figure skating on TV. It reminded her of the skating rink near Riverside school. Dr. Mei told me that Little Yangmei was going to participate in China Daily “21st Century Cup” National English Competition in April and the main topic was “the wildest imagination.” Dr. Mei hoped I could brainstorm with Little Yangmei and revise the speech draft. I know that “the wildest imagination” was a wonderful topic for children to think about. Therefore, I asked her thoughts at the beginning of our online class.

Haojun: what is your wildest imagination?
Little Yangmei: 我想把老家整个移到加拿大去,这样就可以滑冰了. 加拿大那边很冷的. 我家这边没有雪场,但是整个移过去就可以滑冰了. 我们一个城市的人都比加拿大人多. (I want to move my whole hometown to Canada so that I can skate. It’s very cold in Canada. There is no snowfield in my hometown, but
you can skate after moving the whole place there. There are more people in our province than the whole population of Canada.)

Haojun: Really? Are you sure? Let me search on Google.

Little Yangmei: I think so. My mom said that.

Haojun: Oh, your mom is right. Your hometown has 38 million people.要是整个城市都搬过去, 加拿大 hold 不住这么多人吧 (If the whole city moves over, Canada can't hold so many people.)

Little Yangmei: But Canada was bigger than China. 其实是我妈让我做的,这是 我们英语老师弄的一个演讲. 我其实不想参加的. 我是假期后面才知道. (In fact, my mother asked me to do it. This is a speech organized by our English teacher. Actually, I don't want to participate. I didn't know there was a competition until the end of winter vacation.)

Haojun: I am sure you can do a good job in the contest! Have a try! It’s something new. 我看到的稿子上写的是把 swimming pool 变成一个冰场. (I saw the draft said the imagination was turning a swimming pool into a rink.)

Little Yangmei: 这是我妈说的, 其实不是我说的. Actually 北京的奥运会的 swimming pool 就是用高科技冻成冰的, 变成溜冰场. (This is what my mother said. It's not my idea. Actually, the swimming pool of the Beijing Olympic Games is frozen into ice with high technology and turned into an ice-skating rink.) But I think one day if Beijing have the summer Olympics, I think they have to use the ice with water again.

Haojun: So, your imagination must be connected with the Olympics (in this English competition)?

Little Yangmei: because it was not like that imagination. You have to connect it with 奥林 pics. (“ao lin” pics, which sounds like Olympics. She pronounced Olym in Chinese 奥林.) 我最想写的是花样滑冰的四周三周跳. (What I want to write most is figure skating: Quadruple and Triple loop.) I don’t know how they can jump like that. 我都不知道. (I don’t know how they could do that.) But did you know 他们这样转都不会晕吗? (wouldn't they feel dizzy if they spin like that?)

Haojun: They have been trained so they won’t. Let me search for some books or pictures about Winter Olympics to see if they could further inspire you. [I searched “Winter Olympics Beijing 2022” on Google Images. Soon some pictures showed up.]

Little Yangmei: Who is she?

Haojun: American snowboarder, Chloe Kim. She is Korean American.

Little Yangmei: [Glancing at these pictures, she asked a question] 但为啥, 很奇怪, 因为黑人不也是美国人? 为啥 Olympics 没有任何那种黑人的美国人?

22 It is the pinyin for 奥林. She mixed Chinese pronunciation and English letters in one word, Olympics.
(But why? There is one strange thing. Since Black Americans are also American, why aren’t there any Black American athletes here?)

Haojun: 有啊，夏季奥运会,他们田径很厉害的. (There are some Black American athletes in the Summer Olympics. They are very good at track and field sports events.)

Little Yangmei: 我说 Winter Olympics. 同样是美国人, 为什么只有白人参加冬奥会？黑人的美国人为什么没参加? (I mean Winter Olympics. They are both American. Why did only white people participate in the Winter Olympics? Why didn't Black Americans participate?)

Haojun: 黑人的运动员是吗? 我们看看有没有啊? (Black athletes? Let us search.) That is a very good question. Let me search on Google Image. “Black American Winter Olympics 2022.” Here is a picture of Elana Meyers, but I don’t know if she is a Black American. She won the silver medal in bobsled. Oh, it just occurred to me that you can imagine some new sports events in your writing.

Little Yangmei: Dragonboat on ice. How about that? I saw there was a Dragonboat race in my hometown. 但是也不知道是不是 Olympics? (But I am not sure if it is Olympics.)

Haojun: 对对，也可以比大家刻冰雕，看谁刻得快。(Yes, yes, you can also say. Let’s carve ice sculptures in the Winter Olympics. The winner will be the one who carves the fastest.)

Little Yangmei: (giggled) And I think that was not Olympics. (Casual conversation with Little Yangmei, April 3, 2022)

The conversations contain a large amount of information. First, Little Yangmei’s imagination was much more creative and vivid than mine. She wanted to move the whole city to Canada so that she could skate anytime. It could be traced back to her favorite sport in Canada: skating. As her Canadian teacher Ms. Nora commented, Little Yangmei was able to connect her life experiences with English writing. This ability did not fade away after she returned to China. For example, she put forward the “Dragonboat on ice” because she just saw a Dragonboat race in real life. Secondly, she knew the fundamental geographic information about Canada and China, such as the population and land area. Thirdly, she noticed that there were not many Black American athletes in
the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, which showed her cultural sensitivity to ethnic
groups and races. Her question about “why Black American did not participate?”
reminded me of her past experiences of being mistaken as a Métis by her Canadian
classmate and her previous stereotype of Canada – people in Canada are all white people
with blond hair and blue eyes. Living in Canada for one year, Little Yangmei knew
countries like Canada and America are multiethnic and multicultural. Lastly, she
mentioned several times that her mom wanted her take part in the contest and some ideas
in the draft were Dr. Mei’s. It indicates the role of parents in young Chinese visiting
students’ language learning. In my opinion, Little Yangmei’s ideas were more creative
and closer to the theme of the contest: the wildest imagination.

One week after our discussion, Dr. Mei sent me the updated draft of Little
Yangmei’s writing and asked me to go over it with her in our online session. The title
was “The Yangzi Ice Rink” and here is the draft.

Did you watch the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games? They were awesome.
Just imagine: a huge swimming pool turning into an ice rink in minutes! With this
technology, you can play hockey, curling, or skate whenever you like. The event
that I enjoyed the most in the Winter Olympics was the figure skating, which is
also my favorite sport. The figure skaters performed their skills by jumping or
spinning so gracefully. Watching the figure skaters, I came up with a great idea.
What if we used that same technology on the Yangzi River? Could you imagine
it: the Yangtze River frozen in minutes! I could skate from my hometown to visit
my cousins in Shanghai. On the way, I could view many beautiful sights and the
fish swimming underneath the ice. We could use this same technology not only
for enjoyment but for saving lives too. What if the Yangtze River was about to
flood? We could freeze it so people could evacuate or prepare to prevent the
flood. Do you love this dream? Would you like to make it a reality? If so, let’s work hard for this shared future. (Little Yangmei’s artifact, April 10, 2022)

The speech included the key words that I brainstormed with Little Yangmei. Besides, it showed her awareness of protecting wild animals (fish in the Yangtze River).

The draft was polished by Dr. Mei, so some words were advanced such as **evacuate**, **prevent**, and **reality**. During the session, Little Yangmei read it twice and I offered her some feedback on the pronunciation of several English words and intonation. After class, I told Dr. Mei about my suggestions on Little Yangmei’s speech. Dr. Mei was pleased and said, “thank you. She will be unhappy if I correct her pronunciation. But she is willing to listen to your words.” I replied, “glad to hear that I could do something for her. She is always talkative in my class and sometimes I cannot interrupt her talking at all.” Dr. Mei remarked, “yes. She liked you. She has another English contest in the summer of 2022. The theme is environmental protection, so she plans to do a presentation about microevolution in Jialing River after fishing ban\(^\text{23}\). She has a team member, and they will make a bilingual banner with pictures of typical fish in the river. I will keep you updated on the result” (Dr. Mei, personal communication, April 10, 2022).

In August 2022, Dr. Mei told me through WeChat that Little Yangmei got the first prize in the contest about environmental protection. “I think she has raised the

\(^{23}\) On January 1, 2021, a 10-year fishing ban in all-natural waterways along the Yangtze River came into effect (Lin & Lu, 2021). Jialing River is a major tributary of the Yangtze River (Wikipedia, Jialing River).
awareness of protecting animals in Canada, which positively influences her until today,” Dr. Mei commented (Dr. Mei, personal communication, August 23, 2022).

Summary

At the very beginning, Little Yangmei was reluctant to embark on the journey to Canada, but after the one-year visit, she was unwilling to leave. Although her life and learning were affected by Covid-19, she was still immersed in the Canadian education system and knew many important aspects and topics, such as special education, environmental protection, Indigenous people, Canadian history, physical education, cultures around the world, English language learning and so on. From April to June 2020, she had to take online classes, but she was happy to come back to school in the second half of 2020. Dr. Mei, as her mom, played an important role in Little Yangmei’s international and cross-cultural experiences such as tutoring her in English writing, reading with her, comforting her when she was homesick, and taking her outside to meet with new friends.

After Little Yangmei came back to China, she felt her grades were not as good as her classmates, but she did not show anxiety or too much worry about that. With one-semester efforts, she reached the average score and felt satisfied. In our online tutoring sessions, her memories of Canada continuously emerge and blended with her newest experiences in China. Her translanguaging also naturally flowed throughout our discussion on language content, story plots, and social issues and served for effective
communication as well as meaning making. Overall, her stories were characterized by all three aspects of the narrative inquiry space, including the shift in living, and learning contexts, interactions with peers and teachers in Canada and China, and connection with previous and future learning, and life experiences.

So far, I have narrated four children’s stories (Feifei, Caicai, Luna, and Little Yangmei) and they were all below grade 3 when attending Canadian schools. The last story that I would like to share belongs to Ping Li, who was a grade-5 student when she came to Windsor. As the “oldest” Chinese visiting student of the five, what did she learn outside the classroom? Did she co-construct meaning and share knowledge through translanguaging? How did she reflect on Chinese and Canadian culture? Chapter 8 will unveil Ping’s lived stories about languages and cultures in the transnational space.
Chapter 8 PING – STORY OF A GRADE-FIVE STUDENT

Prelude of Ping Li’s Narratives

On December 12, 2019, Ping Li and her mom, Dr. Liu attended a Farewell Potluck Party held by Dr. Shijing Xu with the RLP Working Team at the University of Windsor for the Chinese student teachers. Ping and Dr. Liu just arrived in Windsor several days ago. At the party, I saw Dr. Ben who was familiar with the RLP and the Chinese student teachers. Dr. Ben, I, Ping, and Dr. Liu chatted and drank juice. It was the first time that Dr. Ben and I met Ping who was a grade-5 Chinese student. She told me she had just come to Windsor for several days, so she was excited about everything here. I was glad to hear that and told Dr. Liu on weekends we could spend time together if they had time. Ping also hoped to explore more fun things in Windsor, so Dr. Liu agreed on my idea, and we added each other’s WeChat. Besides, Dr. Liu met Susie at the party and got to know from other Chinese visiting scholars that Susie did a good job in tutoring children. They added each other’s WeChat after a casual chat (Field notes, Canterbury College, December 12, 2019).

Since January 2020, Dr. Ben, I, and Ping often hung out on weekends, and we became more and more familiar with each other. Before they flew back to China in November 2020, I had a face-to-face interview with them at their rented house. After they left Canada, we kept in touch with each other through WeChat. In October 2021, I invited Dr. Liu and Ping to participate in my research and they agreed. Then I had online
interviews with them respectively in October and November 2021. This chapter provides a narrative understanding of Ping’s lived experiences in Canada and China by focusing on her translanguaging, bi-lingual/cultural acquisition and her meaning making of the trip to Canada.

**Before the Trip: Yearning for Going Abroad**

Ping was born in southwestern China in 2009, and her mom, Dr. Liu, works in a comprehensive university as a professor. Ping told me in our interview that her mom went abroad for several months when Ping was little and came back with a delicate book about Disney princesses. It was an amazing gift for Ping, a four-year-old girl. She loved the book, from which she got to know Merida, Cinderella, and Pocahontas (Interview with Ping, November 5, 2021). The attractive present buried a seed in Ping’s mind – going abroad one day.

Dr. Liu told me in our face-to-face chat that in 2015 Ping attended a Chinese primary school that was affiliated with the university where Dr. Liu worked. Then Ping started to learn English in grade 1. Many students at the school are the children of Chinese university professors and they have short-term overseas experiences. For example, one of her Chinese classmates Meng had been to the U.S. and she often showed Ping the photos taken in America. Ping’s cousin also had been to the U.K. and shared with Ping about her overseas experience. As a result, she envied her cousin and classmates who had been abroad. Dr. Liu knew that Ping had been looking forward to
going abroad since she was very young, so she decided to bring Ping with her when she had the opportunity to be a visiting scholar at the UW for one year (Interview with Dr. Liu, November 5, 2021).

Dr. Liu also told me that before coming to Canada she searched for information online about public schools in Windsor and found that the Ridgeview School, which was located near the downtown, had a choir. Ping loved singing and she was one of her Chinese school’s choir members, so it could be a perfect match. According to the school website, 48.5% of students’ first language is not English and the proportion of students who are new to Canada from a Non-English-Speaking country takes up 18.8%. Furthermore, Ridgeview School did not have many Chinese students and its average score in math was similar to Kingswood’s. In Dr. Liu’s mind, it would be improper for Ping to attend a school which had many Chinese students because she would rely on her first language instead of practicing English. Thus, Dr. Liu chose to rent the second floor of a house which was close to the Ridgeview School. The house was only a 6-minute walk away from the school (Interview with Dr. Liu, November 5, 2021).

**During the Trip: Transformations and Complexities Arose**

*The Last Month of 2019 and the First Half of 2020*

Ping’s dream of going abroad finally came true. In the last month of 2019, she came to Canada with Dr. Liu after a 14-hour flight. In our online interview, Ping recalled their first day in Windsor and shared with me in English as follows.
My mom ate the noodles, but we didn’t like it because it was hard to chew. The noodles were like pasta. It didn’t taste very well. Actually, they were not real pasta. I am not sure what they were but definitely not Chinese noodles. You need to boil it for a long time. Anyway, the taste was not very yummy. After I had the fruit as simple dinner, I went to bed and that is it. (Interview with Ping, November 5, 2021)

Ping’s impression of the first day in Canada was about the food she ate. On the second day in Windsor, Dr. Liu and Ping went to a newcomer service center to submit some fundamental files and go through a few formalities, including registering for the public school that Ping would attend. After two days, they could check the status in the system and Ping could go to school.

**The First Month of Schooling.** In the middle of December 2019, Dr. Liu took Ping to school and the principal arranged Ping to Mr. Leung’s class in grade 5. Mr. Leung was from Hong Kong, so Dr. Liu was not sure if he could speak Mandarin²⁴. On the first school day, Ping was already able to understand basic English, such as “How are you? Do you want to go to the bathroom?” Before the trip, she had learned English for 4 years in China. She accepted an English test and the ESL teacher, Mr. Theodore, said Ping could choose to go to the ESL program or just attend normal classes in the mainstream classroom. If she chose the ESL program, she could go back to the mainstream classroom after the March break of 2020. Ping chose the second option.

On the first school day, Ping came home in the afternoon at 3:10 p.m. and she told Dr. Liu that it was exhausting at school because she was learning in an English-

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²⁴ A majority (89%) of people in Hong Kong speak Cantonese (Otieno, 2017).
immersion environment. But she was still excited and delighted. Dr. Liu recalled Ping’s mental state after school in the first week of schooling by saying, “she was physically tired but mentally elated” (Interview with Dr. Liu, November 7, 2020). Dr. Liu said that the only learning difficulty in the first month was that Ping could not understand the math questions written in English. The words including *sum, subtract, fraction, divide,* and *multiply* were new to her because most Chinese primary schools do not teach mathematics in English and the English curriculum does not including those mathematical terms. After the Christmas break, Ping said to her mother that she wanted to study abroad in the future because she believed that children in foreign countries were much happier than Chinese children. She thought so since she knew there was less homework and Canadian children could finish school much earlier than Chinese children (Interview with Dr. Liu, November 7, 2020).

**Racially Diverse Community and School.** Since the middle of January 2020, I had started to go out with Ping and Dr. Ben on weekends. When we took a walk at the Ojibway park or enjoyed delicious food at local restaurants, Ping would share her daily routines, feelings, and understandings of life in Windsor. She told us that on school days she got up at 8:30, had breakfast, left home in the morning at 8:50 a.m., and then arrived at school before 9 o’clock. She said she was confused why there were so many Canadians looking like middle eastern or Indian people, especially on the bus. On
January 12, 2020, while we were eating rice noodles at a Vietnamese restaurant, Ping said,

I used to think Canadian society is full of white people, but in fact, it is not. In my Canadian school, the white students only constitute only 10% because this neighborhood has a lot of Muslim people. Some of my classmates are South Korean and Vietnamese. There is only one Chinese student in my class. I go to the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) and the children are from Laos, middle east countries, Somali, and so on. A Black girl in my class is so pretty because she has long legs. (Casual conversation with Ping, January 12, 2020)

Ping’s previous impression of Canada was similar to Little Yangmei’s, which was mentioned in Chapter 7. The racially diverse community and school astounded Ping and she found the neighborhood she lived in seemed to be sparsely populated by white people. I heard that the public security situations near downtown were not good, so I asked her whether she lived comfortably in her rented house. She told us that there was a sanctuary close to her house, so she often saw some homeless people walking around her house. She said, “A homeless man even defecate in our backyard. I saw that. It was horrible” (Casual conversation with Ping, January 12, 2020). That sounded scary and disgusting, so I felt sorry and worried for Ping and Dr. Liu. Dr. Ben reminded that Ping should lock the window and door before they went to bed.

Create an English-Immersion Context. We chatted for one and a half hour at the restaurant and then Dr. Ben drove Ping and me home. On our way home, Ping mentioned that she started to take the weekly tutoring class with Susie (Casual conversation with Ping, January 12, 2020). Susie’s one-on-one tutoring class began in
January 2020. The tutoring was at Ping’s home and each class lasted for one hour. The textbooks they used were Complete Canadian Curriculum Grade 5 and Complete English Smart 5. In the first few tutoring classes, Susie helped Ping with the words in math questions, especially some typical terms. Dr. Liu told me that since Ping figured out the meaning and requirements of math questions, she started to feel confident in learning math (Interview with Dr. Liu, November 7, 2020). According to the math curriculum in China, math textbooks begin with multiplication in the first semester of second grade, when children are seven years old. Thus, when Ping Li came to Windsor and was arranged in grade 5, she had already learned the math knowledge taught at Ridgeview School. She might have learned that when she was in grade 3 or 4 in China.

Dr. Liu told me in the face-to-face interview in November 2020 an important reason why she had Susie tutor Ping and hoped to create an English immersion context. Even if the learning content was English grammar, Dr. Liu still wished Ping to learn it in an all-English environment. She recalled her own educational experiences,

Before I graduated from high school, the English class had been taught mainly through Chinese. However, when I became an undergraduate student, the classes were suddenly taught in English, and I could not adjust to it in a short time. Thus, it was hard for me to make the transition. Hence, I hope Ping can try her best to understand as much English as possible. (Interview with Dr. Liu, November 7, 2020).

As a parent, Dr. Liu’s past learning experience influenced her decision making in Ping’s English language learning. For example, she paid Susie to tutor Ping every week for an hour.
Sharing Cultural Knowledge. On February 9, 2020, Dr. Ben, Ping, and I took a walk beside the Detroit River. While we were talking, Ping started to talk about the conventions and political correctness she observed at Ridgeview School. She summarized it in English as below.

“You cannot touch Black people’s hair or talk about watermelons with them. I did not offend any cultural traditions, but I am still very careful in daily life. For example, if I accidentally touch a Muslim’s hijab, will there be any consequences? Some of my Canadian friends tell me they must wear it when they are 13 years old. I also learned that you should be very careful when talking with Muslim people. You should respect their belief. People will name their child with Muhammad. You cannot say the name is weird. People will be offended.” (Casual conversation with Ping, February 9, 2020)

I learned a lot from Ping’s sharing about cultural knowledge and I was also curious about how she made friends with her classmates from different ethnic backgrounds, so I asked if the language barriers influenced her making new friends at school. She replied in Chinese, and I translated her words into English here. She said, “even though I do not understand Arabic, I still know what they are talking about. There is a context in their conversation. For example, a classmate is sharing her opinion about food and then the next classmate continues with the topic. Sometimes they speak English, so I know they are talking about food.” I was amazed by Ping’s ability in making sense of the conversations at her school, so I chatted with Dr. Liu about this through WeChat after Ping went home. Dr. Liu thought Ping might have some talent in learning foreign languages. “Her father can speak German and her aunt also majored in foreign languages in college. She could guess what her Canadian classmates were talking
about in Arabic, but probably she cannot understand it,” said Dr. Liu (Dr. Liu, personal communication, February 9, 2020). Ping’s response seemed to indicate that she did not see multilingualism as a barrier in making new friends at the Canadian school.

**Ping’s Friends.** While Ping was enjoying her schooling in Canada, the euphoric school days were interrupted on account of Covid-19. After March break, Ping started to study at home. At the same time, I invited two Chinese graduate students at the University of Windsor, Tingting, and Nana, to our “hang-out” group as we are good friends and I noticed that Ping’s thoughts were more mature than her peers. She was comfortable making friends with those who were older than her. We established a WeChat group named “Ping’s friends,” which included Dr. Ben, I, Dr. Liu, Tingting, and Nana. Ping did not have her own smartphone, so she was not in the group. Each time before we hung out, Dr. Ben would send a message asking who wanted to join.

Sometimes Tingting was busy, or Nana had other scheduled arrangements, so Dr. Ben, Ping, and I would play outside for a while. Dr. Liu hoped to create an English-immersion environment for Ping to communicate with Canadians, so she did not hang out with us. When it comes to language use in real life, Ping told me that she would not speak Mandarin with Canadians, but she would speak some English words when staying with her Chinese friends because she knew they could understand English (Casual conversation with Ping, March 15, 2020).
Do You Have the Virus? On March 12, 2020, Ontario announced 17 new cases of COVID-19, so the total number reached 59 (Rodrigues, 2020). Under that background, many Chinese people in Canada began to take precautions and individual public health measures such as wearing masks and washing hands with soap. On March 15, Ping, Dr. Ben, and I took a walk at Ojibway park at 2 p.m. We all wore masks, but other Canadians did not. While we were going to walk over the wooden bridge, a lady suddenly walked toward us and calmly asked us, “Do you have the virus?” Dr. Ben hastily clarified, “No, we are just protecting ourselves.” I also patiently explained, “Though there are not many cases in Windsor now, we still wear a mask. It does not mean we have Covid-19.” The lady understood and asked, “Can I take a photo of you three? Don’t worry. I did not mean to judge anything.” We were all wearing a mask, and thought no one could recognize us, so we agreed. She took a photo of us, though I had no idea where she was going to post that. Ping was also confused about the lady’s behavior, but she was not mad at it, just witnessing the different attitudes that Chinese and Canadian people held toward Covid-19 (Field notes, Ojibway Park, March 15, 2020).

Taking Online Courses at Home. After the March break of 2020, Ping had to take online classes at home. Dr. Liu told me through WeChat that the Canadian teachers sent some links and videos for students to watch and then answer questions after watching these videos. It was similar to reading comprehension, but the text became online videos. Dr. Liu told me through WeChat,
Mr. Leung selected some science videos about Covid-19, though they were too
difficult for the students. Even I could not understand the content because there
were too many specific words about biology, neuroscience, and medical
knowledge. (Dr. Liu, personal communication, April 20, 2020).

Interested in how Ping got over the difficulty, I asked Dr. Liu how she helped
Ping with these questions. Dr. Liu told me that she suggested Ping adjust the pace of the
video and watch it repeatedly before answering the questions. However, it was still
tough. She recalled,

One time, Ping and I watched a video twelve times, but still could not find the
answers to some questions. We had to submit it before the deadline. Luckily, the
five questions were correctly answered and the teacher Mr. Leung comforted
Ping. He knew that Ping took both ESL and mainstream classes, so he said, “it’s
ok” and encouraged Ping to learn as much as possible. (Dr. Liu, personal
communication, April 20, 2020).

When Ping recalled the period of taking the science class online, she told me that
she figured out how to find the answer from the scientific videos.

Although I did not really understand what the videos were introducing because
they were extremely difficult. There were questions such as the function of white
blood cells and platelets. Even my mom could not make sense of it. But it’s ok. I
read the questions on the assignment first and then listen to the audio, paying
attention to the context. The answers were hidden in the sentences. (Interview
with Ping, November 5, 2021)

Ping found the secret to answering the questions related to the videos while
studying at home. The English videos were hard to comprehend, but she used the
strategy that was commonly seen in doing reading comprehension exercises to finish the
demanding science assignment.

On April 18, 2020, Ontario provincial officials reported 10,010 confirmed cases
of Covid-19 and 514 deaths in total (Goodfield, 2020). Considering the severe situation,
Dr. Liu thought it was dangerous to frequently go outside. Thus, since April 2020, Dr. Ben and I reduced the number of going out with Ping. During the first wave, Dr. Ben would take Dr. Liu and Ping grocery shopping when they needed to buy food. He told me in our online interview in October 2021 that it was hard for anyone to tell Ping from her conduct in a grocery store that she was a visiting Chinese student “because she knew where things were in the store, and she always wanted to persuade her mom to buy certain things. For example, she liked the tiny dumplings and steak sold at Costco” (Interview with Dr. Ben, October 20, 2021).

Apart from taking online classes from Ridgeview School, Ping was also following the online classes from her Chinese school in the meantime. In the first half of 2020, Covid-19 outbreaks were so severe in China that many Chinese schools asked students to study at home. The Chinese teachers at Ping’s primary school offered the remote learning platform, so Ping could take some classes even though she was in Canada. Besides, her weekly tutoring class with Susie was still going on through Zoom Meeting. Every day, she finished the learning tasks assigned by the Canadian school and then ate some snacks. She took a nap in the afternoon and then took online courses that included Chinese and math, which were part of the curriculum in China.

**Learn a Language in Relation or Relationship.** After we had the ice cream and chatted for an hour, Dr. Ben drove Ping and me home. After Ping arrived home, Dr. Ben
told me that he found Ping took lots of initiative in conversations. He said to me in the 
car,

It might be her personality, but I think she has a kind of confidence in her English 
language ability, so she was just not shy in communications. Actually, it’s like 
one of the best ways for somebody from another country when they’re visiting. If 
they learn a language in relation or relationship with somebody. (Casual 
conversation with Dr. Ben, June 14, 2020).

His words were enlightening, so I asked him about the meaning of “learning a 
language in a relation or a relationship.” He explained, “if you’re in a classroom, you 
need to repeat things or write things and follow the exercises. But if it’s in a relationship 
with somebody, you have more incentive and more encouragement to take risks. It gives 
a context and an encouragement for learning.” Dr. Ben’s comment reveals the difference 
between learning and acquisition. It also inspired me to reflect on the meaningful 
language practices in Ping’s natural interaction with us. Nearly every time when we hung 
out, the Chinese people in our group first spoke Mandarin and then translated it into 
English for Dr. Ben to make sense of what we were talking about. Sometimes we only 
spoke English so that Dr. Ben could follow our conversations. It is possible that Ping had 
considerable input through these relationships because she could hear the same meaning 
expressed twice in both languages. Although we never intentionally asked her to speak 
more English, she naturally developed her bilingualism when chatting with us, which 
was like Dr. Ben said, “learning a language in a relation/relationship.”
The new semester began in the middle of September and Ping became a grade-6 student. She had a new Canadian teacher who was a white lady, named Ms. Riley. Dr. Liu told me in our face-to-face chat that Ms. Riley did not assign any homework to the students because Ms. Riley insisted that “they are students at school, but they are children at home” (Interview with Dr. Liu, November 7, 2020).

YMCA and Pickles. On September 26, 2020, Dr. Ben, Ping, Tingting, and I went to the University of Windsor to play table tennis. While we were playing, Ping started to talk about her feelings and observations at school and YMCA. I had never been to the YMCA, but I heard Ping mention it several times before. I supposed it was an after-school center, so I asked her what it was like. She said,

YMCA, you also have teachers, but it’s a place like they don’t teach you anything. It’s like if your parents cannot like pick you up from school, like if they’re working and then the teacher from YMCA will go to your school and then pick up a bunch of childrens. They will give you something to eat, but the food is like cereals, like you know. And people grab it like, and then put it into the mouth. Yeah, so actually I did that too because I must do that. I don’t have a spoon or anything....... Sometimes like they will give you like em… em… Something is not like the. I don’t know what it is called in English. 就是泡菜. (it’s pickle.) Like they have kind of a tiny. It’s like a tiny 就是很小的黄瓜. (it’s very small cucumber) [I asked, “Do you mean pickle?”] Yeah, pickle! It’s like very very salty and. But a lot of like people like in Canada, and I still remember once I went to come school and like they’ll put out this like food and then they like taste it. And em... There’s a like big jar and so they put them into like tiny like paper, the cupcake paper. It’s like tiny little ball and each ball of like one pickle, but that pickle doesn’t looks like a pickle. It’s just like a tiny little ball, so I don’t know what it is. It’s like white and there’s some like waters. So, I thought it was like jelly and I thought like a lot of children, they like pickle, so I take one
and I just put it into mouth like and then like it takes so bad~ [Dr. Ben and I smiled when she said, “it tasted so bad” and her facial expressions were just like she was eating a lemon.] It’s so salty, yeah. They will give you pickles in like YMCA and every time they gave us pickle, I will give the pickles to the others because they likes it. (Field notes, University of Windsor, September 26, 2020)

Ping introduced the function of YMCA and the food it gave to the children there.

According to her description of the “pickle,” what she actually referred to might be an olive. She used many “like” in her oral English and I knew she got the habit from Susie.

As Chapters 5, and 6 mentioned, I had observed Susie’s several classes with Caicai and Luna, so I was familiar with the language pattern in Susie’s discourses. The integration of “like” in Ping’s expressions created a buffer for her to organize thoughts and add details in verbal communication but it also diluted the density of information in her sharing.

We played ping-pong for one and a half hour and then Dr. Ben drove us home. Before leaving, we decided to celebrate Thanksgiving at Dr. Ben’s house together and he would prepare a delicious turkey.

First Month of Schooling in the Fall Semester. On October 12, 2020, Ping, Dr. Liu, Nana, and I all arrived at Dr. Ben’s house. We chatted in the living room and kitchen. I asked Ping how her French learning was going on at school. She looked proud and said,

我法语的测试题从来就没有错过。好简单的，你想啊。他们五年级六年级了，法语在学那个 un, deux, trois. (相当于英语的) One, two, three. What’s this? 那些。他们学的好简单。就跟我们英语学问问题是一样的。法语考试会（让学生）连线，就是给你数字，比如说 onze 是 11，douze 是 12 这种。
有时候会让写自己的名字，比如说 Je m’appelle Ping Li. 或者 “你”是什么。比如说“你”是 tu. (I never made mistakes in the French quiz. It is so easy! Think about it. When the students are in grade 5 and 6, their French is like, “un, deux, trois,” which is like the English words and phrases, “one, two, three. What’s this?” What they are learning is so simple, just like learning to ask questions in English. The French quiz will let you do the matching between numbers and French. For example, onze means 11 and douze means 12. Furthermore, sometimes the quiz requires us to write down our names, for instance, Je m’appelle Ping Li or how to say “you” in French. It is “tu.”) (Casual conversation with Ping, October 12, 2020)

Ping mixed three languages to explain why the French quiz was easy for her by extracting examples from her English learning experiences. She compared basic English knowledge with the learning content in French class. I was also interested in other classes at Ridgeview School, so I asked if Ping could tell me more about her schooling in the first month of the fall semester. She first explained in English and then she shifted to Chinese for clarification. I translated the second half of Chinese sentences in the brackets.

Ping said,

The Canadian schools much easier and like they will give the children more time to play and the way how they learn is really different. For examples, say, like ESL class. There are more playing in that class, but like em… in the a like regular class like em… it’s em… more close to Chinese class. It’s just like people sit. Teachers is like teaching, but like they will use more videos like and also, I found out that the teacher don’t need to do that much like Chinese teacher. They can just use a lot of things from YouTube or like Instagram. Like the students they are actually, you see, I need to change the way how to say it. I feel they will listen like a half. So when they are like when they’re doing like the worksheet, they will ask a lot of questions. Actually, they’re not like not paying attention. I think they’re just they can’t understand that much like at once. 唉，总觉得好像不能这么说这个事情，怎么说呢，（我）还是用中文的，因为不好解释这个问题。我总是觉得有的学生他是在很努力的听，但是老师讲一下他听不懂。你会感觉他应该没有 pay much attention，但是其实他有可能在很努力地听。他们会有一个问题：需要听很多遍。我的一部分同学，不是所有的，也
不能说是智商上的参差。比如说他有的时候会问我数学问题，我还是能回答一些，我用我的方式去给他讲，他听了之后是一遍就能听懂的。不知道是不是因为我之前学过的原因，反正老师讲的我完全可以听懂，但他就是不行。(I feel that I can’t talk about it in this way. I will speak Chinese because it’s difficult to explain this problem. I think some students are trying hard to listen, but they can’t understand what the teachers are teaching. You may feel the students do not pay much attention, but in fact, it is possible that the students are trying to listen, that is to say, here is the problem. They need to listen to it many times. Some of my classmates, not all of them. I can’t say it’s caused by the difference in IQ. For example, sometimes he will ask me math questions after class, and I know the correct answer. I will illustrate these questions in my way to him. I think he can understand it with my illustration. I don’t know if it’s because I’ve learned some math knowledge before. Anyway, I can understand what the teacher said, but he just can’t.) (Casual conversation with Ping, October 12, 2020)

Ping felt it was inappropriate to attribute others’ learning difficulties to their IQ, so she shifted to her native language, Chinese, to further explain what she meant in a more accurate way. Moreover, she also noticed the learning resources used in her class and how the students learnt. It sounded like she did not have peer pressure in Ms. Riley’s class, so I asked her whether she had any difficulties in learning. She said,

Nothing challenging for me. It only takes me 10 minutes to finish all the homework, but my classmates need to spend one hour on it. In the classroom, they are doing exercises while I am reading or doing other things because I have finished all the homework very early. The learning here is not like that in China, where you feel that you are still slow compared with your peers or you will make mistakes sometimes. There are so many talents in Chinese schools, so it is very competitive. It’s much easier to be the top student in Canadian schools. (Casual conversation with Ping, October 12, 2020).

I was glad that Ping felt easy about the schoolwork (even French learning because she had not learned it before coming to Windsor). She compared learning in Canada and China and summarized that “在加拿大的学校做一个 top 就轻松很多，不用付出那么多努力就可以做 top 的感觉确实不一样，会快乐很多” (You can be the
top student without working too hard in Canada. It really feels different, and you will be much happier here) (Casual conversation with Ping, October 12, 2020).

I remember she wore an orange winter coat on the day we exchanged Thanksgiving gifts, and her black hair was longer than her shoulder. After we arrived home, Dr. Liu chatted with me through WeChat about Ping for a while. She said,

Today I listened to Ping’s chat with you and Dr. Ben. Her oral English was much enhanced. From March break to the middle of September, Ping just stayed at home with me or hung out with you and Dr. Ben. She also took Susie’s weekly class, but it was just English input. She did not have much chance to practice and speak English. I did not realize that the input was useful until she went back to school. In the past, her English was broken but now, she could express herself on the topics that she was interested in, such as social and political issues. (Dr. Liu, personal communication, October 12, 2020)

Dr. Liu’s observation showed that a large amount of input seemed to lay the foundation for Ping’s communication with Canadians in English. I felt lucky to witness Ping’s progress in English language learning.

**Fight Against Racism.** At the beginning of October 2020, new restrictions were put in place for Toronto amid rising coronavirus cases including the closure of indoor dining at restaurants, bars, gyms, and cinemas (Nielsen, 2021). My birthday is at the end of October, so Dr. Ben was prepared to celebrate it for me at his house. I was touched by his kindness and agreed. On October 23, 2020, Ping, Dr. Liu, Nana, and I all went to Dr. Ben’s house. Ping gave me a birthday present (a silk scarf), and a postcard.

While we were eating the cake, Ping told me her Chinese school reopened and there were no online classes for her to take. She just needed to do some exercises and
mid-term exam papers that her mom printed. Dr. Liu also brought the textbooks that
Ping’s Chinese primary school used as Ping needed to preview the content of grade 6.
Dr. Liu told me, “Unlike other young Chinese visiting students in Windsor, Ping is the
oldest among the Chinese children that I knew here. She has to work hard. Otherwise,
she will feel super difficult when she comes back to her class in China” (Field notes, Dr.
Ben’s house, October 23, 2020). After we ate the cake, we chatted for a while at the table
in Chinese. Here is the translated conversation.

Haojun: I am so glad to receive the gift from you. Although there is Covid-19, we
can still get together occasionally and have fun. Anything new about your
school?
Ping Li: Just fine. Do you know? Long time ago, another friend of mine went to
the U.S. She is Chinese. She was bullied by some boys. Her head was hit by a
ball. She had to see a psychiatrist.
Haojun: Oh. That is too bad. You must protect yourself at school. What if
someone does not respect you?
Ping Li: If someone makes racist comments, I will fight back. You can’t be a
coward. (Casual conversation with Ping, October 23, 2020)

Before the visit to Canada, she heard a lot of stories from her Chinese friends
who had been abroad. When she finally had the opportunity to visit a foreign country,
she would mention her Chinese friends’ cross-cultural experiences from time to time and
compared their stories with her own. She believed that she was different from her friend
who was bullied in America.

Ping’s words at my birthday party were proved to be true by a striking situation
at YMCA earlier that month. While we were drinking tea at the table on my birthday
party, Ping told me about the conflict between her and a grade-8 boy. She recalled that
one day in October, she and her Canadian friends were having snacks at YMCA. At this time, a tall boy came and shouted at her, “do you have virus? You come from China. Oh, Chinese virus. Go back to China. Chinese are dirty.” Then he touched Ping and poked her with a pen. Ping was so angry that she stood out and hit back, though the boy was older than her. When she told me this story, I was first shocked but then impressed by her bravery and resistance to racism. Meanwhile, I had the fear that Ping might have other troubles because of this fight. On the contrary, she was not worried because she knew she would only stay in Canada for one year and she was sure a caring teacher would support her. She shared the reaction of the teacher at YMCA in Chinese and I translated Ping’s words as follows,

I told the teacher at YMCA why I hit the boy. She understood and supported me. She is an immigrant. She said, “good job” and gave me a thumbs-up. The teacher also seriously told the boy he should not say those words. (Casual conversation with Ping, October 23, 2020).

Before my birthday party, Ping already told Dr. Ben and Susie about this conflict. They all supported Ping and thought her resilience against racism was laudable. At the end of the party, I heard from Dr. Liu that they were to leave Canada the following month. It was earlier than I expected because the visit should be one year. Dr. Liu explained it was because of Covid-19 and she was worried that the restrictions on flying back to China would be increasingly strict. As a result, she decided to leave Canada in the middle of November 2020.
Visit Ping and Dr. Liu Before They Left. I was reluctant to say goodbye and hoped to repay Ping’s company. I bought her an artificial Marauder's map\textsuperscript{25} from Amazon as a present because I knew Ping loved *Harry Potter* series. On November 7, 2020, Dr. Liu invited me to her house because she had left many things to me, including a pair of boots and some kitchen seasoning. In the afternoon, I brought my gift to visit their house near downtown and Ping was joyful to receive the Marauder's map. Then we sat on the balcony and started the conversation about schooling and life in Windsor. We mainly spoke Chinese so I translated her words into English as follows, except when translanguaging appeared.

Haojun: You are going to leave. How time flies! What do you think of the school here now?
Ping Li: Good, because there isn’t much homework, and I can go home very early. I always finish all the homework in the classroom before I come home. Then I can read books by myself at school.
Haojun: That sounds great. What topics will you talk about with your classmates?
Ping Li: I don’t chat with them very often. We just play games together. 我有个同学喜欢 Blackpink 和 BTS，但我不知道 BTS 是什么 (One of my classmates likes Blackpink and BTS\textsuperscript{26}. But I don’t know what BTS is.) She showed me their MV and talked about her favorite stars. But I have more common topics and similar interests with my Chinese friends.
Haojun: Got it. It might be a difference. What other differences do you find between the Chinese and Canadian schools that you attend?
Ping Li: Canadian students can sit as whatever they like in class, for example like this [began to imitate her classmates’ sitting posture: cross-legged on the chair] and this [she leaned back]. In China, we will be like this [back straight, feet flat on the floor. Her hips, knees, and ankles are about at 90 degree].

\textsuperscript{25} The Marauder's Map in *Harry Potter* was a magical document that revealed all of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

\textsuperscript{26} Blackpink a South Korean girl group formed by YG Entertainment while BTS is Bangtan Boys, which is a South Korean boy band.
Haojun: If the student does not sit well here, will the Canadian teacher point that out?
Ping Li: 这边小孩很讨厌作业，而且我们班上有个同学就脚踩箱子还敲桌子，咚咚咚地打，节奏一样的。老师就说 I told you a lot of times don’t do this. 还有戴口罩他就这样那样带着，只罩着鼻子（露出嘴巴）. (The children here hate homework. Moreover, there is a classmate stomping on the box and tapping on the desk with beats. “Doom, doom, doodoo.” In addition, he does not wear the mask properly, like this [putting the mask on the nose with the mouth being exposed]. Thus, my teacher said to him, “I told you a lot of times don’t do this.”) (Interview with Ping, November 7, 2020)

Ping vividly described her Canadian classmates’ hobbies and the topics they were interested in. She also compared Chinese and Canadian students’ class rules and behaviors, such as the sitting posture. I was still interested in the challenges that Ping might meet in her visit to Canada and would like to know if her answer changed over time. Thus, I asked her the same question that was asked before when we hung out earlier.27

Haojun: 在这快一年了，你觉得有什么困难或者挑战吗？
Ping Li: 没有，就是我五年级的时候有点难，因为我根本不懂法语，我是在学期中加入这个班的。我不知道老师在法语课上在讲什么。
Haojun: 哦哦，也就是说，你进班的时候，其他学生已经学了一段时间法语？
Ping Li: 是的，但我觉得他们的法语水平是...很多同学都怕法语考试，但我不怕。法语考试对我来说很容易啊，但我同学会错比较多。
Haojun: 哇，这么厉害。因为你来加拿大之前完全没有学过法语，但你还是觉得考试很简单！
Ping Li: 而且我有一个同学就很傲慢，他觉得自己数学很好，平时做作业做完之后，他就很大声地（说）“done, done”，然后还有这么（拿起自己的卷子炫耀）“I am done, see?” 他还觉得自己法语很厉害，但是他做完的时候，我们班一大半都做完了！还有法语考试，他觉得自己法语很好，然后在那里秀。Recess 的时候他就自己在那飚法语，都飚错了。当时有一个同学 Salma 她说她很怕。

27 Previously, her answer was mostly like “nothing challenging because everything is fine” (February 9, 2020).
Haojun: 怕什么？
Ping Li: 怕考试，然后那个同学就跟说 Salma 我可以帮你怎么样，然后呢
法语 123 是 un trois deux，然后他写的是 un deux trois，123 这都错了嘛。然
后他帮 Salma 的法语，好多都帮错了。人 Salma 考试，考了个 15 道题对 7
个，他自己才对了三道，三道他还去帮别人？而且他其实对老师很不尊
重。（我们学校）有一个做清洁的，然后当时就在这打扫我们的 locker.
（清洁工）就打扫他的 locker，然后那个同学就说“你为什么打扫我的
locker?” 然后清洁工说，“我需要把你的清好，因为怕有 corona 什么
的”，结果他就说，“你（柜子）里面也要清吗？” 清洁工说“对，（柜
子）里面什么你的所有东西我都会帮你清理一遍。” 然后（清洁工）之前
打扫我的（柜子的）时候，我就说了 thank you。但是到他的时候，他就
说，“如果有什么东西我不想让你看到的，你不想让你碰，你碰了怎么
办？”反正他就跟那个人争论。

(Haojun: Almost one year living in Windsor. Do you feel any difficulties or
challenges?)
Ping Li: No. Just a little bit hard when I was in grade 5. I could not understand
French at all because I joined the class in the middle of the semester, and I knew
nothing about it. I had no idea what the teacher was talking about in French class.
Haojun: Oh, so when you entered the classroom, other students had learned
French for some time?
Ping Li: Yeah, but I feel their French level is… Many classmates are afraid of the
French test, but I am not. The French tests are so easy for me, whereas my
classmates made a lot of mistakes.
Haojun: Wow, that is terrific. You have not learned French before you came to
Canada, but you think the test is simple!
Ping Li: Furthermore, I have a classmate who is very arrogant. He thinks his math
is pretty good, so he will say loudly, “done, done” after he finishes exercise in our
classroom. He also likes to show his test paper to others. “I am done, see?” [She
imitated the boy’s action: unfolding a piece of paper and showing around]
However, half of the class already finished the exercise when he showed off. At
recess, he keeps speaking incorrect French. At recess, my classmate Salma said
she was anxious.
Haojun: Anxious about what?
Ping Li: She was worried about the French test and the boy said he could help
her. One two three in French is un deux trois, but he wrote un trois deux, which
was wrong. He thought he could help Salma with French test but lots of his
answers were incorrect. Salma got 7/15 while the boy only got 3/15. He only got
3 but he still felt he was an expert in French. What’s more, he was disrespectful
to teachers at our school. One time a cleaner was cleaning our locker and I said
“Thank you” to her. But later, I heard the boy asked the cleaner, “why did you clean my locker?” The cleaner illustrated, “because it’s my job and I need to make sure there is not corona (virus) inside these lockers.” The boy kept arguing with the cleaner by saying “What if I don’t want you to touch my things and there are some belongings that I don’t want you to see?”) (Interview with Ping, November 7, 2020)

Ping felt French was difficult at the beginning, but she found out that her classmates’ French level was not so high. In our chat, she imitated the “arrogant” boy’s behavior in her class, and she thought the boy was disrespectful to teachers. Then she made an example of how the boy treated the cleaner at school. It revealed that Ping paid much attention to a person’s moral character. Besides, I knew she was resilient and straightforward when she encountered things that she disliked or felt sensitive to. Thus, I asked her if she remembered anything else happening at school. She told me that in one of her science classes, her Canadian teacher played a video in class introducing Covid-19 and there was one sentence in the video saying, “the virus comes from China.” Ping did not agree, so she immediately told the teacher the video was inappropriate. The teacher said sorry and clarified, “I did not mean to discriminate anything. But we can still learn something from it (i.e., the video).” Again, her bravery stroke me because she quickly stood up and pointed out the things that made her uncomfortable. During the pandemic, the alarming rates of discriminatory experiences faced by Asian Canadians and hate crimes targeted at Asian Canadians have increased hundreds of times (Lou et al., 2022). Considering that background, I believed her reactions were more worthy of admiration and respect.
It was a relief that the science video about Covid-19 and the conflict with the boy at YMCA did not make Ping frustrated. Nor did she see these events as difficulties or trauma. For example, it was one week after the fight with the boy at YMCA that Ping told her mom about this because she thought it was not a big deal (not because she was worried about being blamed by Dr. Liu). When I asked her if she wanted to return to China, Ping said “not really” as she liked her Canadian classmates and her school. She said in Chinese and here is the translation.

One of my Chinese classmates in China did not like her school when she was studying for a short time in the U.S. So, she wanted to return home during her visit. Well, I do not because I have friends here. Although life in Windsor is not as wonderful as I expect, I am willing to live here, so long as mom and I can move to a new house. (Interview with Ping, November 7, 2020).

She compared her friend’s experiences in America with hers in Canada again. And I did not anticipate that she was willing to stay in Canada since she told me and Dr. Ben several times when we hung out that she found foreign countries were not as great as she expected and there was a psychological gap in her mind. After coming to Windsor, Ping changed many of her previous perceptions of Canada due to many factors. For example, before coming to Windsor, she thought all universities in foreign countries were as prestigious as the Peking University. She further disclosed her views in our chat in Chinese and I translated as follows.

I realize that some foreign universities are not as good as Peking University and Tsinghua University. And the insecurity of living in foreign countries is increasing. For example, the number of gunshots in America is rising. Previously,

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28 According to the QS World University Rankings 2022, Peking University ranks 18th (Express News Service, 2022).
there were many Chinese people worshiping all foreign things but this time, I saw how the Chinese government dealt with Covid-19. I think our country is becoming better and better. I feel China is the safest and happiest country now. (Interview with Ping, November 7, 2020).

I was amazed by her analysis of current situations in Canada and China as well as her perceptions of living and studying in the two countries. After I chatted with Ping, she went back to her bedroom to continue packing up things. I went on chatting with Dr. Liu on the balcony about Ping’s evaluation of Canada and China. Dr. Liu expounded that for a period of time Ping’s attitudes and thoughts shifted from one extreme to the other. “At first, she wanted to go abroad and worship foreign things and countries. After she came to Windsor and saw how Canadians and Chinese handled Covid-19 in a different way, she transformed her previous opinions. Then she went to the other extreme,” Dr. Liu said to me. (Interview with Dr. Liu, November 7, 2020). I was interested in the word “extreme,” so I asked Dr. Liu what kind of extreme she meant. She told me,

Ping Li is in grade 6 now, just before adolescence. Some of her opinions might be cynical, especially at the beginning of the pandemic. Her father and I tried to guide Ping to reflect on these experiences from a comparative and objective view. For instance, her French learning was on and off. She had learned it from December 2019 to March 2020. Then she did not continue until the fall semester of 2020. She told me about French learning in grade 6 is just reviewing and testing. I deem that the students do have fun at the Canadian school but there is not much efficacy or progress. So, I try to guide her to analyze one thing from different perspectives. Overall, I think Ping has a better understanding of foreign countries like Canada and the U.S. because she sees a real Canada. (Interview with Dr. Liu, November 7, 2020)

Dr. Liu guided Ping to take a comprehensive look at things in Canada. She used French learning as an example to illustrate the two sides of Canadian education to Ping.
In terms of schooling, I knew that Ping really liked her Canadian school and her classmates. Dr. Liu smiled and added,

Ping’s Canadian teachers always praised her. For example, her French teacher called her “French genius” because she had never learned French before but sometimes got full marks in French tests. Ping told me that her Canadian teacher Ms. Riley was also adept at praising students. A boy got 7/15 in a test, which was not a satisfactory score in the Chinese context (because it was less than 60%). However, Ms. Riley commented “fantastic.” Aside from that, the learning content itself was easy for Ping. Some of Ping’s classmates do not hand in their homework at all, not to mention taking more classes on weekends or during holidays. It is very different in China where Chinese teachers have great pressure and they assign a lot of homework to all the students. Many tests and after school, students will take more courses at kinds of educational institutions such as math, English, piano, painting, and so on. As a result, Ping had a lot of peer pressure in China. There are too many excellent students at her school in China. (Interview with Dr. Liu, November 7, 2020)

Dr. Liu’s words uncovered a huge contrast between learning in Canada and China. It also resonates with what Ping shared with us earlier about her feelings of schooling in the two countries. Dr. Liu mentioned peer pressure, so I thought of Ping’s peers in Canada. Then I mentioned Ping’s fight with the boy at YMCA and asked what Dr. Liu thought about the tension. She told me that when she heard of the fight from Ping, she reminded Ping of protecting herself and not fighting with others. Dr. Liu added,

Ping often mentions her Chinese friend who had been to the U.S. because the girl was bullied by some children during her stay in the states. Ping thinks it is not proper to be afraid of bullying. Different from some younger visiting students who may not understand what racism is, Ping read international news and she knew Covid-19 is quite serious in North America this year and there are many Anti-Racism reports. So, Ping is sensitive to such issues. (Interview with Dr. Liu, November 7, 2020).
Dr. Liu’s explanation gave me more background information about Ping’s attitudes toward racism. The outbreaks of Covid-19 had an impact on Ping’s thoughts and behavior. Besides, Dr. Liu said, “Without Covid-19, I think Ping’s schooling in Windsor would be much better. In this year, she was lucky to have you and Dr. Ben to talk with her” (Interview with Dr. Liu, November 7, 2020).

Dr. Liu’s words reminded me that during Ping’s visit to Canada, there were so many people getting involved in her life: her Canadian classmates and teachers at school and the YMCA, the two Chinese graduate students, her mom, Dr. Ben, Susie, her roommates, I, and so on. Every time when we hung out, Ping shared with us her schooling and interesting things happening in her life. Meanwhile, we witnessed her changes in a comprehensive way. For example, we all noticed that Ping made obvious progress in her English competency. Dr. Liu was pleased to hear that, but she commented, “without the ESL program, Ping’s English could get more improvement.” It was perplexing to me because the ESL curriculum was designed to support English language learners to achieve the high levels of literacy that are expected of all students (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008a). Thus, I asked, “how come it held Ping’s English language learning back?” Dr. Liu expounded that it only took Ping two months to understand English in daily conversations, and she had learned English for several years before coming to Canada. If she could go to the mainstream class after the March break and there were no Covid-19, then her English might have been much better because she
had more peers who had higher English levels to communicate with (Interview with Dr. Liu, November 7, 2020).

After the March break, Ping took both the ESL and mainstream classes at home until she went back to school in fall semester. Furthermore, I knew Ping was also taking the weekly tutoring class with Susie and an online math course that her mom registered for her. In addition, she had to preview the grade-6 Chinese curriculum including three main subjects (Chinese, English and Mathematics). For the heavy workload, Dr. Liu explained,

Even in Canada, Ping has to do many exercises and practice tests. Additionally, I require her to recite one Chinese poem every day. Otherwise, after she comes back to her Chinese primary school, she cannot catch up with her classmates. There is no other way. The whole learning context in China is like that. We will fly back to China next week and after that Ping will change her daily schedule too. She has to get up at 7 am and leaves home before 7:30 am. In January 2021, she will take the final exam. (Interview with Dr. Liu, November 7, 2020)

While Ping was visiting a foreign country, she was making preparation for academic adjustment after she returned to China. She said to me, “maybe my Chinese classmates can get more than 90, whereas I can only get 85 or 86 as I mostly learn by myself in Canada while my Chinese classmates learn from teachers at school” (Interview with Ping, November 7, 2020). Although she studied hard in Canada, she still assumed that her Chinese classmates in China would get higher scores in exams.
At the end of our chat, it was already 5 p.m. and the sunset became a flush of rose on a dome of silver. Before I left, Dr. Liu described a beautiful scene that I would remember it for my entire life. She said,

the air is fresh today and you can see the clouds clearly. Our balcony is a great place to enjoy sunrise and sunset. When the weather is as nice as today, I will ask Ping to watch the scenery. One time, the sunset was just as charming as it is today. I asked her to come out to enjoy the dazzling sky. She walked out, stood for a while, and unexpectedly began to sing the song *Ode to the Motherland*. She sang, 五星红旗迎风飘扬, 胜利歌声多么响亮, 唱歌我们亲爱的祖国, 从此走向繁荣富强. (The five-star red flag waving in the wind, how grand the victory sounds! Singing our beloved motherland, rising toward rejuvenation.) I think Ping does not miss home or family very much, but she really misses her homeland” (Interview with Dr. Liu, November 7, 2020).

Saying goodbye to Dr. Liu and Ping, I walked home with the splendor that the sunset lavished over the earth. Softly humming *Ode to the Motherland* on my way home, I looked up at the sky and seemed to see the same view that Ping saw on her balcony. I could imagine that the glory of the setting sun shed on her face as she looked into the sundown and the sublime sunset glowed in her eyes.

**Time to Say Goodbye.** The day before Dr. Liu and Ping left Windsor, Dr. Ben, Dr. Ben’s wife, I, and the two Chinese graduate students all came to their house to see them off. It was a chill but sunny day. We brought our going-away gifts and Dr. Ben prepared a photo album which contained Ping’s photos with us during her 11-month visit to Canada. Dr. Liu almost burst into tears when she saw the album. From the photos, I could tell Ping had grown much taller and stronger than before. Ping’s Chinese roommates (Yiyi’s parents) took a group photo for us, and Dr. Liu shared the photo with
us in the WeChat group “Ping’s friends.” Ping was the same height as I. After we saw them off, Dr. Ben drove me home and, on the way, he recalled the days of hanging out with Ping and her language development. He said,

   When we went for a walk at Ojibway park, or we went down to the river or something, she is very observant. She noticed the plants like raspberries, birds and squirrels and asked questions about the trees. But after 3 or 4 months, she was not trying to learn a language. She was functioning in a language. She is comfortable with adults. She just felt free to talk and the more she talked, the more she developed her skills (Casual conversation with Dr. Ben, November 12, 2020)

   After staying in Canada for 11 months, Ping was able to order food in English, go grocery shopping, express what she observed, and communicate with adults on various topics. Dr. Ben and I were both sad about Ping’s departure, so we decided to stay connected with Dr. Liu and Ping after they came back to China such as making a group video call through WeChat. The trip was over, but our friendship would last.

**After the Trip: Always Busy in China**

*The Last Semester in Primary School*

Ping and Dr. Liu arrived in China in the middle of November 2020 and had two-week quarantine in the hotel before they went home. I kept in touch with Dr. Liu through WeChat and got to know that Ping took the final exam in January 2021. She got full marks in math and got satisfactory grades in Chinese and English tests (Dr. Liu, personal communication, February 16, 2021). It was winter vacation after the final exam. Ping had a video chat with Dr. Ben and me in our WeChat group. She said,
Hi, guys, is the restaurant where we had breakfast still open? Or just allowing customers to take out the food? I miss you guys. Currently, I still have a weekly online tutoring class with Susie. We read the story *Arthur’s Adventure* together. It is a story about a mouse walking like a man and having adventures. (Casual conversation with Ping, February 18, 2021)

Ping cared about her Canadian friend Dr. Ben’s life and the restaurant where we used to have breakfast. She did not cut loose after the final exam but kept studying hard during winter vacation since she had to prepare for the new semester, which would be her last semester in primary school.

**A Big House and Small Rooms.** At the beginning of March 2021, she went back to her Chinese school. In the middle of April, Ping told Dr. Liu that her friends who used to play with her already had new friends. The girls talked about superstars they liked and the boys that they had a crush on, which were not the topics that Ping was interested in. She felt lonely and did not want to go back to school. Caicai and Feifei also had similar reactions when the new semester began, but for different reasons. In our online interview, Ping recalled the days when the spring semester of 2021 had just begun. She used a metaphor to describe her loneliness and we had the following conversation.

Ping Li: 我是六年级回来的，按照人类的正常身心发展这个方面来讲的话，这个时间他确实是会融入到小圈子里面去的。正好这段时间我就不在，比如说你原来的朋友是个大圈子，在四五年级之前这个大圈子里。比如说它是一个大的屋子，每个人都可以从这里到这里。但是完了之后就开始… (I came back when I was in the sixth grade. Considering the physical and mental development of human beings, people will integrate into small groups at this time. In this critical time period, I was not in China. Old friends formed a big circle before the fourth and fifth grades. You can see the big circle as a big room. Everyone can drop in, stop by, and visit each other. But when I came back to my class, it started…)

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Haojun: 没有哪个房间属于你了。(There is no small room for you anymore.)
Ping Li: 你看，整个教室被分成了，首先是男生和女生两大阵营。男生肯定（我）就不考虑了，然后就是女生。女生被分为追星一、追星二。剩下的就是我跟她们玩。我们平时什么都聊，我回来之后就跟那几个玩，我们也玩的很好。因为我一直都是那种，大房间可以、小房间不行。也不是小房间里不行，可能就是我没有找到、没有人和我的小房间一样，如果我非要呆在小房间里面的话，我就只能一个人。(Yes! Because the whole classroom is divided into two camps: boys and girls. I only play with girls. The girls in my class are divided into groupie one and groupie two. I played with the rest ones. We usually talk about everything and play with everything. Before I went abroad, I used to play with those people. After I came back, I still played with them, and it was not bad. I have always been the kind of person who can play in a big room, but I am not comfortable playing in someone’s small room. It does not mean I can't make it in a small room. Maybe I didn't find someone who has the same small room as me. If I have to stay in a small room, I will be alone.)
Haojun: 你希望别人跟你聊什么？国际政治吗？(So, what do you expect others to talk to you? Like international politics?)
Ping Li: 不是。我们朋友之间聊的不是这个。但是追星一和追星二他们这两个圈在我们班的话是一个对立的状态。(No. Me and my friends will not talk about this. In my class, group one and group two are opposite to each other.)
Haojun: 我明白了，他们不喜欢对方的 idol。 (I see. They do not like each other's idol.)
Ping Li: 对，像原来在加拿大有个朋友特别喜欢 Jimin，然后我另外一个朋友喜欢 Jung Kook，但是跟 Jimin 的粉丝跟 Jung Kook 的粉丝是对立关系。(Yes, for example, I have a friend in Canada who liked Jimin very much, but another friend of mine liked Jung Kook. The fans of Jimin and Jung Kook were at loggerhead.)
Haojun: 那他们平时不也是聊的比较日常的话题吗？还是说你觉得，没有人能够 match 你的 topic？(Don't they usually talk about everyday topics? Or do you feel no one can match with your topic?)
Ping Li: 我喜欢音乐。但是他们的很多话题都是建立在需要经常获取信息的基础上。我无法获取快速的信息。所以我没有这个渠道。比如说他们看到好笑的视频，他们会发给我，我会接收到信息，但是这个信息是他们的，所以我知道的是他们知道的一部分。虽然他们把他们的（信息）分享给我了，但是我无法跟他们进行互相的交流。我的爱好建立在不需要去（经常）获取信息的基础上。(I like music. However, many of their topics are based on the need for regular access to updated information. But for me, I cannot get instant information. So, I don't have this channel for the newest information. For example, when my friends watch some funny videos on their phone, they will...
send them to me and I will receive the information, but this is their information. What I know is part of what they have already known. Although they shared theirs with me, I couldn't communicate with them. It is not a mutual communication.) (Interview with Ping, November 7, 2021)

Ping had brought forward critically important insight and revealed an issue that might be common among adolescent students. In her description, she could not find someone who had a similar small room because her classmates were interested in different topics. Furthermore, Ping was not allowed to use her phone by her mom and her Chinese school, so she could not follow the updated Internet slang or recent gossip about South Korean stars. Ping’s reflection on interpersonal relationship in her class was critical and in-depth, so I treated the problem seriously and shared my opinion with her in our interview: it is a significant topic that we all need to deal with throughout our life, not just in elementary school or adolescence.

Actually, Ping also told Dr. Liu about the obstacle in maintaining the former friendship. Dr. Liu comforted her by guiding her to reflect on her own experiences and friendship. In our online interview, Dr. Liu said to me,

I told her that she changed a lot after the visit to Canada, so it is the same as her friends. I did not expect Ping would have difficulty in socialization. I thought she might feel not easy in subject learning. Ping is in her adolescence, so, for sure, she is sensitive to things around her such as her friends’ attitudes. I did not pay attention to her mental health, so the frustration was seated in her mind little by little and finally burst out. Her struggle was totally understandable. (Interview with Dr. Liu, October 9, 2021)
Dr. Liu guided Ping to put herself in others’ shoes and reflected on her own changes after the visit to Canada. On the other hand, Ping knew that she was going to be a grade-7 student and enter a new school, so she gradually adjusted her mindset.

**Different Versions of English Language.** In May 2021, Dr. Liu mentioned that Ping was worried about her English grammar, so I said I could offer online free tutoring if Ping had time. If allowed, I hope to ask her some questions about life in Canada. Dr. Liu agreed but Ping was really busy with schoolwork, so I only tutored her once a month at most. On May 16, 2021, Ping and I met each other at Tencent Meeting, and we chatted for a while before learning English tense. I was perplexed because I thought Ping should feel English learning super easy after her visit to Canada. She explained to me her concern with English grammar. I translated her words into English as below.

Half of my Chinese class have the experience of travelling abroad as many of them are the children of university professors. Their Chinese English (中式英语) is not good. Me too. Yet many classmates’ Chinese English is better than mine. They have a talent for testing, but my advantages probably do not lie here. Canadians are not great at grammar. In Canada, the grammar in your oral English is inaccurate and your friends’ grammar is not correct either. However, you and your friend can still understand each other. That’s enough. (Casual conversation with Ping, May 16, 2021)

Ping noticed the difference between Chinese English and authentic English, but she did not imply that one variety of English was inferior to the other one. In her opinion, mastering the “Chinese English” could help to excel in standardized exams. I continued to ask her, “which one is more important? Getting full marks in English exams
or getting people to understand the English you speak in daily life?” She answered in Chinese and here is the translation.

Then it's up to you. First, you should know your purpose of learning English. In China, you must shine at taking tests, which is for survival. But when you go abroad, you can’t ensure that others can understand your English only because you can get high scores in exams. Maybe you do well in testing and your grammar in oral English is all correct but making yourself understood is more practical in daily life. If you always do well in tests, then maybe your English can be applied to paper writing or foreign trade. But if you think English is to communicate with foreigners and broaden your horizons, it’s another thing. (Casual conversation with Ping, May 16, 2021)

As a grade-6 student, Ping could differentiate the different purposes of learning or using English in various contexts such as in daily communication and academic paper writing. To assist Ping in excelling in English tests, I designed the tutoring sessions based on the English curriculum standard of junior high school. In the class on May 16, I started with simple present tense and simple past tense. At the end of the 40-minute session, Ping said she needed to prepare for the middle school entrance exam in June, so I wished she could successfully pass the exam and looked forward to seeing her online after the exam.

**Getting Prepared for Being A Middle School Student**

In July 2021, Dr. Liu mailed me a whole box of snacks to appreciate my assistance in Ping’s English learning. I was grateful to receive the food and chatted with Dr. Liu through WeChat about recent situations about Ping. I thought Ping would travel around after the important exam because she had finished elementary school with hard
work. But she was expected to take advantage of the summer vacation to preview the main subjects in the 7th grade. On the last day of July 2021, I tutored Ping for 40 minutes and checked some English grammar exercises with her. She got most questions correctly, which was amazing because the level of these exercises was higher than the 7th grade. At the end of our tutoring session, I asked Ping whether she wanted to study abroad in the future and how she thought of the younger children’s adaptation to foreign countries. She said,

Maybe I want to go to Canada or New Zealand. I am willing to go to Canada, but I have to consider some real factors such as money. Now I am in China, so definitely I will study hard and raise marks in exams. I have standard for myself in studies. I don’t think grade 2 and 3 children will have any difficulties in their adaptation to foreign countries, because they have more fun activities to participate such as pajama day. Their experiences will be different from mine, considering the impact of Covid-19 on my trip to Canada. The children are too young to feel being offended or discriminated. They will be cheerful and when they come back to China, the memories of visiting foreign countries will also be blissful (Casual conversation with Ping, July 31, 2021)

She considered more about financial situations and the preparation that she had to make in academic achievement when talking about the future plan. Furthermore, she compared the possible experiences and feelings between her and younger visiting students.

On August 6, Ping was taking an online grade-7 math class organized by a private educational company. She was still as busy as before, even though it was summer vacation. On the same day, I spent 40 minutes tutoring Ping English. At the end of my session, I designed a section to practice her oral English. I asked her several questions
about life and learning in Canada. Afterward, I analyzed the sentences and words she used and paid attention to her logic among sentences. After class, I told Dr. Liu that Ping had a great sense of English, but she could do a better job if she enhanced her logic and insert linking words among sentences. Dr. Liu was satisfied with the design of oral English questions and agreed on my feedback. “Yes, her talk was incoherent. Without logic. Thank you for pointing it out. When you have time, come to our city and we can have palatable meals together” (Dr. Liu, personal communication, August 6, 2021). I was grateful and hoped I could visit them someday. On August 21, I had another tutoring session with Ping. We read a picture book and discussed the present perfect tense. In the end, I asked Ping some English questions about high schools, universities, and colleges in Canada. She answered in English,

I just heard that high school is good, like good and also it's just like em…simple like it's just a regular high school, but they have more programs. Like a good high school might have program such as like mathematics, hockey, or anything else, like their programs like and more art. I know the college and the university is different, but the other countries I heard like in America or other countries there. University is just equal to like college. I don't know, just someone told me that the college is not a very good place, compared with the university. And they are like the college like the student cannot go to the university, they will choose to go to college. So college as just like one of them like in Chinese, we just called them like 职业学校 (vocational school). (Casual conversation with Ping, August 21, 2021)

In Canada and China, Ping heard of two different opinions about universities and colleges. Her words actually uncovered part of the Chinese education system and the established path for most students: go to a good elementary school, and then they can go
to a better high school, which paves the way for entering a great university and getting a satisfactory job after graduation. Within such a sociocultural background, the ranking of different institutions (e.g., colleges and universities) becomes evident and most Chinese parents hope their children to go to universities (大学) rather than colleges (学院). In contrast, people from the west do not generally conclude that a university is more prestigious than a college as that depends on students’ interests, needs as well as the programs offered by the two types of institutions (Lindsay, 2019). The different meanings implied by the same word “college” in China and Canada resonates with what Zhichang Xu and Thuy Ngoc Dinh (2013) find that common English words not necessarily “share identical meanings among World English speakers” (p. 365) as “the denotative and connotative correspondence between the English words varies on an individual and cultural basis” (p. 370).

After Ping shared her opinions about colleges and universities, I analyzed the English tense and logic of her expressions. After class, I offered some advice on improving Ping’s oral English to Dr. Liu through WeChat. For example, it would be useful to her Chinese and English writing if she could pay more attention to the beginning and conclusion parts. Dr. Liu was very appreciative and commented, “Yeah, the section of practicing oral English was amazing! Keep doing that. Then Ping could express herself in a logical way. Thank you so much for talking with her from time to from. She could think of the days in Windsor where she spent wonderful days” (Dr. Liu,
personal communication, August 21, 2021). In that sense, the tutoring session was more than English language learning. It was more of an opportunity for me to get involved in Ping’s life in a way that both she and her parents felt comfortable with.

**Getting Busy as A Bee in the Middle School**

In September 2021, Ping went to the secondary school that was affiliated with Dr. Liu’s university. Dr. Liu told me that Ping got up early in the morning at 6:30 a.m. and came home at 9 p.m. because there were evening classes at her school. She played the piano for a while after arriving home and then went to bed (Interview with Dr. Liu, October 9, 2021). At the beginning of October 2021, I contacted Dr. Liu and asked if she and Ping could participate in my research. They both agreed immediately.

On October 11, 2021, Dr. Ben, I, and Ping had a video chat through WeChat with Dr. Liu’s permission. Ping mentioned that there was a seven-day holiday in October (National Day in China), but she had a lot of homework to do, so she had no time to travel around. She said, “we have 34-page of math exercises and 340 calculation questions” (Casual conversation with Ping, October 11, 2021). We felt sorry for her but we also knew Ping was just like most Chinese students in China who had to experience intensive learning in K-12 education.

**Ping's English Competence in Dr. Ben’s Eyes.** After the group chat, Dr. Ben told me through WeChat that he was impressed by the fact that “Ping has both the sensitivity and also the language to be able to explain things happening at her middle
school in English. She learned English through living her life” (Dr. Ben, personal communication, October 11, 2021). I was curious about the word “sensitivity,” so I continued to ask Dr. Ben what that meant. He expounded,

I was gonna say mastery, but she has control over how she uses English. And she can express her own feelings. Her comfort with English really impressed me. I remember she had pretty remarkable English skills when she came to Windsor, but they really developed, because it was like a laboratory. She was using her English every day, taking risks with it. If she didn't have the right word, she just go ahead anyway, and she might ask me. (Dr. Ben, personal communication, October 11, 2021)

Dr. Ben recalled Ping’s English proficiency when she was in Canada, but he also noticed that after she went back to China, “she's searching for words a little bit more because she was not regularly talking English every day the way she was in Canada” (Dr. Ben, personal communication, October 11, 2021). It was similar to the trajectory of other young Chinese visiting students whose parents found that the frequency of speaking English at home was much lower after the trip to Canada.

In October 2021, Dr. Ben participated in my research as an informant. As the prelude of this chapter mentioned, the first time that Dr. Ben and I met Ping was at the farewell party, which was held for Chinese pre-service teachers, in December 2019. We often hung out during Ping’s visit to Canada. On October 20, 2021, I interviewed Dr. Ben online about Ping’s experiences in Canada. He commented on her English level when she was in Windsor in 2020.

I think her English was always good enough to if there were just the two of us, she could also make herself understood. Sometimes she needs help thinking of a
word. But she always spoke sentences. I felt that by the time she stayed in Canada for three months she had her fluency really developed. She didn't have to search for words as much. And she could talk about what was happening in school and also about Chinese politics and international politics like a university student, which really surprised me because she has the vocabulary and the ability to express herself. So, she could tell you her views about international relations, China’s relationship with the world, and Donald Trump. And she made predictions about the American election. And at that time, she was 11 years old. She seemed always familiar with the current news. She also had the ability to develop complex thoughts about and even to say about American politics. Certainly, by April of 2020, she was really uninhibited in talking. Something remarkable about her is that she's very comfortable with adults. (Interview with Dr. Ben, October 20, 2021)

Dr. Ben mentioned some points of time (three months and April 2020) when he described Ping’s English competence. He was also impressed by Ping’s knowledge of politics and politicians. After Ping came back to China, she still video chatted with Dr. Ben once a month through WeChat, so he knew her thoughts at different periods of time.

One time, Dr. Ben was amused by a joke about Donald Trump that Ping told him. He said to me in our interview that,

one joke was just more recently after she returned to China. She said, “I missed Donald Trump.” And I asked, “why?” She said, “well, Biden is kind of boring. But Trump was in the news every day and he is so ridiculous.” It was entertaining. Imagine by this time, she is 12 years old, but she has the knowledge about current events. And she also has the ability in English to say this thing which is incredibly funny. I felt like it takes a certain amount of control over a language to be able to say humorous things. For most of us learning another language, it would be hard to do that. (Interview with Dr. Ben, October 20, 2021)

Dr. Ben believed expressing a sense of humor in another language was a sign of mastering that new language. It resembled how Susie commented on Feifei's “English sarcasm” in Chapter 4. As Swain (2009) argues, “the use and understanding of humor
requires high levels of not only linguistic knowledge, but social and cultural knowledge as well” (pp. 101-102). Moreover, Ping was still interested in international politics and was able to talk about American politicians in English.

**Follow Up with Ping’s Updates.** On November 5, 2021, nearly 12 months after Ping has been back in China, I interviewed her online for an hour. She was in an elementary school when she was in Canada. Back home in China, she is now in a middle school because in China elementary schools have grades 1 to 6. Grades 7, 8 and 9 students are in middle school. When it comes to her middle school, she first talked about her English class. I translated her words into English as below.

My English teacher is a novice teacher with limited teaching experience, so she is not accomplished in classroom management. If the students do not follow class rules, she will be angry and ask us to copy words many times as a punishment. But in many cases, we have no idea why she is angry. In fact, too much English homework is very time-consuming and useless. In class, she asked us if we had learned English phonetic sounds (such as /ʃ/ and /ʒ/). Many classmates answered yes, but I had not! Only me and my friend who had been to the U.S. did not learn English phonetic sounds. I did not know much about subject, object, and predicate, either. I can use my intuition to do the exercises and answer questions in the English test, but I am afraid in grade 8 and 9, I will feel more and more confused about some English questions. (Interview with Ping, November 5, 2021)

Ping mainly relied on her English language intuition, but she was less confident in English grammar. It explains why her mom was worried about her English grammar as I mentioned earlier in this chapter. Moreover, she thought her English teacher was biased because she often let another student who had been to the U.K. to lead all the students to read English textbooks. Ping said to me, 我还需要他来教我 Good morning.
Hi. Hello? (‘I need him to teach me ‘Good morning. Hi. Hello?’’) I was bewildered why the grade-7 students were still learning English greetings, so I asked Ping why the content on their English textbook was so easy. She elucidated that some students in her class come from rural areas so the level of English cannot be too high at the beginning. I translated her words into English as follows.

It is still tough for the students from rural areas because they cannot read or spell words. The English teacher just starts with English greetings, which sounds weird to students like us. We have learned that in grade 1. At my secondary school, most students’ parents are the professors at the university where my mom works. But my class does not have a good learning environment because some of them fall asleep or read novels in class. (Interview with Ping, November 5, 2021)

Ping observed the learning environment and summarized the characteristics of some classmates. Then I asked whether she perceived any differences between Ridgeview School and her middle school in China. She said,

Canadian students listened to what their teachers were talking about in class, and they would ask questions, such as “so are we going to do this?” I sat in the second row in Ms. Riley’s class. When Ms. Riley asked us to discuss something, we would discuss the class topic. However, in my Chinese class now, the students just chatted and never discussed the learning topic. When the discussion section was over, the Chinese teacher asked someone to stand up and answer the results of the discussion. The student just improvised and made up one. (Interview with Ping, November 5, 2021)

I was surprised to hear that the Chinese students in her class were not actually doing group discussions. Her description of the Chinese and Canadian students was so intriguing, so I asked her if she spotted any other differences between her Chinese and Canadian classmates. Then she raised a philosophical topic about 幸福 (well-being) and 快乐 (happiness). Here is our discussion.
Ping Li: 我们年级有同学有 mental health problem. (Some students in our grade have mental health problems.)

Haojun: 加拿大重视心理健康这方面吗？你感觉。 (Does Canadian education emphasize students’ mental health? What do you think?)

Ping Li: 加拿大的小孩不会有心理健康问题。没有压力，多轻松啊，感觉一辈子活得没啥意义。但是在中国要想活的有意义，就光快乐也不行，最高的那种是幸福。 (Canadian children won’t have mental health problems. No pressure in life. How relaxing it is! But it seems to be no sense to live like that. However, if you want to live a meaningful life in China, you can't just be happy. The ideal status is to own well-being.)

Haojun: 快乐和幸福有什么区别？ (What's the difference between happiness and well-being?)

Ping Li: 就是你可能过得快乐，但是你并不幸福啊。加拿大那边有吃有住的，他当然会过得快乐且幸福，但是在中国你幸福了就会快乐，你快乐了不一定会幸福。 (You may be happy, but you don’t have well-being. Canadians have enough food to eat and places to live. Of course, they will be happy, and they have a sense of well-being, but in China, if you have well-being, surely you will be happy. However, if you are just happy, you do not necessarily have a sense of well-being.)

Haojun: 怎么才能得到幸福？精神上的吗？ (Then how to gain well-being? Do you mean something spiritual?)

Ping Li: 在中国就只能够拼，拼命，才能够找到出人头地的道路，比如你要找工作。但是在国外。你看国家给他们那么多，相当于给了大半辈子了。你自己还需要为你这辈子做些什么呢? (In China, you must work hard, work desperately to find a way to excel and to compete with others. For example, you need to get a job in China. But in foreign countries. You see, the government has given them so much, which equals what they will need for most of their life. What else do they need to do for their life?) (Interview with Ping, November 5, 2021)

From Ping’s point of view, Canadian children do not have mental health problem because they live an easy and relaxing life, compared to Chinese children. Even though Ping was only a grade-7 student when she made that comparison in our interview, she had her own understanding of the Canadian and Chinese society.
Since October 2021, I had stopped tutoring Ping because she was too busy with schoolwork. In March 2022, I messaged Dr. Liu asking about Ping’s recent schooling and life. Dr. Liu said everything was going well and Ping got the only full marks in her class in an English test (Dr. Liu, personal communication, March 25, 2022). I was glad to hear that and was willing to continue to accompany her growth along the way. For example, in June 2022, Ping’s friends had another video chat through WeChat, and we all updated new things happening in our lives. For example, she passed the piano level examination and still kept practicing it every week.

**Summary**

Before the visit to Canada, Ping aspired to go abroad because many of her classmates and friends already had international experiences. In December 2019, she flew to Canada with her mom. She liked the school she attended and made new friends from multiple cultures and backgrounds such as Arabic, Vietnamese, African, and so on. She found learning in Canada not difficult for her, which made her confident in being there. After the March break, one challenge for Ping was that she had to study at home and take many online classes from the Canadian school and from her school in China. Moreover, the dramatic increase of Anti-Asian racism during the pandemic has worsened Chinese Canadians' well-being and sense of belonging (Ibrahim, 2022). Within this special social context, Ping became more sensitive to racism in the surroundings.
In the second half of 2020, Ping went back to Ridgeview School, and she had confidence in her ability to use bilingualism to express herself in daily communication. Meanwhile, many Chinese Canadians (and other Asian Canadians) reported they faced increased racism since Covid-19 caused much social unrest (Ibrahim, 2022). In such a social context, Ping had a clash with a boy who made racist comments at YMCA. The 11 months that she was in Windsor were like a kind of compressed education, but her development was quite remarkable. Ping has all these people involved in her education: the English tutor, her mom, Dr. Ben, I, the two Chinese graduate students, and everything that happened at school. After Ping came back to her motherland, she devoted herself to learning as she was faced with the entrance exam to the middle school in June 2021. Meanwhile, she had a problem with maintaining friendships when she just went back from Canada. In September 2021, she became a grade-7 student and embarked on a new journey at a middle school. Since I met her in the winter of 2019, I have been listening to her talking about her stories and how she felt in kinds of situations. When she described what she observed and how she reacted, her translanguaging and bilingual/cultural acquisition emerged and flowed.

Up till now, the five young Chinese visiting students’ stories have all been told and retold. The next chapter will first discuss their translanguaging practices and their bilingual/cultural acquisition. Then I will elaborate on the international and cross-cultural experiences from their point of view.
Chapter 9 DISCUSSION

Seeing the Big or Small?

Honestly speaking, I struggled for a long time with the logic of organizing this chapter and what themes should be abstracted and discussed here. Firstly, I should exhibit wholeness and continuity in children’s lives. Secondly, translanguaging studies are supposed to present how learners achieve learning through translanguaging practices involving the maximal use of diverse resources (Choi, 2020; Pontier, 2022). Thus, after being adrift between seeing big and seeing small, I decided to return to narrative thinking for understanding young Chinese visiting students’ translanguaging practices in their lived experiences within specific educational and cultural contexts. In this chapter, I present the themes that emerged from “the final research text which is a blending of stories composed and recomposed all within the midst of life” (Lewis & Adeney, 2014, p. 173).

Making Meaning Through Translanguaging in Canada

Adapting to the New Environment Through Translanguaging

Translanguaging Based on Practical Needs. The Ontario Ministry of Education (2008) notes that on account of newcomer students’ “lack of experience in particular settings, they may need strategies and explicit instruction about the hidden curriculum or the unwritten rules of social interaction, such as personal space, school routines and expectations for behavior and homework” (p. 11). The young Chinese visiting students
supported each other by sharing their hidden knowledge about the Canadian schools and teachers, just like how Xuanxuan introduced “local customs and cultures” of the Canadian school to Luna who arrived later than him. Reciprocally, Luna memorized some practical English expressions at home and then shared them with Xuanxuan at school, such as “Excuse me. I want to go to the bathroom.” When the two young Chinese students were helping each other to familiarize the new learning environment in the first month of their visit, translanguaging occurred at school. Moreover, because the Canadian teachers at school used translation apps to assist the communication with the young Chinese visiting students, their “linguistic, semiotic, cultural, and social resources” were recognized, valued, and mobilized (Darvin & Norton, 2015). By interpreting young Chinese visiting students’ language practices within a broader historical/temporal and sociocultural discourse context (Duff, 2019), I found the role of translanguaging in the transition to schools in Ontario which unfolds a new linguistic and cultural environment.

In the early stage of the transition, the young Chinese visiting students like Luna noticed what they lacked in daily communication with Canadians at school and outside school, so they were eager to learn what they needed and had translanguaging practices with their parents. For instance, Caicai asked her mom how to improve English quickly on the first school day and started to retell what she learned at school on the way home since that day. It indicates that if language and literacy learning at preschool is seen by the child as a potential and important opportunity to increase competence, autonomy, and
relatedness, the internal motivation will be activated (Roberts, 2009). What they learned from their parents and peers could be immediately used in their daily conversations with Canadians, so the linguistic expressions and discourse structures are not “inert knowledge” (Whitehead, 1929) but serve for authentic communication. As Whitehead (1929) criticizes, it is meaningless to instill inert knowledge in students as the inert ideas are disconnected and the “possibilities of mental life” has not been demonstrated (p. 3). Whitehead (1967) also points out that aimlessly accumulating inert and unutilized knowledge would detach students from real life and their own interests and then lead to “paralysis of thought” (p. 37). Luckily, the young Chinese visiting students actively deployed linguistic and cognitive resources embedded in the new learning environment and gained support from their parents.

Meanwhile, the young Chinese visiting students’ “translanguaging competence” (Hlavac & Xu, 2020, p. 20) was developed in broader contexts such as the way back home. In Caicai’s stories, the grassland, license plate number and house number also mediated her translanguaging competence as spatial resources. She was able to switch between two languages, defy the traditional strict boundaries and use the resources provided by the surrounding world for learning English and sharing her schooling experiences with her mother. Overall, the young Chinese visiting students’ “translanguaging competence” (Hlavac & Xu, 2020, p. 20) emerged and expanded in the self-motivated language practices that entertain themselves (e.g., Feifei’s diary and Little
Yangmei’s letter writing) and in interrelationship with others.

With a natural desire for varied channels for creativity, students come to schools with personal interests, different competences as well as diverse cultural experiences (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). However, in my research, some participant children reported that their strengths could not be seen in Canada because they could not understand English and could not speak fluent English to express themselves at the beginning of the visit, which frustrated them. For example, Luna and Xuanxuan had learned more advanced math knowledge in China, but they could not make sense of the math terms in English at Kingswood school. The math assessment became a language proficiency test rather than content knowledge (Brisk, 2006). Under the deficit models that overshadow students’ cultural and linguistic assets (Kiramba & Oloo, 2019), they are defined by what they could not do with English or other official languages.

Similarly, Ping found it hard to comprehend the vocabulary in her science class, which mostly belongs to Tier Two and Three words. According to the Three Tier Model (Beck et al., 2002), Tier One words, which are sight words and early reading words, are basic words without multiple meanings (e.g., book, girl and orange). Tier Two words (e.g., measure and fortune) are used across the curriculum and are indicators of students’ success. Tier Three words are subject-specific and low-frequency words such as asphalt and isotope. For some words, she already had ways to express the concepts represented by the words in Chinese. For the knowledge and skills acquired through the mother
tongue provide the foundation for Ping’s learning (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009), but some English words were new technical terms in Science that she had seldom heard in China. Thus, Ping’s mother translated those words into Chinese and helped Ping to understand them within the text or short videos assigned by the Canadian teacher. As Swain (1986) acknowledges the role of translation in foreign language learning, it is “instrumental to the emotional and academic well-being of the learner” (p. 101).

Furthermore, translanguaging plays the role of supporting subject learning and cultivating students’ CALP. Moreover, it reflects the young ELLs’ existing languaculture, i.e., LC1. The LC2 is the Canadian context where they got involved in academic and social practices (Norris & Tsedendamba, 2014). As a bridge between LC1 and LC2, translanguaging connects the old knowledge acquired in the young Chinese visiting students’ home country with the new knowledge expressed in English.

**Translanguaging as the New Pipe.** While I was reading and rereading the five main student participants’ stories in Canada and China, an image of a swimming pool and its pipeline came to my mind. Chinese language and culture as well as the prior experiences in China brought by the Chinese children are like the water in a swimming pool. Before the visit, the water could be mainly filled and drained through the conduit of their mother tongue in the EFL context. Whereas when the children were taken to Canada, suddenly, the water could only be exported via the pipe of the English language, which does not exist or has not been completed yet (depending on the children’s English
level before coming to Canada). As a result, outsiders mistakenly assume that there is very limited water in the swimming pool when they see no water coming out. However, in fact, there is plenty of water, which just cannot be delivered through the new pipe yet. As the Ontario official document describes, “I have so much to say, but I can only say it in my first language” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008b, p. 9). In my research, the Canadian teachers were all supportive and emphasized on what the young Chinese visiting students had done well. Hence, while building the new drainpipe, newcomer children should be allowed to use the previous pipe to deliver water because their home languages are “more than scaffolds but rich resources connected to their cultures, creativity, and criticality” (Tian, 2022, p. 12). Meanwhile, a new input pipe of English is also being established, through which the children could start acquiring new knowledge and culture through English. As the new input and output pipes of English are being built, more water (i.e., new experiences and linguistic and cognitive resources) would be pumped into the swimming pool and it could be drained through the pipe of Chinese, English, or both according to the children’s needs. As Lewis et al. (2012) argue, both or all languages can be used in a dynamic way to mediate understanding and learning.

“The narrative understanding of knowledge and context” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4) and the metaphor of swimming pool pipes could contribute to the understanding of young Chinese visiting students’ translanguaging practices in the transition. When they returned to China, the bilingual pipes were still useful if they were
encouraged to share what they acquired in Canada. Some concepts and cultural knowledge were acquired in English, so the young Chinese visiting students were more likely to use English to express what they knew, which naturally led to more translanguaging practices. As Zhichang Xu (2022) reveals in his research on Chinese speakers of English, most participants tend to “adjust their pragmatic behaviors in relation to their contexts, including choice of languages, the people they interact with, the nature of the speech acts, and the time and location where interactions occur” (p. 216). I will discuss more about the translanguaging practices after they returned to China and the implication of the research findings on the Chinese context in latter section.

**The Impact of Locations and Sociality.** Connelly and Clandinin (1990) elucidate that “place is where the action occurs, where characters are formed and live out their stories and where cultural and social context play constraining and enabling roles” (p. 8). The influence of different locations and interlocutors on the participant children’s language expressions cannot be ignored. In Feifei’s stories, she looked silent at school. Even though the Canadian teacher invited her to introduce something in Chinese, she was still unwilling to speak in front of the class. With more inquiry, I found that she was more talkative with her ESL teacher at school. After school, she even played the role of an interpreter in Caicai’s tutoring class given by Susie at the university library. At home, her diary became the best location for her to be herself and to “create beautiful and hilarious doodles inspired by her innermost feelings” (Russell, 2011, p123) although
the place was barely seen by others. Stories of the young Chinese visiting students like Feifei can shed light on a series of questions which are often encountered by Chinese and Canadian teachers, principals, and parents: if children do not speak English in classrooms, does that mean their English is poor? Are there any other ways to identify children’s linguistic repertoires besides public speaking or answering questions in class? How do we fully use the strengths and personal history that students bring to school and draw on them for successful educational experiences (Hornberger & Link, 2012)? I cannot offer knowledge claims to directly resolve the problems of young ELLs’ silence in class, but the findings of my research reveal that translanguaging is a way of empowering language learners and emphasizing their agency since it can open transformative spaces for learning (Gutiérrez et al., 2008). It enables students to shift from vulnerable ELLs to active learners integrating diverse linguistic elements for functioning well in a “multilingual and multicultural setting” (Ou & Gu, 2017, p. 26).

Furthermore, as reviewed in Chapter 2, previous literature of translanguaging mainly focuses on transnational and immigrant families (Song, 2016; Sviatlana et al., 2019), learners’ identities and ideologies (Creese & Blackledge, 2015), teachers’ and students’ attitudes towards translanguaging (D. Wang, 2019) and the pedagogy in classrooms (García et al., 2017). My research integrates short-term visiting students’ translanguaging in local communities in two different countries with different people, which are new dimensions and rarely touched upon in former studies. For example, in
the fall of 2020 at Dr. Ben’s house, Ping mixed three languages (Chinese, English, and French) to explain to me why she thought French learning was easy for her. It shows that community translingual repertoires are embedded in the everyday realities of children (Severo et al., 2020) and translanguaging can be a naturally happening phenomenon for students who are not taught to use multiple languages purposefully (Lewis et al., 2012). Moreover, it indicates that the Chinese speakers of English are shifting “from shared endonormativity to co-constructed and negotiated trans-normativity” where pragmatic norms are “trans-created through translingual and transcultural practices across English as a Lingua Franca communities” (Z. Xu, 2022, p. 216).

As just noted, translanguaging can happen within the classroom, local community, and home. When the young Chinese visiting students shared what they learned at school with their parents, the Canadian tutor, and Chinese friends such as other visiting scholars’ children, they had translanguaging practices. Their moving from one country to another implies “the mobility of linguistic and other semiotic resources in time and space” (Blackledge & Creese, 2017, p. 34). After one or two months of arriving in Canada, they had more direct quotes of what their Canadian teachers and classmates said at school. That enabled the parents to know what their children had learned at school. Moreover, Canadian school teachers and parents might realize that English, Chinese, French and other languages are the bridge leading to diverse languacultures. Translanguaging and a sense of inquiry (Clandinin, 2019) are empowering the
newcomers to walk steadily and confidently on the bridge. Inspired by Shijing Xu (2019), I regard the bridge as a reciprocal connection that links newcomers’ home culture and languages with the host countries’ multiculturalism and multilingualism, so when it is being built, people in the host country are also invited to walk on the bridge and get a glimpse of other languacultures. As Canagarajah (2013) comments on intercultural communication, it is a “two-way street” where “both parties have to co-construct meaning, without assuming that one person’s norms can be imposed on the other” (pp. 83-84).

**Translanguaging in Writing: A Process and Creative Space**

At the beginning of the visit, some young Chinese visiting students wrote bilingually with complete Chinese sentences inserted into the English composition. After a brief period of time, there were basically no Chinese characters in English writing anymore because they knew their homework sheets would be submitted to Canadian teachers who probably could not understand. Despite that, complete Chinese sentences or characters still occasionally appeared in the young Chinese visiting students’ diaries, drawings, or artifacts. For example, one day in the second month of the visit to Canada, Little Yangmei wrote “Dear Grandparents” in Chinese to begin her diary.

On top of that, emergent bilingual children like Luna, Little Yangmei, and Feifei...
combined Mandarin pinyin with English words in English writing in the first few months of arriving in Canada. They had just begun to learn Mandarin in their Chinese schools before the visit, and they were all in lower grades (grade 1 or 2) when arriving in Canada. For example, Luna wrote ò to represent the sound “oh” in the third month of her stay in Windsor. Little Yangmei wrote down “practis” (practice) and “haos” (house) in the first month in Toronto. This can be seen as the trace and embodiment of their way to use bilingual resources, but in such examples, translanguaging appears within a word or a syllable, which is seldom studied in translanguaging research. Most empirical studies reveal the mixed use of words from two or three languages in one sentence or dialogue, instead of in one single word (Duarte, 2020; Makalela, 2018; Musanti & Rodriguez, 2017). For example, Seals et al. (2019) and Treffers-Daller et al. (2018) categorized three types of translanguaging:

1) translanguage for self-repetition (repeating oneself but using a different language each time), 2) continuous segmental translanguage (moving between languages intrasententially), and 3) cross-speaker interactional translanguage (a second speaker building upon a first speaker’s utterance but doing so in a different language from the first speaker) (Seals & Olsen-Reeder., 2020, p. 5)

But none of them fits with the type that I found from some young Chinese visiting students’ translanguage writing practices in which sentences are no longer the smallest unit used of translanguage. What I refer to echoes with the study of Chen et al. (2021) who explore the effectiveness of applying translanguage to French phonological instruction in a Chinese university. Chen et al. (2021) demonstrate that
translanguaging units can be smaller than phrases and dialogues that former research concentrates on (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020).

In the early stage of the transition from Chinese to English on the bilingual writing continuum, the young visiting students’ writing might be assessed as “messy and random,” or regarded as a sign of their limited English language proficiency. However, mixing pinyin and English letters in words is a stage that the young visiting students probably had to go through, rather than a period that must be “eliminated” as soon as possible. With a large amount of reading, parents’ help, consistent practicing, and Canadian teachers’ positive feedback, the young Chinese visiting students’ English writing made more sense and expressed clear meaning after several months. Nevertheless, it is necessary to reiterate that not all the young visiting students presented the same pattern in their writing because it was influenced by their previous English learning and different personal life experiences. For instance, some students had learned English for a longer period before coming to Canada, so they were familiar with phonic rules, had a wider range of vocabulary and spelt English words more accurately.

Moreover, the Chinese children had the preference to write what they said in daily life and imitated the style and tone of writing from the books they read. For example, Feifei loved to read Dork Diaries, so she had many similar expressions in her diary such as “HMMM… do you think we can talk about something else? Maybe we can talk about my game” (Feifei’s diary, October 25, 2019), which is a very common
phenomenon when children are developing a voice in L2. By comparison, Luna’s English writing took on a distinctive look as her personality and interests are different from Feifei’s. She was a gregarious and socially dynamic girl who enjoyed being in the limelight. Thus, her English writing was similar to how she spoke English in oral communication. She brought together her personal history, experience, feelings, environment, and cognitive capacity (W. Li, 2011) into one piece of coordinated and meaningful writing.

Aside from that, the young visiting students’ English writing in distinct types of texts had different purposes and translanguaging often appears to serve the whole text. It is similar to how Zhichang Xu and Danya Zhang (2020) describe Chinese English, which can be interpreted “from a more functional perspective as a translanguaging practice” and “English is reshaped and adapted to suit the needs of Chinese English speakers” (p. 595). For instance, Little Yangmei was reading the great classical Chinese novel – Journey to the West in the third month of her visit to Canada. In the morning, she listened to a Chinese audiobook of the novel and watched the English Cartoon of Journey to the West in the evening. One day in the middle of that month, she wrote a diary in Chinese, which mentioned that she dreamed of the plots of the novel at night (Little Yangmei’s diary, April 14, 2020). Then she drew the image of Monkey King, Sha Monk, and Piggie on a piece of white paper with a black pencil (Little Yangmei’s artifact, April 16, 2020). Next to the main characters, she wrote down their bilingual
names and pinyin. Her translanguaging in writing at this stage was more for recreation and presenting her reading of the Chinese novel, which was different from her translanguaging in her homework submitted to the Canadian teacher in the first month.

Creating a Third Space through Translanguaging. Young visiting students’ translanguaging in writing shows the human’s instinct to “between and beyond socially constructed language and educational systems, structures and practices to engage diverse multiple meaning-making systems and subjectivities” (W. Li, 2018, p. 24). For example, Feifei did not speak much English at school and tended to express herself through diaries, which created a third space between home and school. Translanguaging in the third space reflects the ways in which she engaged her linguistic repertoires (García, 2009a) and her way of being. It is also “an emotionally and linguistically safe space” where she felt comfortable expressing “positive and negative emotions” by using “multiple entangled layers of linguistic resources” (Dovchin, 2021, p. 839).

The third space is related to the concept of “translanguaging space” put forward by Li Wei (2018), as I reviewed in Chapter 2. It is a space of new possibilities, creativity and “hybridity of first and second languages” (W. Li, 2018, p. 24). More importantly, the participant children in my research need such a third space to briefly “keep away” from teachers and parents and in this space, they do not need to cater to others’ expectations such as what languages they must speak or write. For Feifei, the pieces of life appearing in her diaries such as the noodle she ate, the games she played and the books she read
constituted part of her experiences in Canada and demonstrated her meaning making of lived stories. Luckily, doing the narrative inquiry and maintaining an intimate relationship with my participant children enabled me to see these personal and lovely places in children’s lives. What is more, I could understand what the third space meant to these children, how they established it through translanguaging and how the creative space changed as their lives went on.

As a brief recap, both my master’s and doctoral theses focus on young language learners because I am interested in the role of learners in their development of a second language. However, compared with my master’s thesis that was about Chinese primary school students’ translanguaging within the EFL classrooms (Guo, 2019), the findings of my doctoral thesis largely expanded the dimensions of Chinese students’ language practices in diverse contexts and places such as home and community. Moving forward from the previous findings about two types of needs for translanguaging: comprehension and expression (Guo, 2019), I reported the multiple roles of young Chinese visiting students’ translanguaging in adapting to a new learning and living environment, communicating with Canadians, writing freely and creatively as well as creating an indispensable personal space.

**Multimodal Possibilities in Translanguaging**

The theory of multimodal semiotics is rooted in Halliday's theory of systemic functional linguistics, which regards language as social symbolic resources (Halliday &
Matthiessen, 2013). It focuses on the symbolic interaction and meaning potential of multimodality (including pictures, gestures, sounds, or languages) (Jiang et al., 2020). As Blackledge and Creese (2017) point out, “to understand social life in the 21st century we need to understand mobility, and understanding mobility requires attention to the movement of linguistic and other semiotic resources” (p. 31). The multimodal translanguaging revealed in Chapters 4 to 8 is salient, so I am going to discuss it as follows.

The major finding is that individual differences such as cognitive style, personal interests and dispositions can influence the young visiting students’ multimodal translanguaging. In Luna’s stories, readers can see a talkative and enthusiastic girl. Conforming to her personality, her multimodal translanguaging was more likely to happen in oral communication. For example, when she was retelling the plots of Frozen II to Susie, the Canadian tutor, in her rented apartment in Windsor, she recited movie lines and used many sound words as well as gestures (e.g., “Huahua, Anna so give my hand. Huahua, Ola is ding! Ship. Hu.”) (Field notes, Luna’s home, November 25, 2019). “Huahua” means the sound of stream and foam. “Hu” refers to the sound of strong wind.

The class happened two months after Luna arrived in Canada. She was able to draw on her familiar “linguistic, semiotic, and multimodal resources to facilitate the processes of meaning making in the communication” (Tai & Wei, 2021, p. 607). Luna’s multimodal translanguaging corresponds with what García and Li (2014) maintain, emergent
bilinguals were not shy about using their entire language repertoire to make meaning, successfully communicating across “languages” and “modes” by combining all the multimodal semiotic signs at their disposal (p. 231). Moreover, the strategic use of the shared linguistic repertoire, complemented by semiotic resources such as pictures, graphic organizers, sound, and gestures, facilitates efficient communication and expands the common semiotic repertoire of the communicators (P. He et al., 2016). Judging from a traditional paradigm, Luna might fall short of speaking like a native or near-native speaker of English. However, with the shift underpinning the goals of English language teaching, Luna was becoming “effective and strategic translanguaging users of English in multilingual communication contexts” (Z. Xu, 2017b, pp. 703–704).

Different from Luna’s multimodal translanguaging in oral communication, some of Little Yangmei’s multimodality occurred visually in her homework sheet as part of school education. As Figure 19 shows, to get the correct answer “I wonder what you can see,” she had to transform the pictures of a hat and a can into English words. In addition, she needed to spell out the word “one” and turn it into a syllable “won” which has the same pronunciation as “one.” Then she added the given “der” to spell the wanted word “wonder.” It looked simple and quick, but it included a complex cognitive process.

Figure 19

*Can You Read the Funny Sentence?*
In my participant children’s stories, translanguaging in everyday oral and written languages and other multimodalities are essential meaning-making strategies that contribute to effective communication, especially for linguistically disadvantaged communicators (A. Lin, 2019). For instance, in the story of “Safety at Home”, Feifei borrowed the forbidden traffic sign, which is an environmental literacy cue (Roth, 1992; Zhao et al., 2014), to send the message that there were some dangerous things children could not do at home. The young Chinese visiting students’ translanguaging practices correspond with what Blackledge and Creese (2017) propose, i.e., “language is only one semiotic resource among many, and all semiotic resources work together to make meaning” (p. 33).

Furthermore, in my research, the young Chinese visiting students’ translanguaging was similar to Li Wei’s conceptualization in 2018, which theorizes translanguaging as a “practical theory of language that considers language as a multilingual, multi-semiotic, multisensory and multimodal resource for sense- and meaning-making” (W. Li, 2018, p. 22). But I did not use a clear operational definition of translanguaging to guide the field notes collection because narrative inquiry is not “framing a research question with a precise definition or expectation of an answer” but carries the research puzzle with “a sense of a search, a ‘research,’ a searching again”, “a
sense of continual reformulation” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a, p. 124). Besides, as Li Wei (2022b) points out, translanguaging is “an analytical lens” (p. 2), so normally researchers will not say “this is translanguaging and that is not translanguaging.” When I was analyzing the field texts and transforming them into research texts, the young Chinese visiting students’ translanguage practices emerged in a bottom-up way and transcended between named languages and other semiotic systems. Based on the research findings, I see children’s translanguage as a competence and natural tendency of flexibly and dynamically using their full linguistic and semiotic repertoire as resources to construct knowledge, share experiences, make meaning, maximize comprehension and effectively communicate without regard for language boundaries emphasized in monolingual norms or worrying about being labelled as deficient English language learners. Given a safe translanguage space, children are more likely to develop literacy skills, utilize various modes, enrich learning experiences and realize their potential. To summarize, translanguage can be seen as a process, an instinct an act, a practice and phenomenon in everyday life.

To summarize, the young Chinese visiting students’ translanguage reflects the sociolinguistic reality of the multilingual and multicultural world. Their translanguage in different forms is like a map which symbolizes the multimodal and assorted elements of geography including desert, ocean, mountains, streams, and so on. On the map, there are corresponding symbols to represent those elements of the earth’s surface. Mountains
will not be regarded as more useful or powerful than the ocean, as they just represent one type of landscapes. It is the diverse geographical features that make the world beautiful, so every habitat is indispensable to the whole ecosystem, just as every language and culture matters to humanity’s depots of wisdom and heritage.

Revisiting Language Barriers from a Translanguaging Perspective

Before coming to Canada, newcomers and their parents might be worried about the language barriers which might impede making new friends and comprehending subject learning. Also, traditionally, both bilingualism and bilingual students have been perceived as problems to be addressed and corrected by the education system (Cummins, 2000a; García, 2009a; García & Kleifgen, 2010). Many previous studies highlight language barriers in newcomers’ adaptation and acculturation (Cheng et al., 2021; Shaffir et al., 2016) without paying enough attention to their unfolding potential (Kiramba & Oloo, 2019). However, in my research, language barriers in some cases are not perceived as real barriers by the children themselves. Reading the core five children’s narrative fragments and unities repeatedly and thinking narratively of their experiences in two countries, I gradually realized that some other factors were as vital as languages and these factors were mediating their schooling experiences in Canada such as the Chinese visiting scholars’ parenting and Canadian teachers’ efforts to make schools more inclusive of diversity.

The evidence comes from the children’s reactions and attitudes towards going to
Canadian schools. Though most of the young visiting students only had emergent English level at the beginning of the visit and could not understand English at school in the first few months, all of them loved to go to school. In my research, the limited English competency did affect the young Chinese visiting students’ communication, socialization, comprehension of school subject matters such as math and science. As Cavicchiolo et al. (2020) find, proficiency in the national language predicts the social inclusion of immigrant children. But they turned to adults and peers for help, used a variety of strategies, and conducted translanguaging to overcome kinds of difficulties in formal and informal learning contexts. Also, the demands for English proficiency in different subjects were different. Luna felt relaxed in P.E. class as she just needed to follow instructions and imitated others’ actions. Whereas she was nervous in her homeroom teacher’s class which was more challenging considering the English requirement. The complexities such as learners’ own arduous work and a supportive social setting (Patton, 2008) need to be taken into consideration when discussing newcomer children’s language barriers.

Moreover, the young Chinese visiting students are probably situated in the middle between Canadian peers and low-SES refugees/immigrant children if comprehensively evaluating from the four forms of capital put forward by Bourdieu (1986): financial, social, cultural and symbolic capital. Take Ping as an example. Her mother paid a Canadian graduate student to tutor her English every week and they had
access to local Canadian friends such as Dr. Ben. When Ping had difficulties in completing the school homework, her mother, a Chinese university professor, would go over the questions with her. Despite these capitals, Ping still had to study hard toward a single standardized form of English as a model, which belongs to the Inner Circle in the “three circles” model (Kachru, 1992). According to Seargeant (2010), the Inner Circle varieties are regarded as “norm-providing” while Outer Circle varieties as “norm-developing” and the Expanding Circle relies on the “external norms” offered by the Inner Circle (p. 107). Furthermore, considering the clear difference between BICS and CALP, the young Chinese visiting students from the Expanding Circle are disadvantaged compared with their Canadian peers as they are always on the way of entering the Inner Circle. With the increasing international communication, the three-circle model cannot represent linguistic reality (Kachru, 1985) and translinguaging, a way of “liberating the voices of language minoritized students” (García & Leiva, 2014, p. 200), has the potential to transform marginalization to distributed new centers. It makes the stretching force more noticeable in the grey areas existing between the circles (Rajadurai, 2005).

As Busch (2012) points out, the meanings that speakers ascribe to languages are related to life trajectories. By inquiring into the Chinese children’s personal histories and experiences, I could understand how their translinguaging developed and why it was displayed in different ways. The next section will discuss the complexity of Chinese children’s translinguaging in Chinese context.
Mobilizing and Repositioning Multilingual Repertoires in China

Making Translanguaging Spaces in the Online Class

When the visit to Canada ended, the young visiting students went back to China and returned to their previous schools. Some Chinese parents continued to schedule the weekly online English tutoring class given by Canadian tutors for their children to keep their sense of English language. Most Chinese visiting scholars in my research believed in English-immersion pedagogy and they hoped their children could speak English as much as possible in class, which was consistent with what they did in Canada. However, when the young visiting students chatted with me or took my tutoring session online, I never asked them to only speak English with me. Hence, they had plenty of translanguaging when talking with me. Some Chinese parents told me that their children preferred taking my class compared to the Canadian tutors’ since they could speak Mandarin with me.

As Lewis and Adeney (2014) write, narrative inquiry seeks understanding and meaning. In my online chat with participant students, I tried to make sense of their lived experience and the meanings they attached to their stories. I also brought my personal life experiences to the virtual space and juxtaposed them side-by-side next to that of the participants (Caine et al., 2019; Clandinin, 2006). For example, when we browsed pictures on Google Images and read English picture books, the five student participants all shared memories about Canada through translanguaging as we have been to Canada.
and visited some places together. With the sense of inquiry (Clandinin, 2019), I opened the door backwards and let those shared memories flood into the dialogues between my participants and me. When retelling the memories of Canada, the young visiting students tended to use Chinese sentence structures integrated with English words or phrases referring to the names of Canadian food, specific terms, streets, shops, books, Canadian festivals, sports, and other objects appearing in their lives in Canada.

Moreover, appreciating diversified and dynamic linguistic practices (W. Li, 2018), I had “playful talk” with the children, which transformed the online tutoring and chat into a translanguaging space. Then the children performed a range of creative acts “with a variety of voices to facilitate the meaning making and knowledge construction processes” (Tai & Wei, 2021, p. 607). For instance, Luna shared a new meaning of seven days in a week through translanguaging to emphasize how busy she was after the visit to Canada. I saw her sharing as a mini story which is a natural and authentic window into how she constructed meanings of her adaptation to schooling in China.

Previously, I thought that after the young visiting students returned to China, their translanguaging practices would be less interesting than those in Canada. But narrative inquiry cautions me to suspend any quick judgments. With a long-term inquiry, I found that their translanguaging in China still demonstrated dynamic and flexible language patterns to show agreement, disagreement, and attitudes, share opinions, lived experiences, and knowledge, do assessments as well as express confusion. For instance,
when Little Yangmei and I were reading picture books online, she first read aloud the short paragraph on each page and then assessed her English pronunciation before I gave feedback. I had heard of her reading English when we were in her rented apartment in Toronto, so I knew she had the tendency to read fast and connect words together. Obviously, she was also aware that her habit of pronouncing English words did not change, which resulted in her swallowing words. Though she was a grade-3 student, she could draw on her linguistic resources to do self-assessment and translinguaging empowers second language learners like her to genuinely show what they know (García & Li, 2014). This was one example of how narrative thinking helped me to bring the pieces of children’s life in Canada and China together and told a story about translinguaging in their lived experiences.

As the young visiting students’ bilingual proficiency develops, their translinguaging has more functions and purposes beyond solving urgent and practical problems to adapt to a changing landscape of languages and cultures. They can draw on different cognitive, semiotic, and linguistic resources to make meaning and make sense, transcending the boundaries between named languages. In Little Yangmei’s story, she shared the knock knock joke with me and contrast sense of humor in Chinese with English through translinguaging since she had access to bilingual recreational resources. It reaffirms what Li Wei (2011) says that translinguaging gives agency and autonomy to the learner and maximizes the learner’s prior knowledge including knowledge of their
own languages. Moreover, translanguaging can be initiated by what they heard in daily life, what they read and even what they talked with others. Since children are sensitive to pronunciation in different languages (Gopnik et al., 1999), their translanguaging is more likely to occur when hearing similar phonemes in different languages. For example, Caicai had translanguaging when she heard the transliteration words in English and Chinese.

Furthermore, the young Chinese visiting students had read more English comic books than I did, so they had great “potential of constructing playful talk through translanguaging” (Tai & Wei, 2021, p. 638). I am not the only “expert” in the virtual classroom and considerable control is handed over to the students (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011, pp. 393-394). Therefore, the traditionally teacher-centered interaction was transformed in our conversations. On the other hand, our playful talk is advantageous in promoting meaning-making, creating a lighthearted environment, negotiating relationships, and enhancing engagement (Tai & Wei, 2021). For example, when Little Yangmei introduced a funny English book she read in Canada, I asked more prompting questions about the book such as why it was funny. Her answer would naturally include translanguaging and her understanding of the book content.

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed multimodal translanguaging when the young visiting students were in Canada. It constantly existed after they returned to China. For example, Feifei shared her screen with me and began to draw cartoon characters on the
whiteboard when we chatted online in the winter of 2021. She recalled how she finished the homework of “safety at home” when she was in Canada through translanguaging and drawing on the whiteboard. Her first and second creations at different places and times overlapped in the virtual classroom. Even though she had returned to China nearly two years, she still clearly remembered the details and was amused by her own retelling. Young students like Feifei got involved with the persistent process of “semiotic mobility across time, space, and resources” (Dovchin, 2021, p. 840).

**Translanguaging Shaped by Values, Experiences, and Feelings**

**Translanguaging in a Monoglot Context.** While young visiting students’ translanguaging frequently happened between me and them, the monolingual ideology still hovered in their learning and life in China, which fails to recognize bilingual students’ “sociolinguistic realities” (Tian, 2022, p. 2). When discussing the problem of why English-immersion programs are popular in EFL contexts such as mainland China, Li Wei (2018) asserts that is a colonial legacy that should not be inherited. In the EFL context, English is seen as part of the cultural capital that enables students to excel in the job market and move up the social ladder (H. Li, 2020). As Ma and Xu review (2017), “learning and using English have become essential for students who seek further education, and for professionals seeking promotion” (p. 191). On top of that, the English power affects pedagogy as education stakeholders lean to view the native languages in classrooms as a sign of inability (García & Li, 2014; Trudell et al., 2005). Kiramba and
Olool (2019) have a similar discovery in Kenya where education stakeholders view the first language as the impeding factor of learning English since Kenya’s language policy is rooted in monoglossic orientations that discourage students’ participation in class.

Unfortunately, a contrasting gap still exists between young language learners’ “Translanguaging Instinct” (W. Li, 2018, p. 19) and the official monolingual ideology in both ESL and EFL contexts. In ESL settings, they were expected to learn English as soon as possible to communicate with native speakers in the mainstream society. Some Chinese visiting scholars preferred schools that had fewer Chinese students so that their children could be arranged in a pure-English environment with less intervention from their native language. In spite of the monoglot context and monolingual ideology, the young visiting students instinctively resisted such an uncomfortable teaching and learning mode. Thus, they still had translanguaging practices with me, their Chinese friends, and other people in their lives. The five students’ stories present that translanguaging not only helps them to adapt to a new environment but also enables them to demonstrate their rich linguistic and cultural resources in a fluid and dynamic way. Their actual language practices in the two countries support the view that translanguaging is needed and valuable in both ESL and EFL contexts, which is rarely mentioned in previous research as most studies of translanguaging only discuss it under either ESL or EFL context.

As the Ontario Ministry of Education (2008a) points out, “all newcomers
experience a period of cultural adjustment. This process is not linear, and all individuals adjust differently and often can experience setbacks” (p. 11). Next, I am going to discuss young visiting students’ bi-lingual/cultural acquisition when they were in Canada and reveal how individual differences influence the approaches, process, and effects of acquisition as well as the role of translanguaging in the acquisition.

Bilingual and Bicultural Acquisition in Canada

Being Anxious but Making Great Progress

In my research, all participant children acquired Chinese as their first language before entering Canada. While learning in Canada, they were still influenced by the conceptualization system and Chinese language knowledge as it is their native language. At the beginning of the trip, most visiting students like Feifei and Little Yangmei found that they could not understand English and felt shy, nervous, and awkward when speaking English because they were afraid others could not understand the English they spoke. In the English-dominating society, the “linguistic difference of speakers of English was transformed into social inequality” since “the native speakers hold the initiative in communication” but the ELL speakers were silent (Ou & Gu, 2017, p. 25). Most children felt anxious at the beginning because they could not understand what happened in the surrounding world and they could not make new friends in Canadian schools. According to Horwitz (2010), the students are made to feel their lack of adequate skills by a powerful social discourse favoring specific language skills. Ou and
Gu (2021) also caution that “global ubiquity of English as the academic lingua franca tends to devalue the linguistic and cultural repertoire of L2 speakers of English, leading to a disadvantaged position in the interaction with native-English-speakers” (p. 3).

Luckily, in the transition, Lexia as a reading program largely helps the young Chinese visiting students to learn phonics and enhance English literacy. They made rapid progress in building phonemic awareness and reading speed while playing learning games and getting upgraded. As Cummins (2022) points out, the Ontario curriculum has “integrated phonics instruction with a strong focus on promoting active engagement with reading and writing” in the past 20 years (p. 86). Focusing on decoding and reading comprehension (Cummins, 2022), the Canadian teachers also gave dictation, read stories in class, and assigned homework related to the stories, such as Little Yangmei’s English dictation and Luna’s worksheet about Big Pumpkin. In that way, the young visiting students were engaging in the “literacy environment that extends beyond the classroom into children’s homes” (Cummins, 2022, p. 90).

One more possible explanation of why the young visiting students made in English language competence was that they were still in the critical period. In 1967, Eric Lenneberg first popularized the term “critical period” for first language acquisition. Dr. Montessori was one of the educators who brought attention to Sensitive Periods, which a child goes through from birth to about six years of age. During this period, children are drawn to words, and they are particularly sensitive to the human voice and lip
movements (Moll, 2004). The theory was extended to a critical period for SLA, so many parents believed that the younger the better to learn a new language. I have mentioned in the first chapter that this was one of the main reasons why the Chinese visiting scholars would like to bring their children abroad with them. They believe “younger children tend to be language sponges and automatically pick up the skills they need by being totally immersed in an English-language environment” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008a, p. 43).

**Individual Differences in Language and Culture Acquisition**

There are eight participant children in my research, but they can be roughly divided into three groups based on their age and the characteristics of their language expressions: pre-school, lower grade, and higher grade in elementary school. Pre-school students like Yiyi and Caicai knew little about the English language before the trip, but they could easily memorize English words and imitate English pronunciation after they arrived in Canada. For the intermediate group which Little Yangmei, Luna, Feifei and Xuanxuan belong, they had learned English for one to two years before the trip, so they knew some simple English words about food, body parts, family, school, animals, and weather. Older students like Ping and Grace, who were in grade 5 when arriving in Windsor, had learned English as a foreign language in China for around five years, so they knew more vocabulary and functional expressions such as describing daily routine and asking for help. According to the National English Curriculum in China, students in
grade 6 should be able to master 600 to 700 words (China’s Ministry of Education, 2022). Compared with that, a five-year-old native speaker can recognize at least 10,000 words (Shipley & McAfee, 2015). A 6-year-old native language child typically has a 2,600 word expressive vocabulary and a receptive vocabulary of 20,000 to 24,000 words (Loraine, 2008). Moreover, a native speaker in fourth or fifth grade may already know some Tier Two words such as admit, perform, and fortune while many Chinese grade-4 students in public schools are still learning Tier One words such as classroom, window, and floor (X. Wu et al., 2013).

Despite the different levels of English when the young Chinese visiting students entered Canadian schools, most of them went through a transition period. Most of the time, they had fun at the Canadian schools and became able to understand English in oral communication with the help of their teachers and parents. Although they ended up the trip with an apparent Canadian English accent, some studies caution that young L2 beginners diverge in the level of linguistic details from native speakers (Muñoz & Singleton, 2010). For example, after some young Chinese visiting students returned to China, I found that they were not good at spelling English words with phonics and tended to read based on their memory and guessing the pronunciation of words. It can be explained by the difference between BICS and CALP as I mentioned in Chapter 2. To be more specific, although the young ELLs may reach peer-appropriate conversational proficiency within two years, it still takes them five to seven years to learn specialized
words in academic and formal register (Cummins, 1998). Although the Chinese ELLs were able to pronounce many everyday words (Tier One words) accurately, they did not know the spelling of many Tier Two and Three words which allow them to access scientific content knowledge (Beck et al., 2002). It is also very common in native language speakers when they are developing their reading and writing skills (I. González, personal communication, November 3, 2022).

In my research, the age differences also resulted in different cognitive characteristics, the way that they acquired diverse cultures in Canada and the cultural knowledge they acquired. There is a huge age gap between the youngest participant student (Yiyi, 5 years old) and the oldest one (Ping Li, 10 years old), so the degree of their understanding of cultural differences varied. During Ping’s stay in Windsor, she witnessed the different attitudes that Chinese and Canadian people held towards Covid-19 and started to think about the reasons behind it. While she was truly engaging with the language, culture, and people in Canada, she was also roaming in diverging worldviews (Uzum et al., 2021, p. 22). By comparison, Yiyi and Caicai were kindergarten children and they tended to perceive Canadian culture through activities from their own perspective. It responds to Piaget’s theory of preoperational stage in which children’s thoughts and communications are typically egocentric (Huitt & Hummel, 2003). For example, Caicai told me that Easter meant bringing eggs alive because there were presents in these colorful eggs (Casual conversation with Caicai, August 27, 2021).
Generally speaking, despite the influence of Covid-19, the young Chinese visiting students were still acquiring different kinds of cultural knowledge during their stay in Canada. For example, Little Yangmei acquired knowledge about the protection of animals, Indigenous people, kinds of festivals such as Diwali, Ramadan, Remembrance Day, and Terry Fox Day. Ping learned about more religious practices when she interacted with her classmates, most of whom were not Caucasian.

As mentioned above, there are many differences among the eight young visiting students. The factors influencing their bi-lingual/cultural acquisition also differ such as the extent of interaction with local Canadians, their age, the number of activities that they took part during the visit and the degree of being disrupted by Covid-19 and so on. For instance, Feifei and Luna left Canada at the end of 2019, so their learning was not affected by the pandemic. The older visiting student Ping Li learned French during their visit while the grade-1 and kindergarten children in my research did not.

**Similarities in Acquisition: Influences, Contexts and Process**

The Chinese visiting scholars’ children grow up in various places and families. They are different in the time to visit Canada, schools they attended, hobbies, English levels, personalities, interests and other aspects. However, all the Chinese visiting scholars did not let their children learn English purposefully for the trip.

Aside from that, there are some other similarities in how the young Chinese visiting students developed bilingualism and acquired diverse cultures. Firstly,
celebrating Canadian festivals and holidays inside and outside of school was an important way to acquire cultural knowledge. As Dewey (1897) insists, “education is a process of living and not a preparation for a future living” (p. 78). When the teaching and learning content at school is consistent with life experiences in communities and homes, the children can achieve better learning including language and culture acquisition. For example, when it was Halloween, Luna learned relevant words in Ms. Clare’s class, played games at Kingswood school and she went back home to make artifacts by herself. She also took part in trick or treat with the company of her Canadian tutor and other Chinese visiting students. In addition, the means of cultural acquisition were diverse such as singing songs, imitating Canadian teachers’ English expressions and so on. Those also facilitated their learning and enjoyment in the early years of curriculum.

Moreover, children acquired languages and cultures within specific contexts and in relationships. The young visiting students spent a lot of time playing outside, from ski resorts to local parks, from the path near the Detroit River to local farms. Communing with nature and observing wild animals also let them understand how local Canadians live. Native speakers are seen as the best model for EFL learners to imitate, so the Chinese visiting students were encouraged by their parents to interact with local people. For example, Ping often went out with Dr. Ben and had the weekly tutoring class with Susie every week.

Thirdly, a large amount of reading was also a critical approach to bi-
lingual/cultural acquisition. All the participant children mentioned that they loved the school library in Canada because there were interesting and colorful books. Most books they read were written in English, which provided a wide variety of vocabulary. Input matters (Gleason & Weintraub, 1976). Through a large amount of reading, they acquired numerous English words which were related to their interests such as Disney princesses, adventures, animals, fairy tales, and so on. But when the Chinese children were reading *Dogman, Captain Underpants, Dork Diaries*, and other interesting books, they were enjoying the stories, instead of purposefully memorizing English words. Although most Chinese visiting scholars brought their children to Canada for the purpose of improving English level and experiencing diverse cultures, the young visiting students themselves did not feel that they were purposefully learning English when communicating with Canadians or reading picture books, comics, or book chapters after school. As Rosenblatt (1988) states, when a person is reading a literary text aesthetically, the “attention is centered directly on what he/she is living through during his/her relationship with that particular text” (p. 25).

Fourthly, all the young Chinese visiting students liked to take part in activities organized by their Canadian schools, which can also be seen as the approach to showing the culture they acquired. For example, Xuanxuan was assigned by Ms. Clare to play *Goldilocks and Three Bears* at Kingswood in the first month of schooling in Canada. Xuanxuan’s mom told me the play was a success, and she said in our online interview
after the visit, “my son learned how to work with other students when he prepared for the role play. The experience itself matters. Adults care about how many words have been mastered but the child just enjoys the process” (Interview with Dr. Sun, November 28, 2021). After returning to China for more than one year, Xuanxuan still remembered some lines in the show: “My chair is broken. My bed is broken” (Casual conversation with Xuanxuan, November 12, 2021).

Reciprocal Learning in Landscapes of Languages and Cultures

Although the length of visiting students’ stay in Canada varied and the degree of acquisition differed, I noticed that they were not passive receivers who came to Canada only for acquiring new languages and cultures. They also made contributions to “Canadian classrooms and communities through educational and cultural reciprocity” (Xu & Connelly, 2015; S. Xu, 2019). For instance, Luna played the role of little teacher twice and taught the other students English words about “days in a week.” Little Yangmei introduced a Chinese hero, her family heritage and Chinese New Year to her Canadian teachers and classmates. This resonates with Shijing Xu’s research of Chinese immigrant families (S. Xu, 2017), which takes readers “beyond the discussion on the assimilation of newcomers to Canada to the role of newcomers as contributors, forming a mutual ‘we-ness’ within communities” (Chi, 2020, p. xiii).

“Wherever one positions oneself in that continuum, each point has a past experiential base and leads to an experiential future” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a, p. 362)
When the young Chinese visiting students were in Canada, they were still intricately connected with their prior knowledge gained in the first language and their previous experiences in China. They brought the Chinese language and culture into Canadian classrooms and shared them with their classmates and teachers. It became a terrific opportunity to engage all children in multicultural education and prepare them for an inclusive society and an increasingly interdependently connected world (S. Xu, 2017). Moreover, the young Chinese visiting students’ participation in local classrooms and communities is not a one-direction adaptation to the Canadian context, but a manifestation of how they embrace “linguistically and culturally diverse school life” in narrative unity (S. Xu, 2017, p. 10). When they actively engaged with their Canadian teachers, classmates and neighbors, they naturally became the bridge that harmoniously connects “ethnically, socially, culturally, and linguistically diverse people” in Canada (S. Xu, 2017, p. 252).

When the young Chinese visiting students returned to China, they shared their schooling and living experiences in Canada with their Chinese friends, families and teachers, which also extended “we-consciousness” in diversity. In that sense, the Chinese visiting scholars’ children are positive multicultural agents who demonstrate “we-consciousness” in the “continuity of knowledge and in the continuity of being” (S. Xu, 2017, p. 218).

A rich body of literature on bilingual and multicultural education (Cummins, 2000; Nieto, 1999) has also made clear that teachers, classrooms, and schools can successfully change their attitudes and expectations toward children of diverse language
backgrounds and intentionally build on the rich linguistic and cultural experiences they bring to school (Day, 2002). This is what the Canadian educational system can learn from the young visiting students. Reciprocally, the Chinese educational system can also adopt some practices in Canadian schools. For example, in my research, one of the main factors that contributed to the children's mental stability and overall success was the excellent work that their Canadian teachers did in being inclusive of them as individuals and their home languaculture. In many large-sized classrooms in Chinese public schools, students come from different family backgrounds and have different academic performance. Moreover, influenced by the standardized testing (e.g., National College Entrance Examination), many schools have to take a traditional and conservative approach to teaching. Although China’s Ministry of Education has promulgated the Double reduction policy which aims to reduce the heavy burden of students in the stage of compulsory education, it still takes time to achieve education equality and save children from the highly competitive education system (Eryong & Li, 2022). Besides, the number of English classes in K-9 in China has been reduced to 6% to 8% but the difficulty of English tests does not become easier since they focus more on students’ English competency in solving real-life problems (China's Ministry of Education, 2022). Under such circumstances, the English education in China needs to reexamine itself including the subject position, meaning of learning English and language instruction in English classrooms. At this point, English teachers in China can learn from the Canadian
More than Bilingualism: Multilingualism in Canada

Bicultural acquisition in Canada does not mean replacing the young Chinese visiting students’ languacultures with Canadian culture. On the contrary, it is a blending of their personal and cultural narratives with the diverse cultures that they felt during their stay in Canada. In my research, few participant children judged a new culture by their own values. Despite the negative impact of Covid-19 on their learning and the rising racism in Canadian society, young Chinese visiting students like Ping never made any judgments on other cultures or races. When Little Yangmei saw the anti-mask protest in Toronto, she thought of the poisonous bug story told by her Canadian teacher, and she drew a picture with cartoon characters and two languages. The values demonstrated in Little Yangmei’s translanguaging are precious because it is critical to emphasize “interconnectedness”, “global solidarity”, collaborative well-being, and international cooperation, especially facing climate change and the pandemic (UNESCO, 2021).

Additionally, most of them broke their former stereotypes of the western culture, i.e., there are only Anglo-Saxon in Canada, and they are all Canadian people who speak perfect English. They used to overgeneralize the Canadians as native-English speakers, but it turned out that many people’s first language was not English and the English they spoke also had an accent. Through learning classes such as Social Studies at Canadian
public schools and seeing multiracial people on the street, they realized that a variety of cultures co-exist in Canada which is a multicultural society. This relates to what He (2002) describes her feelings when she just arrived in Canada as a teacher. Her initial experience of strangeness was about “a sense of colors” which was the same as Ping’s description of people on the bus. Furthermore, unlike immigrant children who are born and raised in Canada, the young visiting students in my research did not struggle with their identities or fall into the dilemma of eastern and western cultures. They all knew that they would return to China after the trip, so they cherished every moment to experience new cultures and breathtaking scenery in Canada.

He (2002) points out that adults’ learning to deal with differences might “disrupt the distinctive cultural values and beliefs we bear with us in our souls and bodies” (p. 338), but the participant children in my study did not feel it particularly challenging or stressful to accept the difference in their everyday lives in Canada. Instead of saying “they are too young to reflect on their own beliefs,” I would attribute it to the fact that these children had no intention to emphasize differences or simply label everything as cultural differences. They were keen observers, and often quickly noticed the differences such as the appearance and dressing of their Canadian classmates, but to them, the difference is just difference, not something horrible or antagonistic. Moreover, the young Chinese visiting students tended to appreciate the differences, just like Ping’s compliment on her Black friend. Meanwhile, none of them treated their native culture as
absolutely sublime. Thus, rather than regarding the young Chinese visiting students as “too young too naive,” it is more proper to put it this way: they are too young to be shaped and engraved by any fixed ideologies, values, or historically constructed values. They are born to be open-minded, uncritical, apolitical, and curious, so it is their nature to cherish and appreciate different things including diverse cultures.

In addition to observing diverse cultures around them, nearly all the participant children were still learning courses from the Chinese curriculum, especially math and Mandarin during their stay in Canada. They recited ancient Chinese poems, learned pinyin, read the text from their Chinese textbooks, and wrote Chinese characters. There are several reasons why they were still learning their native language when they were in Canada. The first one is their parents were worried that the children might fall behind after the trip since the competition in Chinese schools is so fierce. It shows how the futuristic dimension influenced the participant children’s experiences in Canada. Secondly, the young Chinese visiting students always quickly finished homework assigned by their Canadian teacher, so there was plenty of time after school. For instance, Ping’s notebook used to write down homework was often blank because there was no homework. Sometimes, the homework was “Tell me anything,” which was super easy for her. Thirdly, some children felt bored at home, so they took initiative to read more books or do more exercises. Boredom does not equal nothingness or something negative. In contrast, it could lead to the most brilliant ideas (Zomorodi, 2017) and it
means learners have the right to choose. According to the Ontario Ministry of Education (2016), when learning is co-constructed through the ideas and interests of children, there is more possibility for them to take ownership of their learning. In short, the young visiting students experienced diverse cultures and learned multiple languages (e.g., Chinese, English and French) during their visit to Canada. The cultures they acquired cannot be simplified as western and eastern cultures considering the multicultural and multilingual society in Canada.

**Monolingual Ideology vs. Multilingual Reality**

In my eight-year teaching experience as a part-time K-8 English teacher (2013-2021), I have seen many young EFL students in China warned by their parents not to speak Mandarin in English class because the time to practice English is limited and they should not rely on their first language to learn English. Despite the official requirement of “English only,” both teachers and students had translanguaging in classrooms, which pushed me to investigate Chinese EFL primary school students’ needs for translanguaging in English classrooms (Guo, 2019). It was my master’s thesis and where I started on the academic journey.

Again, in my research, I encountered the same situation: even though they had already come to Canada which is not a monolingual country, some Chinese visiting scholars still endeavor to seclude their children on a man-made island where only English was spoken. Pursuing the pure-English learning environment, several Chinese
visiting scholars hoped their children could acquire English and western cultures in an efficient way. The monolingual ideology has influenced their choice of schools that their children attended in Canada and how their children interacted with local people. For instance, after school, the parents would sign up for English tutoring classes for their children to let them practice English with the Canadian tutor. Although the young Chinese visiting students were in Canada, it was unavoidable to speak their native language and creating a pure-English environment was unrealistic.

With narrative inquiry, I got to know that there are some reasons for Chinese visiting scholars’ belief in English-immersion pedagogy. Some Chinese mothers had a tough time when transferring to English-immersion courses in the freshman year, so they hoped their children to overcome the language barrier as early as possible. They wished their children could think in English and reach the English level as those who were born in English-speaking countries. As a consequence, the young ELLs “carry the burden to be socialized to a never-ending pursuit journey for native-speaking competence” (Ou & Gu, 2018, p. 23).

Secondly, as English competence becomes “a defining characteristic of talents in the 21st century” (Hu 2009, p. 52), these Chinese parents knew that if their children invest in English learning, they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which can in turn increase the value of their cultural capital and social power (Darvin & Norton, 2015). Thus, learning English and experiencing new cultures were the
main motivation for the Chinese visiting scholars to bring their children abroad. Given their children’s fluent oral English at the end of the trip, the Chinese parents were satisfied with their arrangement and praised the monolingual mode which believes that students’ mother tongue will interfere with the second language acquisition. But in my inquiry, I witnessed the young Chinese visiting students’ interactions with Chinese people and the local Canadians. Their language expressions were still hybrid, depending on whom they were talking to and the purpose of communication. Aside from oral communication, translanguaging also appeared in writing as previous discussion in this chapter reveals. It is similar to the findings of Dovchin (2021), who indicates that being immersed in the English-dominated language context does not necessarily assure that immigrants constantly use English in the society. In fact, extensive exposure from the English-only environment causes some immigrants to refrain from just speaking English because they feel restrained (Pacheco, 2018). Moreover, “using English as an international language entails more than a monolingual understanding of language and culture” (Clyne, 2008, p. 360) as there are many ways of using English around the world (Seidlhofer 2006).

Lastly, I found that different values and beliefs of second language acquisition will lead to different perceptions and evaluations of ESL programs among three groups: Chinese parents, young Chinese visiting students and Canadian teachers. For example, Ping’s mother believed that Ping’s English would be better if not going to the ESL
program, which seems to diverge from the original purpose of placing newcomers in the ESL class. In contrast, the Canadian teachers assessed newcomer students more comprehensively. They hoped the newcomers to enhance academic English literacy in ESL programs while the Chinese parents were eager to put their children into the mainstream class where there were all local “native speakers” with higher English proficiency. Moreover, the young Chinese visiting students’ different attitudes toward ESL made things more complicated. For instance, Feifei was more talkative and confident in ESL class because she thought her English was not bad there. Whereas both Little Yangmei and Ping thought that ESL class was easy for them. Ping was in grade 5, but she was asked to read picture books at a much lower level in her ESL class, which includes sentences like “banana is yellow.” Compared with that, the words that she learned in Susie’s tutoring class were mostly Tier 2 words such as chronological, erected, union, inventor, maze, and province (Field notes, Ping’s home in Windsor, April 23, 2020).

To make the transition smoother and achieve the most effective English learning, the three sides need to communicate and compromise such as the appropriate time to leave ESL programs. But in my research, there was not much contact or negotiation between some Chinese visiting scholars and the Canadian teachers because they thought the visiting period was too short and it was proper to listen to the Canadian teachers. In traditional Chinese culture, the authority of teachers is high, and teachers can receive
respect from students and parents without making effort to earn it (Chen & Zhang, 2015). Honoring teachers and their intelligence (Huaxia, 2022; Leung, 2018), the Chinese visiting scholars trusted the Canadian school and teachers. The young Chinese visiting students rarely took part in decision making since they were deemed to be too young to assess or monitor their learning. Canadian teachers tended to provide feedback on the young students’ learning through email, teacher-parent conferences, and some cloud-based tools such as EDSBY\textsuperscript{30}. Therefore, the different attitudes that Chinese parents and their children hold toward ESL programs and the hidden beliefs are unseen and covered under their stories. It can be a beginning to reflect on current ESL programs and other language curriculums for newcomer children in Canada.

To sum up, the young Chinese visiting students felt anxious and nervous in the transition to changing landscapes of cultures and languages in Canada. But they made rapid progress in English learning and cultural acquisition in a supportive environment at home, community, and school. There were many similarities and individual differences in their bi-lingual/cultural acquisition. They were immersed in multiple cultures in Canadian society but were still challenged by the monolingual ideology that their parents owned. On this issue, I stand with Norton (2010) who insists, “we are concerned not only about linguistic input and output in second language acquisition but also in the

\textsuperscript{30} It is “a cloud-based tool that offers real-time access to student's attendance, schedule, activities, and classroom work” (Great Essex County District School Board, 2022, para. 1).
relationship between the language-learner and the larger social world” (p. 2). Otherwise, there will be consequences in both individual and national levels. For example, Clyne (2008) points out that people with a monolingual mindset may have “little understanding of, or the sympathy for the expression of identity through a language other than the dominant language” (p. 353). Besides, decision makers’ monolingual mindset may overlook the advantages brought by a country’s multilingual potential (Clyne, 2008).

Moreover, “with increasing transnationalism and transmigration—processes that should be highly conducive to second language acquisition and multilingualism—have come many deeply troubling trends: the forced expulsion, rejection, xenophobia, linguicism, neocolonialism, and other forms of prejudice and oppression” (Duff, 2019, p. 19). Considering these trends, it is urgent and significant to provide equity for all students in languages and cultures and “build on linguistic strengths” (García et al., 2012, p. 242).

Languages and cultures are “fluid and constantly being negotiated and reconstituted both spatially and temporally” (Creese et al., 1999, p. 3). After the young visiting students finished the trip and went back to China, what linguistic and cultural knowledge did they acquire? As Li Wei (2022a) says, a lot of learning “takes place outside of the classroom, in the community, and at home” (p. 180), the next section will report the young visiting students’ bi-lingual/cultural acquisition after their visit to Canada.
Bilingual and Bicultural Acquisition in China

**Different Versions of English in Canada and China**

When the young visiting students just went back to their schools in China, they had a reverse “shock” in learning. For example, in academic performance, it took them a long time to memorize Chinese characters and recite Chinese poems. Making up the missed lessons was an intense process, so Luna used the one-day free visit to the teacher’s office to describe the hard transition period. Alongside this, many young visiting students mentioned that they learned different versions of English in Canada and China such as the contrast between authentic English and English for tests (because there are power dynamics as to who decides which English is authentic and which one is not). They perceived the differences in English language education in the two countries such as the authenticity of English textbooks. For example, summarizing grammar rules like “can 问 can 答” (If a question starts with “can,” you should answer it with “can” as well.) might be useful in English exams in China, but too much focus on forms and structures will mislead students in real situations since the answers in daily conversations are not fixed.

One plausible reason why the young visiting students had such a comparison is related to their English learning experiences in Canada. For example, the textbooks (e.g., *English Smart* or *The Complete Canadian Curriculum*) they used after school were from Costco or Amazon bought by their parents. The learning content was related to Canadian
culture and closer to authentic English language usage in life. Aside from that, in the interaction with people in Canada, the young visiting students found that Canadians did not know much about the international phonetic alphabet or English grammar, which did not affect daily communication at all. Overall, the experiences in Canada influenced their perceptions of English language education in China and enhanced their linguistic awareness.

After the visit to Canada, the young visiting students experienced English language education in two countries. But why was it different to learn and teach English in Canada and China? How did the differences come into being? From a macro view, that is because of the standard examination in China which aims to select excellent students. Its washback inevitably leads language learners to exam-oriented learning (P. Huang, 2019). “The input and output of the language are mostly in the form of repetitive exercises and homework” (S. Xu, 2017, p. 224). Under the pressure of standardized assessment, teachers will still seek the most efficient pedagogy that can improve students’ scores in exams while the main subject of learning, i.e., learners, will be unseen. Secondly, Chinese teachers and parents often emphasize the acquisition of English language knowledge such as vocabulary and grammatical rules but pay less attention to the acquisition of culture. Although more and more educators in China are working hard to cultivate students’ intercultural awareness and competence (Cheng, 2011), it is possible that many English teachers and textbook editors have not paid much
attention to English pragmatic knowledge or the appropriate use of English in intercultural communication in the real context. Besides, as far as I know, many Chinese teachers and students still believe that doing exam papers and taking English tests many times are the most efficient ways to get desired score in high-stake testing such as the National College Entrance Examination and the IELTS.

Indeed, there is a challenge in current foreign language education in EFL contexts such as China, i.e., to teach a new language without real-life contexts. Wen (2018) points out that what has just been learned at Chinese public school has “become receptive knowledge that cannot be automatically converted into productive knowledge” since students have no real contexts to practice English (p. 5). It explains why the Chinese visiting scholars hoped to take their children with them in the trip to Canada. So far there have been many Chinese scholars having found that issue and drafting papers to argue that English teachers should start with use, communication and meaning (Wen, 2018).

Furthermore, the level of English textbooks used in Chinese public schools does not match the young Chinese visiting students’ English proficiency. Pingping Huang (2019) analyzes a textbook in China including its characteristics and the reasons behind the design of the English curriculum in Chinese education system:

In China, English is a compulsory school subject and textbooks are state-approved, fully funded by the government and selected by provincial or municipal level administrative departments to be used in all formal schools in the corresponding administrative areas. Textbooks in China, thus, are designed for a large number of students with various backgrounds, rather than a specific type of
students or a specific school. (p. 91)

It is a one-size-fits-all approach and explains why Ping’s grade-7 English textbook still included greetings such as “Hello. Good morning” which was boring for her. Compared with that, she had learned many Tier Two words such as achievement, decision, suffer, original, accepted, unique and establish from Susie (Ping Li’s artifact, April 23, 2020). These words are general but more sophisticated (Beck et al., 2002). Therefore, Pingping Huang (2019) suggests that “educational practitioners use the textbooks in a contextualizing way or make appropriate adaptations” to cater to individual needs and levels (p. 91). To sum up, English language education in Canada and China has different purposes and students and has been situated in different sociocultural and political contexts. Besides, English teachers in China also have different teaching beliefs, which cause more complexity in the young visiting students’ English learning experiences after their visit to Canada.

The Past Has Not Passed. The international and cross-cultural experiences not only enabled the young Chinese visiting students to see the differences in English taught in different countries but also shaped their learning interests and habits. After the trip, the reading interests, and habits that they formed and developed in Canada still cling to them. Take comic books as an example. It is often seen as informal and does not meet academic standards of language expressions, but it reflects the young learners’ interests and their unique way of interpreting the world. Feifei’s mother bought her seven books
of *Babysitters Club* after she returned to China, and she became interested in Japanese after reading the trilingual magazine that her mom ordered for her. Those pieces composed a rich, dynamic, and fluid landscape of young visiting students’ language and culture acquisition in China.

Previous research often emphasizes that the literacy immigrant children develop in their first language can transfer to English (Cummins, 1984). For instance, Xu (2017) substantiates that what the immigrant children achieved through L1, “such as good learning habits, learning strategies, communicative skills, and high-order thinking, transferred to learning ESL, math, and other subjects in English” (p. 227). In my research, the five students’ stories not only echo with that but also show the skills and habits acquired through L2 can benefit L1 learning as well. For example, Caicai had developed self-regulation and English reading habit during her stay in Canada, especially in the first half of 2020 as the school was closed. She spent much time previewing the grade-1 curriculum and “taught” her toys at home. After she came back to China and became a grade-1 student, she kept the work ethics such as reading Chinese and English books, telling her mom stories before sleeping and writing excellent compositions in Mandarin. It shows that the literacies of two languages (L1 and L2) could be transferred and benefited each other.

**Crafting Languages in Communications**

In my research, the participant students acquired different cultures through formal
and informal learning. After they returned to China, many of them not only accepted English education at public schools but also participated in kinds of English activities and competitions. For example, Luna took part in an English summer camp in Beijing and Little Yangmei won prizes in the English speech contest. These cross-cultural experiences became the personal linguistic landscape and the resources of their translanguaging.

On the other hand, translanguaging was the way of telling and retelling their amazing experiences. While they were sharing with me old memories of Canada, their reading experiences, activities that they participated in China and their understanding of cultural differences in the two countries, translanguaging frequently happened in our conversations. For example, Little Yangmei was aware of the different senses of humor in English and Chinese. She knew translating the English tongue twister into Chinese would spoil the fun, which shows that words or phrases in two languages may not correspond exactly. In short, the participant students’ translanguaging and our interactions motivated them to verbalize their thoughts, reveal their language and culture acquisition and reflect on the experiences after the trip. Their stories were featured by the three dimensions, including the shift in living, and learning contexts, relationship with parents, friends, the researcher, classmates, and teachers, and connection with previous and future life experiences.

To summarize, the young Chinese visiting students as bilingual children engaged
in bilingual and bicultural acquisition in their cross-cultural and international experiences through interpersonal communication, intrapersonal communication, employing various materials and participating in kinds of activities in the cultural community, at home and school. First, their parents, grandparents, teachers and friends all provided rich experiences in multiple languages. During the visit to Canada, Caicai’s mother talked about everyday activities with her on their way home and Little Yangmei’s father told her traditional Chinese stories by phone. Second, outside of school, the young Chinese visiting students celebrated Canadian festivals and enjoyed holidays with their parents. That offered ample opportunities for the children to hear and speak two languages (Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams, 2013). For instance, Little Yangmei went to see a gala show about Chinese New Year with her mother in Toronto, which eased her homesickness. Third, some of them had self-language activities such as telling stories to toys and write English diary at home. It could be seen as a preparation for socialization and a free way of self-expression. Fourth, there were a variety of materials as mediation to facilitate their bi-lingual/cultural acquisition including books, songs, games and daily routines. Overall, my research findings reveal how the student participants who had varied and sustained experiences in multiple languages engaged in bi-lingual/cultural acquisition.

With the sense of inquiry (Clandinin, 2019), I am going to answer the last research question about children’s own understanding of international and cross-cultural
experiences in the following section.

**Sketching Young Chinese Visiting Students’ Lives between Canada and China**

*Unpacking the Experiences with Narrative Thinking*

“Thinking narratively about a phenomenon challenges the dominant story of the phenomenon as fixed and unchanging throughout an inquiry” (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p. 9). The analysis gained from the three-dimensional framework of young Chinese visiting students’ cross-cultural experiences between Canada and China let me realize that sometimes seeing is not believing. A person is just like a whole book, which cannot be understood from just one single page. Thus, I would not separately analyze their thoughts with static cross sections of their lives, but connect who they were before the visit, how they felt during the visit with where they are going after the visit to Canada.

**Pre-visit Experiences and Individual Differences.** As the Ontario Ministry of Education (2008b) points out, “a student who arrives as a teenager may face different issues from someone who arrives as a pre-adolescent” (p. 10). Hence, it is impossible to understand the young visiting students’ feelings and cognitive changes without thinking about their motivation and attitudes before the trip to Canada. The young Chinese visiting students’ attitudes of going to Canada before the trip were different. Some children were reluctant to go while some felt it did not really matter where they went as long as they were with family. My participant children went to Canada mainly because of their parents’ decision. Most of them had not been abroad before coming to Canada.
(except for Grace who had been to the U.S.), so they did not have grand expectations for Canada. Ping was an exception who looked forward to going abroad because some of her friends had travelled abroad and shared with her the experiences of living abroad.

Before the trip, the Chinese visiting scholars were considering which school was appropriate for their children. As Shijing Xu (2017) finds, “Chinese parents often choose their home based on the quality of the local school” because they believe the school plays the most important role in children’s education (p. 248). Many Chinese visiting scholars checked the local school information before they decided on the location of renting a house or an apartment. But they held different attitudes toward the choice of school. Little Yangmei’s and Ping’s mothers chose the Canadian school with fewer Chinese children so that their children could learn English as fast as possible. Grace’s father preferred to live closer to the university, so Grace went to Kingswood which was near the campus.

Since the young Chinese visiting students started schooling in Canada, their experiences before the visit began to influence their performance, feelings, and perceptions. For example, young learners like Yiyi had one year of schooling experience in the Chinese kindergarten before she came to Canada and the narrative history helped her to adapt to the Canadian kindergarten as she knew what kindergarten was about. At the beginning of Little Yangmei’s story, she did not want to go to Canada, so she missed her father and burst into tears when it was the Chinese Spring Festival that celebrates the
beginning of a new year with family members.

Furthermore, the Chinese children’s experiences before the visit were different including their imagination and understanding of Canada and their attitudes toward the visit. Therefore, those pre-visit experiences could be transformed into supporting power, disappointment, or adaptation difficulties. In Ping’s story, she was eager to go abroad as many of her Chinese classmates had overseas experiences. When she just came to Canada, her dream came true, and she felt everything was exciting and fresh. However, due to Covid-19, she had to stay at home for almost half a year during which the anti-Asian racism was severe in Canadian society. Ping began to perceive this country from a more realistic perspective. Moreover, she tended to compare her feelings and experiences with her Chinese friends’ overseas experiences in the U.S. During her stay in Canada, Ping mentioned several times how her friend was bullied in the states and then she showed her own firm stance on fighting against racism in Canada.

In Luna’s story, her Chinese classmates and teachers told her to show the spirit of Class 1 before going to Canada, so she wanted to perform well at Kingswood school and be the perfect student in Ms. Clare’s class. The pre-visit experiences supported her in learning motivation. But that could also cause strong mood swings once her expectations were not met. For instance, Luna was the only child in my research who reported having the least favorite Canadian teacher because she felt she was often misunderstood and mistrusted by the teacher. After Luna returned to China, she was criticized as “went to
Canada for nothing” only because she misspelt an English word. It reveals peer pressure that often impacts a child's self-esteem and identity. Her stories also state that the assessment of children’s learning and interpretation of their lived experiences will become singular and arbitrary when the meaning making was unitary and predefined.

In Feifei’s story, she knew nothing about Canada before the trip, so she had no expectations or specific purposes of the visit. She did not define it as a trip to learn English or western culture, just living with it. Besides, she cared more about “what is the experience like” instead of “what it ought to be” (Hudson, 1969) during her stay in Canada. After the trip, she commented, “everything about Canada is great!” Innocence is often deemed as risk and unpreparedness, but in my research, it helps some young visiting students perceive new things without bias or personal judgment.

**Deconstructing the Problems and Challenges.** Every young Chinese visiting student had his or her own “problems” to deal with and those “challenges” happened in different stages of the visit to Canada. Some tensions occurred at the beginning of the visit while some emerged in the later phase with the coming of Covid-19. I quote the two words because, in some children’s eyes, these “problems” were not deemed significant. In addition, they had different attitudes toward the same issue, which made my analysis more complicated. For instance, both Feifei’s mom and her Canadian teacher were worried about her not speaking much English after several months’ stay in Windsor. Feifei herself did not regard it as an issue because she knew she could understand most
of the English that Canadian teachers and classmates were speaking at Kingswood. She even thought it was fun since others thought that Feifei could not speak or understand English. She told me in our online chat that she was proud of herself as she could understand what Canadians were talking about while the Canadians could not understand her native language (Casual conversation with Feifei, June 15, 2022). Ou and Gu (2017) argue that “there is an asymmetrical power relationship between Chinese students and their native English-speaking peers in conversations, where the Chinese students tend to be silenced as they do not get much say on the choices of subjects and language of communication” (p. 17). But in Feifei’s stories, the power relation in her mind seemed to be shifted at the later stage of her visit to Canada. Similarly, some parents and teachers might feel concerned about how newcomer children could make friends during the transition period, but Caicai said she was not upset about not having her best friend at Kingswood kindergarten because many children just played together. She told me after she returned to China, “I didn’t need to speak much English in Canada. I still had great fun there” (Casual conversation with Caicai, October 16, 2021). In case the young visiting students were romanticizing the experiences in Canada and weakening the difficulties they encountered, the face-to-face interviews with their mothers and the observation of the Canadian tutor’s tutoring classes during their stay in Canada adds more credibility and trustworthiness to their perceptions of those “challenges and problems.”
Transforming the Barriers into Power. Yan (2011) reports three factors that impede Chinese international students’ adjustment to American universities: teacher-student relationship, educational environment, and language barriers. But in young visiting students’ cases, language barriers are not insurmountable obstacles because new allies would assist learning, among who Canadian teachers can largely support children’s healthy mental and language development (Vegas & Winthrop, 2020). Chinese visiting scholars praised the excellent job that these Canadian teachers did. All the participant children loved their Canadian teachers and stated that their teachers helped them a lot at school (Except for Luna who did not like Ms. Clare because she thought she was often misunderstood by this Canadian teacher). The participant students’ narratives show that with proper instruction and support from home and school, the “impeditive” factors can be transformed into auxiliary power. It depends on how educators and newcomers interpret these factors and what measures are taken to meet their needs.

Fighting Against Racism. Since the participant students’ experiences are fluid and complex, their narratives also illuminate the multiple, nuanced, and emergent ways of interacting with the Canadian society during their visit. For instance, Canada has a mix of distinct cultures and people often find ways to get along in this country. However, it is not always a happy picture because there is still a significant stream of racism such as anti-Black, anti-Asian, anti-Muslim, and anti-Semitism (Hedy, 2018; Wang & Moreau, 2022) sentiments. Racism is a sensitive but unavoidable issue in some young
Chinese visiting students’ experiences in Canada. In my research, the Chinese visiting scholars’ children were not deeply hurt by the aggressive behavior and racist comments, but their sense of security and socialization was affected.

In Ping’s stories, she was discriminated against by a boy at YMCA after school, which is a microcosm of verbal attacks against Chinese people during the pandemic. According to the Balintec (2022 April 3), violent attacks were a continued trend, with a 42% increase in Asians reporting being coughed at or spat on from January 1 to December 31, 2021. Within such a context, Ping bravely fought against racism and gained support from the teacher at YMCA. When Little Yangmei heard unfriendly words about Chinese people at the anti-mask protest, she drew pictures at home to demonstrate the different attitudes that different countries held toward Covid-19. The two students’ ages and the places where the discrimination happened were different, but they both thought that racism is unacceptable.

**Feeling More Relaxed but Still Having Extra Work After School.** During the trip, nearly all the participant children realized different academic expectations between Canada and China. When they were in Canada, they felt much more relaxed because they spent less time doing homework or going to tutoring classes after school compared with that in China. They got plenty of free time after school, so they learned to manage time with their parents’ help. For example, during the pandemic, remote instruction increased the visiting students’ opportunities to learn at home with their parents. Little
Yangmei and her mom made a timetable and followed it to make sure important and urgent tasks were completed.

In contrast, the young visiting students in higher grades usually had more work to do after they finished school. For example, Ping had to take the English tutoring class given by Susie, the online advanced math class offered by an educational company, online classes from her Chinese school, and other programs signed up by her mom. When Ridgeview School switched to remote learning after the March break of 2020, Ping’s science assignment became challenging for her. Gradually, she used the reading strategies to find answers from the videos and accomplished her assignments. As a mature learner, she was hard-working in Canada because she knew she had to face the competitive education system after returning to China.

Reinterpreting Stories Within the Three-dimensional Framework. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) note that the temporal dimension attends to the past, present, and future of people, places, practices, and phenomenon under study. I used to interpret it as the past would influence the current and the current experiences would shape the future. But my participant children’s experiences were not simply unfolding in a linear way. The three dimensions influenced their perceptions in a multilayered way. Take Ping’s story as an example. When she was in Windsor in 2020, she had a heavy burden of learning every day because she had to get prepared for the entrance exam to middle school in 2021. That demonstrates how the future shaped her experiences in Canada. Besides, her pre-
trip experiences had an impact on her feelings, understanding and reflection on Canada as a country. She had high expectations on foreign countries, so she felt excited at the beginning of the visit but gradually developed a more objective understanding of Canadian society. More than the past and future, everything that she was experiencing in Canada also impacted her perceptions of this country. After returning to China, her initial idea of Canada before the visit, her experiences during the visit and her current schooling at the Chinese junior high school all had an impact on her reconstruction of the short-term experiences in Canada and her plan for future study (e.g., which country she would like to go and whether she has enough money to go). All these experiences were shaping her perceptions of languages, cultures, society, and people in Canada in a complex and multi-lateral way. I drew a horizontal axis with an arrow to illustrate how different places, periods, and sociality shaped Ping’s understanding of her international and cross-cultural experiences.

Figure 20

*Ping’s Understanding of the Trip Within the Three-dimensional Framework*
As Figure 20 shows, the past, present, and future all influence Ping’s understanding of the trip when she was in Canada and after she returned to China. Interpreting the young Chinese visiting students’ stories within the three-dimensional framework, I had an epiphany that the way that past histories exert impact on the present and future is not unidirectional or unchangeable because the past can be reconstructed and renegotiated according to people’s changing perspectives in the flow of time. Though past stories already happened, they may still be “present in people’s consciousness and decisions” (Duff, 2019, p. 10). Moreover, I saw every participant child as the integration of multiple “selves” that stood for him or her at different times and locations, interacting with different people. It corresponds with the second stage of Zen Buddhism: 看山不是山 (when you look at the mountain, you feel it might not be a mountain.). As mentioned earlier, the five participant children’s personalities and family backgrounds are different. These stable qualities are unlikely to be totally transformed because of the short-term visit to Canada, so they are always with these children as they live their cross-cultural lives in Canada and China. With a sense of inquiry (Clandinin, 2019), I could see the unchanged part in their experiences, so it echoes with the third level of Zen Buddhism: 看山还是山 (to look at the mountain as it is and be able to see its true face). It is different from the first level of 看山是山 (to look at the mountain as it appears).

To sum up, the individual differences such as age, cognitive features, personality,
and period of visiting Canada all have an impact on the children’s understanding of
Canada, Canadian teachers, their translanguaging in oral and written forms, the style of
narratives as well as the way of expressing ideas and thoughts (e.g., writing diaries or
telling dolls stories). There are several major factors that influence children’s experiences
such as parents’ support, beliefs and perceptions of education, the Canadian tutor’s
intervention, encouragement from the schools and Canadian teachers, activities they took
part in, students’ native language and the technology-assisted learning (e.g., Lexia and
the translation app). Those findings have some overlapping with what Ng et al. (2011)
summarize about the external and internal factors influencing cross-cultural experiences:
cultural distance and social support; the level of the target language, previous overseas
experience, expectations before the trip and stereotypes.

Continuing with the Lived Stories After the Visit

A richer understanding of the young Chinese visiting students’ cross-cultural
lives evolves from studying who they were, who they are, and who they will become.
After they finished the visit, their stories in China continue. Would the children struggle
between the two societies? What was their reflection on Canada after they returned to
China? Storying and restorying can capture the transitions that are usually unseen in the
social and personal lives of the young Chinese sojourners in Canada.

After the young visiting students returned to China, the life space was much
narrower than that in Canada as they were faced with peer pressure and had a busy
schedule on both weekdays and weekends. There was much more homework and exams, and the school time was longer than that in Canada as many Chinese pupils must arrive at school before 7:30 a.m. and come home at 5 p.m. Most of them cared about their ranking and test scores, so they had to study hard to earn grades. When they were in Canada, they had plenty of time drawing, doing crafts and playing outside, but in China, they spent more time in doing homework and extra-curricular exercises. Meanwhile, most young Chinese visiting students felt their Chinese teachers were stricter than the Canadian teachers, so they did not like going to school that much as they did in Canada. Besides, they had to spend much time making up the main subject lessons that they missed during the visit to Canada. Among the subjects, Chinese was the most challenging and time-consuming one. In contrast, they felt English was quite easy at public schools even though some of the learning content was different and they were bored in the English class. Though Ping and Feifei reported that they were not familiar with the International phonetic alphabet and did not enjoy learning English grammar rules, they often got full marks in English tests. On weekends, the young visiting students went to arts or sports programs such as playing the piano, practicing Chinese calligraphy, singing, and swimming.

Thinking narratively of the cross-cultural and international experiences, I could see how the pre-visit experiences impacted their understanding of the visit and how their experiences during the visit influenced the children’s learning and life after they returned.
to China. Some habits that they developed in Canada were maintained and benefited native language development, but some had to be adjusted or just faded. For instance, Caicai’s self-discipline and self-management contributed to her transition from kindergarten to primary school in China. But without gaining permission from the Chinese teachers, she could not ask questions in class just like how she did in the Canadian classroom.

Having experienced Canadian education and knowing Canadian people’s way of living, young visiting students at a higher stage of primary school had more in-depth reflections on life and learning in the two countries. For example, Ping mentioned the difference between well-being and happiness in our online interview. New experiences have an impact on her prior knowledge about the world in which she lives (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). Her words reflected the reality of the Chinese education system which left limited choices for most students.

Before the trip, most of the young Chinese visiting students did not want to visit a foreign country but after the trip, their attitudes changed, and it might influence their decision making in the years ahead. Because of the pleasant experiences in Canada, most of them showed willingness to go abroad again in the future and they had more confidence in communicating with people from English-speaking countries.

**Children’s Life Journey in Languages and Cultures**

As Clandinin and Connelly (1994) state, the narrative is phenomenon and
method. It is more about making educational meaning out of participants’ personal lived experiences so the question of “so what” matters (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). With international student numbers increasing by 25% per year, Canada has surpassed its International Education Strategy launched in 2011 to raise international student numbers to 450,000 by 2022. Chinese students composing about one-third of the international student population of Canada (Luedi, 2020). While a series of reports (e.g., British Council, 2012; Institute of International Education, 2018) about international students’ backgrounds, little information is accessible as to the development, implementation, and effectiveness of short-term study-abroad programs.

Considering the enormous number of Chinese students studying abroad and the literature gap, this narrative inquiry aims to answer three research questions: 1) What are young Chinese visiting students’ translanguaging practices in their international and cross-cultural experiences between Canada and China? Do they change over time? If so, how? 2) What is young Chinese visiting students’ bi-lingual/cultural acquisition in their international and cross-cultural experiences? and 3) How do the young Chinese visiting students make sense of their international and cross-cultural experiences through language and culture? In the international and cross-cultural experiences, the young Chinese visiting students had creative and flexible translanguaging practices which could figure out meaning and interact with others in the social life (W. Li, 2018). Besides, they gained a deeper understanding of a wide range of cultures such as Indigenous culture and
Muslim culture. In addition to acquiring English language knowledge, they also learned other subjects including Music, Social Studies, Math, and so on. Aside from that, they became more confident, caring, self-disciplined, independent and were more willing to embark on a new journey in foreign countries such as New Zealand, Canada, and the U.K.

Narrative inquiry as a research methodology and a way of thinking helps me to make sense of the young Chinese visiting students’ lived experiences. The last chapter will provide implications on language education in China and Canada for facilitating newcomers to adapt to a linguistically and culturally diverse society and contributing to international or visiting students’ smooth transition after returning to their homeland. My self-reflection will also be presented in the end.
Chapter 10 CONCLUSION

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that “for narrative inquirers, it is crucial to be able to articulate a relationship between one’s personal interests and sense of significance of larger social concerns expressed in the works and lives of others” (p. 122). Therefore, in the last chapter, I am going to show the original knowledge that I have contributed to the field of study and implications offered by the research. Then I will reveal the limitation, recommend some topics for future work, and provide a reflection on my overall research journey including my growth, my understanding of narrative inquiry from a traditional Chinese perspective and self-narratives.

Contribution to the Knowledge and Society

It has been estimated that two million people across international borders daily (Omelaniuk, 2005) and sojourners take residence abroad for different reasons and for different durations of time. Take the Chinese in Canada for example. In the 2021 Census (Statistics Canada, 2022), the Chinese Canadian community was 1.71 million, making up 4.63% of the Canadian population. However, Chinese students are often unrecognized, underrepresented, and excluded from not only dominant discourses in educational study and policy but also in research on marginalized and minority communities. Furthermore, previous studies of Chinese immigrants mainly focus on the challenges newcomers meet and how they construct their social and cultural identities (Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002).
In the field of translanguaging, most research looks at the role of translanguaging as pedagogical scaffolding strategies for identity affirmation (Cummins, 2015a; Cummins et al., 2015; García & Li, 2015) and raises research questions such as “How teachers and students have developed and co-constructed pedagogic practices for participants in complementary schooling?” (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Daniel & Pacheco, 2015; W. Li, 2014a). Despite many translanguaging studies in recent years, not many researchers focus on young ELLs’ translingual practices in a transnational space or interpret children’s complex language practices from a narrative perspective. Moreover, the role, characteristics, and barriers of translanguaging are studied separately in former research rather than be understood from a holistic dimension within speakers’ lived experiences.

Considering the research gaps and the current trend of sending younger students to study abroad for quality education as well as the popularity of pursuing the English-immersion model in China (Qiang & Siegel, 2012; Xiong & Feng, 2018), I made in-depth inquiries into young learners’ flexible language practices in Canadian and mainland China contexts, including the role that translanguaging plays in the transition, its various forms in children’s daily life and the obstacles that prevent dynamic translingual usages. The five young Chinese visiting students’ stories indicate that translanguaging and the use of native language should be allowed in both ESL and EFL contexts because students’ heritage/primary language is not an impediment (Cummins,
2005a), but a foundation that enables children to communicate their unique experiences with and reactions to their world and to express their preferences, desires, needs and perspectives (Theresa, 2009). As Butzkamm and Caldwell (2009) argue, the mother tongue should be regarded as “the greatest pedagogic resource a child brings to the learning of foreign languages” and it is “for all school subjects” (p. 24).

Besides, narrative inquiry enables readers to see individual differences which influence the children’s translanguageing practices and their acquisition of cultures and languages. Their personality, interests and life experiences largely impact their ways of expressing themselves, such as conducting multimodal translanguageing in oral communications and drawing bilingual posters. Moreover, each child made sense of the international and cross-cultural experiences from his or her own stance and perspectives. The complex ways that families, schools, and communities interact in their translanguageing and bi-lingual/cultural acquisition provide significant insights into how students learn, negotiate, and access languages and cultures both inside and outside school settings (Norton, 2013).

Furthermore, the findings of my research might be useful to similar international and large-scale projects such as Canada-China Reciprocal Learning Partnership Project (Connelly & Xu, 2019; S. Xu, 2019; Xu & Connelly, 2017) since they reveal the complexity of young learners’ English language acquisition and learning in a transnational space. As I reviewed in the second chapter, this is one gap in previous
research about reciprocal learning in international and cross-cultural contexts. Although the findings cannot directly solve problems in English language learning and teaching in China and Canada, they are likely to help more people to see this ignored group in academia and narratively think the continuity and wholeness of their lived experiences.

Narrative inquirers must be able to answer the “so what” and “who cares” questions and join the conversations in which there can be an educative dialogue between research, practice, and policy (Clandinin, 2006). Next, I identified the possible audiences for this narrative inquiry and suggested implications for stakeholders including teachers and school administrators, students, parents, and researchers.

**Implications and Limitations**

**Implications for Language Education in Canada and China**

As a significant part of language education, intercultural communication is “a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process, in which people from different cultures create shared meanings” (Lustig & Koester, 2007, p. 46). Moreover, language ability and cultural awareness are the two core components of high school English curriculum standard in China (Zhou et al., 2011). The current research suggests that except for breaking stereotypes and bias, there is still much work for intercultural communication programs and courses to do such as jumping out of the comparison model.
Moreover, intercultural communication competence and awareness had better be integrated into all English teaching in terms of all the aspects such as vocabulary and listening. When teaching English words in primary school, it would be great if English teachers could remind students of the specific use and nuances of different words. For example, it might be impolite to describe a person’s body as “fat.” Susie did not mind Feifei’s joke of “you are fat” because they were very familiar with each other. But it would be useful if English teacher in China could teach students more appropriate words to politely describe others’ body image. That is part of communicative competence (Hymes, 1977), which is also the goal that English teachers need to work on. English teacher education programs should also attend to intercultural sensitivity and the nuances of English language culture. Besides, as Zhichang Xu and Thuy Ngoc Dinh (2013) point out, even when “we use the same English words in global communication, we may not share the same denotations and connotations” because “the meanings of English words change and vary in accordance with English as a Lingua France contexts” (p. 365). Thus, it will be helpful to demonstrate how “speakers co-construct and negotiate meanings” in real communications (Z. Xu & Dinh, 2013, p. 365). In that way, learners can “raise their awareness of and exposure to different varieties of English” (Z. Xu, 2002, p. 236).

Qiufang Wen (2018) elucidated those pedagogical methods in mainstream education in Mainland China are basically “text-centered and input-based. English instruction takes the text as an end rather than a means, and input-processing is the major
learning task” (p. 526). Thus, English education in China has been criticized as “spending enormous time but obtaining poor outcomes” (Jing, 1999, p.22). The responses of the participant children after the trip to Canada indicate that English language education in some Chinese schools focuses more on grammatical functions and words memorizing instead of communicative functions and students’ real-life experiences. Little Yangmei’s struggle with the only standard English font and Feifei’s puzzle about the translation of “any” show that authenticity, communication, diversity, and cultures (P. Huang, 2019) in English classrooms are ignored. Learning will become ritualized (Norton, 2010) and distinguish classrooms from the real-world (Z. Xu, 2002), if ELLs are always struggling for native-speaker-like proficiencies (Z. Xu, 2002) and there is little ownership over meaning-making. For instance, Caicai loved to sing English songs in Canada and performed them to her mother at home whereas she felt bored about singing English songs in her textbook as there were too many of them and it became a must-do task at her Chinese school. Therefore, there should be a shift in the paradigm for “increasing effectiveness in foreign language teaching methodologies” and benefiting the whole English language teaching industry (Z. Xu, 2014b, p. 364).

Implications for Teacher Education in Canada and China

The first language of approximately 20 percent of the children in Ontario’s English-language schools is a language other than English (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). Depending on newcomers’ ages and countries of origin, they may
have had varying educational experiences prior to their arrival in Canada, and consequently will require different levels of support in order to succeed in the classroom. Teachers need to be aware of the student’s strengths and lived experiences and use these assets to build literacy skills (Ontario STEP Curriculum, 2015). Cummins (1986) had paid attention to the significance of identifying the minority children’s previous learning experiences and out-of-school settings to make sense of children’s learning in school (S. Xu, 2017). My research made an inquiry of children’s language and culture learning, which unfolded how young newcomers made sense of new learning content and surroundings outside of their classroom. In that sense, the research findings are expected to shed light on Canadian pre-service and in-service teachers as they are going to teach or are currently teaching students from multiple ethnicity and cultural backgrounds.

Recognizing and programming for students’ educational needs will continue to be central to their successful transition to Ontario schools and to Canadian society (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). The young Chinese visiting students’ narratives have revealed that every individual brings cultural and linguistic experiences to Canada and hopes to be respected and appreciated. Participant children’s intercultural knowledge and experiences were valued and valuable for their schools and classrooms, which, in turn, contributed to English language education in both ESL and EFL contexts. As Darvin (2015) points out, L2 learners need to draw on their linguistic, semiotic, cultural, social, and material resources, and the extent to which teachers can recognize, value, and
mobilize these resources is what empowers learners. In both Canada and China, language educators should value learners’ previous knowledge which might be acquired through other languages than the target language (e.g., English). My research studies the bilingual acquisition of Chinese and English, but the research findings also hope to shed light on other bilingual programs such as French-English and Spanish-English programs.

Both Canadian and Chinese teachers are teaching students with individual differences in personalities, levels, learning styles, needs, motivation and personal histories. It is necessary to see students’ strengths and resources they bring to the classroom and integrate them into teaching because students themselves are front-and-center curricular resources (Y. Wang, 2014). In my research, Little Yangmei’s Canadian teacher designed activities for children to share their family heritage and heroes in their minds. Luna’s English teacher in China awarded her for making a bilingual handwritten poster about Chinese New Year. These teachers recognize and draw upon student strengths and the various forms of capital they possess represent an empirically effective way to support and enable academic excellence and better educational outcomes in general (Kiramba, 2017; Kiramba & Oloo, 2019). They are working toward incorporating “the lived experiences and social identities of language learners” into “the formal second language curriculum” (Norton, 2011, p. 26).

On the other hand, Canadian and Chinese teachers are faced with different challenges. For Canadian teachers, their students come from diverse cultural
backgrounds and ethnic groups, so it is necessary to ensure justice, diversity, equity, inclusion, and respect in the classroom. In planning programs for children with linguistic backgrounds other than English, teachers should recognize that every learner adjusts to the new social environment and language in a unique way and at an individual pace. For example, children who are in an early stage of English-language acquisition may go through a “silent period” (Krashen, 1981) during which they closely observe the interactions and physical surroundings of their new learning environment. Some teachers may feel puzzled by their students’ silence and question what they have learned during this period (Iddings & Jang, 2008). They may use body language rather than speech or they may use their first language until they have gained enough proficiency in English to feel confident in their interpretations and responses (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009).

Furthermore, the five main student participants’ narratives can also provide some practical suggestions for Canadian teachers. For example, newcomers like Chinese visiting students may find some topics are not directly related to them, such as Indigenous people’s history. To provide space for them to join the discussion, teachers can invite students to reflect on the history of ethnic minority groups and the maintenance of cultural heritage in their homeland to observe how learners react in the depicted situations (Uzum et al., 2021). When teaching Canada Day, instructors can ask Chinese visiting students how they celebrate National Day Holiday in China every year.
to build personal connections with the learning materials. In addition, the narratives of Chinese English speakers such as Ping who realized the difference between “authentic English” and “Chinese English” have revealed the different meanings of the same English words. Therefore, the Canadian educational system should realize English varieties in different countries such as China, India, Nigeria, France, Brazil, Iran, and Philippines. Those varieties, as illustrated by Zhichang Xu and Farzad Sharifian (2017), can contribute to “unpacking more deep-rooted cultural underpinnings that learners have subconsciously encoded” (p. 216).

Activating students’ voices through translilingual practices may support students’ agency (Kiramba & Oloo, 2019) but many teachers are concerned about how to do translanguaging pedagogy if they do not understand their students’ L1. I suggest they use the dialogues as the prompt to encourage students to share in kinds of ways such as painting, speaking, writing, photography and so on. The artworks that collect their stories and memories can be exhibited on the wall of classroom or the school hallway, just like in an art gallery. In that way, an adaptive and creative education model could be established on students’ experiences and advantages (Xu et al., 2017), which resonates with the core values of translanguaging. Moreover, in both Canada and China, it will be helpful to make sure the assessment of students’ academic performance is multi-evaluated. Young ELLs like Feifei who have less oral output can express themselves through writing and drawing. Leaving translanguaging space for students can give them
a sense of control and a sense of belonging (Jong et al., 2020) as bilinguals' home language and cultures are valued (DeNicolo, 2019; Gómez Fernández, 2019). They will not feel frustrated by being assessed by a single standard – whether they speak a perfect target language. When we free ourselves from monolingual instructional assumptions, a wide variety of opportunities emerge for developing students’ L1 and L2 proficiencies by means of bilingual/ multilingual instructional strategies that acknowledge the reality of, and strongly promote, cross-language transfer (Cummins, 2016).

**Implications for Bilingualism and Multilingualism**

The advent of super-diverse settings in the 21st century has increasingly required classroom practices, curricula, and policies to build on the multiple repertoires of the learners (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; W. Li, 2011). Calling for translanguaging is not intentionally chasing something unorthodox, but aims to comply with learners’ cognitive mechanism, fully respect their lived experiences and go back to the nature of education and the nature of language. According to Duff (2019), by its very nature, language is “heteroglossic, dialogic, and arising from prior social experience” (p. 8).

My research has revealed numerous translanguaging practices outside of the classroom, which presents the instinct of language learners and how they learn in daily life. The children were able to solve problems by extracting linguistic and cultural resources. As Zhichang Xu (2010) points out, “English can be utilized to reflect learners’ own national and ethnic identities” (as cited in Ma & Xu, 2017, p. 199). Not only
English language, multimodal symbols were also integrated into the young Chinese visiting students’ oral and written translanguaging. The real world that children live in is multilingual and multicultural, so I disagree with the modus operandi of creating an English-immersion island where young learners’ full linguistic resources are denied, and the only goal was to achieve “Anglo-American norms at pragmatic and discourse levels” (Z. Xu, 2002, p. 234).

In the future, researchers can further explore children’s “translanguaging competence” (Hlavac & Xu, 2020, p. 20) as they move across space and time. Following Dr. Zhichang Xu’s advice and suggestions, I consider the following questions are valuable topics for future research. For example, how do children mesh and orchestrate varied linguistic and cognitive resources in writing English compositions? How do they collaborate with classmates and interact with communities through multimodal translanguaging? Besides, as Covid-19 pandemic has led to the burgeoning of online classrooms, it is vital to study language learners’ digital literacy and multimodal literacy in virtual learning environments. The transfer from on-site classrooms to blended and hybrid classrooms is a challenge for both teachers and students, so it will be meaningful and important to attend to the ways that multilingual learners navigate virtual learning space. For example, what messages do they send to the chat box? Do these messages include any non-linguistic symbols such as emoji and meme? How do these messages construct meaning with different languages in the online classroom?
Apart from that, translanguaging has a great potential to investigate how bilinguals and multilinguals use their linguistic, semiotic and multimodal resources for intercultural communication, presenting ideas and constructing identity in a variety of contexts such as markets, local communities and international universities. For example, in China, many public schools organize English contests in which students create short videos to introduce Chinese traditional culture, historical figures and places of interest in their hometown. It will be interesting to analyze how students use their multimodal communicative repertoires to make short videos for presenting great stories and exhibiting their own understanding of those stories.

Overall, translanguaging shows open-mindedness towards a multicultural and multilingual world. It is vital to develop translanguaging space strategically and purposefully to focus on how students practice bilingualism and multilingualism by employing their social, cognitive and linguistic resources for learning.

**Limitations of the Research**

My research involved eight Chinese visiting students (JK-Grade 5), eight Chinese parents and three Canadian informants. Since I did not observe the classes that the participant children attended in public schools, their experiences were only interpreted from the children’s and their parents’ perspectives. If I had the opportunity to enter the classrooms where those young visiting students studied in Canada and China and
interview their Canadian and Chinese teachers and principals, the validity would have been further improved.

Secondly, the sample was quite small to generalize the results of this study to other contexts. The purpose of my research was not to spot an objective and universal law about children’s acculturation and language development. The findings could not be directly generalized to other ethnic groups in Canada, such as immigrant Black students or Indigenous students because every ethnicity has its own historical narratives and problems to cope with.

Thirdly, as a narrative inquirer, my interactions and talks with the participant children more or less influenced their language practices and cultural acquisition. Though I tried not to let my preference and belief of language education impact their English language learning, it still had the risk of being criticized as “leading more frequent translanguaging practices” in the participant children’s narratives. Instead of looming behind the text as an omniscient, transcendental, and all-knowing figure (Norton & Early, 2011), I tried to immerse myself in participants’ experiences and work with them throughout this narrative inquiry.

**Imaging Future Pathways**

UNESCO launched a new global report entitled Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education on 10 November 2021. It called for transformation in future education and urged all educators to think about “Why learn?
How to learn? Learn what? When and where to learn?” (UNESCO, 2021). In response to the issues and opportunities confronting society in the 21st century, people are concerned with what language learning entails, from a number of disciplinary vantage points, and also with what teacher educators and policymakers should know and do. These are “decidedly socio-educational concerns” (Duff, 2019, p. 8). With that background, SLA research would need to be issue-driven, to obtain a robust understanding of the language in context, and the developmental SLA processes within people’s lives (Duff, 2019).

Narrative inquiry as a research methodology and a way of thinking suits that trend and requirement because, with a deep understanding of the person and the context, researchers can make more sense of the speaker’s language expressions and cultural acquisition.

The future study of newcomers and visiting students in short-term programs can consider interviewing teachers, school boards and principals in public schools to know their opinions about children’s language choice, cultural acquisition, and other schooling experiences. Thinking narratively of learning and teaching practices, researchers can make an inquiry into how translanguaging works in real classrooms and how teachers perceive their interaction with newcomer children over time.

In my research, the participant children made friends from countries around the world, and they went back home and shared new cultural knowledge such as customs and food with their parents. This finding demonstrates that children then naturally
become the bridge between school and home. Teachers and parents as supporters all get involved in the learning journey of language and culture led by children. Future research can continue to explore how newcomer parents, school, community, and children themselves take part in young learners’ acculturation, new literacy and competence, and their bilingual/cultural creativity. For example, in the field of family language policy, researchers can examine visiting students’ translanguage and multimodal literacy demonstrated at home when they connect with family members in their motherland through letters or phone applications. How do their parents perceive the mismatch between learners’ home language and the official language of learning and teaching? Do they have translanguage with their children at home? What is the role of family engagement in children’s literacy development? Regarding teachers as the main participants, researchers can further examine the teaching practices of translanguage and multimodal meaning-making in the mainstream and ESL classrooms in Canada. For example, how do Canadian ESL teachers facilitate newcomer children’s learning by multimodal resources (e.g., PowerPoint, visual displays, verbal explanations, and gestures)? At the school library and public library, researchers can also explore translanguage in literacies such as bilingual and multilingual reading and writing activities.

According to Guo and Liu (2020), the Canadian government has positioned international education as one of its 22 pillar industries and expanding the enrollment of
international students is at its core. Future research can study short-term visiting
students’ experiences in Canada and figure out the causes that may influence their future
preference for studying abroad. That may be useful for attracting more international
students coming to Canada to stay longer and contribute more to Canadian economy and
society. Attracting more top talents helps reserve for Canadian immigrants and
encouraging students to study in Canada as long as possible is an important part of the
international partnership (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2019).

**Narrative Inquiry for Translanguaging Research**

Working as a research assistant for Dr. Xu and Dr. Connelly’s Project helped me
to get to know several Chinese visiting scholars and their children. When I walked into
the participants’ lives and understood their translanguaging practices, language, and
culture acquisition in their lives, I realized that there was a perfect match between
translanguaging and narrative inquiry. As Canagarajah (1996) asserts, narratives have the
potential to represent knowledge “from the bottom up” (p. 327) and can represent the
research process in a far more comprehensive and open-ended way than the more
conventional research report (Norton & Early, 2011).

First, narrative inquiry helps me to understand more things behind children’s
language expressions and to really see the children in their own lives. For example, in
Feifei’s story – “Why doesn’t she speak?”, I used to focus on the part “why doesn’t
speak (English in Canada)?” and hoped to find out the reason why she was different from
other children. However, the more inquiry I did, the more attention was transferred to “she.” Meanwhile, more thorough field notes were amazingly gathered together from the interactions between Feifei and me, which transformed my initial way of understanding her translanguaging practices.

Moreover, both narrative inquiry and translanguaging emphasize meaning making, interpretation and people’s internal view. In my narrative inquiry, I gradually saw how translanguaging was initiated and how that was related to the children’s personal experiences including their habit of speaking, the books they read, their hobbies and interest, family background and friendship. Language practices, communication, cognition, social and emotional development are interdependent in young children (Kohnert et al, 2005). Thus, I gradually realized that I should not purposefully select translanguaging practices from a static moment in participant children’s daily lives but understand their language expressions and acquisition within their lived experiences. I called it “seeing small within the big picture.” For example, I used to think only those conversations and written artifacts having mixed languages were well worth studying. But with a sense of inquiry (Clandinin, 2019) and my supervisors’ advice, I found that the written word or oral communication is only one of the many semiotic modes that children encountered in their lives. From popular culture, drama, to oral storytelling, the children were engaged in diverse ways with multiple texts (Norton, 2010). Overall,
narrative inquiry enables me to situate my investigations about language in questions of place, movement and history (Blackledge & Creese, 2017).

Thirdly, as my research is situated within Dr. Xu and Dr. Connelly’s partnership project, it can contribute to the overall objective of the larger partnership: West-East reciprocal learning. Reciprocal learning emphasizes cultural equity and interactions which lead to educational benefits for all (Xu & Connelly, 2017). My research provides children’s perspectives of Canadian and Chinese language education systems, which benefits public discussion of basic education and language teacher education in the two countries. Besides, showing how the young Chinese visiting students communicate with people different from them in the international and cross-cultural experiences helps teacher educators to further think about how to respond to the changing global world and how to empower students to be global citizens in the 21st century (Holloway et al., 2023). The participant students in my research did not directly say, “look! We are reciprocally learning from the west and east. See, here are our creative works developing out of collaboration.” However, their translanguaging practices and bi-lingual/cultural acquisition outcomes are the exact evidence and result of expanding sense of “we-ness” (S. Xu, 2006, 2017). Translanguaging provides a different lens to understand young Chinese ELLs’ speaking, writing and multimodal language productions. In that sense, my research is an invitation in the form of storytelling to all teacher educators, principals, policymakers, teachers and parents to openly explore linguistic and cultural
differences and observe what happens at the intersection of Chinese and Canadian educational narratives (S. Xu & Connelly, 2009). Furthermore, translanguging and reciprocal learning has shared values as both of them emphasize the equity of all languages and cultures and pay more attention to learners’ educational needs as well as their contributions to local communities and societies. Boundaries and boarders used to be regarded as the places of tensions, uncertainty, and conflicts. However, translanguaging challenges the prevailing language policy for newcomers and embraces linguistic and cultural diversity (S. Xu, 2011), which is also what reciprocal learning calls for.

Lastly, the young Chinese visiting students reflected on their international and cross-cultural experiences and gained new insights into their own personal practices in their motherland, China. For example, Little Yangmei developed environmental protection awareness in Canada, and she still cared about the ecosystem of Yangtze River one and a year half after the visit. The participant students as open-minded learners, who have not yet disciplined into named languages and cultures, showed us their unique and imaginative ways of knowing and being, so their stories already unfolded to us the positive, hopeful and harmonious reciprocal lives where multi-layered identities and diverse languages, cultures and modalities coexist. In other words, they developed English language proficiency and acquired Canadian culture during the visit,
but reciprocally, we, as practitioners can also learn from them through listening to their stories that do not constrain themselves within named eastern or western culture.

**Personal and Professional Growth Along the Way**

By writing this doctoral thesis, I gained personal and professional growth. First, I was learning how to do narrative inquiry by doing it. I experienced every feeling along the way such as the reluctance of saying goodbye to participant children in front of the camera. These lovely children have taught me so many exhilarating and insightful lessons including living in the moment, caring for family members, and being optimistic.

Secondly, I learned how to talk with children and listen to their stories. It was difficult at the beginning because their descriptions seemed to be illogical and lacked complete narrative form. I had to keep exploring how to have conversations with them as an equal and in a comfortable way. Following my intuition, my supervisors’ suggestions, and my past experience of teaching English to Chinese children, I chatted with my participant students with patience and curiosity. Meanwhile, I did not see myself as an adult who should know much more than a grade-1 student, so I often honestly said to the children, “I really don’t know. Could you please teach me?” in the conversations with the young visiting students. In that way, I expanded my way of knowing and learned about how the participant children understood the world, themselves, and others. I also realized that children’s storytelling has its own personalized narrative forms which can be understood within their lives and the sociocultural background. But I also found that
children do not passively accept everything they are told, so they should not be seen as a simple combination of family education, school education and society. They have agency and the capacity to invest in learning that allows them to question, and sometimes resist dominant practices (Darvin & Norton, 2015). As Swain (2009) points out that the learner, with his or her history, in his or her immediate environment, has options and makes choices in the learning environment.

Thirdly, I learned about young learners’ translanguaging in ESL context, which was my initial research interest when I started the doctoral journey. My master’s thesis was about Chinese primary school students’ translanguaging in EFL classrooms, so I moved one step forward on the academic path. Moreover, I got to know the differences between Chinese and Canadian education through Chinese children’s eyes. For example, they had a lot of extra-curricular fun reading during their visit to Canada such as English comic books and fairy tales, which were not seen as standard learning materials in China. As Norton (2010) describes, “real reading” was reading that the teacher prescribed and it was “educational and challenging,” but it was seldom “fun” (Norton, 2010). The “informal, recreational and unorthodox” reading in children’s spare time expanded their horizons, made them laugh and acquired some words and cultures with ease.

Wisdom from Traditional Chinese Philosophy and Literature

Since translanguaging encourages speakers to cherish and use their native languages and cultures, I tried to draw on my knowledge of traditional Chinese
philosophy and literature to understand narrative inquiry and the phenomena that I studied. As a novice inquirer, I discovered that the spirit and values of Buddhism and Taoism resonate with the core nature of narrative inquiry, which largely helps me to make sense of what is narrative inquiry and what makes a good inquiry. For example, the famous Buddhist text *Diamond Sutra* mentions 应无所住而生其心, which means “when you do not constrain yourself in any fixed forms (or stances, phenomena), you can see the truth emerging from your heart.” The wisdom of not judging anything and not being opinionated inspired me to respect the participant children’s own experiences, rather than using their stories to exemplify “I am right.” Besides, it also inspired me to reconstruct translanguaging as a value of not labelling anyone within a certain fixed language or culture, which further enables me to understand the openness of languages and the nature of translanguaging.

Furthermore, 易经 (*Book of Changes*), a foundational text of Chinese philosophy and Taoist wisdom (Hon, 2019), reveals how ancient Chinese explained the universe, highlights the law of changing. It believes that change is the only thing that does not change. When I read this, those seemingly binary concepts such as gain and loss, the useful and useless, non-being and being became interconverted as time, place, and sociality changed. It enabled me to see children’s lived experiences in a dynamic way and to spot the changes in children’s stories (e.g., their language practices) and those unchanged things (e.g., personalities that are relatively stable).
While I was writing the last chapter of the thesis, Guowei Wang’s description of the three stages of doing scholarly work came to my mind as it narratively summarizes the state of my mind throughout my doctoral research. I quoted his words below and provided the English translation.

1) 昨夜西风凋碧树，独上高楼，望尽天涯路. 2) 衣带渐宽终不悔，为伊消得人憔悴。3) 众里寻他千百度，蓦然回首，那人却在灯火阑珊处.  
(Stage 1: Last night the west breeze, Blew withered leaves off trees.  
I mount the tower high and strain my longing eye.  
Stage 2: I won’t regret it, even if the belt on my robe grows looser;  
For you, it’s worth being wan and haggard.  
Stage 3: A thousand times, I search for the one in the crowd.  
Suddenly turning my head, discover her where the lantern lights are dim.) (Wang, 2004)

At first, I was collecting field notes and saw them piled up on my desk with those books about narrative inquiry. Then, I was drowning in the sea of dialogues, stories, and language expressions, so I had to work hard day and night to seek truth, i.e., the “you” in the poem. At this stage, I had doubts, frustration, exhaustion, hesitation, and struggle.

For example, when the participants recalled their experiences in Canada, they were already in China and had ended that visit for some time. Did their descriptions reveal the reality of Canadian and Chinese education? As the Buddhist canon said, 境随心转 (the external circumstances and dynamics of the environment are affected by our mind). With continuous reflection and seeking wisdom from Chinese traditional philosophy, I realized that the participants’ memories could reflect how they perceived the experiences, and their retelling was influenced by their state at that moment, things
happening after the trip and other complicating factors. As Mäkelä (2022) remark, in narrative inquiry, memory is fused with imagination, allowing people to reinvent what is remembered. Instead of doubting the authenticity and objectivity of their narratives, I asked myself more questions to continue the inquiry such as “why these memories stood out to them after they returned to China for one or two years?” As Carr (1986) says, “we are composing and constantly revising our autobiographies as we go along” (p. 76). By looking back, forward, inside, and outside (Clandinin, 2006), I could see how the participants interpreted the same thing differently and told stories based on different meaning making. Lastly, when the aha moment came, I looked back and suddenly realized “the truth” was there!

**Researcher’s Self-narratives and Self-Reflection**

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state that research interests within social sciences are often influenced by the researchers’ own personal and professional storied experiences. Tracing back to my initial research interest in Chinese primary school students’ life experiences sharing in English classes in China, I noticed that “something mysterious” had been intriguing me for so long. When I was attracted by the Chinese EFL students’ storytelling in classrooms, I did not realize that my passion would take me to Canada and embark on a completely new journey with eye-opening experiences.

Throughout my doctoral research, I have been learning how to do narrative inquiry. It is a process of making an inquiry into participants’ lives but also an
experience of looking inside. Thus, I have been reflecting on my working experience in teaching children in different educational institutions in Beijing, my undergraduate and graduate learning experiences in two famous Chinese universities and the family where I grew up in. Continuously looking back and looking inside, I had a possible explanation of what was calling me on this academic road. Since I entered the classrooms where I collected data for my master’s thesis, I subconsciously worked toward becoming the kind of teacher I would like to become and explored what kind of education I wish to bring to my future students. Showing full respect to learners, listening to their voices, opening an equal and free space, co-constructing meaning with them, and sharing our experiences is the ideal education in my mind. Furthermore, the continuous reflection made me realize why I am suitable to do this research, what my strengths are and how the research topic relates to my working experience as well as my academic and educational background. In retrospect, I realized that my thesis combined the two most updated trends in SLA: the narrative turn and multilingual turn (Bahrami et al., 2022; Benson, 2014; Canagarajah, 2017; Pavlenko, 2007). Narratively thinking of young language learners’ translinguaging brings together their personal backgrounds, cultural knowledge and richer linguistic forms that are present in their daily communications.

Reflecting on my past experiences in a narrative way, I became more determined and motivated to continue doing research on translinguaging, bilingualism, and multilingualism as a narrative inquirer. Never forgetting where I start, I will always learn
from Chinese traditional wisdom and practice of everyday life. Pursuing my dream of the education career, I will mindfully experience everything with curiosity, sensitivity, innocence, and kindness. I know I will walk slowly, but steadily with the flow of life.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A The University of Windsor REB Clearance

Today's Date: September 22, 2021

Principal Investigator: Miss Haojun Guo

REB Number: 39413

Research Project Title: REB# 21-145: "Translanguaging and Bi-lingual/cultural Acquisition: A Narrative Inquiry into Young Chinese English Language Learners’ Cross-cultural Experiences Between Canada and China"

Clearance Date: September 22, 2021

Annual Renewal Date: September 22, 2022

This is to inform you that the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board (REB), which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans and the University of Windsor Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants, has granted clearance for the ethical acceptability of your research project.
Appendix B Individual Interview Questions for Chinese Visiting Scholars

1. What preparation did you do before the visit to Canada? Why did you choose Canada as the visiting country, instead of U.K. or U.S.?

2. How long have you and your child stayed in Canada? When did you arrive in Canada and return to China?

3. Was your child happy when he/she knew that there was an opportunity to go to Canada with you?

4. Before your child came to Canada, how many years had he/she learned English? How was his/her English at that time?

5. Do you still remember the first day that you took your child to school in Canada? Who did you meet and what happened that day?

6. When you selected the Canadian school for your child, were there any considerations?

7. Were there any considerations about renting a house (e.g., the landlord and roommate)? How did you get to know the landlord?

8. What languages did your child speak with her Canadian classmates, teachers, and neighbors in Canada? Did he/she mix Chinese and English when talking with others? Did that mixed use of languages change over time?

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9. In the first few months of your visit to Canada, did your child miss his/her friends or family members in China? How often did he/she contact his/her friends or family members in China?
在您访问加拿大的前几个月，孩子想念在中国的朋友或家人吗？他/她多久联系一次在中国的朋友或家人？

10. When your child just arrived in Canada, was he/she able to communicate with Canadians and understand English conversations? After several months, how was your child’s English?
您的孩子刚到加拿大时，他/她能够与加拿大人交流并理解英语对话吗？几个月后，您感觉孩子的英语怎么样？

11. What does your child think of the Canadian school? Would she/he share interesting stories that happen at school with your or other family members? Could you please give me some examples?
您的孩子喜欢上加拿大的学校吗？她/他会和您或她/他的其他家人分享在学校发生的有趣的故事吗？如果有的话，您能给我举1-2个例子吗？

12. Did your child mix Chinese and English when she/he speaks with you at home? Would she/he speak the whole English sentence or mix some English words in a Chinese sentence? Could you please give me some examples? When did he/she begin to speak English at home with you?
当您的孩子在家和您说话的时候，他/她是否会混合中英文呢？孩子会说完整的英语句子还是在中文句子里面夹杂一些英语单词呢？您能给我举1-2个例子吗？他/她什么时候开始在家跟您说英语的呢？

13. When did you find that your child made great progress in English? How did you find it? Could you please give me an example?
您什么时候发现孩子英语有了较大的进步？您是如何发现的呢？您能举个例子吗？

14. Has he/she made any Canadian friends during your stay in Canada? What languages did he/she speak with these local friends?
您在加拿大逗留期间，孩子有交到加拿大的朋友吗？他/她和这些当地的朋友说什么语言？

15. Has your child taken part in any school activities? What do you think of these activities in helping the child to learn English and understand local culture?
您的孩子参加了哪些学校活动？这些活动是否有助于孩子的英语学习和理解本地的文化？

16. What did your child often do after school? What did you and your child do during public holidays in Canada?
您的孩子放学后经常做什么？节假日的时候您会和孩子一起做什么活动呢？

17. What did you often eat with your child? Does he/she like Canadian food?
您经常和孩子一起吃什么？他/她喜欢加拿大的食物吗？

18. Has he/she mentioned the Canadian teachers? What do you think of the interactions between the Canadian teachers and your child?
他/她放学后回家有跟您提到加拿大的老师吗？您觉得加拿大老师和孩子之间的互动怎么样？

19. Have you participated in any activities organized by the school? How do you like it/them?
您参加过加拿大这边学校组织的活动吗？感觉怎么样？

20. What were the difficulties/challenges when your child adapted to a new living and learning environment in Canada?
您的孩子在适应加拿大新的生活和学习环境时遇到了哪些困难/挑战呢？

21. How long does your child spend on his or her homework in Canada every day? Does he/she also attend any Chinese courses during your stay in Canada?
您的孩子在加拿大每天花多长时间做家庭作业？在加拿大期间，他/她是否也在继续上中国学校的课？

22. What do you think your child learned from the visit to Canada? Is there any pity in the visit?
您认为孩子从加拿大的访问中学到了什么？这次访问有什么遗憾吗？

23. How did your child adapt to life and study after returning to China? Were there any aspects that took her/him a long time to adapt to?
您的孩子在回到中国后上学和生活的适应情况如何？她/他有没有花了很长时间才适应某些方面？
Appendix C Individual Interview Questions for Canadian Informants

1. How long have you known the Chinese visiting scholars and their children? Where did you first meet them?

2. Do you often hang out with them? What will you do together?

3. What languages do Chinese visiting scholars’ children speak when they talk with you? Will they speak Chinese as well?

4. Are there any differences between the languages that the children use when you just met, after a period of time and before they left Canada? If so, what are the differences?

5. Are there any interesting stories that you would like to share with me about the children’s life and study in Canada?

6. Do you think the children like Canadian schools and culture? Can you give me some examples or tell me any stories about it?
Appendix D Individual Interview Questions for Young Chinese Visiting Students

1. When you knew that you could go to Canada with your mom/dad, how did you feel at that moment? Were you happy?
当时知道能够和爸爸/妈妈一起来加拿大一段时间，心里感觉怎么样？开心吗？

2. How much did you know about Canada at that time?
你去加拿大之前对加拿大有多少了解呢？

3. How long had you learned English before you went to Canada? How was your English at that time?
你去加拿大的时候已经学英语多久了呢？你感觉自己当时的英语怎么样？

4. Before you went to Canada, did you learn English with other methods, such as taking any English courses at training centers or on the online platforms apart from learning English at school?
去加拿大之前，除了在学校学英语，你还有在其他地方学英语吗？比如英语培训机构和线上的英语课？

5. How was your first day in Canada? Can you tell me more about that day? How did you feel when you first came to Canada? Do you still remember the last day when you were in Canada? What did you do on that day?
还记得刚刚到达加拿大的第一天是什么情形吗？能给我讲讲那天发生的事情吗？来了之后感觉怎么样？你还记得最后一天即将离开加拿大时的情景吗？那天都做了些什么呢？

6. What were the difficulties and challenges you encountered in life and study in Canada? Have you solved them? How?
你在加拿大学习和生活时遇到了哪些困难和挑战呢？你最终解决这些困难了吗？怎么解决的呢？

7. How do you like Canadian teachers and your classmates? Are there any interesting things between you and your Canadian teachers/classmates? Can you share with me 1 or 2 stories?
你觉得加拿大的老师和同学怎么样呢？你和加拿大的老师或者同学之间有没有发生很有趣的故事呢？可以和我分享 1-2 个吗？

8. Did you make any good friends when you were in Canada? Did you hang out with them? Where did you go with them? What topics did you usually talk about?

你在加拿大的时候有没有交到好朋友呀？会跟他们出去玩吗？都去哪里玩呢？你们一般都聊些什么话题呀？

9. When you just came to Canada, can you understand what the teachers and students said? How long did it take you to basically understand their talking?
刚刚来加拿大的时候能够听懂老师和同学们说什么吗？大概多久以后可以基本上听懂呢？

10. How did you find that you made progress in English during the visiting period? Is there any difficulty in communicating with Canadians now?
在爸爸/妈妈访学期间，你是如何感觉到自己英语进步了呢？现在跟加拿大人交流有什么困难不？

11. When you were in Canada, did you need to write the homework assigned by the teachers in China? How much time did you spend in doing homework every day? Did you take any other online classes at that time?
你在加拿大的时候需要写中国这边学校老师布置的作业吗？每天花多久时间写作业呢？还有其他的网课吗？

12. How long did you spend doing the homework assigned by the Canadian teachers? Was the homework difficult? What would you do if you didn't understand the English words in your homework?
放学后一般加拿大学校的作业要写多久？作业难不难呢？作业里面有不懂的英语单词怎么办？

13. What was your favorite food in Canada? Did you often eat that food with mom/dad?
你最喜欢加拿大的什么食物呢？会经常和爸爸/妈妈去吃吗？

14. In Canada, when you came home from school, would you share some of your school experiences with your parents? What happy or unhappy things have you told them? Can you share a story or two with me?
在加拿大的时候，放学回家后，你会跟爸爸/妈妈分享你在学校的事情吗？你都告诉过他们什么开心或者不开心的事情呀？能不能也跟我也分享一两个故事？

15. What did you usually do when you came home from school in Canada?
在加拿大的时候，放学回家后你都会做什么呀？

16. How often did you go shopping in the supermarket when you were in Canada? How did you go to the supermarket? By walking, taking a bus or rides from friends?
在加拿大的时候，你多久去一次超市买东西呢？一般怎么去超市呢？走路、坐公交还是和朋友一起搭车去？

17. Would you mix English and Chinese in one sentence when you were in Canada? If so, when and with whom would you do that?
你在加拿大的时候会不会把英语和普通话混合在一句话里说呀？如果会的话，你什么时候会这样做呢？和谁说话的时候会这么混着说呢？

18. Would you speak English with your mom/dad at home when you were in Canada? Was it a complete English sentence? Or some English words? Can you give me an example? When did you begin to mix Chinese with English?
在加拿大的时候你在家里会和爸爸/妈妈说英语吗？是说完整的一句话吗？还是说一些英语单词？能给我举个例子吗？从什么时候开始会这样中英文混着说呢？

19. Would you speak some English when you called your family and friends in China?
跟国内的家人朋友打电话的时候也会说一些英语吗？

20. Do you like Canadian libraries? Why?
你喜欢加拿大的图书馆吗？为什么呢？

21. What do you think of the school activities in Canada? What are the activities? Are they fun? How would the activities improve your English?
你喜欢加拿大的学校开展的活动吗？都有哪些活动呢？好玩吗？这些活动对你英语提升有什么帮助呀？

22. What did you do on holidays in Canada? Did you celebrate these festivals with mom/dad?
加拿大节假日期间你都会做些什么事情呢？会和爸爸/妈妈庆祝这些节日吗？

23. After you returned to China, did you feel it hard to adapt to life and study or just quickly go back to your former life as before?
回到中国后你是觉得很难适应以前的生活和学习了呢，还是很快又适应了顺利回到从前的生活了呢？

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