

**EXCHANGING STORIES: A NARRATIVE ETHNOGRAPHY OF IMMIGRANT
SENIORS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING EXPERIENCES**

by

Natalia Balyasnikova

Specialist Diploma, Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia, 2004

Candidate of Sciences, Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia, 2007

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES
(Teaching English as a Second Language)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Vancouver)

July 2019

© Natalia Balyasnikova, 2019

The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, the dissertation entitled:

Exchanging Stories: A narrative ethnography of immigrant seniors' English language learning experiences.

submitted by Natalia Balyasnikova in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Teaching English as a Second Language

Examining Committee:

Dr. Ryuko Kubota

Supervisor

Dr. Patricia Duff

Supervisory Committee Member

Dr. Hongxia Shan

Supervisory Committee Member

Dr. Anthony Paré

University Examiner

Dr. Pierre Walter

University Examiner

Abstract

The growth of the ageing population worldwide has been noted as one of the “major forces shaping the 21st century” (World Health Organization, 2007, p. 6). Reflecting the trends of global demographics, Canadian census indicates that the proportion of seniors is rapidly growing across Canadian provinces (Statistics Canada, 2014). However, one peculiarity of the Canadian context is that the increased number of seniors can be in part attributed to immigration patterns. With many immigrant seniors arriving in Canada with little to no English, language learning support becomes a significant issue for research, educational practice, and seniors’ wellbeing.

By drawing on the theoretical constructs of the contact zone and agency, this thesis examines the role of English language learning in the lives of ageing immigrants in Canada. Ten immigrant seniors participated in a customized language learning class in a community-based program, which was centered on narrative expression as the main pedagogical strategy. The participants were asked to create written and multimodal texts in response to a series of prompts about their language learning and use upon arrival in Canada. In addition, each of the participants was interviewed about their language learning experiences.

Thematic analysis of written, spoken, and multimodal data suggests that senior adult language learners seek social connection through agentive undertakings of language learning. The oral and written narratives of the participants portray language learning as a way to grow social circles and work through experiences of racism, ageism, and linguicism. In addition, practices observed during the classroom-based ethnography support the use of narrative as a core pedagogical practice, and story-sharing as a strategy to facilitate language learning in community-based settings.

Lay Summary

There are many older adults in Canada, including a large group of immigrant seniors who speak little to no English as an additional language. Despite the size of this demographic, little research has been done to understand how they experience language learning. Through an analysis of a collection of spoken, written, and visual stories produced by ten immigrant seniors who took English language classes offered by a community-based program in Vancouver, Canada, this study sought to understand the language learning experiences of older immigrants. The study finds that language learning plays an important role in the lives of older immigrants. For example, it helps seniors find new connections and cope with societal prejudices and stereotypes. In addition to these findings, the research supports the use of story-sharing as a productive pedagogical strategy for seniors' language learning in community-based settings.

Preface

This study has undergone an ethical review process and was approved on March 9, 2016 by the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board. The Human Ethics Certificate #H16-0047 for “Culture, identity, and belonging of senior ESL learners: A case study of a community-based program” expired on December 15, 2018. This dissertation is the original intellectual product of the author, Natalia Balyasnikova. The photographs were taken by Natalia Balyasnikova.

Parts of this dissertation have been published in:

- Balyasnikova, N., & Gillard, S. (2018). “I Love to Write My Story”: Storytelling and its role in seniors’ language learning. *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education*, 30(2), 81–90. I was the lead author, responsible for manuscript composition. Gillard S. was involved during the all stages of writing, supported data analysis and contributed to final manuscript edits.

- Balyasnikova, N., Gillard, S., & Korcheva, G. (2018). Circles within circles: Storying pedagogical practice, literacy research and community engagement. In R. McGray & V. Woloshyn (Eds.), *Proceedings from Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education*, Regina, SK, Canada (pp. 14-21). Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education. Retrieved from

www.dropbox.com/s/dd53vdyatvg9w5c/CASAE%202018%20May%2025.compressed.pdf

Gillard S., Korcheva G., and I collectively conceived the idea for the article and co-wrote it.

- Balyasnikova, N., Higgins, S., & Hume, M. (2018). Enhancing teaching English as an additional language through playfulness: Seniors’ (Ethno) Drama Club in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. *TESOL Journal*, 9(3), 481–497. I conceived the idea for the manuscript and co-wrote it with the contributions from Higgins S. and Hume M.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Lay Summary	iv
Preface	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	ix
List of Figures	x
List of Abbreviations	xi
Acknowledgements	xii
Dedication	xiii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Significance of Studying Immigrant Seniors' Experiences	2
1.3 Research Contexts	4
1.4 Motivation for the Study: A Reflexive Account	6
1.5 Research Frameworks	12
1.6 Research Questions	15
1.7 Key Terms	15
1.8 Organization of the Thesis	16
Chapter 2: Research Contexts	17
2.1 Introduction	17
2.2 Downtown Eastside	17
2.3 English Conversation at the UBC Learning Exchange	19
2.4 Seniors Storytelling Club	22
2.5 Conclusion	23
Chapter 3: Ageing, Immigration, and Language Learning	25
3.1 Introduction	25
3.2 Older Adult Education: Concepts and Review of the Research	25
3.2.1 Instrumental vs. Socio-Emotional Needs of Older Learners	26
3.2.2 Learning as the Emancipation of the Elderly	29
3.3 Language Learning in Later Life: Challenges and Opportunities	32
3.3.1 Language Learning and Ageing	32
3.3.2 Language Learning and Immigration in Later Life	35
3.4 Immigration and Language Learning	36
3.4.1 Language Instruction to Newcomers to Canada	38
3.4.2 Language Learning in the Community: Promising Practices and Critique	41
3.5 Conclusion	45
Chapter 4: Conceptual Orientation	49
4.1 Introduction	49
4.2 Contact Zone: A Framework for Understanding Language Learning Experiences ..	50

4.2.1	The Processes of the Contact Zone	52
4.2.2	Application of the Contact Zone to Language Learning Research	55
4.3	Agency and Language Learning in Immigrant Contexts	57
4.3.1	Agency as Socially Mediated	58
4.3.2	Agency in Language Learning Research	59
4.4	Conclusion	61
Chapter 5:	Methodology and Data Generation	63
5.1	Introduction	63
5.2	Looking Through the Lens of Narrative Ethnography	63
5.3	Seniors Storytelling Club	69
5.4	Recruitment and Participant Profiles	74
5.5	Ensuring the Collaborative Nature of the Study	82
5.6	Data Generation Procedures	86
5.6.1	Narrative Interview Data	87
5.6.2	Written Narrative Data	89
5.6.3	Observation Data	92
5.7	Analytical Framework	93
5.8	Authenticity and Issues of Representation	95
5.9	Limitations	97
5.10	Conclusion	98
Chapter 6:	Language Learning in Later Life	101
6.1	Introduction	101
6.2	Ageing and Longevity	101
6.2.1	Cindy: “Learning English is very important”	109
6.3	Cultural Engagement and Belonging	114
6.3.1	Julia: “I am a newcomer. I must learn more and more”	121
6.4	Vulnerability and Resilience	131
6.4.1	John: “I don’t give up English”	137
6.5	Summary	146
Chapter 7:	Community-Based Language Learning in Later Life	149
7.1	Introduction	149
7.2	Connections	149
7.2.1	Bu: “UBC Exchange give me good life”	153
7.3	Synergies and Discordances	160
7.3.1	Jacqui: “This place gives me my power back”	165
7.4	Expanding Roles	172
7.4.1	Justin: “UBC language so different, so nice”	177
7.5	Summary	183
Chapter 8:	Discussion and Implications	186
8.1	Introduction	186
8.2	Summary of Findings	187
8.3	Implications	191
8.3.1	Implications for Theory	191
8.3.2	Implications for Research	192
8.3.3	Implications for Practice	194

8.4	Future Directions for Research	196
8.5	Final Reflection.....	197
References		199
Appendix A Participant recruitment letter		232
Appendix B Consent forms.....		235
Appendix C Introductory questionnaire.....		244
Appendix D Interview protocol		245

List of Tables

Table 5.1 Summary of research activities	69
Table 5.2 Summary of learning activities	72

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Schematic representation of the research contexts	17
Figure 2.2 The picture of a newly-built condominium	18
Figure 5.1 Summary of data generated during the course of the study	87
Figure 6.1 Brainstorming notes.....	102
Figure 6.2 Julia’s illustration “First Day” in Canada.....	125
Figure 7.1 Jacqui’s multimodal story “UBC Learning Exchange”	171

List of Abbreviations

DTES	Downtown Eastside
UBC	University of British Columbia

Acknowledgements

I express my deepest gratitude to everyone who supported me in completing this dissertation.

First, I want to thank the people at the UBC Learning Exchange—learners, volunteers, and staff—for creating a space where I was able to grow personally and professionally. To Spring Gillard, Dr. Angela Towle, and Kathleen Leahy: thank you for believing in this project, supporting me and encouraging the creation of the Seniors Storytelling Club. To Zhaoying Hu, Jennifer Lee, Sarah Higgings and Matthew Hume: thank you for volunteering your time and talents in support of arts-based language learning and sharing this wild journey with me. William Booth, thank you for guiding and helping me. To the senior storytellers who welcomed me into their lives and allowed me to learn from their experiences: thank you for sharing a part of your life with me and entrusting me with your stories. I remain in awe of your strength and wisdom.

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Ryuko Kubota as well as my committee members Dr. Patricia Duff and Dr. Hongxia Shan for their wise counsel and unwavering support over the past six years. Thank you for teaching me and guiding me as I was writing my dissertation. I would also like to thank Dr. Anthony Paré and Dr. Pierre Walter, and the external examiner Dr. Doris Warriner, for reading this work and their insightful suggestions on how I can improve my scholarship in the future.

I am extremely thankful for the support of the brilliant faculty and outstanding staff of the Department of Language and Literacy Education. To Dr. Anthony Paré, Dr. Kedrick James, and Dr. Steven Talmy: thank you for being true role models as researchers, teachers, and members of the academic community. To Dr. Sandra Zappa-Holman, Dr. Reginald D'Silva, and Dr. Ryan Deschambault: thank you for allowing me to learn by your side and helping me understand the true meaning of what it means to be an educator. To Ana Sunjara, Christopher Fernandez, Lisa Atlan, Effiam Yung, and Alya Zhukova: thank you for keeping the department running and for supporting students like myself.

I extend my thanks to my many friends and colleagues from across the globe. All my fellow LLEDers, you rock! Dr. Claire Ahn, Dr. Ernesto Peña, Dr. Victoria Surtees, Angela Moon, Yuya Takeda, Ashley Moore, Amber Moore, Simangele Mabena, Liza Navarro and Léa: I can't thank you enough for your friendship and for sharing this PhD journey with me. My dear friends, Alejandra Echeverri, Ashley Walker, David Gill and Lora Moon, Deena Dinat, Elena Ignatovich and Julia Vasilyeva, Emily Rankin, Galina Sergeeva and Sebastián Medrano, Joalissa Jean, Olga Vasilyeva, Pedro and Adrea Odon, Stephanie Glick and Bico: thank you for reminding me that there is life beyond academia, for long walks, coffee talks, and movie marathons. Kimberly Kreicker and Arla Jones, thank you for being my constant cheerleaders through time and space. Karen Taylor: thank you for the careful editing of my texts and for teaching me along the way. Мои любимые Саша, Вероника, и Таня, спасибо вам за вашу дружбу и поддержку. Мама, папа, и Илья, спасибо вам за все.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the UBC Faculty of Education, the Department of Language and Literacy Education, and the UBC Public Scholars Initiative for the financial support that I received during the course of my doctoral studies.

Dedication

I write this in loving memory of my grandparents.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

You know, I know a lot of old people. They are very stressed. I say: "Why not go to school to meet some people, maybe you won't be stressed, right? Let's learn English." They say: "No, I am too old, how can I go to school?"

I open this chapter with a quote from my conversation with Bu, one of the immigrant seniors who was learning English in my class in Vancouver, Canada. One day, I asked Bu if he had ever invited any of his peers to join him in taking community-based classes. In response, he offered a long reflection on the possible impact of English language learning in his life and the lives of other older immigrants. I chose this quote because it powerfully illustrates many similar conversations I had with other seniors during my years of volunteering as an English language teacher in Vancouver's Chinatown. In one way or the other, many of them shared that while it was challenging, learning a new language enriched their lives and contributed to their well-being. Some of them also lamented that there were very few accessible programs for them and their peers.

This narrative ethnography investigated the English language learning experiences of older immigrants in Canada as well as the impact of community-based learning in their lives. It was inspired by my experiences as a volunteer in a seniors-focused English language learning program nested within a community-engagement initiative of the University of British Columbia that was located in Vancouver's Chinatown. After spending three years volunteering as a language facilitator, I was moved by the language learning experiences of the seniors who took classes there. I became interested in understanding the roles of language learning in their lives and the ways in which community-based education influences immigrant seniors' language

learning experiences. To accomplish this, I recruited ten seniors who were regular long-term patrons of the program and developed a ten-week English language course that combined class discussions, non-fiction story-work, and reminiscence exercises.

The narratives created during the research project shed light on the multiple ways older adults experience language learning, highlighted their agentic search for language learning opportunities, and pointed to the complex ways in which they constructed identities as they participated in community-based language learning programs.

Serving as an introduction to the study, this chapter outlines the research context, describes the researcher's positionality, and presents an overview of the conceptual and methodological frameworks. In the section that follows, I delineate the significance of the study in light of the theoretical, methodological and contextual gaps in the literature.

1.2 Significance of Studying Immigrant Seniors' Experiences

In 2007, the World Health Organization named rapid ageing of the world's population as one of the "major forces shaping the 21st century" (World Health Organization, 2007, p. 6). As "a major trend with global implications" (United Nations Population Fund, 2012, p. 11), ageing impacts all aspects of social life. Therefore, it is increasingly becoming the focus of global research, policy and activism (for examples see: Rodwin & Gusmano, 2006; Smith, 2009; Wilmoth, 2016). Canadian demographic trends mirror those of other developed countries with the proportion of Canadian seniors steadily growing at a rate of 4% a year since 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2014). With 17% of the population currently over 65 years of age, the United Nations Population Fund (2018) projects average life expectancy in Canada to reach an estimated 81 years for males and 85 years for females between 2015 and 2020. However, one specific feature of the increasing number of seniors in Canada is that this trend is largely attributed to

immigration patterns (Carrière, Martel, Légaré, & Picard, 2016), especially due to family reunification immigration policies, which are expected to significantly alter Canadian demographics in the near future.

In British Columbia, the number of immigrants aged 65 and older has been growing over the past decade (Statistics Canada, 2014) and the trend continues. Given the increase in the elderly immigrant population, seniors constitute an important segment of Canadian society in terms of cultural, economic, and community cohesion. In the context of such demographic change, major urban centres in the province are working to create and maintain seniors-friendly infrastructure, including establishing multiple educational initiatives. However, due to a variety of reasons, there are few well-established systems that support immigrant seniors who speak languages other than English. For example, in Vancouver the numerous adult English language learning programs available in the city seldom pay attention to seniors as a unique group within the adult language learner population. However, it is important to recognize that immigrant seniors experience ageing in a context that is usually culturally and linguistically different from the one they grew up in and often lacking the social networks established over their lifetimes, which makes them a unique group when compared to seniors who were born in Canada. Immigrant seniors constitute a diverse group: some of them immigrate earlier in life and grow older in new locations, others relocate from overseas later in life to be reunited with their families. Due to the variability of their life experiences in Canada, I believe that this group is significant for Canadian society and that their perspectives can be explored through listening to their life stories carefully and with respect.

As our society changes, the significance of the older people as a demographic group has been recognized through the emergence of seniors-friendly policies, legislation, and community

initiatives, as well as growth in interdisciplinary research that addresses ageing. While researchers in the health-related and social sciences have started paying attention to the senior population, within the field of language and literacy research seniors continue to be largely overlooked (Park & Brenna, 2015) and there are few studies that have approached this issue in the field of language education. Research has been conducted to understand the general experience of ageing by language learners (Bernard, 2011; Haseloff, 2001; Phoenix & Sparkes, 2009) as well as the specifics of language learning across age groups (Bialystok, Abutalebi, Bak, Burke, & Kroll, 2016; Burke, MacKay, Worthley, & Wade, 1991; Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Kee, 2010; Mackey & Sachs, 2012). Other than Andrew (2012) and Ramírez Gómez (2016a, b), there has been little extensive research on older adults' socio-cultural experiences of language learning. Therefore, this study addresses a void in the scholarship by analysing the language learning experiences of immigrant seniors.

1.3 Research Contexts

To contextualize my dissertation research, I begin with a short description of the Vancouver neighbourhood in which the research was conducted. I then offer a brief overview of the community-engagement program that hosted the Seniors Storytelling Club—a special seniors-focused project I developed for the purposes of the research. Finally, I outline my motivation to conduct this study and my positionality.

Located on the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations, the Downtown Eastside (DTES) is one of Vancouver's oldest neighbourhoods. In addition to its First Nations community, the area is home to several cultural immigrant communities of Asian, African, European, and South American heritage. The DTES is a large urban area comprising seven sub-areas: Chinatown, Gastown, the Industrial Area, the

Oppenheimer District, Strathcona, Thornton Park and Victory Square (City of Vancouver, 2015). The area is home to about 18,477 people and has a higher percentage of seniors living there compared to the number of seniors in the city of Vancouver as a whole (City of Vancouver, 2013). In terms of linguistic diversity, the majority of DTES residents speak English as their main language; however, Mandarin and Cantonese speakers comprise 28% of the total DTES population. Not surprisingly given the population demographics, Chinatown has the largest number of Chinese-speaking residents. Vancouver's Chinatown was settled in the late nineteenth century and quickly grew to become one of the largest self-sustaining ethnic enclaves in North America. At the time of the research, this community was changing rapidly due to government-funded and private residential and commercial revitalization initiatives.

The UBC Learning Exchange is a community engagement initiative that was started to facilitate relationship building between the University of British Columbia (UBC) and the DTES community. The work at the centre has always been grounded in the principles of asset-based community development—an approach to community work that builds on the community's strengths, promising practices, gifts, and talents of its members. Rooted in this approach, the UBC Learning Exchange strives to support the diverse communities in the DTES.

The English Conversation program is one of many offerings available at the UBC Learning Exchange. This program, which began in 2004, is open to Canadian citizens, new immigrants, and refugees. It delivers more than 30 classes a week to nearly 400 learners per year. More than 50% of the learners are Chinese-speaking seniors many of whom live in the DTES. Many learners commute from other parts of Vancouver and have diverse cultural heritages (Balyasnikova, Gillard, & Korcheva, 2018). In addition, the program makes an immense effort to support learners who attend the classes and the volunteers who facilitate them. For example,

some learners are encouraged to take up leadership positions and facilitate lower level classes and the facilitators are offered multiple development opportunities and social activities. I began volunteering at this program in 2014, shortly after coming to Canada as an international student.

Building on existing educational practices, the English Conversation program launched a program called Seniors Thrive¹ with the objective of increasing “social capital among seniors in the inner city, in addition to improving English language skills, thereby improving their health and well-being” (Balyasnikova & Gillard, 2018, p. 83). Among numerous initiatives, the Seniors Thrive program pioneered arts-based language learning classes, which combined dancing, singing, drama, and storytelling with English language practice. For the purposes of this study, I asked the coordinator of the English Conversation program to start a Seniors Storytelling Club under the umbrella of Seniors Thrive. We agreed that the practices developed during this class would be used to examine the value of story-sharing pedagogy when working with older learners and for the development of language programming for the English Conversation program.

1.4 Motivation for the Study: A Reflexive Account

By describing my role in the study, the ethical considerations and choices I made during the course of the research, and my shifting positionality, I hope to move beyond providing an ethical “checklist” (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 268). Instead, my desire to write this section is rooted in recognition of the multiple ethical dimensions of my research and prioritization of reflexivity throughout the research process. I am inspired by scholars such as Foley (2002) and Pillow (2003) who embrace the many forms of reflexivity, vulnerability, and the emotional impact of qualitative research on all participants, including the researchers. Particularly, Pillow (2003) advocates for a reflexivity of discomfort that “pushes toward an unfamiliar, towards the

¹The program was funded by the Carraresi Foundation.

uncomfortable” (p. 92) and includes “examples that may not always be successful, examples that do not seek a comfortable, transcendent end-point but leave us in the uncomfortable realities” (p. 194). While this dissertation is not an autoethnography, my experiences (even if uncomfortable) dictate every word that appears on these pages.

Feminist scholar, Sarah Ahmed (2012) powerfully states that “every research project has a story, which is a story of an arrival” (p. 2). In a way, my arrival at this research project was literal. I arrived in Canada from Russia with one goal in mind: to conduct doctoral research. However, I did not arrive at this particular project right away. In fact, I had a completely different project in mind when I applied to come to UBC. My current work with seniors in the DTES was not inspired by any previous special relationships with seniors or immigrant seniors. In fact, my relationship with my own grandparents was anything but simple. However, this research project has its own story of an arrival and it began when I walked through the doors of the UBC Learning Exchange in October 2013.

I came to the UBC Learning Exchange by chance, having noticed its sign while walking in Chinatown. I was curious to find out why such a prestigious and famous university, located in the affluent Point Grey area of Vancouver, would have a learning centre in one of Vancouver’s poorest neighbourhoods. I opened the door and went into a large room filled with people, music and the smell of brewing coffee. This moment started my journey at the UBC Learning Exchange where I began volunteering in the English Conversation program and continue to do so to this day.

When I began volunteering at the UBC Learning Exchange I was given a set of lesson plans for my classes. As the centre encourages facilitators to explore diverse topics and activities in their classroom practices, I was also permitted to break from the provided plan and facilitate

the lesson as it unfolded. The freedom allowed me to be flexible and I ended up slowing down and rethinking my delivery of the curriculum so that the learners could more actively engage in learning. After facilitating the language classes for a while, I started paying attention to the process of narration that took place in the classroom. I noticed that learners in my classes spent considerable time talking about their experiences and that they would often use a story to represent these experiences or to illustrate a point. The stories they shared seemed to help them make sense of their own lives and enabled them to establish connections with their classmates. For each of the ten-week classes that I taught, I collected poems, anecdotes and inspirational quotes that the learners shared during our lessons. I printed these texts in a small booklet as a token to be taken home by every member of our class; something to remind them of this time spent together. In the beginning of 2015, I wrote in my journal: “They are courageous and strong people and the stories that they tell in class are narratives of wisdom that only a long life can give.”

Over the years, I was captivated by the UBC Learning Exchange community. What I found most fascinating was the peer-to-peer collaboration that I observed as a volunteer. As an educator, I wanted to write up my observations and share them with other educators working in community-based settings. I honestly believed that the practices developed at the UBC Learning Exchange were promising and innovative. This was when I switched from thinking about the centre as a place to spend my volunteer time, to thinking about it as a site of innovative teaching practices. In 2014, I came across an announcement that the UBC Learning Exchange was hiring research assistants. I decided to apply for this position and was hired to do a study of the peer interactions within the facilitator community. This project gave me my first real hands-on experience of doing community-based research and laid the foundation for my desire to do this

kind of research more formally. The results of this small-scale research project were later transformed into an ethnodrama and shared at a number of academic venues.² Prior to this, I had not had much experience with community-based research. It was during this time that the staff at the centre, its academic director, and my fellow research assistants taught me valuable lessons about ensuring the collaborative nature of my research, making research accessible to wider communities, and following ethical guidelines beyond those required by ethical review boards. While I was humbled by this experience, I was also encouraged to continue applying my newly found knowledge to my doctoral research. This is why I asked the academic director of the UBC Learning Exchange to allow me to conduct my research there. With her approval and the support of the English Conversation program coordinator I drafted a research proposal, which I later defended back on the UBC campus.

When the time came to decide on my doctoral research study, I had been a facilitator in the English Conversation program at the UBC Learning Exchange for two years. As my research progressed, my role shifted from being a volunteer at the UBC Learning Exchange to being a researcher who observed and facilitated the class and conducted interviews with participants. As a community-engaged scholar I was prepared to remain immersed in a self-reflexive practice at all stages of the research, including during the writing of my thesis and communication of my findings back to the community.

I came to see reflexivity as the foundation of my own epistemological approach towards research. While affirming my self-reflexive stance, I remained acutely aware of my own privilege and my complex positionalities at the centre. As a white, middle-class immigrant with high English language proficiency, I was often positioned as a native-speaking Canadian by the

² For more information about the study see Gillard & Balyasnikova (2015) and Balyasnikova et al. (2017).

learners. In designing and leading the classes in which my study took place, I wonder if I might have been reinforcing the notion that only the white English-speaking teacher possesses legitimate knowledge. I also grappled with my legitimacy as a researcher of the older adult immigrant experience, which prompted me to consider that “rather than pursuing the legitimacy of our roles as researchers based on one aspect of one’s social identity (i.e., Whiteness), one’s legitimacy as researcher is based on one’s ability to explicate the ways in which marginalization and racialization operate” (Kirkham & Anderson, 2002, p. 13).

Ruthellen Josselson (1996) maintains that researchers engaged in narrative work often find themselves in close relationships with their participants. I came to experience a similar phenomenon. I had been to participants’ homes and met their families. When I was recovering from a traumatic brain injury the members of the Club shared their homemade remedies with me. When my paternal grandmother passed away, they consoled me in my grief. They fed me and shared gardening tips with me. I still stay in touch with some of them two years after the data generation took place.

Working for the English Conversation program, developing the Seniors Storytelling Club, and conducting community-based research has also challenged me to take a closer look at my own life. Faced with the “‘emotional residue’ of experience” (Atkinson, 2002, p. 127), I wrote a story called “The Story Unheard” and shared it in one of the Seniors Storytelling Club meetings. I want to share my story with the readers of this dissertation to illustrate how doing this research project made me reconsider my own life choices and relationships.

When I was 19 years old, my grandmother became very sick. My parents decided that she couldn’t live alone, so she moved in to live with us. She came from Smolensk, a small town that was a two-day trip away from Saint Petersburg. Before she came to live with us, we would only meet

once a year for a two-week summer vacation. My parents gave my grandmother half of my room, which they separated with an armoire. I was a young girl, I had just started university and I was always busy. I had new friends, a lot of new exciting things going on and new experiences to try. To be honest, I was not very happy that our grandmother was living with us. But I never said anything, because she was my family and I had to respect the tradition of taking care of our elders. I just pretended I didn't care.

When I was 23, I stayed alone with my grandmother. She now had her own room where she moved all the things that made her happy—her books and photographs. I was finishing university. I also had to work a lot, because my career was very important to me. I had many friends and I enjoyed spending time with them, travelling or having fun. My grandmother didn't have any friends or connections in the big city. She spent a lot of time in her room reading old letters that my grandfather wrote her when they were young or looking at old photographs. So, I thought she was comfortable in her memories.

When I was 29 my grandmother suddenly died one night. I woke up in the morning and found her on the floor in her room. My parents were away on a trip, so I called my brother to help me do something. When my brother arrived, he was crying and kept asking me questions. But all I could think about was that I didn't remember the last conversation I had with my grandmother. I realized that I didn't really talk to her about her life. I knew that she had an amazing life full of interesting and wise stories, but I was always too busy to sit down and listen. I was very

ashamed to have wasted all those years and I was incredibly desolate in realizing I couldn't do anything to turn back the time.

Now I am 33 and I love listening to people's life stories and learning from their wisdom. For me, this project is a bridge between the past and the present and I promise to treasure and honour your stories that have built this bridge.

Looking back, I think that displaying my vulnerability by sharing this narrative brought me and the research participants closer. I will never forget the moment when, holding back my tears, I looked up from the pages of my notebook and saw that everyone was tearing up as well. The silence that remained after I stopped reading was finally broken by one of the oldest participants who said: "Every family same problem as you two. When my grandparent passed away, I felt very repentful about my life."

Through writing this reflexive account of how I came to engage in this research project, my subjective experiences become embedded in the inquiry presented in this thesis. My work is built on my empathy for the members of the Seniors Storytelling Club and on my collaboration with the UBC Learning Exchange. My commitment to social justice in education and transformation of teaching practices is reflected in the rigour I bring to my scholarly research. I hope this study benefits the community that nourished me as a researcher and contributes to the theory and practice of language teaching across educational contexts.

1.5 Research Frameworks

The conceptual grounding of this study is based on Pratt's (1991, 1992) construct of *contact zone*, which refers to a space constructed by power relations. Conceptualization of language learning as a symbolic contact zone (Canagarajah, 1997; Helm & Dabre, 2018) understands language learning as unfolding within overlapping systems of power that saturate

English language learning on local and global scales. In addition, drawing on the concept of *agency* or “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn, 2001, p. 112), I understand immigrant seniors’ language learning trajectories as non-linear, formed and reformed through agentive acts contingent on power-laden relationships. Finally, I examine these concepts from the perspective that language learning takes place in context, thus taking the form of the language socialization (Duff & Talmy, 2011) that occurs throughout one’s lifetime.

Methodologically, this study was developed as a narrative ethnography (Goodall Jr., 2004; Gubrium & Holstein, 1999, 2008; Hampshire, Iqbal, Blell, & Simpson, 2014; Tedlock, 1991, 2004) nested within a language classroom. I chose this design despite the relatively short duration of the data generation because of my desire to develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of language learning in later life and the fact that I had spent two years working closely with the members of the learning community that hosted my study prior to embarking on the research project. In addition, it has been found that short term classroom ethnographic research projects have the potential to produce insights, which can later be used to develop culturally responsive practices in a variety of contexts (Forsey, 2010). My research project pursued similar practical goals.

Narrative ethnography pays close attention to the overlap between the narrative itself and observation of the context in which it is produced (Gubrium & Holstein, 1999). Therefore, I combined my observations of the class interactions with analysis of the texts that the participants produced in class and the content of my interviews with them. In line with the methodology of narrative ethnography, my research process was reflexive and constructivist and developed as an “ethnographic dialogue to create a world of shared intersubjectivity” (Tedlock, 1991, p. 70) between the multiple stakeholders at the UBC Learning Exchange. The main goal of this study

was to examine the individual stories of those typically underrepresented in large-scale educational research (Chase, 2005).

Drawing on the knowledge generated during my two years of participating in community-based learning activities at the UBC Learning Exchange, I designed and facilitated a special class entitled Seniors Storytelling Club, which ran for ten weeks and explored the participants' life experiences through facilitation of narrative work in the classroom. Narrative was broadly conceptualized as the "spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected" (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 17). These narratives were complemented with detailed notes of class context and the entries from my researcher's journal. I analyzed significant elements from the narratives that the participants produced as learning products—the elements that uncovered their language learning experiences, identities, etc. This approach to understanding ageing individuals' experiences "preserves and appreciates people's agency and active meaning-making, while also laying out for view the dynamics through which cultural, ageist and moral notions of age and ageing surface in and through discourse" (Nikander, 2009, p. 876). From a methodological perspective, this study pays close attention to individual meaning-making and thus aims to "honor [the] individual agency and intention" (Riessman, 2008, p. 12) of the narrators throughout the research process. As a result, this study highlights the multiple and, at times, competing discourses that frame immigrant seniors' experiences of language learning and re-establishes "the centrality of personal experience and identity in the social construction of knowledge" (Goodall Jr., 2004, p. 187) which is one of the central facets of narrative ethnographic research.

1.6 Research Questions

The purpose of this study was twofold. The main objective was to explore the experiences of English language learning in the lives of immigrant seniors in Canada. To meet this objective, I posed the following research questions:

1. What have been immigrant seniors' experiences of English language learning? What has influenced their efforts to learn English over time?
2. How do immigrant seniors perceive the impact of community-based learning in their lives?

These research questions aim to map seniors' language learning as an agentive endeavour structured along the lines of intersecting power relations. They locate language learning as a socializing practice in a symbolic intercultural contact zone (Pratt, 1991) created by numerous daily interactions within diverse discourses.

Due to the current shortfall of language learning programs for immigrant seniors in Vancouver, my second objective was to contribute to the development of a language curriculum that would be offered to older adults residing in the DTES.

1.7 Key Terms

Several terms need to be defined specifically for this thesis. Although people over 25 experience ageing differently, they are often classified by broad life cycle categories as adults (25 to 64 years of age) or **seniors** (65 years and over). These are the classifications used in policy documents issued by the City of Vancouver. The term **older adult** often refers to individuals over the age of 50. This is the youngest age that many seniors' groups and organizations consider for admitting individuals into their programs. It is also a commonly used term in gerontological research. However, given the complexity and the socioeconomic challenges facing the DTES

immigrant society (Carnegie Community Centre Seniors' Guide, n.d.), I define **seniors** as individuals over 55 years old. All participants in this study self-identified as seniors.

1.8 Organization of the Thesis

This dissertation is divided into eight chapters, including this introductory chapter. In Chapter 2, I contextualise the study through a detailed description of the DTES, which is where the research site is located. I present the UBC Learning Exchange, English Conversation program, and Seniors Storytelling Club as three interdependent contact zones, which framed the research project. In Chapter 3, I situate my study in the existing literature. Chapter 4 lays out the conceptual frameworks of the contact zone and agency, which guided the research. Chapter 5 presents the methodology used for this study. In this chapter I present an account of how I conceived and carried out the research project and address the complexities of the research process. Chapter 6 draws on the theoretical construct of agency to answer the first set of research questions. In this chapter I present findings from the thematic analysis of the data and illustrate these themes with an in-depth analysis of three participants' narratives about their language learning experiences in Canada. In Chapter 7, I conceptualize the community-based language learning program as a contact zone. I present the thematic analysis of narrative data regarding the role of community-based language learning in the lives of older adults. This analysis is supplemented by the narratives of three seniors that illustrate the impact of community-based language learning in later life. Finally, Chapter 8 draws conclusions based on the information presented in the thesis and includes a discussion of the implications along with an outline of possible directions for future research.

Chapter 2: Research Contexts

2.1 Introduction

The study was situated within three nested contexts: Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES), the UBC Learning Exchange, and the Seniors Storytelling Club (see Figure 2.1). I understand the DTES as the encasing context of my study, which necessitated the community-responsive design of the study. As a community-engagement initiative of the University of British Columbia, the UBC Learning Exchange provided space and administrative support for the research. As such, it served as the framing context that constructed the specific research relationships. The Seniors Storytelling Club was the central context of the study. It served as the language learning class where storytelling was used to generate the data.

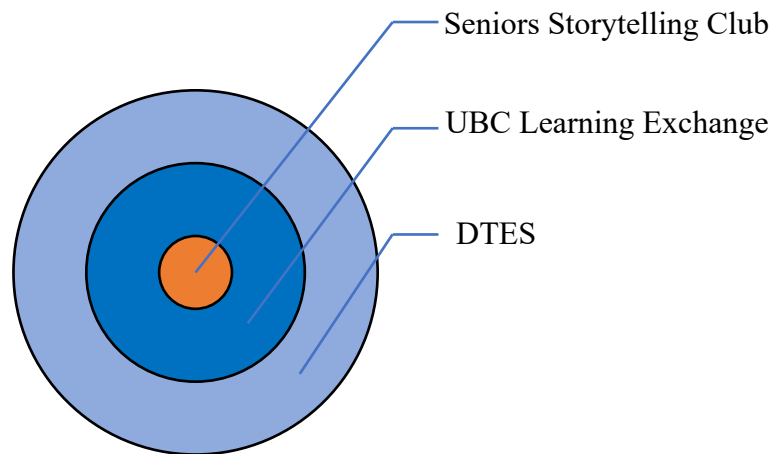


Figure 2.1 Schematic representation of the research contexts

2.2 Downtown Eastside

In the documents relating to City of Vancouver strategic planning, the DTES is recognized as a unique space within the city core, a collection of vibrant neighbourhoods, and a place where residents experience a “sense of community belonging, inclusion, dignity and safety” (City of Vancouver, 2018, p. 14). However, in the popular discourse, the DTES is painted as facing

severe societal challenges (MacQueen, 2014). Various information sources such as TripAdvisor (2010) and the media (Shore, 2017; Turner, 2017; Woo, Dhillon, Stueck, Hager, Hume, Bailey, Lopes, 2017) focus on alerting their wider audiences to the issues of unemployment, crime, prostitution, drug overdoses, and the like.

At the time of this study, the area was undergoing rapid gentrification (Burnett, 2014; Liu & Blomley, 2013; Smith, 2003). In 2017, the City of Vancouver introduced a number of projects aimed at revitalizing the neighbourhood. Several of these projects sparked controversy and public debate (Mackie, Fumano, & Lee-Young, 2017, McElroy, 2017; Gerzak, 2017), highlighting the polarization of public opinion on the future of the neighbourhood. On the day I started my research project I took a picture of the modern condominium complex that was constructed next to the small three-storey building that houses the UBC Learning Exchange (see Figure 2.2). This image remained with me as visual metaphor of pending social changes in the neighbourhood.



Figure 2.2 The picture of a newly-built condominium

As gentrification changed the neighbourhood, there were also changes in its demographic makeup. For the seniors living on income assistance in the DTES, gentrification “could set a terrifying precedent” (Cole, 2014, para. 10.) as with it come rent increases, reduction of social services, and an influx of affluent residents. Despite these changes, there are many social initiatives in the DTES, including those that provide accessible literacy programs (for examples see Booth, 2014). One of them is the UBC Learning Exchange which aims to help strengthen the community and support educational endeavours by creating a space where community members, students, UBC faculty, and centre staff work together to address the critical issues (Towle & Leahy, 2016).

2.3 English Conversation at the UBC Learning Exchange

The UBC Learning Exchange was initiated in the late 1990s. It is currently located at the intersection of Main and Keefer Streets in the heart of Vancouver’s Chinatown. The development of the UBC Learning Exchange from a small drop-in centre to becoming a well-recognized learning community in the DTES was not straightforward. Initially, getting the DTES community to trust the large prestigious university that had descended into their midst was not an easy feat. In her memoir, the UBC Learning Exchange’s first director, Margo Fryer (n.d.), mentions that “UBC had alienated a lot of people” (para. 4) in the neighbourhood and that is why the establishment of the UBC Learning Exchange was a challenge. Given that UBC is an academic institution, there were concerns that a new initiative would ignore the needs of the communities populating the DTES. However, by listening to the stories of the regular patrons, the centre’s staff gained insight into how the university could be of better service to the community. These insights led to a number of successful outcomes, including development of a Vancouver School Board report in 2005, and implementation of a well-received community

project with local binners.³ As appreciation for the centre grew, residents of the DTES started frequenting it on a drop-in basis.

By 2003, the UBC Learning Exchange had become recognized in the DTES educational space. Fryer (n.d.) writes:

Thirty to 50 local residents came in every afternoon. Often there was a line-up of people on the sidewalk waiting to come in when we opened the doors. Some days, it was standing-room only in the small open space of the storefront during the peak of the afternoon's activity. (para. 2)

As interest in the UBC Learning Exchange grew, so did the programming. The drop-in services were supplemented by a series of computer literacy workshops, entrepreneurship education, advocacy workshops, and mentorship programs for women (to name a few). Today, the core programs offered at the UBC Learning Exchange include digital literacy, arts-based and indigenous-themed workshops, and English language classes.

According to its website, the purpose of the UBC Learning Exchange is to effectively address complex social issues by building on personal and community strengths and not by focusing on needs and problems. The practices at the UBC Learning Exchange are directed by the principles of inclusion, collaboration, celebration, learning, pragmatism, and sustainability (Towle & Leahy, 2016). To foster inclusion, the UBC Learning Exchange attempts to welcome and empower all members of the DTES and the UBC community and encourages reciprocal exchange of ideas and knowledge. To ensure collaboration, the centre strives to develop mutually beneficial relationships that bring together diverse individuals. Further, the UBC Learning Exchange honours lived experience as fundamental to learning and fosters lifelong

³ The term "binner" refers to a person who collects recyclable materials and other objects of value from garbage bins to sustain their livelihood and divert waste from the landfill (Korcheva, 2018).

learning. In addition, the learning environment in the centre is flexible and aligned with the pragmatic needs of the learners. Funded by the university, private donations, commercial enterprises, and grant-funding agencies, community-engagement of the UBC Learning Exchange takes a long-term approach to their program planning so that the work extends into the future.

According to Towle and Leahy (2016), the UBC Learning Exchange saw an increase in “campus and community groups’ space usage . . . including a six-fold growth in community-based researchers’ usage” (p. 70) between 2015 and 2016. A multidimensional educational hub, the UBC Learning Exchange harbours several successful learning programs, arts-based events, public talks, and community-facing academic conferences. In addition, there are a number of research projects underway at the centre and the results of the research are easily accessible by various populations.

The English Conversation program aims not only to develop the conversational proficiency of language learners, but to provide them with opportunities to gain confidence and leadership skills. Each language class runs for ten weeks and patrons can only take one English class at a time. However, all learners are free to attend the other classes offered by the UBC Learning Exchange and to spend time at the centre socializing with other learners and facilitators. Some use this opportunity to help their peers learn other skills, while others spend time reading the magazines and newspapers in English available on the premises. According to Fryer (n.d.), introducing the language learning classes into the programming at the UBC Learning Exchange had a “kind of messy magic” (Fryer, n.d., para. 15) and generated “more diversity at the storefront, more creativity and a greater sense that we had found a way of engaging with the complex power dynamics in the Downtown Eastside that was both innovative and in line with our values” (Fryer, n.d., para 15).

The program also strives to foster a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in which the learners' and facilitator's roles are flexible and fluid. Learning sessions are facilitated by community and university volunteers who get initial training and receive additional professional development and staff support. However, in some cases, the learners begin to facilitate classes. Fundamentally, seniors' engagement with the English Conversation program encourages peer socialization within the community of practice. Characterized by mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998), these conversation classes encourage learners and facilitators to see themselves as members of one large learning community and to participate in shared activities, both learning and social.

2.4 Seniors Storytelling Club

In January 2016, the UBC Learning Exchange launched a new initiative called Seniors Thrive. The purpose of the Seniors Thrive program was to offer new and exciting language learning experiences to Vancouver's older adult immigrant population, build their social capital, encourage leadership, and foster their social inclusion. The programming includes a number of arts-based classes including choral ensemble, storytelling circles, and health and wellbeing training to name a few. The research study that I conceptualized was implemented through the Seniors Storytelling Club, which was one of the first classes to launch under the Seniors Thrive umbrella. I was responsible for the lesson planning, preparation of materials, and co-facilitation of the Club with June,⁴ a volunteer graduate student who helped me with the class delivery.

During the ten weeks of the regular classes and in the months that followed them, ten seniors, June, and I spent considerable time engaging in story-sharing work, during which we co-constructed narratives about our immigration and language learning experiences. This was a very

⁴ Pseudonym.

vulnerable practice. To illustrate the emotional impact of story-sharing, I invite the reader to consider the following excerpt from my researcher's journal in the second class.

As we were sharing our favourite fairy tales and bedtime stories, John became visibly distraught. As the conversation continued, he appeared to be on the verge of tears. He explained that the fairy tales brought up old memories of growing up in extreme poverty and having to leave home at the age of 14. He shared his feelings of being uneducated and unworthy of respect and what it was like to be poor and constantly looked down upon. This was an unexpected outcome of the storytelling activity. Indeed, sharing stories is a vulnerable practice that can take surprising forms. (April 28, 2016)

By sharing this excerpt, I want to make clear that participants' stories about their successes or failures in search of language learning opportunities were constructed within the close-knit and vulnerable space of a small language learning class. For some learners this context was enabling while for others it was constraining. Not all learners participated equally in the story-sharing and as a result some of the experiences that were constructed through the writing of texts, classroom discussions, and interviews could have been overshadowed by others. Thus, the data presented in this dissertation should be approached with attention to the context of their production.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter contextualized the research by describing the spaces where the data generation took place. These three interconnected spaces are: the DTES, the English Conversation program at the UBC Learning Exchange, and the Seniors Storytelling Club.

Understanding the context of this study is crucial for readers of this thesis to appreciate the value of working with immigrant seniors in a community-based language learning program.

Nested in the DTES, which is often sensationalized as a destitute and dangerous neighbourhood, the UBC Learning Exchange serves as an example by engaging with the community with care and respect. English Conversation blends multiple approaches to language teaching to deliver vibrant lifelong learning opportunities to the immigrant senior population of the DTES and beyond. By collaborating with the staff at the UBC Learning Exchange, this study serves as an example of community-focused educational research.

Chapter 3: Ageing, Immigration, and Language Learning

3.1 Introduction

This study is nested within several fields of academic research. The purpose of this chapter is to review the research that is relevant to understanding older immigrants' language learning experiences. Given that the focus of my study is on immigrant seniors' experiences in a community-based language learning program, I first review the educational research on lifelong learning and critical analyses of learning experiences in later life. Second, I review the theoretical underpinnings of the development of alternative learning models for older adults. Both of these bodies of literature are nested under the umbrella of educational gerontology. Following this review, I address the body of literature that explores the cognitive and social factors affecting language acquisition in later life. Finally, given the context of my study, I review the state of the government-funded language learning programs available to immigrants in Canada and compare them to community-based English language programs.

3.2 Older Adult Education: Concepts and Review of the Research

A review of the literature on older adult learning reveals that for many years educational gerontology has been dominated by either the deficit model, which identifies obstacles to learning caused by mental and physical deterioration, or the usefulness model, which focuses on development of skills that can benefit the larger society and the learners themselves. For example, in the inaugural issue of the journal *Educational Gerontology*, Moody (1976) argued that many providers of older adult education view older learners either as limited in economic value and in need of life improvement, or as repositories of life wisdom and insight that can be put to service for the larger society. Dominance of the deficit model in understanding the older adults' abilities framed the education offered to this group as a social welfare project, imposing a

burden on a more active population. On the other hand, the usefulness model treats older learners as valid only if their skills and knowledge can be extracted for the advancement of society as a whole. However, over the years, these two opposing views were supplemented by alternative visions of the purpose of education in later life.

Today, there is a consensus that seniors might need educational models that focus on self-actualization rather than on the accumulation of knowledge as promoted by traditional educational approaches (Lemieux & Sanchez-Martinez, 2000). Educational gerontological research views older learners as agentive individuals with multifaceted identities and speaks to the power of the social aspects of learning (Chené, 1991; Clark, Heller, Rafman, & Walker, 1997; Duay & Bryan, 2008; Kim & Merriam, 2010). My review of the research carried out within the framework of educational gerontology⁵ suggests that currently there are three approaches to learning in later life: (1) addressing learners' instrumental needs, (2) addressing learners' socio-emotional needs, and (3) developing social activism and emancipation of the elderly. I will address each of these approaches in subsequent sections.

3.2.1 Instrumental vs. Socio-Emotional Needs of Older Learners

Reviewing studies on older adult learning, Findsen (2007) observes that the main focus of the research lies on the coping and instrumental needs of older adults (staying healthy, learning new skills) or their liberal expressive needs (learning for leisure). Both of these approaches stress the centrality of the older learner's social status as a legitimate member of society. Moreover,

⁵ The terminology used over the years to describe this field has included theory-focused gerontagogy (Lemieux & Sanchez Martinez, 2000) and practice-focused gerogogy/geragogy (Formosa, 2002; Maderer, Skiba, 2006; Ramirez Gomez, 2016). I use the phrase "educational gerontology" as an umbrella term for all studies pertaining to older adult education.

they argue that older individuals can continue to actively contribute to the larger society well after retirement.

The first category of research addresses the coping or instrumental needs of seniors (learning new skills, new forms of literacy, taking vocational courses). In these studies, researchers argue that older learners engage in educational activities because of their desire to be self-sufficient and keep up with the changing times. In addition, research suggests that educational programs need to produce knowledgeable, self-sufficient, and competent older citizens who can sustain fulfilling lives after retirement. This type of research grounds older adult educational needs in discourses of active and productive ageing. For example, in Australia, Boulton-Lewis, Buys, and Lovie-Kitchin (2006) surveyed 2,645 older adults attending technology literacy workshops in an attempt to understand the role of technology learning in active ageing. They argue that continuous learning is an important aspect of ageing productively and note that it facilitates “living fully through learning” (Boulton-Lewis et al., 2006, p. 281). Similarly, Carragher and Golding (2015) found that older Irish men turned to learning in later life to expand their experiences after retirement. This study found that participation in hands-on activities not only motivated seniors to seek further learning opportunities, but also contributed to a sustained sense of masculinity as they grew older.

The second category of research examines the expressive or socio-emotional needs of older adults engaged in learning activities. These studies do not necessarily address acquisition of particular skills. In these studies, older learners are constructed as individuals who are interested in maintaining general well-being, building new connections, finding friends, or simply learning for the sake of learning itself. For example, Purdie and Boulton-Lewis (2003) argue that participation in lifelong educational activities can support older adults’ physical and mental

wellbeing, as well as help them remain socially active. Similarly, in a study examining a lifelong educational institute in Seoul, South Korea, Kim and Kim (2015) found that “an immediate sense of enjoyment, satisfaction, and achievement is crucial for elderly learners” (p. 131) furthering the idea that self-actualization is one of the motivational constructs for older learners. Shigeo Hori and Sandra Cusack (2004) conducted a Canadian-Japanese comparative study of seniors’ attitudes toward ageing, their learning needs, and the role of educational programs in later life. While it focused on the differences in preferred learning formats, this study suggests that positive views of ageing frame engagement in learning activities, which benefit mental health in later life in both countries. In their research on learning in later life in China, Leung, Lui, and Chi (2006) found socio-emotional needs to be superior to instrumental ones. Building on this study, Leung, Chi, and Chiang (2008) suggest that an overall positive view of learning and an established social support network might sustain an individual’s desire to learn well after retirement. However, given the specific context of their study, the authors acknowledge that their participants found the opportunity to learn at an older age valuable due to the lack of educational options in their youth, and that their desire to learn was fueled by a sense of making up for lost opportunities. Many studies suggest that, in addition to learning new things, older adults are interested in socializing and developing peer support networks. These learners often seek opportunities to interact outside their fixed social groups and within communities that value them and their experiences (Bynum & Seaman, 1993; Duay & Bryan, 2008; Kim & Merriam, 2004). Thus, learning plays an important role in the lives of older adults as it encourages them to stay more connected to their communities and the larger world. As Golding (2011a) argues, socially situated informal learning with peers has “particularly therapeutic” (p. 117) outcomes for seniors who otherwise are excluded from formal continuing education programs.

While differing in nuance, all of these studies contribute to the discourse of active and productive ageing as the most valuable option for older adults and, as Cruikshank (2003) notes, attest to the argument that ageing could be re-invented through education. Teaching practices developed within the framework of educational gerontology generally aim to promote older adults' autonomy through their self-actualization, growth of independence, and ability to advocate for themselves. These practices relate to discourses of positive ageing, well-being in later life (for a detailed examination of discourses on active later life, see Andrew, 2012) and are closely related to promotion of learning, which takes place throughout the lifecycle of an individual in both formal and informal contexts. It is important to note that such individual-oriented views of older adult learning have been criticized for putting too much emphasis on individual agency without giving attention to the larger societal structures that mediate it. This is especially important to consider given global demographic shifts that have resulted in an increase in the size of the ageing population in countries with significant economic power. While acknowledging that seniors might experience feelings of marginalization and feel as if they are on the periphery of the larger society due to age, many studies overlook the systemic nature of discriminatory practices. In contrast, research carried out within the paradigm of critical educational gerontology (Battersby & Glendenning, 1992; Formosa, 2002, 2011) conceptualizes learning as an empowering endeavour taking place in a community of peers.

3.2.2 Learning as the Emancipation of the Elderly

In contrast to the two approaches to older adult learning described so far, in the early 1990s critical approaches to educational gerontology were elaborated to raise awareness of elder abuse and neglect and the role of education in combating them (Decalmer & Glendenning, 1993). Australian and British scholars Battersby and Glendenning (1992) were among the first to root

educational gerontology in Freirean critical theory, calling for the emancipation and empowerment of the elderly, transformation of research, and development of theory based on action. Based on the work by Battersby and Glendenning, critical approaches to educational gerontology challenge practitioners to develop older learners' critical consciousness and to empower them to confront ageist discrimination in and outside the classroom.

Critical approaches to working with older adults, as elaborated by Marvin Formosa (2002), are rooted in two overlapping social issues. One is that there is an increasing number of marginalized older adult groups, and the other is that mainstream educational gerontology seems unable to address issues of poverty and access to power. Formosa (2011) maintains that the benevolent project of older adult education must be approached critically and invites practitioners of adult education to understand older adults' experiences as located at the intersection of capitalism, ageing and later life learning. Ray and Fine (1999) maintain that critical educational gerontology should consider the "connections between language, self, and social action" (p. 172) that lead to social transformation. Taken together, critical approaches to older adult education move the field of educational gerontology toward an understanding of older adults as agentive individuals capable of collective empowerment. For example, in her research on the leadership potential of retirees attending a seniors' centre in Canada, Sandra Cusack (1994) suggests that while the explicit focus on seniors' empowerment and growth in confidence resulted in some seniors taking on leadership roles, there was a significant group that "view education as either a frill or not relevant to later life" (p. 414). Cussack (1994) argues that the reasons for this view stem from internalized ageist discourses, which prevent older adults from seeing the value of lifelong educational programs and effectively articulating their

educational needs. To address this challenge, she argues that learning programs need to combat ageist discourses and support individual development well into later life.

Drawing on critical educational gerontology, the practice of critical geragogy⁶ considers learning in later life as presenting older learners with an opportunity for greater personal control and autonomy (Glendenning & Battersby, 1990). Adopting this perspective in educational programming might lead to a greater “sense of personal value, belongingness and purpose” among the learners (Creech, & Hallam, 2015, p. 56), challenge ageist stereotypes (Ramirez Gómez, 2016a), recognize learners’ agency, and give them “the opportunity to act and change oppressive social structures” (Formosa, 2002, p. 83).

Critical educational gerontology is not free from critique. Withnall (2006) points to the fact that while claiming emancipation and empowerment, a lot of research understands older populations as a priori marginalized and homogeneous. Withnall (2006) believes that this “ideological constraint” (p. 30) is the main shortcoming of critical educational gerontology. He argues for a change in the conversation so that “the voices of older learners themselves, hitherto largely ignored, can emerge” (p. 30). He also argues that “what is required is a new insight into how people make sense of their own attitudes to learning and how they have acquired beliefs and values about what education and learning mean in the context of their own lives” (Withnall, 2006, p. 30). Such an analysis would offer a distinctive perspective on the factors that might influence older people to continue with or take up a learning activity.

⁶ The terms gerogogy or geragogy are used to describe practice-focused scholarship on teaching older learners. Formosa (2002) and later Maderer and Skiba (2006), elaborated principles of critical geragogy that serves to empower older learners.

3.3 Language Learning in Later Life: Challenges and Opportunities

Older adults need nuanced teaching approaches due to the cognitive, affective, and linguistic factors that affect their engagement with an additional language (Cox, 2017; Słowik, 2017; Tran, 1990). In this section, I first review the empirical research that examines older learners' additional language acquisition. I follow with a review of some practical approaches to teaching foreign languages to older adults. Finally, I examine the literature on the social factors that impact language learning in the context of immigration in later life.

3.3.1 Language Learning and Ageing

Cognitive ageing has a significant impact on older adults' experiences of learning a new language. However, researchers caution against falling into the trap of ageist thinking when it comes to working with older language learners. Experimental studies, such as one performed by Cox (2017), show evidence of successful language learning by older adults and specifically the cognitive benefits of bilingualism in later age. Similar arguments are put forward by cognitive researchers Bialystok, Abutalebi, Bak, Burke, and Kroll (2016) who reviewed research carried out on bilingual seniors. The authors argue that while all older individuals experience mild cognitive impairment to a certain degree, bilinguals display less decline than their monolingual peers. This fact has significant implications for public health, for example in terms of supporting educational initiatives for the purposes of supporting the cognitive health of the ageing populations.

While the declining cognitive abilities of older learners present challenges to retaining new information, there are a multitude of other factors that might facilitate successful additional language acquisition (Mackey & Sachs, 2012). This argument is reiterated throughout much of the international research on language learning in later life. For example, Schulz and Elliott

(2000) analyzed the language learning journal of Schulz who, at the age of 57, was learning Spanish in an immersive context while living in Colombia. The narrative data presented in the study highlights Schulz's age-related frustrations dealing with everyday interactions using a new language. At the same time, the authors conclude that due to her high motivation and the intensity of her interactions, Schulz was able to significantly advance in her mission to learn Spanish. In researching German-Slovenian bilingual speakers studying English as a foreign language, Pfenninger and Polz (2018) conclude that language learning should be part of a healthy ageing process. Older adults who participated in the study improved their linguistic skills, spoke with higher confidence and displayed a certain sense of autonomy in seeking language interaction. At the same time, the authors note, older learners tended to apply ageist stereotypes to themselves and others, something that has been noted by other scholars (e.g., Andrew, 2012; Oxford, 2018; Ramírez Gómez, 2016a). Participants of the study continued to pursue learning a new language as a way to remain active and relevant in their everyday life. In their discussion of participants' motivations for learning English, Pfenninger and Polz (2018) write:

Learning English is one way they have found to remain active and to continue to advance personally. More importantly, it is a major source of prestige for them in view of all that English signifies in terms of cultural capital. While they very much enjoy the academic challenge of learning, this undertaking has much more to do with their life in the world beyond the classroom. The participants often pointed to the importance of the approval and acknowledgment of their family members; they also tended to compare themselves with other older adults (inside and outside their language classes) (p. 10).

Similar observations can be found in other contexts. For example, in a study of older Korean learners' motivations to study English as a foreign language, Kim and Kim (2015) write that "most participants agreed that their desire to obtain a sense of self-achievement was the most influential motivation for their English learning" (p. 126), whereas practical speaking goals were not dominant in the seniors' desire to learn English.

However, older learners are not a homogeneous group and some studies suggest high instrumental motivation to learn a new language. For example, in researching Polish seniors' English language learning experiences, Kuklewicz and King (2018) noted that the participants wanted to learn English because they saw it as a practical life-skill that would help them communicate while travelling through Europe. Some participants in the study expressed a desire to learn the basic language forms they would likely encounter in daily interactions while visiting their children abroad. Although they had different motivations for learning a new language, the participants in all these studies were able to set and achieve realistic language learning goals.

Not all language learning can be empowering for older adults, argues Ramirez Gómez (2016a). The reason for this stems from older learners' and instructors' internalization of ageist stereotypes regarding age-related cognitive decline. In order to combat these beliefs and improve older learners' experiences in the classroom, Ramirez Gómez (2016a, 2016b) suggests applying Formosa's (2002, 2011, 2012) principles of critical geragogy to additional language learning. As elaborated by Ramirez Gómez, critical foreign language geragogy has several specifics. First, it takes into consideration the cognitive characteristics of ageing and adopts a realistic stance regarding older learners' potential. Second, it actively dispels ageist stereotypes by seeking to "provide older learners with a deeper understanding of their abilities, disabuse them of inaccurate beliefs, and equip them with tools to self-direct and accomplish their objectives" (Ramirez

Gómez, 2016a, p. 141). As a result, not only are older learners empowered to take on new roles in and outside the classroom, the larger society is also made aware of this demographic's potential and value.

3.3.2 Language Learning and Immigration in Later Life

Most arguments regarding seniors' language learning apply to the context of immigration in later life. However, there are contextual specifics that distinguish this group of learners. First is the fact that language learning in immigrant contexts is carried out within a dominant cultural milieu. Tran (1990) explains that often older immigrants and refugees "lack preparation for their adjustment . . . [in the host] society. They also have fewer opportunities to make successful adaptation[s] to their host society than the younger generations" (p. 94). At the same time, prior life experiences (e.g., level of education, professional occupation, family status) significantly influence older immigrants' language acquisition. Such background factors, Tran argues, should be considered in the development of educational programs for older immigrants.

Recent studies conducted with older immigrants (e.g., Hubenthal, 2004; Pot, Keijzer, & De Bot, 2018) add another layer of complexity to understanding immigrant seniors' language learning as it pertains to their feelings of anxiety and shame while speaking English. For example, Hubenthal (2004) worked with Russian-speaking older adults who immigrated to the United States at different stages of their lives. In her analysis of participants' interviews, she notes the highly critical attitudes of the learners towards their language improvement. Despite some success in communication, all participants expressed feelings of shame when they were misunderstood by the native speakers they interacted with. In the Netherlands, Pot et al. (2018) highlight similar feelings of shame and inferiority harboured by older immigrants, which led them to avoid interacting in Dutch with native speakers. These "linguistic insecurities are

specifically heightened in medical settings, where communicating important information can make the difference between an adequate or inadequate treatment” (p. 12). Indeed, high-stakes interactions in a new language when in a vulnerable state can increase feelings of anxiety, which affects language output at any age. Finally, studies suggest that older immigrants experience higher levels of loneliness as compared to younger immigrants or older adults in general (for Canadian data see Wu & Penning, 2015). As a result, older immigrants might seek language learning as a way to overcome social isolation and establish a community of peers who share their life experiences (Carlock, 2016) as well as to maintain mental health (Taylor, Taylor-Henley, & Doan, 2005) and find ways to interact with their English-speaking family members (Arxer, Ciriza-Lope, Shappeck, del Puy Ciriza, 2017).

In sum, international research that examines the language learning experiences of older adults highlights the multiple factors that impact this process. While there are certain age-mediated cognitive challenges to acquisition of a new language, they can be overcome by building upon elders’ motivations to learn, sustaining their engagement with the subject, and developing age appropriate curricula. Without these interventions, older learners who are left to their own devices in seeking out a language practice might encounter debilitating experiences, which in turn foster feelings of shame and anxiety and contribute to further social isolation of this important demographic group.

3.4 Immigration and Language Learning

In English-speaking countries, adult immigrants learn English language for a variety of reasons. Some do so for practical reasons, such as to communicate at work (Norton, 2013), while others learn so they can gain employment or access opportunities within the community (Duff, Wong, & Early, 2000). Many do so to enhance their family literacy practices (Chao & Mantero,

2014) or for personal reasons. It has been noted that in the context of immigration, many immigrant-focused programs are expected to help learners achieve a certain level of economic and social security (Haque, Cray, Ramanathan, Morgan, 2007; Warriner, 2016). Constrained in their program development and aiming for a high graduation rates, many programs take a “quick-fix” approach (Warriner, 2007, p. 356) to immigrant language learning, running the risk of ignoring the complexities of learners’ identities, needs, and abilities.

Reflecting on the purpose of English language learning in Canada, Morgan (2002) writes that “in many ways language learning is simultaneously a process of individual and collective identity negotiation” (p. 157). If that is indeed an important factor to consider in language learning, then practices of language education should embrace it through variability and flexibility in curriculum and lesson delivery.

As noted by many researchers (e.g., Kubota, 2004) English language education on a global scale is shaped by the linguistic, racial, and cultural privilege of European norms over others. Canadian practices are not an exception. Fleming (2010) writes that the very notion of high versus low English language proficiency is based on a “racialized (or ethnicized, if you will) hierarchy of Canadian citizenship” (p. 610). Similarly, Tara Gibb (2008) observes that English language teaching programming reinforces power imbalances and highlights the “gender, racialization, and class discourses stemming from Canada’s colonial past” (p. 328) that influence language learning practices. She argues that English language education in Canada is grounded in colonial settler practices, which privilege certain normative forms of being and socialize immigrants into essentialized language norms and cultural practices laid down by European settlers. Similarly, in her review of Canadian language policy, Eve Haque (2011) sees it as “a historically contingent process embedded in power relations” (p.106) framed by views of the

founding settler colonial groups. The colonial foundations of English language education in Canada, both Gibb (2008) and Haque (2011) argue, continue to sustain subtle racial and cultural inequality in the classroom and beyond. However, in many contexts, certainly in Canadian language education, it must be noted that “people of colour or ‘visible minorities,’ who typically occupy the centre stage of the antiracist movement, are in fact settlers of Canada” (Kubota, 2015, p. 5). Therefore, a more nuanced attention to this aspect of language learning practice is warranted.

3.4.1 Language Instruction to Newcomers to Canada

In Canada, adult immigrants are given opportunities to develop their English language skills through federally-funded programs with the objective of fostering immigrants’ integration into the Canadian workforce. Older immigrant adults are eligible for such English programs, even though they may not desire to work. Indeed, due to the scarcity of literacy programs developed specifically for older immigrants, these learners often attend programs open to a larger adult population. Reviewing English language programs and their critiques sheds light on the larger ideologies that surround non-Anglophone immigrants to Canada, including older immigrants.

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programs are the largest federally-funded language training programs in Canada. These programs have flexible curricular designs; however, their curricula reflect expectations of ensuring employment and achieving a certain level of economic security. Established in 1992, the rationale for the creation of LINC continues to centre on the “necessity of adequate language skills for newcomers to successfully settle, adapt and integrate socially/culturally and economically in Canada” (Evaluation of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program, 2004, para. 4). Given this particular

mandate of LINC, Canadian citizens, refugee claimants, and temporary residents of Canada are not eligible for this program. Today, both full- and part-time LINC classes are offered in every Canadian province. These classes are offered in a variety of settings, with some combined with free child-minding services. LINC provides only basic language training and follows Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) for learners' assessment.⁷ In addition, these programs often expect learners to progress quickly through the training levels, and the assessment of learners' proficiency is strictly regulated by the model of language competency that is stipulated by CLB standards.

The mandate of LINC programs stems from the history of their origin. According to Fleming (2007), Canadian English language programs have traditionally focused on providing learners with basic language skills sufficient for obtaining entry level work or doing manual labour. This focus has been widely criticized for creating social inequalities and furthering the economic divide between language learners and the English-speaking population. Today, the number of language programs has grown and diversified. Nevertheless, many programs reflect "heightened interest in immigrant labour market integration" (Haque, 2017, p. 110), thus sustaining the idea that integration of immigrants and national cohesion can be achieved through shared language under the condition that immigrants ensure their employability and achieve economic success. Not relevant for the workforce, immigrant seniors are often excluded from such language learning strategies.

In his research on adult immigrants learning English in Canada, Fleming (2015) argues that in addition to ensuring the employability of immigrant language learners the English language instruction offered to immigrants in Canada "has always served as a vehicle for the integration of

⁷ LINC offers classes up to Canadian Language Benchmarks Level 7.

newcomers into Canadian society” (p. 43). Indeed, English language programs often familiarize newcomers with Canadian values, history, and traditions, as well as laying the foundation for efficient intercultural engagement with the diverse communities that constitute Canadian multiculturalism. Relatedly, Guo (2013) argues that Canadian educational policy encourages the immigrant language learner to “think like a Canadian” (p. 33). As a result, language learning materials and classroom discussions are often saturated with “normative references to what it means to be a Canadian” (Fleming, 2010, p. 610) ignoring the dynamic nature of Canadian society, the flexibility of cultural norms, and the possibility of competing views.

Implementation of the linguistic integration of newcomers is shaped by the social and ideological agendas put forward by federal immigration policy documents. As Haque (2017) notes, many language learning programs in Canada are based on a deficit model that “reproduces human capital theory which understands knowledge development to be an acquisitive and individualised activity instead of a social and constructive process” (p. 10). Moreover, conceptualizations of an ideal immigrant language learner in curriculum documents can be different from the actual experience of learners in the classroom. For example, Fleming (2010) conducted a qualitative study that contrasted the concept of Canadian citizenship as it was represented in curricula and the views of adult immigrant English language learners. The study found that programs that follow the Canadian Language Benchmarks standard restrained adult immigrants in the fluid construction of their national identities. Based on his analysis of curricula materials for an English language program offered in British Columbia, Fleming (2010) observed that such programs “tend to position ESL learners as relatively powerless, passive, and atomized recipients of programming designed to normalize them into a dominant culture” (p. 589).

As the literature review suggests, LINC programs are examples of government-funded programs with clear benchmarks. These programs have several shortcomings, therefore, many learners search for language learning opportunities beyond those offered through this initiative. To explore this situation further, I will review research conducted within different settings in the following section.

3.4.2 Language Learning in the Community: Promising Practices and Critique

Thus far, I have reviewed the current status of LINC programs offered for adult immigrants in Canada. However, other programs that are, to a certain extent, free from government-mandated benchmarks can also play a significant role in adult immigrant language learning experiences. This section is dedicated to a review of research conducted with immigrants in informal and community-based settings outside of the federally-funded LINC initiative. The goal of this review is to highlight teaching practices and the language contexts of these community-based programs. While I specifically draw on research conducted in the Canadian context, I point to the similarities found in international studies.

Canadian research reveals significant differences between the learner's real-life experiences and the idealized view of immigrant language learners (Burnaby, 1998; Fleming, 2007; Lee, 2008; Morgan, 2002). Research finds that while some learners are in fact workforce-oriented, many attend lessons for the purpose of interacting outside their usual social groups. Morgan's (1998) research in Toronto found that community-based programs can be attended by learners with broad social needs that result from the political and historical background of the learners. The study revealed that discrimination experienced by adult learners had a great impact on their self-perception as Canadians and affected their language use outside the classroom.

Community-based language programs can be offered in diverse settings, such as churches, which poses questions of socialization of adult immigrant learners into specific practices. For example, Huamei Han (2009) conducted research analysing language policies and practices as well as fluid translanguaging between English, Cantonese and Mandarin in a Canadian church-based language program. She analyzed the practices of a bilingual church-based language learning program, which served the Chinese community in a large Canadian city. She argues that community-based spaces not only support the language development of recent immigrants, they also facilitate their social, spiritual and economic inclusion. Following this work, Han (2011) published a critique of monolingual English-only practices in language classrooms. Focusing on language use, Han (2011) argues that “alternative spaces” (p. 383), such as churches where marginalized individuals can engage in multilingual social interaction, tend to further social inclusion and creation of community. One of the focal participants, an English language facilitator named Joy, showed her appreciation for the languages and experiences that the students brought to the classroom by encouraging translanguaging between English and Cantonese. In contrast to the monolingual practices of formal language classes this approach created a more balanced language dynamic in the classroom. In addition, Han (2011) writes that proficiency in English was “only one of several dimensions that mattered in assigning speaking roles” (p. 393), reflecting the ideology of linguistic pragmatism and the acceptance of all linguistic codes and varieties of English and accents. Overall, Han (2011) argues that such community-based classroom practices benefit learners in a number of ways such as by making them feel more included and equal to their classmates and the instructor regardless of their language proficiency. However, it is important to acknowledge that church-based programs, such

as the one described in the article, are likely to have a religious mission of evangelism and the aim of attracting new members to the congregation.

In a related article that examined relationships formed by Chinese immigrants attending an evangelical Christian church, Han (2014) argues that “language and race intersect in complicated ways to racialize immigrants and their children differently” (p. 54), which in turn sustains linguistic, racial and social hierarchies within multicultural communities. To illustrate her argument, Han (2014) presents the case of Chinese immigrants who attend church activities in search of free English language practice and Western friendships. On one hand, analysis of immigrants’ experiences in the church revealed their desire to achieve native-speaker proficiency in English. On the other hand, interviews with other members of the church community, namely the pastor (who was born in Malaysia to Chinese parents, but grew up in Canada), highlighted a lack of recognition for the immigrants’ rich linguistic repertoires. Therefore, in community-based language learning, Han (2014) argues:

Discriminatory ideologies and policies cross-fertilize with common-sense assumptions of language and play out in everyday interactions, which are structured by, and also structuring, immigrants and another groups’ marginalization. (p. 68)

As this quote suggests, despite professing egalitarian goals community-based initiatives might in fact enable individuals to reproduce the normative Whiteness and Otherness of racialized immigrants. Similarly, in her reflection on the state of multiculturalism and celebrated egalitarian diversity in Canada, Kubota (2015, p. 9) maintains that English language educators need to engage in a “nuanced analysis of power relations that involve race, class, [and] gender” by becoming aware of the complex historical hierarchies of power between white settlers, settlers of colour, and aboriginal people. Otherwise, even the most well-meaning practitioners risk

falling into the trap of whitewashing their practice, resulting in further marginalization of the learners.

Ethnographic research carried out with parents who enrolled in English as an additional language programs in order to match their children's language proficiency gives insight into how community-based English language learning might impact family literacies and community ties (Chao & Mantero, 2014). In contrast to the programs examined by Han (2011), the two church-based programs in Chao and Mantero's (2014) study were based on the English-only principle and were run by monolingual, middle-class white Americans in the United States. The two programs encouraged adult learners to use their native languages in community programs and outside the classroom. This allowed immigrant parents to recognize the value of their native language in fostering community-building practices. Chao and Mantero (2014) also point out that despite the English-only medium of instruction, English language proficiency did not supercede the learners' native languages or devalue their existing literacies. These findings echo the argument that community-based language programs have the potential to mediate between learning English and preserving the multilingual language practices in learners' homes (Chao & Mantero, 2014) and that English language acquisition is not the only desired outcome of learners' participation in these programs. The conceptualization of community-based programs as "language, community and power brokers" (Chao & Mantero, 2014, p. 108) provides an important framework for future directions in the development of programs for adult English language learners.

Programs offered through many of the community-based centres are characterised by the blending of language practice with other forms of activity or literacy training. For example, community-based English language programs have served as a vehicle for developing health

literacy in immigrant communities (Santos, Handley, Omark, & Schillinger, 2014; Soto Mas, Ji, Fuentes, & Tinajero, 2015), raising awareness of mental health issues among language learners (Rusch, Frazier, & Atkins, 2015; Thomson, Chaze, George, & Guruge, 2015), and increasing financial literacy in various groups (Faulkner, 2016).

The last characteristic of community-based language learning is limited reliance on rigid benchmarks, which results in mixed language proficiencies in the classroom. Community-based language learning often brings together learners of varying levels of English language proficiency, which encourages active co-construction of meaning (Broeder, Bremer, Roberts, Vasseur, & Simmonot, 1996). Moreover, as learners move between diverse communities (home vs. classroom; first vs. additional language, etc.), they construct different linguistic identities (Skilton-Sylvester, 2002) and strategically utilize them in various ways (Hardman, 1999).

I would argue that community-based language learning presents an opportunity for a flexibility of expression and activities, which might be lacking in LINC classes.

3.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to contextualize my dissertation within the existing literature. I addressed research carried out in the fields of adult and older adult general education as well as language education. My literature review highlighted parallels in approaches to adult and older adult learning, presented empirical studies that problematize education provided to immigrants in Canada, and summarized the arguments for nuanced approaches to working with older adult immigrants.

I reviewed research on ageing populations situated within the framework of lifelong learning. These studies suggest that the traditional representations of older learners fall into two categories: fragile seniors who face cognitive obstacles to learning, and active lifelong learners.

Critical researchers problematize such dualistic representations and point out that it fails to recognize seniors as “multidimensional people with complex lives” (Findsen, 2007, p. 551). Accordingly, researchers argue for a more nuanced understanding of learning experiences in later life. For example, while some seniors have positive attitudes to ageing and remain active in later life, others experience various forms of discrimination, such as ageism, which presents serious obstacles to their self-fulfilment (Formosa, 2011). To assist older adults in combating discrimination, several scholars (Cusack, 1999; Formosa, 2002; Glendenning, 1993) put forward principles of critical educational gerontology. Altogether, critical gerontological research problematizes both the deficit view of older adults and the celebratory active ageing paradigm (Holstein & Minkler, 2003). Critical educational gerontology research is primarily aimed at dispelling ageist stereotypes and suggesting practices that would lead toward transformative action (Findsten, 2007; Formosa, 2002, 2011; Ramírez Gómez, 2016a). In addition, critical educational gerontologists take into consideration the cultural and material conditions that shape the learning experiences of older adults as a marginalized group.

My review of the literature in the field of language education for immigrant adult learners suggests that the main concern tends to be the exploration of how the acquisition of literacy skills in the language of the host society can facilitate the economic integration of these immigrants. Because of this, much of the empirical research does not seem to address the circumstances or the needs of older adult immigrants who are located largely outside of the labour market. In addition, some studies suggest that participation in socially and culturally responsive language learning models is crucial for the full and successful participation of adult immigrants in social life (Burns & Roberts, 2010). This seems relevant to older adults as well, although little research

on this population exists. While many immigrant seniors participate in language learning opportunities, not all of these programs are socially and culturally responsive to seniors' needs.

The few researchers that have spent time observing older language learners maintain that discourses of age have a significant impact on seniors' language learning (Andrew, 2012), especially as older learners construct new identities in the classroom. While language learning is often saturated with ageist and ableist discourses, research has shown that language learning can be successful in later life (Ramírez Gómez, 2016b). In order to obtain greater understanding of older adults' learning experiences and needs, further research is needed to describe the complex language learning trajectories experienced by older immigrants. Outside of language education for immigrants, there is ample research on the various aspects of educational programs offered to older non-immigrant adults (Carragher & Golding, 2015; Golding, 2011a,b; Merriam & Kee, 2014; Ng & Shan, 2010), but little of that research focuses on learners' oral and written narratives.

Following this review, I examined studies carried out within various immigrant adult language learning programs. These studies show that many immigrant adults attend classes not only for language and literacy development, but also for social reasons. They seek peer-to-peer interaction and a community that values them and their experiences. Apart from acquiring English language skills, learners also rely on each other as resources not only for practicing English, but also for a sense of community that helps them cultivate relationships outside the smaller groups. Of the various models of language learning, community-based language learning programs provide an environment where learners might see themselves as stakeholders and valuable members of the community. As such, community-based education both in the English as an additional language and the older adult education contexts provides affordances for the

development of a nuanced educational practice that is flexible in design and open to program participants with varying needs. However, these programs are not free from power dynamics and can potentially serve as conduits for dominant discourses. For example, these programs can reproduce normative discourses of Whiteness, imply the superiority of English over other languages, or privilege active aging over other experiences. Therefore, given the growing importance of the immigrant seniors demographic, more research is needed (especially ethnographic and narrative studies) to highlight the personal experiences of older language learners in these programs.

Chapter 4: Conceptual Orientation

4.1 Introduction

Researchers of language learning and use, especially those working in large urban settings, are increasingly confronted with evidence of the dynamic social processes of the contemporary globalized world, necessitating re-evaluation of the theoretical stances and research practices brought to working with diverse populations (Blommaert, 2010; Smakman & Heinrich, 2018). Immigrant seniors' life trajectories are not linear, and their language learning unfolds alongside their immigration experiences. Influenced by global historical processes and partially constrained both ideologically and materially, language learning in later life is power-laden. These power relations need to be considered in research conceptualization and design.

In this chapter, I present the two key constructs that frame my dissertation: language learning within a *contact zone*, and *agency* as a contextualized phenomenon occurring within the context zone. Each of these constructs originates from different, but compatible disciplinary backgrounds. The contact zone is a social and symbolic site of linguistic and cultural encounters that frame the negotiation of power (Pratt, 1991) that is disproportionally distributed. Agency is conceptualized as a “socially mediated phenomenon” (Miller, 2014, p. 3) situated within the power dynamics that frame the language learning trajectories of immigrant seniors. I begin this chapter by discussing the work of postcolonial literary scholar and cultural critic, Mary Louise Pratt who coined the term contact zone. Through an overview of Pratt's work and its applications to educational contexts I demonstrate how Pratt's theorization of the contact zone allows scholars to better account for the complex matrix of contextualized relations that shape language learning experiences in later life. I then discuss the concept of human agency as a contextually-mediated process as theorized by anthropologist Laura Ahearn and applied linguist Elizabeth

Miller. In this chapter, I argue that an interdisciplinary conceptual framework can prove useful in investigating the immigrant seniors' narratives generated for this study and can yield practical suggestions for further practice. I now turn to discussing the concept of the contact zone and its application across various disciplines.

4.2 Contact Zone: A Framework for Understanding Language Learning Experiences

In her now classic text *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt (1992) presents the construct of the contact zone as a useful frame for examining how complex power networks, conflicting identities, and the diverse language practices of individuals who find themselves in an intercultural context are constructed through narrative artifacts. In the opening chapter of the book, Pratt tells the story of a long-lost sixteenth-century manuscript found in a Danish Royal Archive. The text is a letter written to King Philip III of Spain by an indigenous man from the Andes called Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala. A multilingual and multimodal piece of writing composed using Quechua and Spanish, this letter provides an extraordinary and elaborate account of the lives of indigenous people before and after contact with European colonizers.

Pratt chose to focus on this account for several reasons. First, she highlights how positivist and Eurocentric scholars deemed some narratives more important than others and thus overlooked Guaman Poma's text. Second, she showcases the beauty and complexity of writing that relies on multiple modes to convey an openly political message in contrast to Euro-imperialist writing, which claims neutrality and objectivity. Finally, she uses this example to elaborate on the concept of the contact zone. Pratt (1992) writes:

To be read, *and to be readable*. The readability of Guaman Poma's letter today is another sign of the changing intellectual dynamics through which colonial meaning-making has

become a subject of critical investigation. His elaborate inter-cultural text and its tragic history exemplify the possibilities and perils of writing in what I like to call “contact zones,” social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today. (p. 4)

Indeed, today most of us find ourselves in contact zones on a daily basis. Be it on the street of a large cosmopolitan city, a language classroom, and even in our homes with access to global media we are constantly engaged in contact with disparate languages, cultures, and agendas. However, as Pratt notes in the quote above, not everyone receives an equal chance to have their story heard and understood. An important characteristic of a contact zone is the presence of competing power relations between the people inhabiting the space. Pratt (1992) explains that understanding “the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters” (p. 6) that frame power dynamics within the contact zone is fundamental. She states:

A “contact” perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other. It treats the relations among colonizers and colonized, or travelers and “travelees,” not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power. (p. 6)

However, Pratt notes that due to a number of factors some voices are heard more often than others. While seemingly discouraging, Pratt’s argument presents an opportunity to pause and reflect on the agentive efforts of all members of the contact zone in making their mark on history. Researchers need to be carefully attuned to the intersectionality of the marginalized

positions manifested in an individual's discourse so as not to reproduce the oppression they are researching.

4.2.1 The Processes of the Contact Zone

In Pratt's conceptualization, contact zones are formed by colonial encounters, making them a space where individuals "establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (p. 6). While there are multiple theories regarding what processes constitute a colonial encounter (for example, hybridity, liminality, and ambivalence put forward by Bhabha (1997), Turner (1969) and others), Pratt specifically focuses on the following: negotiation of power dynamics, transculturation, and specifics of autoethnographic expression. All of these processes are important to consider in examining a person's narrative about their language learning experiences. I will now unpack these concepts and discuss their applicability to my research.

Within the contact zone, *power* is relational. To address these relations, Pratt suggests highlighting "the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters" (Pratt, 1992, p. 7) that take place between individuals who enter the contact zone via different life trajectories. In her earlier work Pratt mainly critiqued the supposedly power-neutral Euroimperialist understanding of colonial encounters, however in her later work she turned to analyses of the vulnerability such dynamics may bring to the individuals within a contact zone. What the disenfranchised subject experiences, she argues in her article entitled "Lessons for Losing," is "the vulnerability of the dislocated" (Pratt, 2016, p. 245) brought upon by the dynamic multiple processes of empowerment and disempowerment. For example, Pratt (2016) explains how the powerful English-only policies in the United States highlight the linguistic vulnerability of immigrants who restrict their speech to protect themselves from "the wounding powers of insult

and epithet” (p. 246). In the context of this study, conceptualizing language learning as a contact zone connects the individual learner’s experiences to the larger and ever-shifting structures of power. Pratt argues that despite the power of institutional structures, immigrants are not entirely powerless—they regularly and actively navigate contact zones and create spaces for themselves within them. Through these actions they produce new cultural and linguistic forms, which merit recognition. In the context of this study, such products are examined through the lens of *transculturation*, which refers to the participatory processes marginalized groups use to modify or adopt dominant cultural forms. The concept of transculturation provides scholars with a theoretical tool that allows them to reach beyond binary oppositions and hierarchies of cultures to focus instead on the intermingling and creation of inter-spaces. Through the lens of transculturation, crucial concepts such as individuality, culture, and cultural contact are understood as always in flux and dynamically influenced by other processes. Although non-linear, such complex cultural flows involve a “two way process in which cultures in contact shape and reshape each other directly and indirectly” (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p.14). Therefore, I would argue, participation in transcultural processes allows diverse individuals construct synergies within the contact zone.

The final phenomenon, which Pratt (1992) calls *autoethnographic expression* refers to the texts that subjugated individuals “construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations” (p. 7). To that end, the authors of autoethnographic texts often draw on the many languages and modes available to them, creatively adapting and merging them into new forms. Examples of such texts include Guaman Poma’s writing described earlier in this chapter. Focusing on this document, Pratt (1991) describes autoethnographic representation as a product of “concrete collaborations between people” (p. 35) that often relies on “more than one

language” (p. 35) and includes visuals. Recognizing the value of such self-narrated texts is important because it facilitates understanding of the contact zone from the perspective of the members of the contact zone. I consider some of the texts that were produced by the participants of my study to be forms of autoethnographic expression. Rather than signal oppression, autoethnographic expression represents participants’ power and agency over engaging with multiple modes of expression.

In theorizing autoethnographic expression, Pratt (1992) draws heavily on theories of linguistic contacts. She writes that, as linguistic contacts lead to creation of new languages such as pidgins and creoles, contact zones facilitate the creation of new linguistic forms. She points that new linguistic forms created through the interactions within contact zones are often considered ungrammatical or even barbaric and unworthy of serious consideration. Pratt (1992) challenges this view by arguing that an appreciation for autoethnographic expression may open a window into the complexities of the relationships constructed within a contact zone. The question stands, however, as to the extent to which these aesthetic dimensions are recognized by the other members of the contact zone. Indeed, according to Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), language is “the locus of social organization and power, and . . . a form of symbolic capital as well as a site of struggle where subjectivity and individual consciousness are produced” (p. 54). In Pratt’s (2018) work on the importance of valuing the aesthetics of everyday language in all its forms, she calls on researchers to embrace “transcultural interaction, translingual, and mixed language materials, [and] the dramas of communication across difference” (p. 19) and to see value in the aesthetic dimensions of the texts in addition to their functional value. This valuation is a fundamental imperative to understanding the various forms of autoethnographic expression that take place within a contact zone.

4.2.2 Application of the Contact Zone to Language Learning Research

Originating within postcolonial literary theory, the concept of the contact zone has facilitated new understanding of language learning and has been applied in various language and literacy studies, community-based research, and studies conducted in teacher preparation programs and higher education contexts. For example, Suresh Canagarajah (1997), who conducted his research at a North American university campus, conceptualized the educational space of the university as a contact zone. This theorization enabled him to explore the efforts of African-American students to create spaces where student groups could claim refuge from the marginalizing processes of white-centric academia. In this work, Canagarajah (1997) highlights the value of understanding learning environments as contact zones, pointing to the nuanced analysis and pedagogical interventions this conceptualization can facilitate. In a different context—the high school English classroom—Smagorinsky, Jakubiak, and Moore (2008) used the concept of the contact zone to understand teacher candidates' beliefs about effective teaching practices. By conceptualizing the classroom as a contact zone, the authors were able to map out the complexities of teaching in contexts where multiple stakeholders' values and agendas converge. Similar to Canagarajah's work, this article yields pedagogical insights and suggestions for practice. For example, the authors suggest that early career teachers should develop “the critical awareness of how schools function,” which would enable them “to construct the setting of their work with an understanding of which competing interests are at work” (p. 453).

Taking a step outside the classroom setting, Higgins and Stoker (2011) applied the concept of contact zones to understand Korean heritage speakers' engagement with local communities of peers upon their visit to South Korea. In their discussion of participants' understanding of belonging to Korean society, Higgins and Stoker (2011) write that language competence and

normalized cultural practices reflect the dynamics of power constructed within the contact zone. The lens of the contact zone allowed the authors to highlight the multiplicity of cultural and linguistic experiences often unrecognized within communities with one dominant understanding of cultural and ethnic identity.

The concept of contact zones has also been applied to understand learning and teaching practices in globalized universities. Focusing on the experiences of native-English-speaking writing instructors working in Chinese universities, Shi (2009) highlighted the multiple competing academic discourses saturating their teaching and elaborates on several insights for future practice. Similarly, Australian researchers Singh and Doherty (2004) conceptualized the globalized university as a contact zone, addressing the historical influences and processes that constitute them. In their overview, Singh and Doherty (2004) described the members of a contact zone—students and instructors—to be proactive agents that are constantly engaged in negotiations of power within the classroom.

In his reflection on the value of translingual practices within the contact zone of an English language classroom, Canagarajah (2013) conceptualized language as a semiotic resource and “an ideological construct, with an order and identity imposed by people” (p. 78). In such a contact zone, some languages might be prioritized—for example English in English-only classrooms—thus legitimizing this semiotic resource and discounting others. In contrast, Canagarajah (2013) argues that translingual practices within the contact zone empower individuals to “communicate through heterogeneous codes and diverse norms because they adopt negotiation strategies to co-construct meaning” (p. 85). Thus, the multiple language repertoires available to language learners become a toolbox for meaning-making that is replenished and enriched by the act of communication.

The concept of the contact zone resonates strongly in the context of this dissertation. Burns and Roberts (2010) describe the adult learning classroom as “a globalized social space” (p. 411) that is populated by learners with divergent life trajectories. Similarly, the experiences, backgrounds, and ideologies that seniors bring to the language learning context influence the expectations and subjectivities formed during class engagement. In order to conduct research in such environments a nuanced conceptual framework is needed. In community-based language learning, contact zones are constantly reconstructed due to the learners’ comings and goings in search of different opportunities. These dynamics affect the relationships between the learners and the language teaching providers.

Depending on the context, older learners might experience conflict and discomfort in class. Community-based language learning is not exempt from this possibility. As any other contact zone, community-based language learning is incredibly complex; however, this complexity can be obscured by the benevolent framing of community-based work that claims to provide a safe and nurturing space for its members. While the contact zone can involve challenging interactions, it can be ultimately transformed due to the agentive nature of language learning. I will explore this concept in the following section.

4.3 Agency and Language Learning in Immigrant Contexts

Due to the complexity of the power relations within the contact zone, agency is a key concept that helps examine seniors’ experiences of language learning. In this section, I review theoretical works that unpack the concept of agency. Following this review, I examine how these conceptualizations have been applied to language learning inquiry across a variety of contexts. Finally, I elaborate on how I apply the concept of agency in my study.

4.3.1 Agency as Socially Mediated

In this dissertation I conceptualize the learner's agency as "the socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (Ahearn, 2001, p. 112). In addition, I draw on Miller's (2016) notion that in the context of language learning, agency constitutes the "capacity to act, be reflexive, be intentional, self-regulate, be goal-oriented, make choices, be strategic, and take concrete actions" (p. 349) in the construction of one's learning experiences.

Laura Ahearn's (2001) early conceptualization of agency is grounded in two interrelated arguments. The first is that language is a dialogical and co-constructed phenomenon that unfolds within specific interactional contexts. The second is that these contexts shape and are shaped by power dynamics. She argues, therefore, that in their analyses of the agentive undertakings of individuals, researchers must pay attention to the discursive contexts that enable or constrain their actions. To develop her first argument—that language is co-constructed in a dialogue—Ahearn draws on the notion of dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981), which understands that each word or utterance is produced in relation to other utterances and can be antagonistic, personal, or social in nature. In order to capture the meaning of utterances all of the above must be taken in consideration.

In order to address the second argument—that discursive contexts are imbued with power—Ahearn (2001) warns researchers not to equate agency with autonomous free will or resistance. She argues that agency does not precede the context in which it is analyzed but is co-constructed within it through discourse (Ahearn, 2010, 2011). Therefore, narratives of agency should not be considered in isolation, but examined with attention to the power-laden contexts of their production. She writes that a power-neutral approach "ignores or only gives lip service to the social nature of agency and the pervasive influence of culture on human intentions, beliefs

and actions” (Ahearn, 2001, p. 114). In addition, agency extends beyond active resistance to imposed power structures due to the nuanced contextually-defined motivations behind an individual’s actions. As such, we need to understand the agency of an individual in relation to others, multiple communities, and larger sociocultural structures.

4.3.2 Agency in Language Learning Research

In their introduction to an edited volume of interdisciplinary theories on agency in second language learning, Vitanova, Miller, Gao, and Deters (2015) write that agency-informed views see language acquisition as a social phenomenon. They argue that in addition to learning a new language, language learners are engaged in “active use of discourses and addressing power relations through language” (p. 5) and that the mediation of these discourses constitutes the learners’ agency. Understanding agency as a contextualized discursive construct calls for a holistic examination of the larger contexts that frame language learning at any age. Miller (2014), who investigated the language learning activities of adult immigrants to the United States, argues that we develop a sense of ourselves as agentic through the “symbolic, interactional and ideological mediation” (p. 27) of complex relationships between ourselves and others. In her analysis of immigrant small businesses owners’ narratives of language learning, Miller (2014) approached agency not as a given individual action, but as a discursive construct. She writes:

our “individual” Selves have been semiotically and interactionally mediated through our participation in discursive practices so that we come to desire particular identities. With respect to adult immigrants and language learning, we can understand that they are enabled and desire to act towards learning a language, in part, because they are “recognized” as social beings who *should* do so. (p. 26)

In other words, Miller argues that by claiming agency in discourse we construct subjectivity that is in turn recognized as agentive and responsible. Thus, by taking a discursive orientation towards human participation Miller (2014) understands agency as a “socially mediated construction” (p. 142). In this sense, the notion of agency is similar to the notion of identity as both an emergent construction and the outcome of internalized discourses (Weedon, 2004) that occur not in isolation but “in and through ideologically informed spaces” (Miller, 2010, p. 484). An example of such a space could be a language classroom where adult learners are constructed as responsible for successful language learning.

In another single narrative case study of an immigrant adult language learner, Miller (2016) explores agency as an ideological construct. She examines one participant’s narratives of the purposeful choices he made regarding his language learning. In this study, an agentive analysis of a language learning trajectory highlights the impact of time, space, and interactional contexts on language learning. Contextually-informed analyses of the learner’s agency, Miller (2016) argues, enables researchers to highlight “the social, economic, and political processes by which responsibility for learning a language is assigned and adopted” (p. 362). Similarly, Gao (2010) highlights the contextualized nature of agency through four case studies of English language learning in Hong Kong. He notes that the changing contexts of language learning mediate the agentive choices of the research participants. Relatedly, Huhtala (2014) applies the concept of agency to study autobiographical narratives of Finnish-speaking learners of Swedish. She understands agency as having a temporal nature, noting that it is often closely linked to the imagined long-term selves of the learners. Duff (2012) defines agency as the learner’s “ability to make choices, take control, self-regulate, and thereby pursue their goals as individuals leading, potentially, to personal or social transformation” (p. 417). Applied to the context of this study,

this definition views older learners as individuals who can make purposeful choices in defining their learning trajectories.

Drawing on the framework of language socialization, Duff and Doherty (2015) note that learners' agency can be mitigated by "power asymmetries and hierarchies" (p. 55), which complicate their ability to fully "exert themselves in terms of their desires, intentions, needs and preferences within a particular sociocultural and linguistic context" (p.55). Similarly, I understand the older learner's agency not as a series of individual acts but as a relational contextualized phenomenon that is mediated across time and space (Larsen-Freeman, 2019). Therefore, in my analysis of participants' agency I take a historical view and outline their learning trajectories from their early attempts to learn English. This enables me to present a nuanced description of the multiple factors that might impact realization of participants' agency while learning English in later life.

4.4 Conclusion

I conceptualize English language learning in the context of immigration as a contact zone constructed by Western knowledges, colonial practices, and marginalization of various groups of learners (such as older adults). Occurring within processes of transculturation, negotiation of power, and creation of new forms of autoethnographic expression language learning scaffolds the construction of learners' social and cultural identities and agentive actions and vice versa.

To trace older learners' strategic participation in educational opportunities available to them, in this dissertation I adopt Ahearn's (2001) understanding that "all action is socioculturally mediated, both in its production and in its interpretation" (p. 112). Attention to context in the analysis of agency has been recognized by several researchers due to the practicality of such analysis in developing responsive pedagogical interventions. Therefore, I argue that the analysis

of narrative data should extend beyond the text itself and incorporate the contextualizing factors that frame their production. In order to describe how this argument was implemented in practice, in the following chapter I describe the methodological and analytical frameworks of this study, and provide a detailed outline of the procedures used to generate the data.

Chapter 5: Methodology and Data Generation

5.1 Introduction

The understanding that one's subject position is not "a matter of naming but of narration" (Prins, 2006, p. 281) supports the use of a narrative lens as part of my research methodology. This study is conceptualized as a narrative ethnography (Goodall Jr., 2004; Gubrium & Holstein, 1999, 2008; Tedlock, 1991, 2004) nested in a classroom. Namely, I combined traditional ethnographic data generation methods (observation, interviews, document analysis) with facilitating the production of spoken, written, and multimodal narrative data.

In this chapter, I explain how I applied the methodology of narrative ethnography to my study. I also elaborate on the research design process and the data generation procedures that were implemented. To this end, I detail the story-sharing curriculum that I developed as part of the research and learning activities that facilitated the data generation. Following this contextualisation, I present a demographic overview and brief narrative introductions to the research participants. Further, I describe the data sources and the framework of their analysis. Finally, I address the question of authenticity and representation of data in this dissertation.

5.2 Looking Through the Lens of Narrative Ethnography

I developed this study within the framework of narrative ethnography, which is predominantly used in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and applied communication research. I chose narrative ethnography of a classroom as the methodological framing of the dissertation as prior to the start of the data generation I had spent significant time actively engaged with the close-knit learner community at the UBC Learning Exchange. In addition, some short-term ethnographic research projects (Forsey, 2010) have been used to support communities such as the one in which my research took place. I chose narrative ethnography

because this method allowed me to closely investigate the participants' lives by drawing on my ethnographic observations of the classroom interactions where the narratives were produced to support the analysis of the narrative data. In this study, I wanted to focus on the narrative data since the value of stories has been recognized both in applied language research as well as in research on the experiences of ageing. I will briefly explain this argument below.

In applied linguistic and educational contexts, narrative-focused research has been largely “concerned with the stories teachers and learners tell about their lived and imagined experiences” (Barkhuizen, 2014, p. 451). In addition to understanding the experiences of diverse groups of language learners, this type of research pays attention to the ways learners represent themselves to others through narration (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chick, 2014). To develop my methodological perspective, I drew on narrative studies that address diverse language learning experiences (e.g., Barcelos, 2008; Benson, 2011; Benson & Nunan, 2004; Coffey & Street, 2008; Kasper & Prior, 2015), agency in learning (Miller, 2016; Murphey & Carpenter, 2008), and participants' search for language practice opportunities (Flowerdew & Miller, 2013).

In research conducted on older adults, reliance on narrative data is also growing in recognition. It has been theorized that while conducting research with older adults narrative engagement takes on a therapeutic role since “deep down, most older people want to tell their stories . . . [and] much healing, and much growth, can happen as they do” (Randall, 2008, p. 171). In addition, narrative data has been used to understand the interconnection between ageing and artistic identity (Banerjee, Wohlmann, & Dahm, 2017), experiences of immigrant seniors and refugees (Becker, 1999; Becker & Beyene, 1999; McConatha, Stoller, & Oboudiat, 2001; Seo & Mazumdar, 2011), and the discursive construction of ageing (Laceulle & Baars, 2014). My project specifically draws on studies in the field of gerontology that examine the social and

situated nature of the expectations of ageing (Breheny & Griffiths, 2017), representations of the ageing self in told and untold narratives (de Medeiros, 2005; de Medeiros & Rubinstein, 2015), and the narrated racializing experiences of older people (Ferrer, Grenier, Brotman, & Koehn, 2017). From a research perspective, the benefit of narrative-focused studies is that they highlight the use of language as a discursive resource to focus on the socially constructed understanding of what it means to be a senior or elderly, the experiences of ageing, and how older people are positioned in society. Over the years there has been significant interest in narrative data across social sciences and as a result multiple forms of narrative inquiry have been developed, including those specific to educational and school-based studies (Xu & Connelly, 2010). More recently, researchers began combining narrative inquiry with other methodologies. One example of such a combination is narrative ethnography.

Sociologists Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein (2008) postulate that narrative ethnography “takes us outside of stories and their veridical relationship to storytellers and experience,” adding that it “involves direct, intensive observation of the field of study—in this case, the multifaceted field of narrative practice” (p. 250). In other words, narrative ethnography brings together narrative inquiry, which focuses on the structures and themes of various narratives, and ethnography, which pays particular attention to the contexts of interaction. Anthropologist Barbara Tedlock (1991) argues that the relationships forged during the research process should be explicitly addressed during the representation of the data and that the researcher’s impact should be openly acknowledged. This stance recognizes the co-constructedness of all data. As a result, in addition to the narrative itself, narrative ethnographers pay close attention to the interplay of the multiple contexts that frame narration, the relationship

between the researchers and the participants, their impact on the co-constructed nature of the data, and the ethical choices in the selection and representation of the data.

While narrative ethnography is an underrepresented method in the study of language learning, it is widely used in anthropological and sociological inquiry. I want to briefly address how this methodology has been utilized in educational research. In “Unmasking the faces of diverse university students and professors through narrative ethnography,” the authors Lynn Wilder, Elia Vázquez-Montilla, and Jackie Greene (2016) describe the value of narrative ethnography in educational research as “a powerful authentic way to unmask the faces behind the façade and discover individuals’ personal, evolving realities, so teachers and professors can maximize student potential” (p. 151). Narrative work allows individuals to express themselves in an authentic way in the classroom and thus serves as a valuable tool for understanding the participants’ realities. In addition, personal accounts are often captivating and emotionally moving. The authors also explain that generation of the narrative data not only makes ethnographic research compelling it also develops strong relationships between the researcher and their participants. Taking this argument further, the relationship of trust created by sharing stories is an important part of research with individuals who experience marginalization.

In two similar studies conducted with young children in Finland, Hohti and Karlsson (2014) and Puroila, Estola, and Syrjälä (2012) relied on narrative ethnographical research to illustrate the importance of the physical and discursive environments in the development of children’s stories about important events in their lives. In their research on the power relationships in an elementary school classroom, Hohti and Karlsson (2014) supplemented daily observations with use of a participatory storycrafting method to prompt the children’s narrative work with little guidance from the adult. This method, the authors argue, serves as “an example

of a holistic and reflexive approach to children's voices" (Hohti & Karlsson, 2014, p. 559). For example, this methodology highlighted the discursive and social factors that amplified or constrained children's narrations. In addition, the authors added a component of reflexive listening to their research in order to uncover how their positionality and choice of research methods affected data generation. Consequently, they argue that in contrast to traditional interviews or observational research, narrative ethnographies should be constructed as "reciprocal processes of holistic narrative activity instead of in single narratives, interviews, or focused statements" with attention paid to "understanding of power relations that penetrate the discursive, social and material/physical dimensions of voices" (Hohti & Karlsson, 2014, p. 559).

In an attempt to understand the nature of children's everyday narratives, Puroila, Estola, and Syrjälä (2012) conducted a narrative ethnography study at a daycare centre. They argue that young children are often dismissed as narrators, however by using narrative ethnography the researcher can "avoid the fixed, pre-determined definitions of narratives, and examine young children's own ways of narrating" (p. 194). To this end, the authors immersed themselves in the daily activities of the children, observing the dynamic context of the daycare centre, recording the narrative exchanges that took place there, collecting the children's drawings, implementing a photography project with the children, and conducting interviews. Similar to Hohti and Karlsson, the authors describe narrative ethnography as a holistic research method that allows them to connect the contextual nature of narrative work and the different types of narratives created by the children on a daily basis. They write that "along with our research process, we have come to the conclusion that children's everyday narratives have an evolving spirit: they are characterised by fragmentariness, multimodality, collaboration and a complex relationship between the narrative and the context" (Puroila, Estola, Syrjälä, 2012, p. 196). The authors argue that

educators need to understand not only *what* the children are saying, but also *how* their narratives come to be. The narrative ethnography lens allowed the authors to contextualize children's narratives and uncover the situated nature of the stories, including institutional and societal constraints and affordances. As a result, they were able to elaborate on the pedagogies that enable or constrain story-sharing in the classroom. This important practical application is noticeable in the use of all narrative ethnographies.

New forms of pedagogies can be developed *through* narrative work. One example is found in Johanna Kuyvenhoven's (2009) book *In the Presence of Each Other: A Pedagogy of Storytelling*. Drawing on a narrative ethnography conducted in a Vancouver primary school, Kuyvenhoven describes storytelling as a nourishing and refreshing learning experience for the students that every teacher should facilitate in their classroom:

If you've never done this kind of storytelling in your classroom before, you'll find that a great blast of fresh air has blown through your room. It reaches well beyond the circle of telling and listening, invigorating all the other things you do with your students. . . . As an educator, you will feel satisfied, even thrilled to note the growth in students' vocabularies, language abilities, and learning relationships. (p. 202)

Kuyvenhoven's (2009) research highlights the innate human desire to tell stories—whether it is facilitated in the classroom or occurs spontaneously during recess. By paying attention to diverse forms of story-sharing in her ethnographic work, the author showcases the many voices that form ethnographic research without limiting herself to one form of narrative data.

Narrative ethnography presented me with an opportunity to combine story-sharing as a pedagogical practice and my interest in narrative with attention to the discursive, material, and interactional contexts of narrative production. Methodologically, I combined a range of research

activities to generate ethnographical and narrative data (see Table 5.1 for details). First, I developed the learning curriculum, which served as both the foundation for my research and a pedagogical artifact for UBC Learning Exchange (see the next section). Second, I co-facilitated and observed classroom interactions while the research participants engaged in story-work in the classroom. Further, I supported the creation of written and multimodal texts in the classroom and collected them for subsequent thematic analysis. I also interviewed research participants about their language learning experiences. Finally, I kept a reflective researcher's journal for the whole duration of the study.

Table 5.1 Summary of research activities

Stage	Research activities
Stage 1	Development of story-work curriculum in consultation with the English Conversation Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of prompts
Stage 2	Ethnographic observation of class activities Co-facilitation of story work and observation of story-sharing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written story work • Multimodal story work
Stage 3	Interviewing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 to 90-minute narrative interviews with the participants
Ongoing	Weekly written reflections on the research process

5.3 Seniors Storytelling Club

For the purposes of the research project I developed the Seniors Storytelling Club, which was nested within the English Conversation program at the UBC Learning Exchange. The main purpose of the Seniors Storytelling Club was to engage the participants in narrative events that addressed the role of English language learning in their lives. I focused on narratives and story-sharing because I believed that it would enable the learners to explore their lived experiences, as well as capture their past and existing identities and author new ones (Bamberg, 2011; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). As an English language class, the Seniors Storytelling Club was intended to

develop the seniors' language fluency and increase their speaking confidence. However, central to our classroom was the pragmatic framing of language use and recognition of the value of multilingual exchanges (Cummins, 2007). Therefore, despite the enacted "English mostly" policy within the English Conversation program, the Seniors Storytelling Club encouraged flexible language use in the classroom.

In addition to meeting the data generation objectives, the Seniors Storytelling Club served to enrich the language programming at the UBC Learning Exchange by developing promising arts-based pedagogical practices. To meet this objective my development of the Seniors Storytelling Club was guided by studies on creativity in later life (Flood & Phillips, 2007; Price & Tinker, 2014). For this reason, I structured the Club as a space in which learners could engage in creative writing activities as part of the English language learning experience.

Research on community-based adult language learning programs shows that many learners benefit from a learning community that cultivates relationships outside of the routine of their fixed social groups. Creating a learning environment in which learners see themselves as stakeholders and valuable members of the community (Auerbach, 2000) was one of the goals of the Seniors Storytelling Club. Further, as argued by Formosa (2000), while designing an educational program for older adults one needs to consider themes and topics that are of interest to them and note that there are multiple age-specific considerations for curriculum planning in older adult language learning programs (Ramírez Gómez, 2016). Drawing on these recommendations, my lesson planning encouraged peer-teaching (Brady, Holt, & Welt, 2003), recognized life experience (Findsen & Formosa, 2011), and enabled self-directed learning (Roberson Jr. & Merriam, 2005).

As I set out to design the lesson plans, I searched for real-world resources that would be interesting and engaging for the learners in my class. I found many news reports, video clips, and conversational prompts on topics of relevance to older adults, such as grandchildren, learning at an older age, and volunteering. In addition, I developed lesson plans that involved peer work through small group activities, pair sharing, and collaborative reading. Given that personal experiences are at the centre of my study, story sharing activities that involved autobiographical work were the main form of language practice in the classroom. My decision to encourage seniors to produce written reflections about their lives in-class and on their own time was grounded in Berman's (1994) work on using personal journals for interpretation of the ageing self, and Brady and Sky's (2003) research on the cognitive benefits of personal history journals. Berman (1994) upholds the importance of allowing the older adult to reflect on and "fixate the meaning of the day-to-day flow of experience" (p. xviii). Similarly, Brady and Sky's (2003) study found that written reflections as a form of journaling generate unique learning outcomes in the older adult classroom. They argue that journal writing facilitates the process of "learning to cope with life's realities (which are frequently harsh), the joyful discovery of triumphs and trajectories of growth, and nurturing one's own voice and spirit" (p. 162). Echoing this argument, Brandoburová and Adamovičová (2016), who facilitated life story work with seniors through creative writing, point to the fact that the combination of creative and reminiscence activities brings positive change to the lives of the participants.

As can be seen in Table 5.2, the classroom topics that I chose were mainly focused on the learners' personal experiences. The learning activities combined elements of written and oral, and multimodal storytelling.

Table 5.2 Summary of learning activities

Class	Class topic	Speaking activity	Writing activity
1	Fairy tales Reading of an article about the fairy tale as a type of story-sharing activity.	Stories, stories, stories Discussion of the role storytelling plays in people's lives and share their experience with stories.	Fairy tale Sharing of learners' favourite fairy tale or creation of one.
2	Bedtime stories Reading of an article about the changing patterns of story-sharing due to the presence of technology.	Stories we tell Discussion of different types of stories and ways of telling them. Learners will share an example of a story they like to tell. This activity will focus on individual authoring of stories.	Childhood memory Sharing of a memory from childhood and comparing it with their current experiences in Canada.
3	Learning at an old age Reading of a news article about an 80-year-old woman who started elementary school.	Story outline Comparison of visual and written stories. Learners practice telling a story from a picture using the clustering method and by drawing pictures to tell a story.	My learning journey Writing about English language learning journeys.
4	Migration Reading of a news article about immigration, refugee processes, and Canada's immigration policies.	One or many stories Discussion of the impact one story can have on communities and individuals.	Coming to Canada Writing about immigration experiences and first memories of Canada.
5	Speaking English Reading of a news article about English as a lingua franca in international settings.	Life story Exploration of the concept of life story and practice outlining their own life stories	Experience with English Writing about their experiences with speaking English.
6	Volunteering Discussion of the types and value of volunteering in the community.	Power of a story Discussion and sharing of stories that have impacted them the most.	Community Writing about community.
7	Visiting relatives Reading of an article about China's ageing population and new policy on multigenerational households.	Passing stories on Discussion of intergenerational knowledge and the role story-sharing plays in	Family Writing about families and relationships within the family.

		establishing intergenerational ties	
8	Travel Discussion of different types of travel, visa regimes and opportunities available to different social classes.	Living stories Discussion of the influence of visual elements in storytelling.	Ways of belonging Writing about the idea of belonging.
9	Working/retirement Discussion of retirement age and the value of working or staying active after retirement.	A picture tells a story Practicing of visual storytelling (drawing of life stories in class) and production of illustrations for the chapbook of stories.	The best place in the world Writing about the best place in the world.
10	Future Discussion of life in the year 2050.	Sharing stories Presentation of the draft collection of stories and share the experience of writing the story with the rest of the class.	Plans for the future Writing about life in the future.

The group met once a week to write, read, and share their stories as well as to reflect on the value of storytelling in their lives. Each meeting of the Club lasted 75 minutes and was separated into two sections. The lesson followed the same procedure each day.

The first half was facilitated by June⁸, a Mandarin-speaking volunteer and a graduate of the UBC Master of Adult Education program whom I had recruited. June used the learning materials that I developed, but relied on her own facilitation techniques. I observed the class while June's facilitated and took notes in my researcher's journal. This section of the class was devoted to conversational class activities. June often started with a warm-up or a brainstorming activity to engage the learners with the topic of the lesson. The next 20 minutes of the class were spent reviewing the topics covered earlier in the program, reading prepared stories, and participating in other warm up activities. Following the warm up, the class engaged in group reading of a text

⁸ June and I met in a graduate course at UBC and became close acquaintances. She was looking for volunteer opportunities as I was developing the research proposal.

followed by discussion of the text. In addition to participating in the guided language learning activities, learners engaged in self-directed collaborative work such as reading, clarification of assignments, or vocabulary word search. A lot of translingual discussions took place during these informal activities.

The second half of the class was facilitated by me and it is during this time that the learners wrote stories and shared their progress on the production of a collection of stories. June stayed in the classroom, helping the participants with any questions or doing other tasks. At the end of each session, participants were given a topic or prompt to ponder at home. Prompts included tasks such as “tell me a story about your immigration experience” or “tell me about your first day in Canada.” These activities gave learners time to elaborate on their ideas and use the available language resources (online translation, dictionaries, home support) as they prepared their written texts. In the class that followed, some learners chose to share their written work with the rest of the group while others chose to submit their texts to me for feedback and discussion in the follow-up interviews. By allocating time to process information and compose narratives, I strived to make the classroom practices more conducive to self-directed learning.

5.4 Recruitment and Participant Profiles

Three weeks before the anticipated beginning of the project, the coordinator of the English Conversation program allowed me to visit regular classes, talk to the learners, and hand out the recruitment letters(see Appendix A). At this time, I visited five classes during which I briefly introduced myself, described the project in simple terms, and passed around the letter to the learners. In addition, I left copies of the letter on the tables in the waiting area of the UBC Learning Exchange. The letter was translated into Mandarin, the most common language spoken

by the learners. During the time of the recruitment I was present at the UBC Learning Exchange daily and potential participants could meet me to ask any clarifying questions.

During the recruitment period, eleven seniors signed up for the Storytelling Club. I met with each one individually, explained the research project once again, and gave them a copy of the consent form (see Appendix B). I asked each participant if they wanted to read the consent form in their native language, and subsequently provided them with translated copies in Mandarin, Persian, and Vietnamese (see Appendix B) if requested. Participants had to sign the consent form before the classes began. All together ten learners were enrolled in Seniors Storytelling Club before the project began.

Upon registration some of the participants chose pseudonyms, while others stated that they did not have a preference as they had been using their Anglicised names in Canada and had no emotional ties to them. Initially, two participants did not want to use pseudonyms, claiming that they wanted their names to be associated with their written stories and with the oral narratives that they shared with me and the class and which were included in the published compilation. However, we negotiated that their pseudonyms would resemble their real names as closely as possible. This was a challenging decision that required a lot of reflection about the ethics of representation within the contact zone.

At the beginning of the research project, participants were asked to complete a simple introductory questionnaire in English (see Appendix C), which asked about their personal backgrounds. I took the information they provided through this questionnaire and the data generated during the classes to describe the group as a whole and create introductions to individual participants.

There were five men and five women whose ages ranged from 61 to 86. They all had lived in Canada for a variety of time periods. The most recent immigrant had arrived in Canada in the early 2000s, while some had lived here for over 30 years. Four of the learners originally emigrated from Mainland China, one from Hong Kong, two from Vietnam, two from Taiwan, and one from Iran.

Gerontological research that analyzes ageing in the context of global migration (Warnes, Friedrich, Kellaher, & Torres, 2004; Warnes, & Williams, 2006) generally separates the immigrant senior demographic into two categories. The first includes relatively affluent immigrants who relocate after retirement while the second group comprises immigrants who relocated in their youth and grew older in the country of their destination. Both of these groups were represented by the Seniors Storytelling Club participants. The majority of the participants were financially able to travel within Canada and internationally. Nearly half of the participants were home owners. Half of the participants owned a mobile device and the majority of them regularly used the internet. Only one of the ten participants owned a car.

In terms of active living, the participants were actively engaged in a variety of social opportunities available to them in Vancouver. More than a half of the learners spent time outside their house (performing an activity such as gardening or house maintenance), had a hobby, or participated in sports. While none of the participants indicated that they were members of a political party or a cultural or ethnic society, four of the respondents self-identified as members of local neighbourhood associations and three attended church. Based on these responses, it can be suggested that the seniors who decided to join the study were active lifelong learners who made use of the social opportunities available to them. Without doubt these qualities need to be

considered when making conclusions about the agency of older learners and the role of language learning in their everyday lives.

The learners also talked about their attitudes toward life in general in the interviews. More than half of the participants claimed that they looked back on their lives with contentment, the majority felt that they were able to do things they wished to, and half felt confident about planning for the future. Half of the participants indicated that they had many friends. These data are reflective of the overall demographics of learners enrolled in the Seniors Thrive programs (see Balyasnikova & Gillard, 2018; Balyasnikova et al., 2017) that suggest that they are active, attend social events, serve as volunteers, and network with other learners.

The individuals that participated in the study had different life trajectories, which I reconstructed and narrativized using information from the questionnaire, interviews, and written and spoken stories shared by the participants.

Bu, 64, came to Canada in the late 1980s as a refugee from Vietnam. He was a citizen of Canada and had lived in several provinces prior to settling in Vancouver in the 1990s. He was divorced and lived alone in a government-subsidised rental apartment. His children lived in Alberta. Bu had a sister who lived with her family in a small town in the United States close to the Canadian border. Bu visited his children and his sister regularly. While, self-identifying as Canadian, Bu often referred to himself as “one of the boat people” and to Vietnam as “my country.” Bu was unemployed but was searching for work despite being of retirement age. In addition to English, Bu was fluent in Vietnamese and French, and spoke some Mandarin. He had learned French in Vietnam and began learning English in Canada. While most of his daily interactions took place within his Vietnamese-speaking community, Bu attended classes in the UBC Learning Exchange regularly. He did not have experience speaking French in Vancouver.

Regarding his English-speaking experiences, Bu mentioned that he had difficulty in daily communications, often naming his accent as the main barrier.

Cindy, 79, and Justin, 83, a retired married couple, came to Canada in the early 1990s from Taiwan and settled in Burnaby. They were both citizens of Canada and, during class introductions, they self-identified as Canadians. They had two children who were educated and had careers abroad. Cindy and Justin owned a house in Burnaby and split their time living in Canada in the summer and autumn and in Taiwan or travelling internationally in winter and spring. Justin was interested in international politics, current issues in the government, and global news. Before retiring he was a government worker in Taiwan where he held a high-level administrative position for many years. Justin spoke Mandarin, Japanese, and English and had a university degree. Cindy was interested in art, gardening, and community events. She was a homemaker all her married life. Cindy spoke Mandarin and English and was a high school graduate. Justin learned English before coming to Canada, but Cindy didn't start learning English until they first came to Canada. They both wanted to learn more English and meet new people while taking classes.

Jacqui, 63, immigrated to Canada in the early 1990s from China. She was a citizen of Canada and gave up her Chinese citizenship upon receiving her Canadian citizenship. Before immigrating she was a school teacher and hoped to continue her teaching career and "contribute to the society" in Canada. However, after immigration Jacqui worked as a baby-sitter, caregiver, and server at a fast food restaurant and held multiple manual labour jobs (in a bakery, in a fish factory, and as a cleaner). Eventually, due to a work-place injury she had to stop working. She wasn't married, didn't have any children, and lived alone in a government-subsidised rental

apartment in the west side of Vancouver. Jacqui was multilingual in Cantonese, Mandarin, and English. She was one of the most active patrons of the UBC Learning Exchange.

John, 86, came to Vancouver from Mainland China in the early 2000s after visiting his son who had immigrated to Canada several years earlier. He held Canadian citizenship and self-identified as Asian Canadian. John was married and lived with his wife in government-subsidised seniors housing complex in Chinatown. He had two children, one of whom lived in Vancouver. John spent every weekend with his son, daughter-in-law, and grandson. In addition, he travelled (albeit seldom) to visit his relatives in Shanghai. In China, John worked at a watch-making factory and had little access to extended educational opportunities. John started formally learning English after he came to Canada—it was the first foreign language he studied. He had recently started to attend classes at the UBC Learning Exchange and regularly participated in learning activities there. He formed close friendships with several of the other learners. He often spoke with gratitude about the Canadian government for the financial, social, and medical support he and his wife were able to access. At home and in his daily interactions John spoke mostly Shanghainese and Mandarin, but he sometimes practiced English with his five-year-old grandson.

Julia, 80, immigrated to Canada in the late 1990s after retiring from a successful university teaching career in China. A self-identified “immigrant” from China, Julia first came to Canada to visit her daughter who had immigrated to Alberta. After the visit, Julia and her husband decided to immigrate to Canada as well. Despite having a family member in Alberta, they chose Vancouver as their home due to its mild climate. Both Julia and her husband were retired and live in Chinatown. They travelled in Canada and internationally with some financial help from their children. Before retiring, Julia pursued knowledge. For example, in China, she learned

Russian to read academic articles, learned computer skills to keep up with her students, and learned some English for work. Julia wanted to learn enough English to be able to communicate in her daily life.

Tom, 77, came to Canada in the 1980s from the former South Vietnam after the Communist Party took his business away and apparently threatened his family. He came as one of the “boat people” expecting his family to follow him, but when that didn’t happen he re-married and started a family in Vancouver’s Chinatown. Tom was not one of the most active patrons and he didn’t seem to have many connections at the centre with the exception of Bu who originally encouraged him to join the UBC Learning Exchange. However, Tom was active in the local Vietnamese seniors community and his church. Tom often talked about being different in Canada. Having lived in Canada, Tom referred to Vancouver as his home and Vietnam as his country. In class he spent considerable time discussing the differences between Vietnam (as he remembered it) and Canada, lamenting the loss of cultural ties, family connections, and the sense of community. He spoke Vietnamese, French, and English.

Mary, 80, came to Vancouver from China in the early 2000s after one of her sons insisted she relocate from Hong Kong. She spoke Cantonese and English. While Mary did not speak about her life at large and her narrative interview was relatively short, I was able to gain some understanding of her life. Before arriving in Canada Mary was a homemaker. She lived with her husband, her son, and his family. In addition to attending the UBC Learning Exchange, she was active in her local church. English was not a language for daily communication for Mary except during her time at the UBC Learning Exchange (once she said that there were “many Chinese” in shops, banks, and hospitals). She attended the UBC Learning Exchange to maintain her “brain health” and to improve her general knowledge about the culture and history of Canada. Several

times she described her life as happy, content, and simple and her time at the UBC Learning Exchange as “learning for myself”.

Sam, 61, came to Vancouver with his family as a refugee from Iran in the early 2010s. He was married and had two children. He was unable to hold permanent job because of his health issues. He spoke Persian and English and had a bachelor’s degree. Sam’s activities in the UBC Learning Exchange were sporadic and often stalled by his illness. Sam talked about himself as being between Iran and Canada. He often lamented about missed educational opportunities and hoped that learning English would enable him to be more sociable and spend time outside the confines of his home.

Ann, 62, moved to Canada in the early 1990s after having lived in the United States where her husband finished his graduate degree. Originally from Mainland China, Ann and her husband were initially planning to stay in the US, but upon hearing about an opportunity to immigrate to Canada they changed their minds and came to Vancouver. She commented on the seamlessness of the immigration process and convenience of living in Vancouver’s Chinatown. In addition to learning English, Ann spoke some Russian and Mandarin. An avid traveller, Ann maintained a busy lifestyle. She and her husband regularly travelled to China to visit relatives and went on shorter trips to other countries as tourists. Ann enjoyed attending various activities at the UBC Learning Exchange. For example, she attended and was one of the leaders of the Drama Club, which took place at the same time as the Seniors Storytelling Club.

Of these ten seniors, I chose to profile the life stories of six participants (Bu, Cindy, Jacqui, John, Julia, and Justin) to show illustrative examples of the common themes generated during the data analysis. These six participants’ stories are featured in Chapters 6 and 7. I chose these learners, because they attended all the classes and actively participated in the narrative activities

assigned to them in class. They also wrote and shared their stories beyond the classroom activities and responded at length during the interviews. The sufficient amount of spoken and written data provided by these participants allowed me to conduct in-depth thematic analyses of their experiences. The other participants' contributions are reflected in the observational data and their narratives and interviews (albeit short or incomplete) were also analysed thematically using the same protocols.

5.5 Ensuring the Collaborative Nature of the Study

Community-engaged collaborative research can be complex. Researchers need to make choices that will not cause harm to the research participants, that accommodate the interests of various stakeholders, and that ensure the sustainability of their own research. My motivation to develop a research project not only for the purposes of this dissertation but to contribute to the practices of the community centre stemmed from the critiques I had read (see, for example, Roulston, 2010) regarding research that is conducted only for the benefit of the researcher. In addition, as noted by an interdisciplinary team of scholars and policy makers (Linden, Mar, Werker, Jang, & Krausz, 2012) the DTES has been subjected to a great deal of dehumanizing and exploitative research. The authors reviewed research conducted in DTES communities between the years 2001 and 2011. Their review revealed that most of the research focused on the social challenges of communities in the neighbourhood and was guided by a deficit or problem-focused approach. I find this situation problematic as it elevates the research participant's pain and legitimizes the researcher's voice. bell hooks (1990) eloquently describes this situation in the following passage:

No need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to hear your

story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you I will write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still colonizer of the speaking subject and you are now at the center of my talk. (p. 343)

Moreover, there is a growing need for educational research to be reframed as revealing social and human complexities, rather than simply identifying failures of the educational systems (Tuck, 2009). In this study, I took a community-centred view that included consideration of the vision and goals of both the individual research participants and the community-based organization that hosted my research project. As a result, I assumed many roles in the project—a language teacher, a consultant, a graduate student, a researcher—all of which undoubtedly added to the blurring of relationship boundaries in the process. I found that the collaboration and reciprocity were multilayered and at times conflicting, given the many stakeholders in the research process. I will expand on some of the dilemmas brought by these blurring of boundaries in the following sections.

Originally, I developed the study in consultation with the UBC Learning Exchange. Specifically, I asked the coordinator of the English Conversation to start a Seniors Storytelling Club under the umbrella of Seniors Thrive. I developed a ten-week curriculum, which centered storytelling as a main pedagogical approach and had it approved by the coordinator. This benefited me as a researcher: my research project was seamlessly incorporated into the programming of the centre and all learners had an opportunity to find out more about it. On the other hand, the centre also benefited from this collaboration. First, the programming was enhanced by an innovative arts-based class. Second, with the participants' input, I made a series of recommendations on how to improve the quality of classes offered by the English

Conversation. Finally, I collaborated on several publications and conference presentations that showcased senior-focused teaching practices that were being developed at the UBC Learning Exchange. As such, I assumed a role of a consultant and collaborator in the development of learning activities that would be sustainable after my research came to conclusion.

Research participants have also benefitted from the study. They were able to reflect on their own language learning experiences and shared these reflections with their peers. Further, to ensure that the project benefited the research participants, I conceptualized Seniors Storytelling Club as a joint and ever-evolving classroom where all participants—facilitators and learners alike—would co-produce the content and the knowledge. First, in every class, participants suggested discussion topics and every contribution was recognized as significant. As such, learners' expectations and input shaped the direction of the class activities. Participants reported such joint development of classes as a positive learning experience (Balyasnikova & Gillard, 2018). Second, the Club served as a platform for the participants to articulate their vision of future positive change for the UBC Learning Exchange. For example, they shared suggestions for improving programming at the centre, and I assumed a role of an intermediary to relay these suggestions to the staff of the centre. Finally, I published the stories written by the seniors in an illustrated book entitled *Exchanging Stories*, which was presented at the end of the project. At the book launch party, each participant received a copy of the book and got an opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings about this publication. It was a joyous event that was attended not only by the members of Seniors Storytelling Club, but also by their friends, relatives, and the staff of the UBC Learning Exchange. Some participants shared how proud they were to see their stories in print and explained that they would show the publication to everyone they know. English and Irving (2015) write that the creation of a physical artifact as a product of creative

practices has the potential to generate “social transformation and change” (p. 49). The book launch functioned as an acknowledgement of the value of the participants’ stories and a tangible artifact to celebrate their creative use of language in the process of storytelling. Moreover, this event affirmed participants as producers of valuable knowledge, competent multilingual storytellers, and published authors.

While I aimed to create opportunities for the participants to be included in the research development, it is important to acknowledge the impact of such close personal involvement on the research process. For example, finding myself in a position of power to amplify the voices of the learners, I faced ethical dilemmas often noted by other community-based researchers (Pettitt, 2019; Warriner & Bigelow, 2019). I was not sure how much to disclose what took place in the classroom to the staff of the centre and I had to engage in an ongoing reflection about my roles and responsibilities in the project. Moreover, there were other factors that affected my interaction with the participants, the data generation and their analysis. My age, cultural background, English language proficiency, and dual role as teacher and researcher impacted my interaction with the research participants. For example, some of them considered me to be a native-speaking white Canadian and I had to consistently remind them of my status as an international student.

In sum, community-based research is “not a neutral process, but a value-laden exercise, based on a model of research *with* communities, not a research *about* communities” (DeSantis, 2014, p. 55). As a community-engaged researcher, the primary purpose of my project was to produce a deeper understanding of the issues the research participants highlighted as important. However, ensuring the collaborative nature of the project was also important for me. I worked with the participants and the staff at the UBC Learning Exchange to elaborate on improvements to educational practices within the English language programming at the centre. This study was

embedded into the existing curricula of the centre and my role was to consult with the staff, take their recommendations into account, and adjust my expectations of the research process accordingly. Drawing on the array of available knowledge and experiences, the research became meaningful for the multiple stakeholders. In addition, the community-engaged nature of my ethnographic work encouraged me to consider my multiple identities and how they impacted my interactions with the research participants, the staff in the English Conversation program, and my co-facilitator June. At different stages of the research project my role shifted between consulting with the centre's staff, to developing learning activities, listening to participants' narratives, conducting observations of classroom activities, and critically analyzing my own positionality as a researcher.

5.6 Data Generation Procedures

The data comes from three major sources: interview data, written narrative data, and observational data (Fig. 5.1). The interview data were generated using narrative interviewing techniques. Written data were generated by the participants through writing activities that took place in class as well as in their free time. I separated the written narrative data into two categories: identity texts (Cummings & Early, 2011) in which participants described themselves and often supplemented the description with illustration, and written narratives in which participants described their experiences. Given that the classes were co-facilitated, I generated the observational data while June was leading the class and reflected on my self-observations in a research journal after each class.

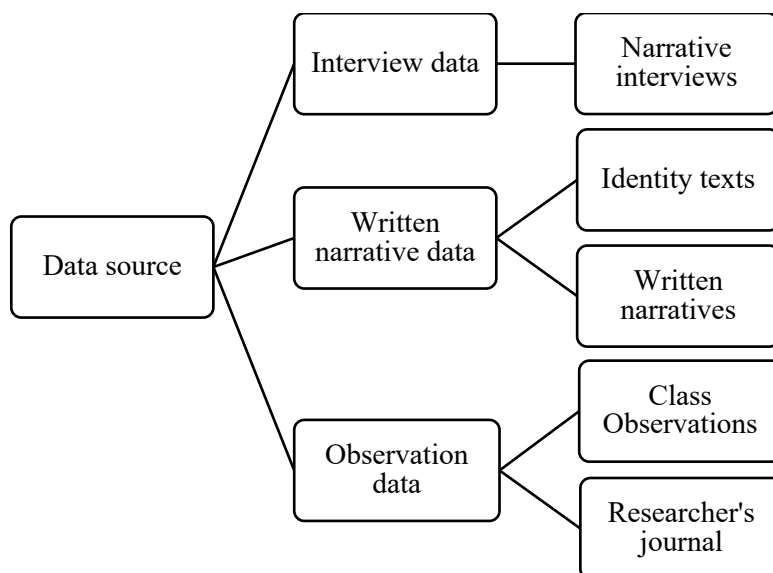


Figure 5.1 Summary of data generated during the course of the study

The diversity and volume of data generated during the field work was astonishing. It speaks to the immense creative, linguistic, and social capital that senior language learners bring to the classroom. The following sections elaborate on each type of data and provide a short commentary on the nature of these data.

5.6.1 Narrative Interview Data

My approach to interviewing was greatly influenced by Talmy’s (2010a, b) conceptualization of the interview as a social and collaborative practice of generating meaning, rather than as a tool for data collection. That is why I developed the interview protocols as narrative-provoking conversations with an understanding that interviewees often “construct who they are and how they want to be known” (Riessman, 2008, p. 7).

In reflecting on the interview as narrative ethnography, Hampshire, Iqbal, Blell, and Simpson (2014) highlight the ongoing and overlapping nature of interaction between the ethnographer and the interviewee. To quote Clandinin and Connelly (2000), my conversations with the research participants took the form of an “intimate participatory relationship” (p. 110),

which in turn sustained the conversational nature of the interview, making it “difficult, if not impossible, to conduct [uninterrupted] interviews” (p.110). Notably, on a number of occasions, participants deviated from the topic of the discussion or turned the table by asking me to tell them about my life and language learning experiences.

At the beginning of the project, all the participants agreed to be interviewed once, however this changed as the project developed. I scheduled the interviews according to the participants’ schedules after the learning activities ended. The UBC Learning Exchange provided the space for the interviews. Several interviews took place at a venue of the participant’s choosing. Interviews were conducted primarily in English, but when participants didn’t know a word they were able to consult a dictionary or use a translation app on their tablets. I offered participants the option of having someone provide interpretation services during the interview, but none of participants required such assistance. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. To ensure accuracy I reviewed the transcript while listening to the recording and made corrections as needed.

During the interview, participants were asked to reflect on their English language journey, their cultural experiences in Canada, and their experiences as English language learners at the UBC Learning Exchange. Like many narrative researchers (Atkinson, 2007; Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000; Mattingly & Lawlor, 2000; Wengraf, 2001) I drew on the principles of narrative interview and life-story interview in my study. These approaches to data collection allow the participants to share their stories and reflect on their experiences in their preferred style of interaction. Following Wengraf (2001), I based my interviews on the three principles of narrative interviewing: conceptual openness, communication and active listening, and free development of the narrative. The interview started with a single question (e.g., “Tell me about your impressions

when you first came to Canada”), which aimed to elicit a narrative from the participant as they chose to tell it. Once they finished answering the first question, I followed up with a second question asking for clarification of some of the topics that came up in the first account. I designed conversational protocols to act as flexible guides and topic starters in order to encourage the narratives. Rather than asking for opinions or using questions that asked why, the protocols helped me probe for information that pertained to memorable events in the participant’s life. When deciding on the way to conduct interviews with the research participants I was faced with the dilemma of whether to follow the standard structured interview protocol or to let the participants take the lead in narration. Rather than following a question and answer protocol I decided to frame my interviews as narrative occasions that ask participants to tell their story. As we engaged in the co-construction of the narrative, participants often moved back and forth within the narration, changed what had previously been said, and even produced contradictions. While the conversational and co-constructed nature of the interview process at times created confusion and misunderstanding, I believe that this method was more responsive to the research objectives.

All interviews took place after the main classes were complete. Although the interviews followed the same protocol (see Appendix D) their length varied between 60 and 90 minutes. The duration of the interviews varied because some narrators shared a lot while others could not devote a lot of time due to their busy schedules.

5.6.2 Written Narrative Data

The first subset of written data came from texts created by the learners at home and then shared in the class. The written narrative data set is comprised of stories produced in the classroom and by the research participants on their own time. I collected the texts and edited

them if the participant asked for it. Given the context of the text production—an English language class—many of the participants asked for feedback (grammar, spelling) from June and me on their drafts. Therefore, the nature of these data is also co-constructed. Some of the texts contained a mixture of two or more languages other than English and were translated into English in class by the participants.

When I developed the story-writing activities I came up with three types of prompts.

- **Reminiscence writing prompts:** recalling any stories about people, places, or events in their community (e.g., tell me about your community).
- **Evaluative writing prompts:** comparing experiences in different contexts (e.g., compare your first day in Canada to today).
- **Creative writing prompts:** using multiple modes in their writing (e.g., draw your story and write about the image).

In addition, I encouraged the learners to share a variety of stories beyond those prepared from the prompts. Due to the nature of the writing activities the written data varied in topics and themes. Some narratives described language learning experiences (e.g., Jacqui’s story “My First School”). The main theme of this narrative is to do with the challenges or successes of language use outside the classroom (e.g., Jacqui’s story “The Angel of Volunteering”). In addition, there were multiple stories that recalled past events that the narrators deemed relevant for the course content (e.g., Tom’s story “Happy Old Life”). However, for the purposes of further analysis I chose those texts that featured the participants’ day-to-day experiences that in some way related to learning, language learning, or language use. As a result, I analyzed 42 written narratives, some of which I edited if the participant requested it.

The second subset of written data was generated inside and outside the classroom through identity text work that supplemented written text with illustrations. Described as “the products of students’ creative work or performances carried out within the pedagogical space orchestrated by the classroom teacher” (Cummings & Early, 2011, p. 3), multimodal identity texts became a tool to illuminate the multiple intersections of culture, identity, and sense of belonging. Moreover, identity texts offer learners an accessible mode of expression. The flexibility offered by identity texts, including literary, multilingual and multimodal narratives, reflected the principles of appreciative and narrative inquiry that frame my research. As a result, the participants generated ten identity texts in total.

The length of the written texts varied. Some stories were five sentences long while some were multiple pages long. The way the texts were written also varied. Some participants typed their material and brought printed copies of it to class while some wrote their stories out by hand. Some of the participants wrote in their first language and others wrote exclusively in English. The use of multiple languages could be the result of the policies that I established in the class. In the materials package that I prepared for the learners, I stated:

It is very important that you feel comfortable during all the activities. Your stories can be as short or as long as you want. If you don’t find any topics interesting, you don’t have to write or tell a story about it! This is an English language class, but you can use your first language, even when you write your story. You can also draw something or take a picture to use in your story. If you need any help with the translation, let us know and we will try our best to help you.

By making the decision to keep the narrative production framework open, I aimed to give participants the freedom to choose the language, style, and mode of their engagement in the

class. I also allocated time to reflect on any ideas generated through discussions for further composition of written texts. The decision to do this was based on my commitment to affirm the learners' experiences and recognize them as producers of new knowledge that shaped the content of the class. These learning procedures aimed to facilitate self-directed learning and recognized the participants' ownership of their own learning.

5.6.3 Observation Data

The third data set addressed the contexts of narrative production. Attention to the context allows narrative ethnographers to analyze not only the narratives themselves, but also the “social processes and circumstances through which narratives are constructed, promoted, and resisted” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008, p. 256). In order to contextualize the narratives I took extensive observational notes while co-facilitating the classes and wrote reflections in my researcher's journal after each meeting. I wanted to pay attention to the contexts of interaction and reflect these contexts in my data analysis.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), any narrative-focused research is “a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or a series of places, and in social interaction within milieus” (p. 20). As an insider-participant-observer, I faced certain challenges as I conducted my ethnographic field work. Consequently, I had to negotiate my self-positioning in the class. In class, my role shifted from observer to co-facilitator and from researcher to language instructor who had the power to shape the content of the narratives produced in class. I addressed these challenges in my reflexive notes after class and in my debriefings with June my co-facilitator.

Drawing on the suggestions put forward by ethnographers Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011), my observation protocols focused on fragments of action, noted sensory details, recorded

quotes (in shorthand), and noted emotional expressions. Narrative ethnographer Barbara Tedlock (1991) suggests moving from participant observation to observing participation where researchers “both experience and observe their own and others’ co-participation within the ethnographic encounter” (p. 69). Following this suggestion, in addition to making my classroom observations I spent about one hour at the end of each class writing my own reflections, insights, impressions and feelings.

In addition to my own reflections, I held weekly debriefings with June who offered her insights and suggestions on the development of the classes. A Mandarin speaker, June provided multilingual support for the course and helped ensure that the material was more easily understood by many of the learners. Given the narrative nature of my study I reconstructed my field notes as a series of narrative vignettes. In these reconstructions, I followed Frank’s (2010) suggestion to focus on the following observables: use of multiple linguistic and extralinguistic resources in class; impact of the narrations on the speakers and listeners; and, construction of identities through narration. As a result, I wrote ten narrative vignettes that combined my observational notes and reflective journaling excerpts. In choosing a narrative vignette as a representational strategy I aim to demonstrate my reflexivity (Humphreys, 2005), embrace my own positionality, and bring my voice to the study.

5.7 Analytical Framework

I chose thematic analysis due to the fact that it has proven useful in identifying salient themes across the data sets (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Following Braun & Clarke (2006), I conceptualized a theme as representing “something important about the data in relation to the research question and represent[ing] some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (p. 82).

I have chosen to use a select set of classroom vignettes for the analysis because they are particularly illustrative of how power relations were negotiated and how they affected the progress of the learning activities. In these narrative reconstructions I adapted Frank's (2002, 2005, 2012) approach to dialogical narrative analysis by specifically addressing the availability of the linguistic resources, the impact of the narrative process on the course of the lesson, and the way the learners relied on narration to construct certain agencies relevant in the learning context. Each vignette highlights the role of language learning in the lives of seniors and the learning conditions that influenced their participation in the Seniors Storytelling Class. My analysis of the classroom data not only focused on the content of the conversations but also on the process of narration itself. I also analysed the narrative vignettes based on the narrative resources available to and used by the participants. In addition, I examined the words the speakers chose. After analysing the individual data sets, I integrated thematic analytic techniques with my reflection to produce a multilayered understanding of immigrant seniors' experiences of language learning across time and space.

The stages of the thematic analysis were as follows. Guided by the concepts of agency as a social and relational phenomenon, and language learning as a contact zone I performed a thematic analysis of several data sets. First, I analyzed the learners' written narratives that addressed the topic of language learning in later life. I examined similarities across the written data sets, specifically trying to note correspondence between the language learning experiences described in the texts and the participants' evaluation. Second, I analyzed the interview data using the same thematic coding approach that I had applied to the written data. Once I finished analysing the data sets and transforming them into thematic notes, I went over the texts several times to systematically organize the common themes within all the data. This focus enhanced

what I had learned through my observations in the class about the immediate context of the narrative production.

In response to first set of research questions — What have been immigrant seniors' experiences of English language learning? What has influenced their efforts to learn English over time?— the first themes relate to the construct of agency. They are: (1) ageing and longevity, (2) cultural engagement and belonging, and (3) vulnerability and resilience. These themes highlight the purposeful and agentic choices made by the participants in their language learning.

To answer the second research question— How do immigrant seniors perceive the role of community-based learning in their lives? — I drew on the conceptualization of language learning as a contact zone. Accordingly, I generated three themes that illustrate learners' experiences in community-based language learning programs. These themes were: (1) connection, (2) synergies and discordances, and (3) expanding roles.

I managed the data using MaxQDA18 software, an analysis program for qualitative data, to organize and code the written and oral material (along with the corresponding transcripts). The visual tools of the program allowed me to identify patterns and common themes between multiple forms of the narratives, which in turn enabled me to visualize the narratives as a system of interconnected thematic nodes.

5.8 Authenticity and Issues of Representation

Ensuring that the narratives presented in this dissertation are as close to the participants' voices was important to me. I decided not to restrict the participants to English-only practices and offered translation services to them. However, while I encouraged the use of any languages in class and during the interviews, none of the participants took advantage of this offer. As a

result, the interviews and the written texts were created in English, which served as a lingua franca during the research project.

As I was preparing the data for presentation in my dissertation, I transcribed the audio-recorded English with attention to pauses, prosody, laughter, repetitions, etc. In doing so, my intention was to make explicit the interactive social context of the interview. In addition, I opted not to edit the interviews for grammatical correctness. Again, I wanted to stay true to the participants' voices and considered this style of transcription to be the most appreciative of their efforts to speak English. Another, more theoretically informed reason had to do with my intention to counter the pervasive ideology of standard English as the only acceptable way to communicate in English (Lippi-Green, 2012). Moreover, as an individual labelled as a non-native English language speaker myself, I have experienced linguistic micro-aggressions upon immigrating to Canada. As a result of my educational journey I have had to work on combatting my internalized linguicism and desire to achieve perfect English proficiency. Therefore, I was cautious not to reproduce discriminatory discourses and practices in my research.

As the end of my dissertation writing neared, I contacted research participants to ask them if they wanted me to edit the excerpts I chose to present in the text of this dissertation. I explained my initial position and the reasons why I did not want to do the editing. To my surprise, all of the participants unanimously disagreed with me. For example, Jacqui explained that she didn't want to sound "wrong" and that she was worried her grammar would prevent the readers from engaging with her story. John mentioned that since he was taking a language learning class, he saw this as an opportunity to learn English, including grammar and vocabulary. After this conversation, I decided to edit the quotes for clarity but limit my editing to ensure that

I did not add to the narratives or re-write large sections of them. I used square brackets to mark where I inserted omitted words, and in some cases I edited the grammar to ensure readability.

I want to make clear that the participants' data presented here are co-constructed products of our interaction and my editing. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that the data presented in this study are themselves discursive co-constructions of the participants' lives as they were created in the context of a specific storytelling class and for the purpose of my study. There are multiple factors that might have affected this process, such as language, age, gender differences, power negotiations in the classroom, and shared or divergent life experiences. As a researcher, I am the one re-presenting the participants' stories, selecting quotes that answer the research questions, and annotating the texts with background information that was available to me. At the same time, I made considerable effort to honour the research participants who joined my project and represent their narratives with respect and care.

5.9 Limitations

There are several limitations to the study that are important to address. First, the monolingual nature of the study had an inevitable impact on the generation of the data. Not speaking the language of my participants has limited my understanding of side discussions and my ability to understand their narratives in depth. It also limited my ability to answer all the questions that my participants might have had. I am not suggesting that a neutral outsider or a proficient multilingual speaker would necessarily be in a better position to occupy the research space; however, I am cognizant of the potential impact I had on the generation of the data for the research.

Second, the self-selection of the participants means that less extroverted seniors might have excluded themselves from the study and that their experiences are not addressed in this research.

In addition, it is important to acknowledge my impact on the recruitment process. In addition, as I was located at the UBC Learning Exchange where personal relationships play an important role and where community connections are celebrated, I may have inadvertently compelled learners to join the project.

Despite these limitations this study provides insight into the underexplored phenomenon of seniors' language learning in the context of the larger societal issues related to ageing, immigration, and the search for a place of belonging.

5.10 Conclusion

In this chapter I presented the methodological framing of my study, including an elaboration on the research contexts, research design, and procedures of data generation. In addition, I provided a brief introduction to the research participants and reflected on my positionality during the study.

This study is framed as a narrative ethnography, a research methodology that applies a narrative-focused lens on traditional ethnographic work. The use of narratives as data has been gaining prominence in applied linguistics, communication, and educational research (Barkhuizen, 2011; Bell, 2011; Benson, 2014; Goodall Jr., 2004). According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative research is “a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or a series of places, and in social interaction within milieus” (p. 20). Similarly, I paid considerable attention to the contexts of narration, the space where the study took place, and the relationships that were developed between myself and the research participants. In addition, I wanted to highlight the learners' experiences and motivations to learn. In my class, I applied this approach by facilitating spoken and written storytelling activities. I chose storytelling for its versatility and its prominence in various educational contexts.

My study took place in a community with a strained relationship with the researchers working in the community. As noted in an earlier chapter, the DTES is an over-researched space and the majority of the research produced takes a deficit or problem-focused approach. Much of the research and most of the resultant policies focus on substance abuse (Boyd, Johnson, & Moffat, 2008; Kerr, Wood, Small, Palepu, & Tyndall, 2003; Pedersen, Sandvik, & Waal, 2007; Robertson, 2007), the socioeconomic struggles of the residents within the neighbourhood, and the consequences of gentrification (Burnett, 2014; Ley & Dobson, 2008; Liu, & Blomley, 2013; Smith, 2003). According to Linden, Mar, Werker, Jang, and Krausz (2013), much of this research comes in the form of reports, academic articles, and public-sector policy documents.

As my research was conducted within a community-based organization, I collaborated with the UBC Learning Exchange to ensure that my study was conducted in an ethical and respectful manner. We collectively agreed to establish the Seniors Storytelling Club and that it would be run under the programmatic umbrella of the English Conversation programming. Each of the Club meetings was broken into two components—conversation practice and story-sharing practice—thus ensuring that the research aspect was seamlessly incorporated into the everyday programming of the UBC Learning Exchange.

The data were generated through in-class story-work, individual interviews, and class observations. I first transformed the various data produced by each participant into cohesive narratives about their language learning experiences. As I was piecing together these stories, I took notice of the affective and relational experiences indexed by the narrators. I then returned to the original data and analyzed it thematically. From this activity, I classified the various themes occurring throughout the narratives as they pertained to my conceptual framework. I analyzed the data thematically giving consideration to the contexts and audiences for which the narratives

were generated. I now turn to a discussion of my findings, which draw on the thematic analysis of the data.

Chapter 6: Language Learning in Later Life

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the thematic analysis of the narrative data and answers the first set of research questions:

- What have been immigrant seniors' experiences of English language learning? What has influenced their efforts to learn English over time?

The analysis of the data pertaining to these questions was grounded in the idea that language learning in later life is an agentic endeavour. Guided by the construct of agency, I generated three salient themes from the data set. These themes are (1) ageing and longevity, (2) cultural engagement and belonging, and (3) vulnerability and resilience. I present each theme by weaving together data from the interviews, the participants' written stories and reflections, and my researcher's journal. In addition, I supplement the themes with a detailed portrayal of Cindy's, Julia's, and John's language learning journeys.

This chapter is structured as follows. I present each of the three salient themes that I identified in the spoken and written data as well as in my observational notes. Following the analysis of a theme I illustrate it with an in-depth analysis of one of the three participants' language learning journeys. The goal of these portrayals is to provide further detail about the experiences of language learning in later life. At the end of the chapter I summarize and discuss salient ideas from the narratives.

6.2 Ageing and Longevity

Understanding English language learning as an age-impacted process was prominent across several data sets. Namely, participants shared the sentiment that they need to work harder than younger learners to reach a desired level of language proficiency. For some, this feeling

seemed to be intertwined with the idea of growing older and running out of time. For others, it seemed tied to age-related health issues. For example, in one of the classes our discussion turned to the topic of ageing. As the participants brainstormed the question “How can we describe ourselves?” I took the notes on the whiteboard (Figure. 6.1). The choice of adjectives they used was telling. They described themselves as sad and happy, tired and content, and suffering and accomplished.

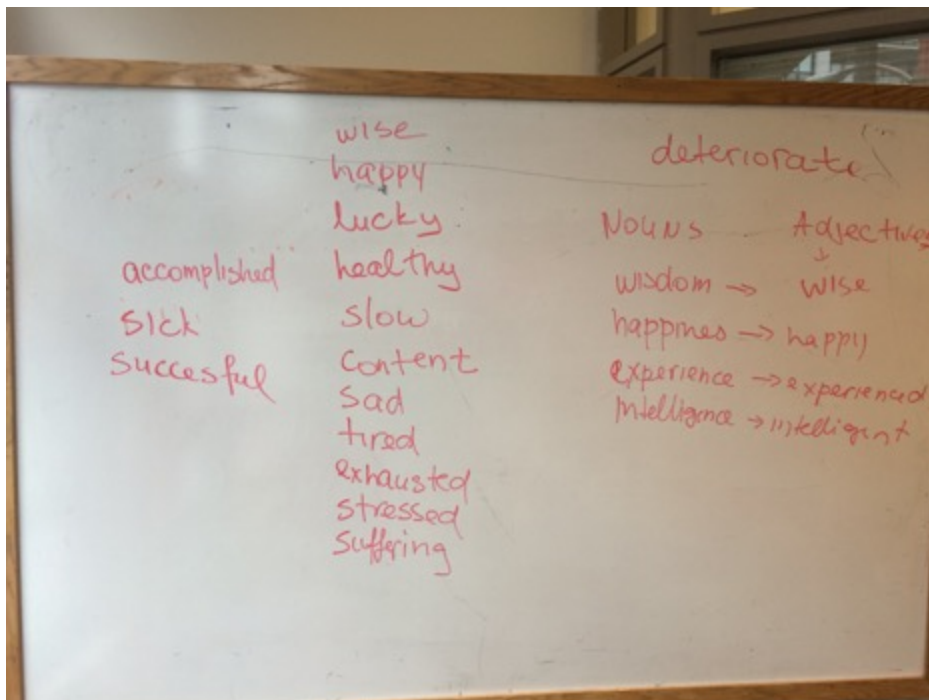


Figure 6.1 Brainstorming notes.

When I asked the learners to comment on their choice of adjectives and how their feelings impacted their engagement with learning English, the discussion went as follows:

Jacqui opens the discussion by saying that there are elderly people who are “weak, sick and no money” and therefore need a lot of support. Justin added that time compresses when one grows old. He seems unable to control his voice and is almost yelling “Everything is going down!” This topic stirs up a lot of emotions in the group as people begin talking over each other, interrupting and adding their perspectives. (March 25, 2016)

A similar stance towards ageing and language learning was shared in many of the written stories and the interviews. For example, during our interview, while reflecting on the meaning of learning English in later life, Tom reflected on the challenges presented by his age and noted how he strives to overcome them:

N: so how would you describe learning English at your age?

T: very difficult. Very difficult. Very difficult. Because when you are young, even our children, even me too when I am a boy, when I see, or I read, or I learn anything go to my memory. When I get old, my brain working hard about my life, about my wife, about my children, about war. Everything working hard. They cannot fit in the memory, so memory is slower. Now, I am very old. I have a lot of time, but my brain does not help me to remember long. Easy forget. I learn, but the new word I understand, but later suddenly I cannot remember. That is a big trouble.

In this example, Tom compares his experience of learning English against that of younger learners, stressing the difficulties of retaining and recalling information. This kind of experience was shared by many learners. For example, John, Cindy, Julia, and Justin also talked at length about their “old age” and the difficulties they experienced while learning English. To illustrate, when I asked John to tell me about his daily routine he was quick to mention his age and the challenges it brought to his life:

Monday, Thursday I go to UBC Learning Centre to learn some English. But you talk to me, I listen understand, but I come back forgot it. Not memory good. Mother always told to me that seniors' time very hard. This moment I understand well.

However, the shared understanding of the impact age had on the process of language learning, seemed to establish a certain comradeship in our classroom as the participants expressed

immense support for each other in pursuing English language learning. Thus, the participants constructed a shared sense of agency. For example, in one of our classes we discussed a news article about a 90-year-old Kenyan woman who went to school for the first time. This topic resonated with many learners, who expressed approval of the woman's determination. Consider this excerpt from my researcher's journal in which I describe how Ann and Bu praised John—the oldest learner of the group—for attending English language classes:

As June wrapped up the discussion, Ann said: "Like John, already 80 something, but he still come to learn English. I always say, I admire him, and he is so good he still come to learn something". Bu added, "never give up." Ann reflected on the reasons why the UBC Learning Exchange is so popular with seniors. In her opinion, because younger people need to learn English faster and "get to work," language learning in other centres [is] more intensive and practical. "The seniors or retired learners," she continues, "have more time, they don't want homework, they just want conversation and meeting new people." Everyone laughs and agrees. Bu imagines that if he gives up learning, he will immediately forget all language skills that he has developed throughout his life in Canada. (April 8, 2016)

My analysis of the data suggests that participants exerted their agency within a particular context of age-related cognitive decline. John, Ann and Bu did not have a clear pressing need to learn English and at this point in their lives language learning was not an easy process. In fact, all three of these learners mentioned in their interviews that childhood was the best time to learn a language and that age was a major impediment to reaching their desired proficiency. However, these participants' language learning was self-directed and agentic, as they pursued language learning opportunities that best met their goal of supporting cognitive health. They indicated that

they valued learning as a means to prevent memory loss and Alzheimer's disease. Thus, their agency can be understood as "socioculturally mediated self-socialization" (Duff and Doherty, 2015, p. 56) into larger discourses of healthy ageing. To illustrate, consider this excerpt from Tom's interview:

N: right. So why do you learn English?

T: you know, I like to learn English. I like to read. When I speak to my friend, I am not confused. If you do not learn English or something your friend easy forget [about you]. Not easy for old people. You understand. Alzheimer's. I am very scared. Most people, they have big trouble about that disease.

Tom firmly believed that learning English can offset Alzheimer's disease—a condition that he feared. Sam echoed this sentiment in our interview, saying: "Sometimes our brain, our memory stops. It is going to strike." Similar concerns were shared by John, Bu, and others. The themes of ageing actively and ensuring brain longevity were identified across all data sets. These two reasons seemed to be driving participants' desire "to act towards learning a language" (to borrow from Miller, 2014, p. 26). It is important to note that maintaining the cognitive health of the learners was not in the mandate of the Seniors Storytelling Club. However, all participants mentioned it as an important reason for attending this particular English language classes. By recognizing and sharing their own efforts in sustaining cognitive functioning, the participants constructed themselves as agentive seniors and active learners.

The process of ageing has both positive and negative social dimensions. On the one hand, ageing means one has had a rich life experience, on the other hand it can be perceived as a liability. As John wrote in one of his untitled stories:

Keeping studying is the most important thing in life. This world does not stop changing every day and every time. If you need to live better and

more meaningfully, you need to keep studying new technology and sciences, especially if you don't have good basic education like me. Otherwise you will be weeded out!

In a similar vein, Justin recognized the limitations that his age imposed on his language learning. In his essay "My Experience with English," he wrote about age presenting a serious complication for the already difficult process of language learning.

My Experiences with English

Today English is the most popular language in the world. With English you can travel around the world, you can communicate with most people in the world. But English is very difficult for the Asian people, especially when you are getting old, because aged people are always hard in hearing and lose their memory easily.

I am already passed 80 years of age. I am hard in hearing and also lose my memory easily. But when you are living in Canada, no matter how difficult it is you should learn how to speak it, otherwise you can't communicate with the local people. Also, you can't travel in this country, go shopping, and join all kinds of social activity. That is why I had to spend a lot of my precious time to learn how to speak English.

In the beginning, I rented a lot of books from the library. I learned from the easiest. Then I listened to the radio and watched TV. I started to communicate with my neighbours. They are local Canadian. Day by day, step by step. I started reading daily newspaper. There is so much information about shopping, sports, education, politics, transportation, etc. I learned more about Canadian lifestyle. I could talk more about Canadian culture. I started to join all kinds of community activities, ESL conversation classes, workshops, festivals, events, volunteer

training, etc. I found this was the only way: more connections, more contact and more practice can make you speak English someday as well as local Canadians.

In this text, Justin, an older immigrant from Taiwan, writes that “Asian people” face significant challenges while learning English and that older learners are at further disadvantage due to hearing problems and memory loss. In this excerpt Justin links the age- and language-related challenges that people of his age face. He constructs himself as an agentive successful language learner who applies his skills in pursuing multiple opportunities to practice English. This identity is closely connected to the one of an active age-defying senior, who can make purposeful and informed choices in his language learning journey. Justin’s belief that age-related issues have a direct impact on language learning seems straightforward. However, he also constructs his identity as a successful older language learner who, due to his immense experience, was able to offer valuable insights and make expert judgements on the quality of the programs offered for seniors. For example, in our interview he had the following suggestion on how to improve seniors’ learning experiences:

N: and what can we do better in our classes?

J: the senior, most of them they like know something about the health. Concerning healthy. One thing, the facilitator, the sound has to loudly. Like your sound is clear, also loud. But some facilitator speaks like mouse. We are listening not well, so I think clear is sometimes better. Most of the seniors have the same problem. Hard in hearing, very hard. They, so facilitator should speak loudly. Second, the letter should be bigger. Without the glasses they almost can’t see. Bigger. And third, have picture. Picture with the word explaining it easier for senior to understand. For memory.

Justin easily identifies hearing, vision, and memory deterioration as issues that complicate learning for seniors. It is clear that for Justin these issues are important to consider and are not regarded as a form of special treatment.

A somewhat different perspective on language learning in later life was shared by Sam who expressed an optimistic and determined attitude towards agentic seeking of English learning opportunities. For example, Sam shared that he was able to mitigate complicating factors of being in poor health, by finding classes that had flexible attendance policy. As he progressed in his language learning, he embraced learning in later life as an opportunity to share his knowledge and also gain new knowledge from others. During the interview, he underscored the importance of staying active in later life and reflected on the value of social participation, which can be conceptualized as agentic acts of language learning and use:

N: ok, and why do you think seniors want to learn English?

S: ok, because at first, they need to communicate. At first, they need to communicate. Second, they need to come out from their home, as good motivation, movement. They should participate with others. They should share their good experience to others, for together. And they should to learn and to try to learn, because if we stop learn or train at that time we are going to die, if we stop our learning or training. We should learn every time, study every time.

Similarly, Bu described learning English as an important activity in later life. In our interview he introduced the notion of independence, which in his opinion could be achieved by becoming proficient in English.

[Seniors] want to learn English because when they have trouble they always [have to] ask children to help them, but the children are always busy, so they must ask another people if they ask another people they have to pay. Having to go to the hospital or go to the lawyer or

something, they have to pay. So that's why they have got to study English, so they can do by themselves, right?

Taken together, these narratives and my observations of the class discussions highlight the participants' acute awareness of their age and the impact it has on their language learning experiences and vice versa. While some of the learners talked about the benefits of being the same age as their peers, others understood it as a significant obstacle that they needed to overcome in their language learning journeys. Despite these differences, all participants seemed to recognize that engagement with language learning contributed to their mental and physical well-being. In the data, they constructed themselves as agentive language learners who were able to reach their longevity. In the following section, I present my analysis of Cindy's narratives about learning English after immigrating in later life. I believe that her story illustrates a positive attitude toward ageing and a desire to maintain life satisfaction while drawing a connection between learning and active ageing.

6.2.1 Cindy: "Learning English is very important"

Now I am very old. I am hard in hearing; I lose my memory. Studying English is so hard to me, but I never give up. I should overcome all my language barrier someday. I think I can communicate with local Canadians with a fluent English. At that day I will be very happy. I will live well and live longer.

I open this section with the excerpt from Cindy's written story "My Experiences with English" because it highlights her feelings about language learning in later life. Despite recognizing some of the physical limitations, Cindy's stories suggest that she actively sought and made use of the many language learning resources available to Canadian immigrants. She often talked about active ageing, independence, and the well-being that can be achieved through participation in language learning activities. Overall, she portrays her language learning as a

victory over her own age-related insecurities that was made possible due to her efforts and the support that she received from her communities.

Cindy told me that when she arrived in Canada in 2005, she couldn't speak any English. She reported feeling lonely because her husband was her only source of companionship and that she did not have any friends or relatives to rely on for her social needs. In her text "My Volunteer Experience," she described her first days in Canada and what it was like not knowing where to go and what to see. Cindy's first language learning experience took place in her own backyard. In the same text, Cindy writes: "Fortunately, our neighbours were a very friendly couple who taught me English and everything, helped me a lot." This encounter shaped Cindy's desire to continue learning English despite it being a difficult process. Even after her neighbours relocated Cindy maintained communication with them, visiting them once a week to practice her English. Seeing her relationship with former neighbours as reciprocal—"they were very happy when I visited"—Cindy expressed that maintaining this connection with her neighbours made her feel happy and needed.

It can be argued that Cindy's sensitivity to the connection between her ability to speak English and her social standing in the community draws on the idea of being a good and agentic immigrant. In one of her texts, Cindy wrote: "most newcomers have a language learning problem when they come to Canada, therefore learning English is very important." In her narratives, she described her life in Vancouver through the lens of a person actively seeking free language learning opportunities and often described the many programs she had taken in order to become a more proficient English language speaker. Cindy's attention to detail in these descriptions as well as her precise recollection of the names of the programs and when she participated in them suggests that language learning was an integral part of Cindy's life in Canada.

Participation in language learning activities not only added structure to Cindy's day-to-day life, it also made her feel joyful and optimistic about life after retirement. Particularly, the theme of physical and mental well-being ran through many of Cindy's narratives about learning to speak English in Canada. However, Cindy's reasons for engaging in community activities were not always driven by her desire to learn a language. In one of her stories, Cindy reflected on her volunteering experiences and highlighted that she wanted to volunteer in the community because it could benefit her and the other seniors physically and mentally. In her text "Volunteering" she writes:

Five years ago, I started attending any kind of volunteers' training, until I knew I could do volunteering, help seniors not to be isolated, encourage them to come out and participate in community actively, play mah-jong, dance, lunch together once a week to help decrease the risk of depression, prevent dementia. Sometimes, I went to seniors' home to make conversation with them, bring information to them. They felt happy, I also felt happy.

Cindy seemed to enjoy being a contributing member of society and at times used the experience to justify her desire to push herself to do more. She explained that her active engagement in the community was being driven by a need to give back to Canadian society.

At the same time, the experience of learning and speaking English in Canada had not always been easy for Cindy who was in her late 70s. She experienced feelings of inferiority due to her age and related cognitive abilities. In her story, "Learning English," Cindy recalled her early days of learning English as shrouded in fear and shyness:

Eight years ago, I studied in ELSA⁹ program from level two to level three. I felt shy to speak English, because of lack of confidence. I was also afraid to make conversation with local people because I didn't know how to answer questions.

Cindy's understanding of the usefulness of being able to speak English fluently fluctuated between seeing it as a means to an end and seeing learning as a fun leisure activity. Indeed, in our conversations Cindy noted that being able to speak English served to advance her status as an active senior and a community member. On the other hand, she kept recalling the emotional distress speaking English caused her. Cindy's desire to learn English was driven by the need to belong to a community. Furthermore, while her early language learning experiences could have deterred Cindy from pursuing further language learning, she demonstrated great determination and agency in seeking out learning opportunities. As she writes in the same story "Learning English":

I decided to study at self-study program at VCC¹⁰ Learning Centre in Tommy Douglas Library. Step by step I built up my confidence for speaking English to others. I also learned a lot of Western history, different customs and cultivated my knowledge.

Cindy participated in her language learning community as a learner and as an activist, protesting budget cuts to literacy programs. When government funding to basic adult literacy programs was cut in 2013, she participated in the ESL Matters¹¹ campaign. Cindy provides

⁹ English Language Services for Adults, a free language program offered to newcomers to Canada. In 2014 ELSA programs became LINC.

¹⁰ Vancouver Community College.

¹¹ Through this campaign many professionals, students, and general public have expressed their support for the preservation of public English language learning programs. These programs, many supporters argued, benefit the learners by allowing them to advance beyond basic English skills. According to the ESL Matters campaign, more than half of the students attending Vancouver Community College (VCC) classes were university-educated skilled workers with degrees from outside Canada. In addition to new immigrants, many of the students affected by programming cuts were permanent residents or Canadian citizens.

insight into her experience in the following excerpt from her written story “My English Language Experience”:

At that time, teachers and students all came together to VCC to make a stand against the government. I suddenly heard my teacher call me and announced that I would have to make a speech. I was very nervous, but I did it. I heard claps from the audience. This was my first experience to make a speech in public. Although I understood that those claps just encouraged me. Finally, I said thank you to everybody.

Cindy compared her ability to overcome fear and feelings of inferiority as a form of victory supported by the reaction of the audience as a form of acceptance. Cindy’s use of the phrase “all came together” suggests that she felt a sense of belonging to a group of like-minded language learners, and that she sees the defence of VCC as a community-building act in which she plays a significant role.

I consider learner’s agency as relational to others, wider communities and sociocultural structures. As such, it is often mitigated by power asymmetries and hierarchies that constitute lifelong language learning. The stories shared by Cindy portray language learning in her later life as a collective relational process in which the learner’s agency can be either constrained or enabled. Moreover, Cindy narrated her language learning journey as a fun experience, an opportunity to meet people, a way to reduce her social isolation, and a chance to learn new things. However, as with other members of our class, Cindy recognized that her age impacted her level of engagement with English learning opportunities in Vancouver. Nevertheless, she pursued her goal of improved cognitive function and physical longevity through continued learning. She utilized any opportunity to practice her English—volunteering, helping other seniors, becoming the face of activism, and attending multiple social events. Her self-positioning as an active senior who can be useful in her communities seemed to help Cindy overcome her

initial shyness and lack of confidence. However, it seems that for Cindy achieving the desired language proficiency was a long-term project that she was willing to pursue for the rest of her life. I want to end this section with an excerpt from my interview with Cindy when she expressed her complex dependency on becoming proficient in English.

So today, today we had a session class. It's topic "what your dream?" I say the dream is can change, so now my dream is I wish I hope I can speak fluent English. It's my dream. But not easy, not easy. To me not easy. For young people, of course it's easy, but for me it's different. I am old, easy forgot. Even I don't have, now I know but after all is forgot. So. But I always told you "I never give up" it's my purpose I want to study, study. Yeah. I want to overcome this.

6.3 Cultural Engagement and Belonging

The second theme that was prominent in the participants' narratives was their fascination with Canadian culture and the agentive choices they made to engage with Canadian multicultural society by learning English. For example, Sam talked at length about the interconnectedness of culture and language learning. In particular, he noted the importance of learning Canadian culture as a "very, very necessary" aspect of his language learning journey. Likewise, in one of her written texts, Cindy noted that her favourite English language classes were those that helped her "know a lot about Western history, culture, and customs." However, the participants' understanding of the concept of culture was extremely diverse and the strategies that they undertook to create opportunities for cultural engagement were different.

In our class discussions as well as during the interviews, participants expressed interest in learning about Canadian cultural manifestations, such as national holidays. To facilitate this process, they tended to construct a clear boundary between their home culture and "Western" or "Canadian" culture and constructed an identity of those able to cross this boundary. On the other

hand, participants were fascinated by Canadian multiculturalism and the idea of blending various cultures together. They often drew on the concept of multiculturalism to describe the uniqueness of Canadian society. In contrast, Sam recalled feelings of culture shock as a new immigrant in later life. Consider our exchange in the interview:

N: and what is the most difficult thing about living in Canada?

S: people get homesick or shock, culture shock. Culture shock. And therefore, they become stuck. They will be stuck sometimes.

Sam went on to explain that he felt “stuck” when he first came to Canada but that over time he was able to understand Canadian culture better and was able to “communicate with a lot of Canadian, every day.” In the same interview, Sam shared that newcomers to Canada should be willing to contribute to society not only financially but also through volunteering, helping others, and being patient—aspects that he considered exemplary of Canadian culture.

[When people immigrate, they should] volunteer and go to the community for more communication and have a good networking. And when somebody asks me: “I want to come to Canada what can I do?” I tell I say him or her you should know English well, computer and [have] enough money and have a good attitude. Have a good motivation to be as an immigrant. Yes. Maybe someone wants to come [here] but she or he only thinks need to have money, but here he can’t be good and useful to people.

Indeed, Sam spent a lot of time talking with other learners in class about the ways that they were able to interact with other Canadians, and expressed interest in volunteering at various events.

Similar engagement with issues of culture could be found in my interview with Justin, such as when he remarked that learning about Canadian culture was extremely important for him. He used the term “Western” culture to describe the traditions and practices of Canadian society. He

constructed himself as an active learner who was driven to enrich his knowledge about the world through engagement with cultural practices. Like Julia, Justin talked about cultures in definitive terms. Specifically, he drew a clear distinction between the Anglophone/Francophone culture of Canada and his “Oriental” culture. For example, consider this excerpt from an interview:

It's very simple. We are from Taiwan. It is [very easy] to clearly separate into two parts, one we call Western culture, it includes English speaking, French speaking [people]. And one is Oriental culture, we call it East culture, you know? We are quite familiar with East part of the culture, their lifestyle, their customs, their traditional cultural festivals, you know? Everything, even the language. Ah, so we are hungry to know something about Western culture. Actually, originally, we [wanted] to immigrate to Canada, the main reason was to know something about Western culture, yeah.

Justin's discussion of “Western culture” did not seem to include much reflection on the different positioning of the diverse cultural groups that constituted it. For example, in Justin's opinion Canadian culture was divided into “English speaking” and “French speaking” groups. In addition, he shared at length about his travels across Canada, his experiences of attending many social events—“even homosexual pride parade” as well as his attempts to “dive deep into the Canadian culture.” Justin described his language learning as learning “through daily life of Canadian ways.” He often used the idea of culture as an overarching concept that enveloped class, citizenship, and community thus reinforcing an us-versus-them binary view. To illustrate this point further, I present an excerpt from my journal.

One class discussion focused on Doctors Without Borders and other international volunteer organizations. I noticed Jacqui and Bu chatting in an animated fashion about international aid and volunteering as a way of life. In contrast, during the whole group discussion Justin remarked

that the reason why there is a lot of volunteering in Canada is because of the "Western culture." This phrase sparked tension in the class. Ann immediately disagreed with him, saying that there has always been a lot of social engagement and volunteering in China. Ignoring her remark, Justin continued describing the benefits of Canada through volunteering because "the culture is different" and repeated that Canadian culture was the reason why he wanted to be active in his community. Tom remarked that the desire to volunteer had nothing to do with the culture, but with the personality and the age of an individual. As an example, he shares that he started volunteering in a temple after retiring, as he was very busy working as a janitor when he was younger. (April 4, 2016)

Reading this excerpt, I notice that Justin talked about how purposeful and agentive he had been in finding volunteer opportunities. He used the concept of "Canadian culture" to highlight his good standing in the community as an active volunteer. In contrast, the other learners displayed resistance to such a clear connection by presenting alternative reasons for why one would take on volunteering roles. The tension described in the excerpt could be explained by Justin's application of the fixed label of superiority to Canada and his insistence on a binary distinction between cultures.

A similar perspective was shared by Jacqui who seemed to reproduce the discourses of celebratory multiculturalism. She often resisted discussions about cultural differences and conflicts as something that "didn't matter." Despite this resistance, Jacqui nevertheless drew on the idea of difference between cultures to highlight the beauty of the multiple communities that she engaged with. Consider this exchange in which Jacqui and I discussed cultural festivals that had taken place during the summer of 2015.

J: yeah, I been there. Every year I been to Canada Place. Last year I [was] in Richmond Centre. This year I [was] in the park. I like it, I enjoy it and the celebration.

N: and what about this celebration that you enjoy?

J: that's Canada Day, I am Canadian citizen, I need to be happy. With everyone to be happy. That's it. I love them.

N: and what other cultural events do you celebrate?

J: um, usually for me it is not a problem. I don't care which culture. If I have time, I'm interested, [if] it is good day, I don't care which one. Sometimes like the grey, the grey day on Broadway...

N: Point Grey Fiesta?

J: yeah. I will come if I have time. In Commercial...

N: Italian day?

J: yeah, yeah. And one time Indian. If I have time, I don't care which country, which culture. I just go to be happy that's it. I just watch, I learn about different cultures, different languages, different foods. I try it. I taste, and I hear the song, watch the dancing, then I try the food.

This excerpt highlights Jacqui's active identification (to borrow from Weedon, 2004) with the dominant discourses of multiculturalism. She constructed an identity of a Canadian citizen who is happy to celebrate the multiple cultures that exist in Canada.

A similar view could be found in John's narratives. John recognized the multitude of cultural and linguistic networks that he found himself in as a language learner. In our interview, he talked about "big" languages—those having many speakers, such as Russian, Chinese, and English—and "small" languages—those he deemed less important on the global scale. He noted that in Canada, due to multicultural nature of the society, there are many people who speak different languages both "big" and "small." Consider the excerpt below in which John reflects on

the differences between his language use in Shanghai and in Vancouver. I asked John whether he had ever experienced living in multilingual communities. He answered:

J: Canada [is] very different. English teacher told me, only Vancouver at least 150 kinds of language. Russian big large language. Chinese language, Japanese language, Korea language, French language. In Canada only English and French [are big languages], I think is very complicated.

As the two main *linguae francae* and official languages, English and French undoubtedly occupy a more privileged space in language hierarchies in Canada. However, this can impact an immigrant's sense of belonging especially when they do not speak English or French as their first language as was the case for John.

For some learners like Julia, Cindy, Sam and Justin, learning about Canadian culture seemed to be something that they enjoyed doing, but for others like Bu and Tom the motivation was more complex. Both of these learners came to Canada as younger adults but did not have social contacts beyond their Vietnamese community. Their interview data suggests that they felt a divide between themselves and the larger Canadian society. For example, Tom (who lived alone) shared that he didn't have any "Canadian friends"—a situation that he attributed to both the language and cultural divide he felt. Reflecting on his lifestyle in our interview he said:

I have to do something by myself. I meet mostly Canadian people, I have to speak English. But you know I don't have Canadian friends. Almost all [my friends are] Vietnamese friends, when I worked no, when I retired, I never meet any [Canadian friends]. And you know sometimes I am not sure because um, for me I think our culture is different from Canadian culture. And I don't understand when I talk to them. Almost all is different.

Here, Tom echoes Justin's view of how different "Canadian culture" is from his culture. He seems to connect the fact that he was unable to find any friends because of the perceived cultural differences. At the same time, Tom attended many language learning programs, including going to a Baptist church (despite not self-identifying as a follower of the Christian faith), and seeking out other opportunities to meet Canadians and form new relationships. Bu shared Tom's desire to learn about Canadian society. In his interview, he mentioned that his goal was to be achieved through participating in educational activities.

N: what was about these classes that you liked?

B: because Canada is my second country, I think I've lived in here longer than my country. When I came here, I were about almost 30 years old but now I am 64, so I live here longer than my country, yeah. So, I want to know about everything in Canada, culture, everything.

N: so, you've lived here, but you still don't know?

B: I know. But how can I know a lot of culture in Canada? If I want to know I have to go to school, if I don't go to school, I don't know.

Tom and Bu were the two participants who had lived in Canada the longest, having arrived to the country as refugees in the 1970s. This could have contributed to their ambivalent stance towards Canada. On one hand they remarked on the differences between themselves and "Canadians" without specifying who was included into this category. On the other hand, they talked about Canada as "their country" or "second home." For example, Tom often described himself as "half and half" because he had lived in Canada for many years. Similarly, Sam constructed a more hybrid identity in his interviews. Consider this excerpt where Sam discusses why he identifies as an Iranian-Canadian:

I am both of them. Can't say that I am not Iranian. No, I can't. I am not only [Iranian]. Can I say I am not Canadian? No, I can't say it. I like

both of them. I like Canada because Canada like me. Canada help me, save me. And I am living here, and I enjoy the environment, the city, the people and communicate with them.

Sam's self-description as having a hybrid identity speaks to his identification as a refugee who was forced to leave his country after the 1979 Iranian revolution, but hasn't forgotten his roots. In addition, he remarks about the role that Canada played in "saving" him and his family from the war, which impacted his relationship with the new community.

Overall, it can be argued that the participants' experience of learning English was closely linked to learning about Canadian culture. Their understanding of this notion was influenced by multiple factors, including their social and economic status, the trajectories that brought them to Canada, and the communities in which they claimed membership. Despite these differences, the participants seemed to draw a clear connection between seeking English language learning opportunities and expanding of their cultural awareness. In the following section, I present the case of Julia who constructed the identity of an active and agentive immigrant with an ability to make strategic decisions. Specifically, she talked about her successes in navigating complex bureaucratic systems and becoming culturally aware along the way.

6.3.1 Julia: "I am a newcomer. I must learn more and more"

Before we immigrated, I [went to visit] with my daughter's family. At that time, I thought Canada is very good country, but now I have no idea. Yeah, because before I got to Canada, I visited Japan for three months and because my older son works in Japan. Now, my son went back to China. I visited USA for eighteen days. Eighteen days. So, I, after I visit Canada my husband and I like Canada. Then I moved to Vancouver.

The excerpt above was taken from my interview with Julia at the end of the project. I asked her to share her story of immigration and explain why she and her husband chose Canada as their

destination. As the interview excerpt suggests, Julia's children maintained transnational lifestyles, having travelled to and lived in several countries. As Julia explained later in the interview, the purpose of her initial visit to Canada was to see her daughter who had immigrated to and settled in a large city in Alberta. At the time of their visit, Julia considered immigrating to Canada, but deemed the city unsuitable to their needs and living expectations. In the end, Julia and her husband relocated to Vancouver's Chinatown where they continue to reside. While Julia did not venture beyond this neighbourhood, she spent a lot of time in her local community as well as travelling internationally to visit her family. Despite this selective cultural engagement, Julia was the one learner who tried to make a connection between being an immigrant to Canada, a purposeful search for English language learning opportunities, and the idea of cultural integration through language learning.

Despite not having travelled abroad before retirement, Julia's language learning journey started early. She had a university degree, had studied Russian and English, and continued learning new skills while working as a secondary school teacher in China after retirement. Julia's stories about her life in China before immigrating to Canada suggest that she led an active life and had a strong commitment to lifelong learning. For example, in her story "My Teaching Career," Julia details that she learned how to type in English and in Mandarin when she was 60 years old in order to help her students, who were young and needed this skill. It could be that Julia's lifelong learning experiences influenced her engagement with English learning opportunities upon immigration to Canada.

In the first story she composed for the Seniors Storytelling Club entitled "Coming to Canada," Julia reminisced about how she came to realize the importance of knowing how to speak English.

Coming to Canada

October 23, 2006 we were invited by our daughter and arrived to Calgary, Canada. After breakfast next day, my husband and I said to my daughter we wanted to shop around and asked her advice. Our granddaughter brought Calgary map, told us the nearest supermarket was Co-Op. My husband and I set off, we had time to listen and we felt that we understood, but we felt dumbfounded. We continued to walk and told to ask, finally we saw the Co-Op supermarket across the street. We were very happy, but we saw that there was a red light and that a steady stream of cars ran fast, we didn't know what to do. After a while, we saw a gap and quickly ran over. The supermarket was similar to Chinese one, but we thought it was too expensive, so we bought a few sweet potatoes.

We went out and saw a small group of people waiting to cross the road, we went with the crowd. When my daughter came back from work, I couldn't wait to ask her how to cross the road. To know myself by the light, it is really too rustic. Then another foolish thing; my husband and I went home by bus; the bus didn't stop. I saw the bus stop, but it didn't stop. I didn't know why; I was very worried. I went to tell the driver using body language, we got off. She seemed to understand, and she stopped. Through the two embarrassing things, I suddenly understood, I am a newcomer. I must learn more and more.

At that time, Julia and her husband were in their early 70s but having arrived in a small town in central Canada they both felt comfortable exploring the vicinity by themselves. Upon receiving directions from their daughter, they set off to shop in a nearby supermarket. In her story, Julia recounted her lack of familiarity with Canadian protocols such as crossing at crosswalks and waiting for crosswalk signals. However, in the same narrative, she explained that while the lack of English skills prevented her from communicating her message, when needed

she was able to navigate any obstacles. As a newcomer to Canada, Julia also did not know that the bus only stops when the stop button is pushed. However, in contrast to how she was able to observe and copy people at the cross walk, in this situation Julia had to engage directly with the bus driver to get the bus to stop. Drawing on the extralinguistic means of communication available to her, Julia was able to convey her message to the bus driver. While these two incidents demonstrate Julia's agency and adaptability, she only comments on them as embarrassing. She concludes the story with: "Through the two embarrassing things, I suddenly understood, I am a newcomer. I must learn more and more." This final sentence emphasises Julia's stance that although she was unable to fully understand the social and cultural protocols, she was still determined to overcome these perceived barriers through education. By sharing this story Julia was able to construct an identity of a responsible language learner, one that she often drew upon in her stories, classroom discussions, and during the interview. Not only did Julia choose to share this story at the beginning of the research project (thus using it as a form of self-introduction), she returned to the same story and created a visual representation of the text (Fig. 6.2) in one of the final classes. In this image Julia drew herself (pink figure) and her husband in two frames. The top frame entitled *First day* shows two figures unable to cross the street, stopped by the flashing light. The bottom frame entitled *Now* shows the same two figures walking on the streets with no obstacles in their way. As such, it seems that the incident, described in this text had a profound impact on Julia.



Figure 6.2 Julia's illustration "First Day" in Canada

Overall, Julia's story about her first day in Canada describes a woman who is a determined lifelong learner, agentive, and adaptable to changing conditions. In the interview, Julia similarly recalled how she navigated shopping malls when she didn't know much English. In her words:

Because my husband no English, don't know. My live environment I don't need English. I sometimes I can speak with Canadian, I am very happy. Sometimes I can go shopping big mall shopping I can speak. Sometimes I ask the way, how to. But a lot of if I got to the strange new place, I google. I detail.

In this excerpt, Julia describes herself as a resourceful individual who is able to use technology to find her way to new places. She claims that she doesn't need English in her daily life, but that speaking English with a "Canadian" makes her happy. In this excerpt, Julia addresses her desire to have wide social interactions, suggesting that staying within her Chinese community was not enough for her. Indeed, while agentively and successfully drawing on her lived experiences as a well-established immigrant who doesn't speak English, Julia also

criticized those residents of Chinatown who prefer to stay within the limits of the neighbourhood. In the interview she said:

I live in Chinatown a lot of people never go to big shopping. For example, Canadian Tire and Home Depot. They don't know. Yeah. They can shop in Chinatown ok. But I think this is not good.

In this excerpt, Julia reproduces the idea that it is the immigrant's responsibility to engage with local culture. In fact, Julia returned to this idea later in the interview, describing cultural integration as her dream and a driving force behind pursuing learning English:

Yeah. I think I, if I live in Canada I must, I have to integrate so that community. This is my dream. But I can't. Ah, sometimes I ask, I talk to Canadian. Canadian can't understand my English, my English. So, I think, but I just said, I don't give up. I think my and I have heard if the people getting older and older will forget all of new things.

Interesting here is Julia's expressed responsibility to ensure that her communication with "Canadians" is effective. While Julia does not explicitly name the source of her belief that she has to pursue cultural integration, her comment highlights the idea that all Canadians speak an English that is very different from hers. She takes it upon herself to not give up and to continue improving her language skills. Here she demonstrates her agency by repeating that it is her responsibility to not "give up" even if she faces challenges along the way. In this way she constructs the identity of a good and responsible immigrant who expects to be able to stay culturally and linguistically engaged with the wider English-speaking community.

When discussing what constituted her cultural engagement Julia often used her knowledge of Canadian holidays as an example. Consider the following text entitled "My first Halloween," in which Julia specifically addresses how she and her husband learned about the traditions of this holiday in order to stay current in their new country of residence.

My first Halloween

My husband and I went to Calgary as permanent residents in 2008. Calgary is a very cold city. It has more and more snow and the winter comes very early. When we came, we saw the snow that covered the ground. We had to see the snow; it is what my daughter told us already. But we saw other special things in neighbours' yards. We have never seen it and we were very scared, especially me. I did not dare to go outside.

At the beginning I felt shy and I didn't ask my daughter's family. But in the coming days, more and more spooky things appeared in the yards. I thought I had to study Canadian culture, so my husband and I asked my granddaughter: what were those? She introduced those and told us: "Every October on the last day is Halloween, it is North American festival" and her mother took my husband and I to go to an exhibition of Halloween in order to understand what Halloween is.

In our discussion on this topic, Julia explained that an immigrant needs to learn about local Canadian culture, traditions, and values and that she was excited to learn as much as she could using all means available to her, including attending English language classes. To explore this further, I will now turn to the analysis of Julia's stories in which she describes the agentic choices that she made in search of language learning opportunities after immigrating to Canada.

After Julia immigrated to Canada, she actively sought to enroll in English language classes. She researched language learning opportunities before her arrival and instructed her children to find programs that she could attend for free. Julia explained that she attempted to actively engage with language learning opportunities, but the educational systems that she encountered were misaligned with her needs. She shared that in some classes the teachers exhibited an ageist bias, which made her feel uncomfortable and contributed to her feeling of marginalization and sense

of not belonging in the class. This is how she describes her English language learning journey in Canada during our interview. The following excerpt begins after Julia finished describing her experience of visiting her daughter in Alberta.

The first time I came to Canada, I knew that [I could take classes in] church and that if I immigrated, I could go to government ESL class. After I immigrated, my daughter quickly [helped] my husband and I go to [take] the test. After test, I go to the ESL class, at that time I was lucky. Because my teacher was older woman. Older than me two years. At that time, I was 72, she was 74, but she told me she is volunteer, and she was, she from, she was from England. [When] she was young, she had three children, so she couldn't work. Then the children grew up, she volunteered at ESL [school] to teach international students. In that class one teacher [worked with] one student. I'm very lucky, I was very lucky. She taught one student but she always, worked hard. Helped me to study. But, when I lived in Calgary, I up to level three. At first level two, then level three. Level three my teacher was very young, like you, so. I think [I was the] oldest student. Every class he wanted to know my age. I never said. He always worried about my study. He worried I couldn't catch up with class. After I came to Vancouver, I studied in Burnaby. My teacher was older woman too, she was maybe twenty years younger than me. But she was older. She liked me very much. Finally, my class closed, closed. I transferred to VCC. Going to VCC was a big challenge. Big challenge. Because a lot of people were about maybe forty years old. And every classmate had good English background, so I thought I was no good. My classmates always said, they wanted to study my spirit [they were inspired by me]. But I, at that time, in level three it was not very difficult. In that time VCC every year after eight months [learners] must [take] a test. The student must to go up. If can't pass

the test, [have to] quit. So, in VCC [I went] from three, level three, level four, finally level five¹². Every time test [included] listening, reading. I [never passed] listening. I think maybe I can't understand anyone. But this school [had a] rule can't pass three, can't go up. In VCC every three months teachers changed. Every three month change one teacher. The [new] teacher was a woman, she was serious, so she knew my listening was very bad, she didn't want me to study in the class. But she introduced me to another school [where I could improve listening]. At that time, I was very angry. I think I must, I don't like this teacher. I think maybe another teacher can be kinder. I stopped my class. But the school didn't want me to stop, she hoped I would continue. But I think it is not good, I decided to quit.

Julia's first attempt to learn English in Canada started by doing extensive research about the programs and free language-based activities that were available to her. Despite these preparations, Julia's early language learning experience was unsatisfactory. Despite having learned English in China she was placed in a beginner class where she was taught basic language skills. In these classes, she first noted the age gap between her and her classmates. In addition, the fast-paced nature of the class triggered Julia's feelings of inadequacy. She left her first class shortly after it started.

In her description of her early language learning experiences after immigration, Julia often referred to herself as a bad student or someone who could not keep up with the course material. While reminiscing about her experience in the classes that followed traditional skills-training approaches Julia often expressed feelings of anger towards the younger teachers who, in her opinion, lacked knowledge about working with older learners. Further, she criticized LINC

¹² Julia is referring to the levels of *Canadian Language Benchmarks* that are used in Canadian adult language learning programs. The benchmarks are organized in 3 stages and 12 levels.

programs for not recognizing her motivation for learning English. It is important to remember that Julia was not only a multilingual professional before her retirement, she was a university instructor herself. In her recollection, however, she did not mention that her teacher was interested in learning about her background or accommodating her specific needs in the course. According to Julia, it was her age that overshadowed her other great qualities in the eyes of her instructor who was simultaneously erasing her strengths, lifelong experiences, and abilities. This perceived misalignment discouraged her from attending such classes and pushed her to continue searching for more age-friendly language classes.

This negative experience, however, was not the only time that Julia's relationship with a teacher impacted her learning. Later in the interview, Julia shared an example of a different relationship. In this case, the volunteer English teacher was closer to Julia in age and therefore she considered this teacher to be more understanding. Julia described her brief encounter with a volunteer as lucky and momentous in her learning journey. The teacher's dedication to hard work added to the value that Julia ascribed to that encounter. In some way, this volunteer served as a model ageing woman in Julia's eyes. She was an immigrant who came from an English-speaking country and volunteered her time to work with new immigrants and share her linguistic capital with them. Despite the perceived difference in their status for Julia the similarity in age was a positive factor in her relationship with the teacher.

Julia's narratives addressed the impact that her teachers and program structures had on her language learning trajectory. She particularly focused on the instructors' age, which, in her opinion, was the main factor in their ability to understand her needs as an older language learner. Narushima, Liu, and Diestelkamp (2017) highlight the importance of the instructors' role in older adult learning. In their study, older adults characterized a good teacher as someone who

“create[d] a safe, stimulating, and mutually respectful learning environment in the classroom” (p. 5). Indeed, the teachers seemed to serve as constraining and enabling factors in Julia’s realization of her agency in language learning.

In sum, Julia seemed to consider English language proficiency and cultural integration as prerequisites for full participation in Canadian society. To reach this goal, she sought out multiple language learning opportunities after she had immigrated to Canada. However, this process and her agency were constrained by the misalignment of Julia’s expectations and the educational practices of centres where she attended classes. As a result, Julia seemed to feel that she was unable to realize her full potential and become truly engaged with Canadian culture. She stated that she never wanted to stop learning English and searching for a program in which she would feel comfortable and that would align with her objectives.

I think I don’t give up English, if I give up, I forget more. If I can study in the class maybe useful for me. Special I meet you, I like you. But in the beginning, I have no idea, but after the time I think your every class give us new things and your spirit is my example. Yeah, now is better.

6.4 Vulnerability and Resilience

The stories shared in the class as well as in the interviews highlight how determined the seniors are in pursuing learning opportunities, and their awareness of how difficult this process can be. In this regard, a quote from Ann’s written story “Learning English” is illuminating:

English is my second language. For me, learning English is a really long journey. Still, my English is not good enough. I can say it will never be good enough for me. I still have a long way to go.

Despite recognizing the importance of learning English, many participants also noted how challenging this process was for them at their age and expressed a certain sense of vulnerability

when they spoke English. Notably John, Jacqui and Ann likened their lack of language proficiency to a physical disability that added to the sense of insecurity they experienced as older immigrants. As Ann put it in her narrative, “My English Language Journey,” “I knew that if I lived here without being able to speak English, I would be deaf and mute.” John explained his experience of learning language in very similar terms. In our interview he said that lack of English made him feel “like deaf and like blind.”

The participants expressed that not being understood by other English language speakers affected their overall sense of security and made them vulnerable to deception and harm. The desire to develop resilience to this feeling often drove them to search for language learning opportunities. For example, during our interview, John shared that he had wanted to continue working as a watch-maker when he first came to Canada. The person who hired him was a “Canadian person.” This is how John described their early encounter:

They need[ed] repairman. I told him, I can fix it. He didn't trust me. He gave me very difficult watch. I fixed it and didn't ask too much money. He trusted me. If someone need very difficult watch, he gave it to me. But he pay[ed] me very low.

John went on to explain that he didn't negotiate higher pay because he was just learning English and that he chose to use this experience to “kill time and make friends.” Further, in the interview, John shared that he was attacked by a drunk man in a bathroom and couldn't report it due to his low English language proficiency. In order to prevent these instances from occurring in the future, John displayed an immense resilience and continued to pursue learning English. He acknowledged the slow pace of his learning saying in the interview “I try little by little to speak English,” but he also conveyed satisfaction with his progress, stating: “This moment I am happy.

I can use dictionary, reading newspaper. But I don't understand 100%, I can understand more than before."

Other participants shared various instances when they felt vulnerable to harm due to their lack of proficiency. In his reflection about his language learning experiences Sam mentioned that due to his health problems he spent a lot of time in the hospital and felt that his language proficiency wasn't sufficient to make fully-informed health decisions. Jacqui mentioned that she had to change jobs because she felt that her inability to speak fluent English made her vulnerable to gossip and being undermined by her co-workers. Jacqui, particularly, reflected on the vulnerable state she found herself, when she was unable to understand people around her. In her story entitled "My First School" she describes the fear she experienced when the school was testing fire alarms.

My First School

English is my second language. It's the first official language of Canada. I came to Vancouver, so I had to learn English. So, building number 333 on Terminal Avenue was my first place to study.

At the second day, I was in the classroom on time. The teacher was saying something to us. Suddenly, I heard the fire alarm ringing, then I saw the teacher put her finger on her lips. She told us to be silent, keep quiet and line up near by the door and walk by stairs outside of the building. When we were on the ground, I saw a lot of students standing there. At that moment all my fear from before showed. I felt shaking all over and crying. My heart was jumping. The teacher was talking to me, but I didn't know any English. I just trembled and I couldn't control myself. All people looked at me; I didn't feel anything. Just thought that everything was finished, I couldn't come back to China to see my parents. That scared me out of my mind. After that, my teacher found another person who

was from the daycare. She spoke Chinese to me and came back with me to the office. She gave me a cup of hot water and a napkin. Then I knew that it was a practice for the fire. I was so embarrassed. The next time, when I was waiting in front of the lift, someone asked me: "Are you feeling better now?" "How do you know me?" "In that practice for the fire on the ground." "Oh! Too bad, I am a bad celebrity." Times pass, but that case is still in my memory. I can't forget it and my first school.

In this text Jacqui describes how terrified she felt during the fire alarm testing and the lingering feeling of shame at being singled out as the one who did not understand English. She is able to recall the details of the day, indicating how significant this experience was for her identity as an older language learner. When Jacqui shared this story in our class it was received with empathy and understanding, which suggested that her fellow learners had experienced somewhat similar situations during their daily language learning and use. Indeed, as research shows, older immigrants may experience a higher degree of vulnerability than younger immigrants "as they are left outside of everyday English social interactions known to offer resources for language learning" (Arxer, Ciriza-Lope, Shappeck, del Puy Ciriza, 2017, p. 42). Moreover, older adult learners are often made to feel ashamed of their language proficiency or rate of language acquisition.

Jacqui used an anecdote from her earlier language learning experiences to highlight her resilience in pursuing English language learning. In fact, all of the research participants demonstrated resiliency throughout the challenges produced by their lack of language proficiency. They persisted in their search for language learning opportunities and communities where they could work to overcome their sense of vulnerability. For example during our interview, Sam described the importance of pursuing English despite the difficulties as follows:

“English is very important and that we need it everywhere and every time. It is with us like our tongue.”

It seems that the feelings of inferiority and vulnerability were not limited to the early days of living in Canada and beginning to learn English. In one of the classes, Tom lamented that even after having lived in Canada for many years he was still afraid of speaking in English because he was “embarrassed of the pronunciation.” Often quiet in the classroom, Tom felt strongly about his accented English and acutely noted the language difference between himself, his peers, and the facilitators. Consider this excerpt from the interview in which Tom talks about the importance of learning correct pronunciation:

I hope you and another teacher have to fix pronunciation, it's very important. Every time you give to us reading, right? You hear correct or incorrect pronunciation 100% about. I sit beside my friend, he Iran. He speaks English, I do not understand him, and I speak English he does not understand. But you speak, I know. Understand. You, next time you go to our class, give somebody reading and you check, all right?

In the excerpt above, Tom's remarks about his language proficiency echo the ideology of the “uncorrupted origination point” (Chow, 2014, p. 58) of the native-speaker's English. I often debated this problematic binary with Tom and introduced notions of linguistic pragmatism for him to consider. Despite questioning the notions of correct and incorrect pronunciation and soliciting of examples of his successful communication with diverse speakers, Tom consistently returned to his original claim. Consider the following excerpt from the interview where Tom suggests that I am able to understand his irregular pronunciation due to my being a language teacher, while others cannot:

You hope everybody speak English and conversation better, but conversation good you have to speak English [with exact] pronunciation.

And you know vocabulary more. You hope that we can have good conversations, because communication good with people outside, but you forget when we speak English it's not correct pronunciation, they do not understand. Because you are teacher, you know everything. Easy for you, but another people [outside the classroom] who are not teacher, they don't know.

In class and in the interview, Tom gave me multiple suggestions on how to improve my teaching, many of which included that I focus on correcting pronunciation. Relatedly, Bu who was one of the most active and enthusiastic learners of the group also addressed his perceived lack of English language proficiency during our interview. In contrast to Tom, Bu considered himself to be a good speaker of English and underscored the usefulness of being able to speak English well. However, despite this assuredness, Bu was not immune to feeling a sense of failure and vulnerability. In his own words:

N: ok. And do you consider yourself a good speaker of English?

B: yeah. Yeah. If you know it is very useful, I can go travel, I can use a little. That's why.

N: so, you use enough English.

B: that's right. You know so far, my English not fluency. Sometimes I want to spread the word, but my pronunciation. Sometimes people what? What you say? I don't understand...

N: who says that?

B: some Chinese woman. They said my accent very, very hard, they cannot get it. I don't know... you understand me, right?

N: I understand you.

B: yeah, I don't know. Sometimes, I wonder why? I lived here for long time but why I speak somebody don't understand me. I don't know why. But your accent is the same Canadian.

N: no, I have a Russian accent.

B: hm.

While Bu recognized that his English language proficiency was not always sufficient for seamless communication with others, he actively displayed a desire to participate in English language learning opportunities. Being in a contact zone sustained his resilience in the face of negative experiences speaking English and facilitated his engagement and success. To illustrate this argument, in the following section I present the language learning journey of John the oldest member of the Seniors Storytelling Club. His narratives highlight his resilience in overcoming the challenges of learning English in later life.

6.4.1 John: “I don’t give up English”

On Thursday I go to UBC Learning Centre to learn some English. When you talk to me, I listen and understand, but I come back [home and] forget it. My memory is not good. Mother always told me: “Seniors’ time is very hard.” At this moment I understand [her] well. [My] close friend passed away. I’m sad. Because [here in] Canada he studied English with me and we talked to each other. We became close friends. But he passed away [and] I am very, very sad.

I chose this excerpt from John’s interview because he often described his life as being “very hard” and talked about the heavy impact of his friend’s passing on his everyday life. At the time of the research project, John lived in a low-cost housing facility for seniors in the Strathcona neighbourhood. After his wife became sick and unable to take care of herself, John had taken on the homemaker responsibilities. He spent a lot of time at home or with his grandson who visited him on weekends. He often referred to being in “the winter of life” and reminisced about his younger days. At the same time, John was particularly interested in electronic devices, such as iPads, and enjoyed sending emails to his friends.

Coming to Canada in his late 70s, John had to learn English for pragmatic reasons—his son was busy and unable to assist with his daily interactions, and his wife was unwell and couldn't join him. In his own words during an interview:

I have looked after my wife, because she is deaf, sometimes unhappy. [She can't go] shopping, go around. I have to show her. She doesn't know which bus goes to hospital, which bus goes to my son's house. I have to show her. And I have to translate for her. Sometimes she is angry with me: "You always go to out!" I said: "I need to learn English, so I have to go out." This moment, she understood me. Because [if she wants to] go to the bus, go to the hospital I have to translate for her. You know me. The first time I spoke English, I was very scared. I think I have no, no condition to learn. Such a complicated language. Now [I speak] a little bit better, but not good.

In this excerpt, John shares how emotionally challenging this experience has been for him as he felt guilty leaving his wife alone to take care of their daily needs. While emotionally taxing, John's engagement with this new English-speaking environment was also agentive. In the excerpt above he uses "have to" to preface the description of how he assisted his wife (e.g., "have to show her," "have to translate for her"). This language choice suggests that John felt an obligation to learn English to support his wife despite having children who spoke it more fluently. Moreover, he needed to speak English despite the fact that he lived in Chinatown.

It is worth noting, that despite his agentive use of English, John portrayed his language skills as "not good." His comment reflects a degree of negative emotions connected to speaking English and being in "no condition to learn." However, John never explicitly tied this identity to the larger societal structures, to experiences in language learning, or to me and his peers. On the contrary, he commonly referred to the kindness of the people who helped and supported him in

Canada. However, he self-identified as someone who was grateful for this support while being too old to give back, stating that he “feel too old. Just get help, I not contribution. I’m very shamed.” Upon reflecting on the development of his language proficiency over the years, however, John acknowledged its growth. In the interview, I asked John to tell me how his life in Canada has changed since the first day he arrived. This is how he answered:

When I first come here, who is East, who is West, who is South? I went to the streets, [it was] very confusing. Since I study English, I know the avenue name, street name, how to get to SkyTrain, how to get to which number bus and go to shopping. This is easy. But still no [success].

John’s agency in learning the basics of English in order to gain some independence and also support his wife is evident in the attention to the detail in the quote above. While John displays humbleness by suggesting that his efforts are not spectacular, it is important to recognize the agency constructed through these descriptions.

The first dimension of John’s language learning experiences incorporates a perceived pressure to speak English in daily interactions and a desire not to burden the people around him, as well as the sense that he lacked the ability to learn. In addition, John’s narratives addressed the emotional impact of not being able to speak the English language. The interconnectedness of language proficiency and independence is particularly salient in his description of coming to Canada before he officially immigrated. This is particularly evident in the following excerpt from a story “The Time when You Learned Something from a Child”:

I came to Canada with my wife for first time. That was a happy time and a worry time! We were both 70 years old and both [did not understand] English! My son had a job [as an architect]—his job kept him very busy, only on the weekend he had free time to accompany us to look around so that day we had a wonderful time.

Here John describes the time he visited his son prior to deciding to immigrate to Canada as both happy and worrisome. This description suggests an ambivalent stance towards immigration and ties it to his age and inability to understand English. In addition, John and his wife could not explore Vancouver on their own as they needed their son to assist them. John continues his story by highlighting a time when he became lost during that first visit to Canada and how he was helped by a stranger.

One day, we tried to go to a shopping mall to buy some food and look around! Because we were too old to remember well, I lost my way I couldn't find the way to come back! I'm very scare[d] and [nervous]. A boy about 12 years old, I showed him my address he was very friendly and helped us to our home! The boy was so nice and very kind [to] help us.

In this excerpt, John again invokes his age as a reason why he couldn't find his way back home and reiterates the emotional impact of the experience. John's description of the interaction with the boy who helped him and his wife is interesting. John does not emphasize the value of overcoming his negative emotions, instead he focuses on the kindness and friendliness of the child.

In addition to his pragmatic reasons, John's desire to learn was also fuelled by his past experiences. He wanted to learn English because in some way he felt the need to make up for the educational opportunities he had missed earlier in his life. As the opening quote suggests, this journey had a significant emotional impact on John and his sense of identity. John's identity as an older immigrant who is thankful to be living in Canada was constructed in his short self-introduction and throughout the course. In addition to his desire to learn English to gain some independence and support his ailing wife, the theme of peaceful living in a quiet and safe space was central to most of his narratives. As a result, his thankfulness and humility might have

impacted his engagement in the learning activities offered by the UBC Learning Exchange. Despite declining health, he diligently attended all the classes. He always arrived on time, carefully read all the learning materials, took detailed notes, and used his iPad to translate unknown words (because he didn't want "to cause much trouble" and interrupt the flow of the class).

Looking back at John's account, it is important to highlight his desire to remain independent and to be able to give back to the individuals who supported his language learning journey. Pot, Keijzer, and De Bot (2018) note that one's ability to remain independent is important in later life, and that being unable to speak the dominant language can present significant barriers to doing so.

As observed in many studies conducted in older adult learning contexts (Narushima, Liu, & Diestelkamp, 2017; Pot, Keijzer, and De Bot, 2018; Tam, Boulton-Lewis, Buys, & Chui, 2017), John's English language learning experience was closely connected to acknowledgement of his and his wife's vulnerability was to do with their limited physical and cognitive abilities along with their advanced age. In reflecting on his decision to immigrate to Canada, John shared: "my wife says no, no, no, too old. Not easy. I say try it, I thought Canada is much better than China" While there might have been several reasons why John's wife did not feel ready to leave China for Canada, he only mentions her concerns about their advanced age. Throughout his narratives, John refers to age as a factor that influences his language learning experiences.

Consider the following excerpt from the interview:

N: so, how had your life changed since you started learning English here?

J: I think, you know me, my close friend all gone, go to God. But I think I am already 85 years old. My wife deaf. I look after her. She is nice woman. But sometime angry with me, because I said, and she didn't

understand. And she said: Oh, you are maybe angry with me? No. I understand when my mother told me: "Seniors' time is very sad, very hard."

N: so why do seniors continue learning English?

J: I think I am also stupid. So old! A friend told me, you are not young! Why are learning language, other language? This not easy! I understand well. Because, memory, grammar, too much new word. For example, Canada's language very complicated. Very complicated. I think you very smart, you can speak English so good not easy.

Here, his sense of inadequacy is reinforced by his friend's comment. Instead of contradicting his friend's ageist remark, John agrees with it by saying that for him the experience of learning was difficult. In her work on the role of age in language learning, Ramírez Gómez (2016a) argues that many older language learners harbour ageist stereotypes regarding their abilities to learn a new language. She argues that these beliefs are reinforced due to the lack of programmatic understanding of older adult learning needs and absence of courses tailored specifically to them. In the Canadian context, according to Guo (2013), language learning curricula are often geared toward ensuring the employability of immigrant language learners, which effectively excludes immigrant seniors. In John's case, the programs at the UBC Learning Exchange were the first ones he had encountered that addressed seniors' learning needs. He remarked: "Other places they think you are too old to study." This educational experience could have contributed to his self-deprecating stance regarding his language learning and use. Despite such a negative stance, John displayed resilience as he continued attending programs geared for both language learners and the wider community at the UBC Learning Exchange.

The second dimension of John's language learning experiences in Canada incorporate his desire to learn new things and search for new friendships and comradeship as well as his desire to

catch up on lost opportunities. During our interview, he often talked about the value of communication as an opportunity to learn.

I'm very scared. You know me. I'm not sure if I describe correctly. I think communicate how to say, I told you something, you told me something. I can learn from others, improve English, understand Canada's culture, history, make friends.

In this excerpt, John specifically highlights that for him learning English is a vulnerable practice. While he shares his feelings of being scared, he also displays resilience and determination to continue on his learning journey. He also addresses the creation of meaningful relationships with peers as one of his language-learning goals. Indeed, he was resilient in trying to overcome the physical (due to his age) and language barriers in order to achieve this goal. Despite being in poor health, having to take care of his ailing wife, and needing to take a bus to the UBC Learning Exchange, John persistently came to every class and stayed after class to chat with classmates. Narushima, Liu, and Diestelkamp (2017) highlight the “synergetic connection between the individual and social aspects of their learning” (p. 7) in the older adult learning context. Similarly, John's experience learning English when he was 70 years old created a certain synergy between himself and the social context in which the learning took place. He became very close to two learners in the Seniors Storytelling Club as well as becoming a recognized face at the UBC Learning Exchange. In addition to developing relationships with his peers, John developed a relationship with me and frequently invited me over to meet his family, to go for walks, and to catch up long after my research project was over and the Seniors Storytelling Club had ended its activities.

During his participation in the Seniors Storytelling Club learning activities John wrote only two stories: “My Childhood” and “Studying is Important.” Both of them were unsolicited and

did not follow the prompts that I had prepared. The first story, “My Childhood,” which opened this section, recounts John’s challenging upbringing and the reasons why he encouraged his children to get a good education.

My family was poor, so when I was only 14 years old, I left my hometown to go to the factory to learn to make clocks. That time was miserable: I worked from morning to night, there was no weekend. I worked for 13 hours every day. After work we slept in the workshop even on the weekend. During that time, I missed my parents very very very much. I had to work hard, otherwise I would be fired. Due to this difficult work, I understood that only by being brave and working hard I could live longer and better. It also made me learn how to overcome this difficult time in the future. If I have a child in the future, I must create good conditions and environment so that my child could have a good education and no longer suffer this miserable life anymore!

In this narrative, John reminisces about his childhood, feeling vulnerable, and the sacrifices he and his family had to make in pursuit of a better life. He addresses his own emotional experience of family separation as well as the early genesis of his belief that being diligent and hardworking are prerequisites for having a good life. This story also suggests that these early experiences laid the foundation for John’s resilience in the face of the challenges he experienced after immigrating to Canada. For John, the main outcome of those early experiences was his decision to focus on sheltering his children from having to face a similar fate. As such, this story shows John’s identity as emerging from his enabled agency as an older immigrant and from his constrained agency at the age of 14 when he had to work.

In addition, living closer to his children in Canada allowed John to observe things that sustained his resilience as he continued on his lifelong learning mission. Their educational

successes, especially their knowledge of multiple languages, served as points of pride for John. He explained this during our interview when I asked him to tell me about his family.

This moment I'm very happy. I have three children. One daughter two son. This second is here. He is very diligent, he understands France and German and Netherlands language. But English much better. So, I very proud.

Here John specifically remarks on how proud he is of his son's multilingualism and his diligence. John, too, could be described as a very diligent learner. In our interview, he said that only sickness could prevent him from attending classes at the UBC Learning Exchange. He also noted that his wife was not interested in learning English and that in other places he was considered too old to enroll. An opportunity to learn English was precious to him, therefore he was resilient in the face of any obstacles that might prevent him from pursuing it. In his words: "If I don't sick, I always like come to. I hate me too old, just enjoy learning something new. Have to contribution, very shame". While some research suggests that not all older adults can articulate the value of lifelong learning in their lives (Cusack, 1994), John actively drew on the experience of being deprived of learning opportunities (and the consequent sense of vulnerability), his role as the primary caretaker for his wife, and the success of his children to sustain his resilience to the ageist stereotypes that he experienced. I want to finish with a quote from John's interview that summarizes his complex relationship with language learning in later life.

A friend told me you very stupid, you not young, English very difficult, you need spend a lot of money, don't understand well, don't waste time! Look around! Watch TV! Go to travel. I think go to travel need a lot of money, but English I like it. So, it's also very very difficult for me, but I think it's worth it.

6.5 Summary

This chapter's overarching theme was related to agency as I answered the research questions: What have been immigrant seniors' experiences of English language learning? What has influenced their efforts to learn English over time? To answer these questions, I performed an analysis of the data derived from the participants written narratives and interview responses, as well as from my researcher's journal. The three themes that I explored related to experiencing the impact of ageing, creating spaces of cultural engagement and belonging, and displaying vulnerability and resilience in the search for language learning opportunities. Further, I used the data generated by three participants Cindy, Julia, and John as illustrative examples of these themes.

The first theme that I identified in the data pertained to participants' experiences of grappling with the impact of ageing on their language learning experiences. My analysis suggests that the process of ageing has both positive and negative social dimensions when it comes to the learning experiences of immigrant seniors. On one hand, the participants realized that as seniors they could draw on valuable resources such as their life experiences, but on the other hand, they perceived their age as a liability when it came to language learning. During class discussions, in their written texts, and in the interviews, participants often reproduced larger ageist discourses regarding their cognitive development and ability to learn new things. This suggests that many of them have internalized ageist discourses. These findings echo those of Ramirez Gómez (2016a) and Andrew (2012) who argue that internalized ageism can have a significant impact on the learning trajectories of older individuals. To explore the theme of ageing and longevity in more detail I relayed Cindy's experiences and background. Cindy's narratives tell the story of an optimistic senior who is ageing gracefully through participation in the free language learning

activities offered in Metro Vancouver. Her narratives reflect the larger discourses of longevity in later life and lifelong personal growth.

The second theme addressed the role of language learning in seniors' cultural engagement and belonging. The participants actively constructed the idea that learning English would help them find a space of belonging in English-speaking communities. They drew on discursive constructions of culture to support their arguments. My analysis suggests that all participants desired access to "Canadian" culture, but that they imbued this concept with different meanings. Despite differences in understanding what constitutes culture and cultural knowledge, the participants saw language learning as a gateway to accessing it. Simultaneously, the participants acknowledged that such a pursuit of cultural belonging is often never ending. To illustrate, I presented Julia's story. She was determined to learn English since the first day she arrived in Canada. Julia seemed to equate knowing English with being culturally engaged with Canadian culture; however, she was unable to fully realize her goals. These findings parallel Warriner's (2007) argument that in immigrant contexts English is often understood to be the "key" to creating spaces of belonging in the new country, but that "learning English by itself is, after all, not the 'key'"(p. 345). Moreover, in Julia's case, the early experiences of learning English often left her frustrated and unsatisfied. Therefore, she continued searching for language learning programs where she could finally feel comfortable and be able to reach her goal of learning more about Canadian culture.

The final theme addressed the experiences of vulnerability while learning a language in later life and outlined the participants' resilience in the face of this challenge. The participants shared about how they felt embarrassed by their accents, their shyness to speak in public, and their frustration with existing language learning opportunities. At the same time, they displayed

their desire to overcome these feelings and resilience by taking multiple language learning classes in a variety of settings. John's experiences served as an example of this theme. He addressed difficulties in overcoming his social isolation as well as the linguistic and cultural discord he experienced during his language learning experiences. At the same time, he seemed to be extremely resilient in his pursuit of language learning opportunities. While demonstrating resilience in overcoming his difficulties and provide language support for his wife, John did not take on the identity of a proficient speaker and successful learner. Despite recognizing his vulnerability, through learning English he was able to develop important connections that expanded his social circle. Overall, John's genuine desire to learn, and his resilience in the face of challenges sustained his engagement in language learning in later life.

Overall, John's, Julia's, and Cindy's experiences were clear representations of the themes—ageing and longevity, cultural engagement and belonging, vulnerability and resilience. All three illustrative cases offered an understanding of language learning in later life and the multiple reasons why seniors pursue it. Previous research suggests that retirees primarily see learning as a major component of their self-efficacy after retirement (Leung et al., 2006; Leung et al., 2008). The data analysed in this chapter suggests other purposes for education in later life, particularly in the context of immigration and language learning.

Chapter 7: Community-Based Language Learning in Later Life

7.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the role that community-based language learning plays in the lives of older adult language learners. I conceptualize community-based language learning spaces as contact zones—the Seniors Storytelling Club at the UBC Learning Exchange as an example of such a contact zone. In order to understand the qualities that define the Seniors Storytelling Club as a contact zone this chapter addresses the following research question:

- How do immigrant seniors perceive the role of community-based learning in their lives?

To answer this research question, I present the three major themes that characterize what the research participants achieved by participating in community programs—(1) connections, (2) synergies and discordances, and (3) expanding roles. I unpack these themes by focusing on the information provided by three research participants: Jacqui, Bu, and Justin. My decision to select these three participants was driven by the fact that they all addressed the role of the community-based language learning in their lives at length. Focusing on the UBC Learning Exchange at large, their accounts construct them not only as language learners but also as competent individuals who had found support networks in this community. At the same time, these three seniors' narratives highlight the differences in their experiences.

7.2 Connections

Contact zones are constantly reconstructed due to the learners' comings and goings in search of different opportunities. The first theme addressed the importance of connections that can be established in community-based language learning. Seniors Storytelling Club seemed to present the research participants with an opportunity to overcome their isolation and meet people who shared their interests.

During the course of the study all of participants shared their reflections about the Seniors Storytelling Club (and the UBC Learning Exchange as the broader context for their language learning) through their writing, in the interviews, and during class discussions. Consider this story written by Sam, an immigrant from Iran.

An Intergenerational Connection

Our educational place is the UBC Learning Exchange. It was started around 16 years ago. The UBC Learning Exchange is one of the first centers to build relationships between the young and the old people. The young people are UBC students who are facilitators; the old—are the seniors, who are learners or trainers. The young and the old contribute or share their knowledge and experience. Therefore, the UBC Learning Exchange is one of the best ways to learn, to teach, to train, and to enable students to become more experienced. It also makes seniors get more energy and modern information from the younger people. We thank coordinator and Natalia as a facilitator, because they do so well. All the people, who work at the Learning Exchange are kind and knowledgeable, and we say thanks.

In this unsolicited text, Sam highlights the intergenerational nature of the UBC Learning Exchange and highlights the process of building new connections as one of the positive outcomes of community-based learning. In a similar vein, in one of our classes Ann, a 62-year-old learner from Mainland China, reflected on the reasons why community-based learning was so popular with seniors. In her opinion, younger people need to learn English faster so they can “get to work.” She argued that because of this, language learning in other centres is more intensive and practical. Seniors and retired learners, she explained, have more time, but they don’t want homework. She concluded that seniors just want to have conversations and to meet new people instead.

In a city that provides limited language learning opportunities for older immigrants the UBC Learning Exchange stands out. When asked to compare the UBC Learning Exchange to other community-based learning centres, most of the research participants described their experience as positive. They highlighted smaller class sizes (up to ten learners), having an opportunity to talk in the comfort of a supportive group setting, and varied lesson topics and formats as being among the main programmatic advantages. In addition, participants seemed to enjoy the way they were treated at the UBC Learning Exchange. While I personally appreciate these sentiments, I want to acknowledge a possibility that participants were not comfortable critiquing the centre at length in their conversations with me, given my multiple roles within the centre and the fact that these responses were not submitted to me anonymously.

Many of the seniors noted that through participation in community-based programs they were able to build relationships with their fellow learners. During one conversation, for example, Jacqui explained that before coming to the program, she was lonely and had little support:

I need to take care myself. I need to know more English. Just like [if I want to] to go to my family doctor, to go anywhere, receive mail from the government. If I know more than it is easy for me. If I don't know then it is very difficult. Just like [in] my building, always the notices are English. I am the only Chinese. It is very difficult. If I learn more, then more more more. Today I learn something, maybe tomorrow I will forget. Then I will keep coming. I have no friends, so I like to come here every day because I like to study. I like to learn more, I want to improve my English.

She went on to say that at the UBC Learning Exchange she was able to obtain support from the staff at the centre and connect with fellow learners. This it seems to have given her a sense of

purpose. Jacqui was very sensitive to any disturbances in the classes. During our interview, for example, she reflected on a debate about Taiwan-China relations, stating:

Um, I [get] unhappy when someone just talks about Taiwan or China. I don't like it. Here just talk about the class, don't talk about other [things] I don't like that. Yeah just like that, I don't want it. Here [we are] just learning English. Ok? Just learning English. I don't want fighting, I don't want unhappy. I don't like that.

This excerpt suggests that Jacqui valued feeling happy and the comradery in the classes; however, when the sense of connection and mutual understanding were temporarily broken due to political differences of opinion, she felt unhappy.

In John's case, learning English in a community-based setting served as a way to carve out a space where he, a language learner, felt like he belonged. In the interview, John explained that meeting new people was equally as important to him in his language learning journey as improving his language proficiency. While describing his ideal class, John shared:

J: I think communicate how to say, I told you some, you told me some. I can teach each other, improve English, understand Canada's culture, history, make friends.

Another aspect that seemed to support the creation of new connections in the class was the enactment of multilingual exchanges and transculturation (creation of inter-cultural spaces within the classroom). In my observation of the class dynamics I noticed that although the English Conversation programs had an official "English preferred" policy, the learners constantly undertook counter-practices and used other languages to construct meaning in the classroom. These practices, however, did not impede the language learning as many seniors reported that they felt more confident and connected with each other while speaking and writing their creative stories. Some learners went as far as to suggest that the model of the Seniors Storytelling Club

should be replicated at other language centres in Vancouver. This evaluation of the project highlights that community-based learning often serves as a contact zone that allows for the negotiation of power and establishment of new productive relationships in the classroom. Other, more formal programs might limit or overlook the benefits of such processes.

In conclusion, I believe that in order to understand language learning experiences as constructing and unfolding within a symbolic contact zone, we need to pay close attention to the social aspects of learning and connections that are developed in and beyond the classrooms. Through participating in the creative story-sharing work, the research participants not only learned a new language, they were able to form relationships with their peers and display empathy and understanding for each other's struggle to learn English. These observations echo the findings of many community-based studies that suggest that learners perceive reduced feelings of marginalization (Kim & Merriam, 2010), increased self-esteem (Bridwell, 2013), and empowerment to affect change (Rivera, 2003) after finding nourishing communities throughout their language learning trajectories. To illustrate how learning English might support creation of new connections in later life, I present the case of Bu who spoke powerfully of the value of community-based language learning and his desire to make new connections through it.

7.2.1 Bu: "UBC Exchange give me good life"

Telling stories is really good. I want to tell them stories from my country, and I want to them to tell me about their country, yeah.

The excerpt above was taken from my interview with Bu when we discussed my idea of creating the Seniors Storytelling Club. I was showing Bu a collection of the participants' stories that I was preparing for publication as a present for them. I asked Bu why he chose to join a storytelling class, but only wrote one story about Vietnam (which he entitled "My Escape to Freedom"). The excerpt above encapsulates his answer. Albeit short, this excerpt is illustrative of

the role community-based language learning programs played in fulfilling Bu's desire to create new connections and learn about other people's lives.

Bu arrived in Canada during the refugee crisis in South Vietnam in the late 1970s. He landed in Quebec and spent a significant amount of time working on a farm there. In 2020, after living in various Canadian provinces, Bu settled in Vancouver's Strathcona area. Bu's language learning experiences were framed by his intersecting identities as a political refugee, a man at the early stage of retirement, and a single immigrant living in the Strathcona area of Vancouver. Bu often alluded to feelings of loneliness and isolation, and his need for friends. Consider the following short exchange, which took place at the beginning of our interview:

N: So, um, tell me a little bit about your life.

B: My life? My life now sometimes very stressed.

N: Stressed?

B: Too sad. Lonely.

N: Lonely?

B: My family, my children . . . no relationship here [in Vancouver].

This interaction was prompted by my initial question, even though I did not ask about the emotional impacts of living in Canada. However, Bu took this question as an invitation to share his feelings about being a senior and raise the issue of social isolation that many older people face. My further probing into Bu's narrative resulted in an affective response. Bu was eager to elaborate on his feelings and Bu expanded his narrative to encompass other issues. He did by reminiscing about his early days in Canada right after he "escaped to freedom," which is how Bu often justified why he left Vietnam.

N: and do you remember your first memory of Canada? I know it was 35
years ago.

B: the first time when I went to Canada, in January when the airplane dropped down on the field of Montreal. Oh, I saw lot of snow! I said: "What is that?" When I got off the airplane, oh too cold. In January, [it was] very cold in Montreal that year. Yeah. After that I had one week. My sponsor who were Holland, Holland people.

N: Holland?

B: Holland.

N: ah, Dutch. Dutch people sponsored you to come here.

B: yeah. I lived with them for six months to work. Milk cows. You know milk cows. I lived with them for six months. They told me: "Go to school." I studied there for only six months. But very, [it was] very lonely, because [I had] nobody. You don't have family there, you know. I don't know if you know, Clinton, Ontario, very far from Toronto. That's very...

N: isolated?

B: isolated, yeah. About 4000 people live in a small town. My emotions, very sad, you know why? I miss my family, now I live small town. That was before I think about maybe Canada is big, big country. But oh, like that. Every day I saw snow on the field, the few cars just drive by and I have to do the job, take the hay for the cow, milk from the cow, everything. I didn't do it before.

Bu's expectations of Canada were those of escaping to freedom and away from the regime change and war unfolding in Vietnam. However, he faced the reality of living in a small Quebec town, having to perform physical labour that he was unaccustomed to and feeling isolated due to lack of communication with the community around him. He again communicated feelings of loneliness, isolation, sadness, and an overall depressed state, which he found hard to overcome.

While Bu spent most of his adult life in Canada, he was unable to fully participate in the social life of this country. In fact, he had to perform manual labor, which consumed most of his physical resources. Semi-retired at the time of the study, by attending the UBC Learning Exchange Bu was “catching up” on the educational opportunities that he understood to be a prerequisite in order to understand how society worked. This affected his engagement with the language learning activities offered by the UBC Learning Exchange. An active individual, Bu had many interests in addition to learning English. He participated in an online karaoke network, which allowed individuals to connect with each other and sing duets using karaoke apps. He also volunteered at a local Vietnamese seniors’ club. In our interview, Bu suggested that “going to school and learning English” was crucial for an immigrant who wanted to succeed in Canada. As one of the immigrants who was unable to attend formal classes upon his arrival in Canada and for many years after, Bu took advantage of the many activities offered at the UBC Learning Exchange. His desire to learn was driven by a search for new social connections, to meet new people, and to learn new and exciting things.

Bu’s early experiences of learning English are similar to the cases described in Fleming’s (2007) study in that his language training was basic and sufficient for him to perform simple tasks on the farm. This language learning experience reinforced his unequal and isolated status within a contact zone. However, in some way, this experience framed Bu’s desire to be a part of a community and to keep an active lifestyle so he could make multiple connections with different people. Over the years, Bu attempted to expand his social networks. For example, he participated in sporting activities, took part in seniors-focused events at the local community centre, and attended religious services. However, these networks did not seem to provide Bu with sufficient opportunities to practice communicating in English.

In addition, Bu participated in other seniors-friendly activities, which provided him with insufficient opportunities to practice language. In the interview, Bu mentioned: “I have to go to swim, yeah, everyday swim. After that I meet some friends to talk, I go to the senior community, sometimes I go to do volunteer work, that’s ok my life.” Bu remarked that his peers often did not speak English, stating “in my senior community, no, I can’t use my English. Everybody speaks Vietnamese.” He also observed that they were much older than him: “I am 64 they are over 70, so cannot speak English,” and that he was worried about losing the ability to speak any English in this context. For example, he shared in the interview:

You know, I study English here for almost two year, yeah, I want to keep it. If I don’t go to school, we forget everything. That’s why I want to keep it, ok. Every week I talk a little bit, I keep it, right?

In addition, Bu’s desire to master English was rooted in his desire to be active and self-sufficient. He spoke about his friends’ experiences of being dependent on their children who were in turn too preoccupied with their own lives to support their ageing parents.

[Seniors] want to learn English because when they have trouble, they always ask children to help them, but the children always busy, so they have to ask another people if they ask another people they have to pay. Having to go to the hospital or go to the lawyer or something they have to pay. So that’s why they have to study English, so they can do by themselves, right?

Bu’s navigation of the seniors-focused activities in the DTES brought him to the UBC Learning Exchange, which as Bu reported gave him a “good life” along with the experience of having fun and trying new things.

Yeah . . . UBC exchange give me good life, I can go communicate with people, speaking English every day. You have fun. So. When I meet a lot

of people I don't get stressed anymore. Yeah. I get to oh, let me go to school. Now try something.

Here Bu described the learning space as a place in which he was able to interact with other speakers of English and make meaning in a safe, fun environment. Bu's words are reflective of Pratt's (1991) argument that within a contact zone, groups might create spaces that provide them with opportunities to "constitute themselves as horizontal, homogeneous, sovereign communities with high degrees of trust, shared understandings, and temporary protection from legacies of oppression" (p. 40). Specifically, having faced challenges in accessing social networks, Bu's agency is realized through his desire to "try something" new by attending the UBC Learning Exchange. Indeed, Bu was one of the research participants who took advantage of multiple programs at the UBC Learning Exchange beyond the English Conversation Program, including the dancing and singing events. Bu's engagement in these programs is somewhat similar to the participants' experience in Canagarajah's (1997) research on minority students' academic success in North America. Canagarajah (1997) addressed the fact that lack of safe houses might pose obstacles for those learners who strive to achieve certain standard academic literacies. In Bu's narrative there is no indication of such a challenge. His simple desire to communicate with diverse cultural groups was realized in this space, which according to the mandate of the UBC Learning Exchange prioritizes social connections over the pragmatic goals of developing language proficiency.

Bu displayed agency by shaping his own language learning trajectory within the UBC Learning Exchange. For example, he did not want to follow the prepared prompts, in fact he actively resisted them. Instead, he wanted to write his own memoir in a genre that he preferred and share it in class. "I want to share my story," he once told me in the class, and conveyed his excitement about having a collection of stories printed. On the final day of the project, Bu invited

his Vietnamese friends (who were not learners at the UBC Learning Exchange) to come and witness him as a published author featured in a collection of stories that I had printed for the research participants. At the same time, Bu described himself as a lifelong learner and explained his desire to learn was based on wanting to make up for lost opportunities. Similar to the seniors who participated in Leung et al.'s (2006, 2008) studies, Bu saw value in learning new things and clearly connected his ability to "go to school" with learning about Canadian culture. Despite having lived in Canada for more than half of his life and self-identifying as a Canadian, Bu still sought out "real" Canadian connections. Consistent with findings that community-based literacy programs promote the well-being of learners and create community cohesion (Bridwell, 2013; Golding, 2011a; Leskowitz & Hemphill, 2013; McIntyre, 2012), Bu's narratives suggest that he was happy to interact with people of all backgrounds in his community. A clear illustration of this is in his assertion in an interview that he enjoyed not having to pay for the community-based programs, meeting like-minded people, and interacting with speakers of varying levels of English language proficiency.

Overall, Bu's stories about his language learning were those of progress, the search for a good life, and finding a community that would help him overcome his isolation. In our interview, Bu summarized why he had been consistently attending community programs for several years as follows:

For me learning is fun too. Why I learn? I want to talk, I want to talk. If I have a friend like you, I speak English every day. After a year, my English will improve very far, but I speak my senior Vietnamese, how can my English, it goes down and down and down. That's why I want to keep UBC. Yeah, I don't want it to close. I want to try here one or two more year, after that my English is very good, I want to be a facilitator to help people, my people. I teach you English! (laughing). You know if I

teach English to my people, it is easy to understand, because if I don't know I look my own language oh you have to use that and that, right? Later then you, you still teach them. Because you teach them a lot, but they don't understand. Nothing. But I teach them a little bit and they understand, because I use that one and that one. That's very good, people can speak fluently. I like very good. Same level.

7.3 Synergies and Discordances

As a contact zone, Seniors Storytelling Club was constructed by learners with divergent life trajectories. These dynamics affect the relationships constructed within the classrooms. The second theme highlights the complex power-laden nature of these relationships. Diverse learners' needs, at times were in conflict and at time in accord during classes and the degree of engagement with the conflict varied depending on the power relations that existed in the class.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, immigrants who begin language learning are not powerless. In fact, they are able to access language learning opportunities because they navigated contact zones when they immigrated. For some learners, community-based language learning facilitated a sense of synergy within the contact zone where they were supported in their language practice, in contrast to struggling to speak English to strangers. The following comment shared by Sam during our interview illustrates this shared feeling:

I think enjoy I enjoy the Learning Exchange but that's a yes, I think yes. Because I am thinking 100% everything is good, [the people who work there] are interested and say welcome everybody. Me too. They are interested, they have a good communication. They are welcoming.

Justin expressed similar feelings of joy and synergy when, during our interview, he observed: "Because I have many experiences, I have many stories, I like speaking, I enjoy speaking. So, I can feel very oh—speak more, oh happier, more comfortable." As the quote

suggests, storytelling is a pedagogical practice that not only facilitated the learning of a language, it also led to a sense of well-being. In contrast, when reflecting on his language use in his everyday life, Bu remarked, “when we can’t speak English, we become upset, we become depressed.” This response reflects the general sentiment of the group at the beginning of the project. Because they lived in isolated or monolingual communities, for some learners the Seniors Storytelling Club was one of the few places where they could practice speaking English. For example, at the end of the course John explained his experience as a “lucky” opportunity to meet peers from diverse language communities. He explained: “I am very happy and lucky to join this class, I learned a lot from my instructor. I met many people from different countries and different language.”

In addition, learners’ co-construction of the Club as a synergetic space facilitated flexible language use. Most of our lessons were dominated by English, however this was not always the case. I explain this by presenting an excerpt from my researcher’s journal.

Once, as I walk around the class, I notice that Mary, Jacqui and Julia’s booklets were covered in Chinese characters and their notebooks have neat rows of translations of the new words they encountered in the text. Tom is asking June to pause and explain the words to him in English, while John has pulled out an iPad and is using a translation app to help him with the text. When the initial reading of the text is over, June encourages the group to discuss it. I notice that Bu and Tom are talking in Vietnamese to each other, they are still trying to translate the text. June is helping John. As I approach, I hear that they are talking in Mandarin. Later, June tells me that John wanted to know details about her background and her life in Canada. Jacqui, Julia, Tom and Sam brought their own stories to share in class. Ann wrote her stories in Mandarin,

but she wants to translate them in English before sharing with us. (May 12, 2016)

As can be seen from this vignette, during the course of the lesson the participants engaged in collaborative translanguaging practices. June and I actively encouraged the use of many languages in the classroom, seeing this process as a scaffolding tool. As a result, the multiple languages used in our classroom made up a complex system. For example, Ann was insistent that her stories be translated into English before presenting them to the group. Despite having written some of her stories in Mandarin she refused to speak Mandarin in class thus constructing the identity of an English language learner. On the other hand, Tom and Bu needed to understand the text before engaging in discussion. Instead of turning to their non-Vietnamese-speaking peers, they relied on each other to translate the unknown words. Their identities as Vietnamese speakers were reflected in the texts they created as a product of their act of translation. It can be argued that these seniors found ways to create a synergetic space within the contact zone where they felt empowered to engage in of transcultural and translingual practices.

However, as noted earlier in Chapter 4, contact zones are also saturated by contentious relations of power. The picture of the Seniors Storytelling Club as a contact zone would be incomplete without acknowledging the discordances that took place in the classroom. One significant episode of a clash between two learners took place in our seventh class when they suddenly began discussing the topic of Taiwan-China relations. I recorded this episode in my researcher's journal.

The discussion started from a seemingly non-threatening vocabulary question when Tom asked the definition of the word "ethnicity." As June began explaining what the word meant, Ann and Justin got into a heated argument about the exact percentage of the Han ethnicity in China. Ann

remarked that as a Han she disagreed with Justin's estimate that this ethnicity was not the dominant one in Mainland China. Disregarding her comment, Justin remarked that Taiwanese youth are more respectful than the Chinese, using the large number of lonely seniors as an example of the lack of intergenerational connection in Chinese community in China. Ann disagreed. She said that "a lot of elderly people have a lot of power, they have sharp mind." As Justin and Ann argued, their voices rung in the silence of the class, as other participants were beginning doing other tasks. I noticed that June was getting upset because she was unable to control this argument. This exchange quickly took over the whole class, with everyone adding their two cents. Afraid that this exchange would completely derail the class, I intervened and change the topic shifting the focus on the topic of the reading. However, Ann was visibly upset by the way the discussion was cut off and at the earliest opportunity she returned to the original discussion about China and its political structure. Her inability to visit her parents (once every three years) was due to economic hardships, she said, not the culture as Justin argued. Jacqui agreed with her saying that everyone wants to visit their parents, but not everyone has money to do so. (May 26, 2016)

In this vignette we see Justin and Ann engaging in a series of exchanges that impact the whole class. In several follow-up interviews the participants noted how uncomfortable this episode made them feel, and criticized Justin and Ann for bringing an open confrontation into the classroom space, which they expected to be peaceful and non-confrontational. For example, during our interview, Jacqui evaluated the episode as follows: "he always says Taiwan is a good one, we Chinese are lower one. Doesn't matter! I don't care. For me, yeah, I don't care." In the interview, Julia remarked that in order for me to fully understand what happened on that day, I needed to understand that "Chinese is ancient country and Chinese history is very complex."

Moreover, she noted that it was wrong to bring together ethnicity, law, and intergenerational relations as “relationship is according to the love, not law.” Similarly, Sam remarked that this class left an impact on him. In contrast to Jacqui, he referred to the debate to suggest that intergenerational connections are important in any culture or country. As this incident shows, the community created in the contact zone can become a space of conflict and discordance, which might bring discomfort to the members of the contact zone. While I tried to mediate the passionate discussion between Ann and Justin, Ann took it upon herself to finish the argument and engaged the other learners as her supporters. As such, this episode also highlights that due to a certain sense of ownership, learners can collectively address conflicts that arise in their classroom and negotiate how such conflicts are mediated.

At the same time, I observed the participants progressively taking ownership of their own learning, shaping the Seniors Storytelling Club as a contact zone where power relationships are negotiated. In class, they actively discussed their goals and objectives for joining the program, adding to the class agenda and often taking it over. I observed that instead of being passive followers the learners exercised discretion over their learning projects, choosing their own topics, modes of communication, and offering feedback to each other. For instance, Justin, Cindy, Ann and Mary seemed to use the prompts that I prepared to generate their narratives, whereas Bu, Tom and Julia chose not to follow these prompts and set off to write other stories. John and Sam used the prompts, but also came up with their own topics for storytelling in class. Jacqui and Bu were deeply invested in practicing their speaking skills in class and writing skills at home. Further, participants gave multiple recommendations on how their language learning experience could be improved. This taking control of their own learning can be considered as an example of

power negotiation achieved by learners adding their voices to the discussion about future iterations of the program.

The following section tells Jacqui's story as it pertains to the understanding community-based language learning as a synergetic learning space in which she was empowered to address the jarring discordances she encountered in her daily language learning and use experiences.

7.3.1 Jacqui: "This place gives me my power back"

I came here [to Canada] like the sky fall on the ground. It's very hard. Very hard. Very hard. I came here [because] I wanted to at that time, I was younger than right now. Then I didn't know it [would be] very hard. So ok, I came [here], but it was very hard, very hard. Then someone said, why did you come here? You in China had a very good life. . . . But in here everything I needed to do [by myself] and [learn] the language by myself, [it was] very hard.

The quote above comes from my interview with Jacqui. Originally from mainland China, Jacqui lived alone in an assisted living facility within a social housing project on the west side of Vancouver. She described her life in China as a wonderful time and her family as "very nice [people, who] never argued, everybody liked them." She often remarked that she considered herself very lucky to have been born into such a loving community. The sixth child, Jacqui left China in search of new adventures abroad; however, her life in Canada presented great challenges and heartbreak for her. Prior to immigration, Jacqui worked as a school teacher and enjoyed an active community life. In Canada, she felt isolated and lonely until she found a community within the walls of the UBC Learning Exchange.

At the time of the research project, Jacqui had an extensive presence at the UBC Learning Exchange. She had participated in multiple language-focused activities as well as non-language focused ones. Moving beyond seeing herself as a language learner, Jacqui was considering

becoming a facilitator in the lower level language classes in the English Conversation program. In addition, she was an active member of several organizations and a volunteer at a local church.

Jacqui's excitement about being part of the community-based language learning program was palpable. In addition to participating in English Conversation classes and events, she attended the general programs at the UBC Learning Exchange. Jacqui had deep affection for the staff and the patrons of the UBC Learning Exchange, including her fellow language learners and the diverse patrons of the daily drop-in program. Jacqui's own journey at the learning centre began with the computer literacy drop-in program, and she repeatedly stressed how glad she was to be part of this community. The UBC Learning Exchange was not the first language program that Jacqui had attended. She had sought out multiple language opportunities since arriving in Canada. She attended language courses for newcomers and YMCA programming, as well as actively practicing English at her places of work. When I asked her to elaborate on the reasons that make community-based language learning so special she spoke to the fact that only in those walls did she regain her power.

Without going into much detail in our interview Jacqui described coming to Canada in negative terms often repeating that she had no choice: "I have no choice. Someone said 'oh, if I am you, I will come back,' but I choose come here, ok I stayed here." Jacqui often described her experience of moving from China to Canada as like the "sky fall[ing] on the ground" and openly shared the hardship that she had to overcome as an immigrant. In addition, Jacqui addressed how her low language proficiency intensified her identity as a racialized immigrant. In the interview, she explains this as follows:

I came here, someone said: "Oh, you are Chinese, come back to China" all the time. Right now, in my building [where I live], only I am Chinese,

[everyone else] is white people, then someone said: "Why did you come here, go back to China". I was very upset.

By labelling Jacqui as Chinese and telling her to go back to China, the anonymous speaker seems to suggest that she doesn't belong in Canada. As a single female immigrant, Jacqui's only relationships were those she established with her neighbours and work colleagues. She was the only resident of Asian heritage in her apartment complex. The other residents were white and proficient speakers of English, but Jacqui did not fit any of these criteria. Thus, her agentive search for employment and learning to speak English were not recognised.

Jacqui reported being constructed as different through the short exchange with her neighbour. Addressing a similar issue, cultural theorists Jackson II and Moshin (2013) write that "naming is a part of the larger discursive/ideological act of creating the Other, of maintaining difference" (p.349). Jacqui had followed the expected trajectory of an immigrant by working hard, learning English, maintaining a home, and interacting with her neighbours. Despite Jacqui's experiences in Canada, her working multiple jobs, and her tireless pursuit of learning English, all it took was one remark to erase her accomplishments and reduce her to being a foreigner who was unwelcome. This experience had a profound effect on her self-esteem and intensified her loneliness. Jacqui's short narrative is interesting because it highlights the challenges of racialisation many immigrants face upon arrival in Canada. The dominant discourse of colour-blind multiculturalism did not carry over into Jacqui's daily interactions. Instead, her experience demonstrates what it felt like to be subject to the racist attitudes shown towards those of Asian descent.

In addition, Jacqui sensed the discordance between her abilities and the limited socioeconomic opportunities she was able to access due to her limited English language proficiency. Despite having worked as a school teacher in China, Jacqui took manual labour

jobs, which she didn't enjoy. Consider the following excerpt from our interview in which Jacqui describes her experiences while working at a bakery in Vancouver.

When I found a job there, I said ok. They always [wanted to hire] the young people. Only I was Chinese. I said ok. Because I liked it there, [I liked to] make the bread. Every day I made bread. But it was a hard job. Very hard job. Take the dough, in the morning, two sugars, two creams, then every day I was working. Because I have no choice. I don't know English. They said ok, it's a hard job, nobody likes it. I said ok. I worked every day.

Drawing on these negative and challenging experiences, Jacqui ascribed a lot of value in having the UBC Learning Exchange as a synergetic space. In particular, she addressed that her interactions with the people who work there were empowering:

They give me, gave me back my power. Because before anytime they said you no good, you no good. Then I said, "I am no good, I can't do anything."

In this short excerpt, Jacqui uses the phrase "my power" to describe something that was given back to her, implying that it was taken away from her by the people she had interacted with after coming to Canada. She also pointed out that her feelings of inferiority started fading after she began attending classes at the UBC Learning Exchange. In the interview, she specifically addressed how her participation in the centre's learning activities had a profound impact on her life. Not only was she able to attend learning activities in the centre, with the help of the staff and their connections across the DTES, Jacqui was able to draw on her experience as a teacher and contribute to the learning activities at multiple venues throughout the neighbourhood. In addition to highlighting the social value of these experiences, Jacqui claimed that these engagements enabled her to start speaking English comfortably, something that she had a hard time doing earlier in her life.

As an actor within the community, Jacqui (and other members of the UBC Learning Exchange) took a stance against the deficit view of her abilities. Having learned about Jacqui's teaching background, the staff invited her to give several workshops on a variety of topics (traditional Chinese cooking being one example she mentioned often). In turn, Jacqui took up this invitation and developed workshops that were well-received in the community. The process of power negotiation that occurs in the contact zone as described by Pratt (1991) was jointly constructed by Jacqui's agency and by the staff at the UBC Learning Exchange who were driven by the mission to enhance the community members' knowledge and talents. In the interview, Jacqui explains the impact of this experience in the following way:

And after I this workshop [I was] very happy. Then I speak English the first time in here. Here in here I first time speak English. Before all the people.

Despite having internalized the identity of someone who is incapable of "doing anything" in Canada, Jacqui seemed to embrace the opportunity to learn and share her expertise. The perception of community-based learning as space where her talents were recognized and celebrated was evident in Jacqui's written and spoken data. She invoked the notion of empowerment as something that she had lost during her years in Canada and that she had now regained. From a macro contextual analysis standpoint, Jacqui's agency was realized due to the collective action of the staff inviting her to give workshops, accepting the invitation, and having the other learners receive and value her work.

Jacqui's relationships with the UBC Learning Exchange staff and other learners is reflected not only in her spoken narratives, but also in her written stories. She wrote three short stories that positioned her not as a passive language learner, but as an active member of the learner community. In her story entitled "June 21," Jacqui describes her participation in a workshop led

by an indigenous elder in which patrons of the UBC Learning Exchange collectively made a traditional West Coast button blanket. She opens her written story with the question: “What was special at that day June 21st?” and goes on to explain in the same text “That was our blanket ceremony as the celebrated the journey of threading our stories and presented our button blanket.” In this story, Jacqui describes herself as an artist, a creator, and a member of a family.¹³

The past three months we were artists. Elder Fox has facilitated the creation of a community button blanket at the UBC Learning Exchange. In that workshop Threading Our Stories we stitched: stich by stich, time by time. Along the shell were big buttons and small buttons. Every Friday our class, we are together like membership of family in our UBC Learning Exchange. Look at that blue and red pattern of a diamond twinkle and the Thunderbird in the centre. We used more than 760 big and small buttons; more than 120 people including from all over the world male and female. In that blanket our energy and power stories were condensed. Just like the bird—the choice of designer T. The little blue stem is from L’s hands. Look at that work: the men didn’t do less than women. Like A, J, and S was happy to join in too. The ladies did the good job too: like S, S, C, M, M In that workshop E and me were learning together, one’s teaching the threading another gives her English back. That’s the power of our blank[et], that’s the happy story in our threading.

Jacqui recognized the inclusive process of collaborative art-making not only as promoting cooperation between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous patrons of the UBC Learning Exchange, but also as a participatory community-building experience. Her attention to detail in this story (shown by how she names people and highlights their authorship) is a testament to the value this workshop brought to her life. Here, Jacqui’s observations capture aspects of the UBC

¹³ Personal names in this excerpt are replaced with alphabetical initials to maintain anonymity

Learning Exchange’s mission and vision including bringing people together, building a community, and peer-teaching.

In another written story entitled “UBC Learning Exchange” supplemented with illustrations, Jacqui describes the centre as a multicultural and multiracial community with no mention of language proficiency or any other barriers to communication

There are white, yellow, black people and First Nation people—all different skin of people from all around the world. They are drinking, eating, singing, dancing and celebrating at the Conference of UBC Learning Exchange.

Jacqui’s agency as a peer leader is constructed by drawing on her sense of responsibility to the community. Jacqui’s growth in self-esteem and confidence, and her inspiration to help others is consistent with other research on the impact of community-based learning (Bridwell, 2013) and constructs the UBC Learning Exchange as a synergetic space within a larger contact zone. Consider the following multimodal text (Figure 7.1) shared by Jacqui in one of our classes:



Figure 7.1 Jacqui’s multimodal story “UBC Learning Exchange”

At the top of the frame, Jacqui drew her language learning journey from learning the English language alphabet to learning simple words and “learning hard” for a long time.

Considering Jacqui's experiences with language learning and use before she found the English Conversation program, we can assume that this stage of her journey was not very pleasant. However, she draws the UBC Learning Exchange in the shape of a heart, accompanying it with a smiling face and words "Good Now," thus signalling her positive stance towards the learning centre. In sum, community-based language learning plays a significant role in Jacqui's life. As someone who once experienced the discord of feeling "like the sky fell on the ground" and was told to "go back to China," she blossomed in a synergetic space of English Conversation that held her in high regard. As a result, her navigation of this community-based language learning program extended beyond pragmatic language acquisition into seeing it as much desired community of peers and a place of synergy that gave her a sense of empowerment. Jacqui powerfully concluded her final story about the people who make up the contact zone of the UBC Learning Exchange with the words "I am one of them."

7.4 Expanding Roles

The third theme represented community-based language as a contact zone where participants were able to expand their roles as members of the learning community. My analysis of the data suggests that within community-based settings, learners often construct new identities beyond those of language learners and take on new roles within the learning spaces. For example, in the interviews three participants mentioned that it was within the community setting of the English Conversation program that they first realized they could teach English to their peers. During our interview, in his written artifacts, and while participating in classroom activities Justin actively positioned himself as an expert. In our interview after the regular classes ended he reflected on his role as an experienced language learner:

These somebody tells us, we go to take a look, but the most important thing is we are hardworking, we like to study more. Many people would

know the information. But they lack [effort] and we do not. We keep going to learn more. All the information comes from a friend. We like to, because now it's the time for us to give back, so we like to help the newcomer or some of the senior, their English is not good, and we can tell them where to go and what to learn. We help them, so this is time. Because we know what we needed at the beginning and somebody helped us and now we should help them.

Of interest here is Justin's use of the phrase "give back" as it was also repeated by several of the other learners. For example, Jacqui explained that she wanted to give back to the UBC Learning Exchange for all the support she had received over the years. She mentioned in the interview that she was approached by one of the staff members with an offer to try out the role of language facilitator for the lower proficiency classes, and that she was considering this offer:

Yes, I said ok I'll try. That would improve my English. Then I will give thanks to this this place, because this place gives me power back. And I will give back as volunteer for everybody and improve my English. That's it.

In this excerpt, Jacqui constructs the hybrid identity of a learner/teacher—someone who can support fellow learners despite recognizing that she still might need to learn more. This kind of identity can be constructed within community-based programs that encourage it. As mentioned earlier, the main characteristic of the English Conversation program is the multilayered and fluid nature of the facilitator's and the learners' roles. As such, the facilitators and learners engage in a collaborative learning practice that benefits both parties and helps construct this unique learning community. These contexts echo research conducted by Crowther, Maclachlan, and Tett (2010) and Coady (2013), who find that community-centered organizations help learners connect with each other and take up new leadership roles.

While Jacqui and Justin saw teaching English as an opportunity to give back to the UBC Learning Exchange, Bu explained that he would be a better teacher than other more experienced teachers due to his understanding of the age-related constraints that older learners might have. In this way he did not deny his language limitations, but envisioned a future in which his proficiency together with his understanding of ageing would benefit him and his learners. He wanted to become a class facilitator because he believed that he would be able to understand other learners' challenges and draw on his linguistic background to help them overcome them. At the same time, a shared experience of ageing was also very important for Bu. When I asked in the interview about the greatest challenge he had faced on his language learning journey, Bu answered that it was his age. However, he was eager to take on new roles and advocate for his peers as a facilitator. Bu's advocacy for himself and his fellow learners is realized through negotiation of the difference between the concept of the ideal language teacher and himself as a teacher, a legitimate candidate to take upon this role.

Justin, Jacqui, and Bu constructed new identities beyond being learners. However, for some participants, establishing their learner identity and feeling comfortable in this role was a significant achievement in itself since they had not had opportunities to attend school when they were younger. For example, Mary wrote in one of her texts that she enjoyed being in the classroom with her peers. In reflecting on her favourite topics covered during the ten-week term, she specifically talked about how discussion of her and her peers' language learning journeys made an impact on her. When I asked her to elaborate, she replied:

My learning journey is a great theme. I did not have an opportunity to learn. When I was young, my parents did not allow me to join lessons. But now, I am a senior and I have different input from the young students and their knowledge. I can meet a lot of friends and school mates. I have a

chance to learn in the UBC Learning Exchange and continue learning my English.

Indeed, for Mary the fact that she could attend free community-based language learning programs seemed to carry particular significance. In her interview she explained: “I learn very happy” thus implying that learning brought her joy. Relatedly, John, whose language learning journey I described in previous chapter, expressed a lot of excitement about attending school. As mentioned, John used his iPad to support his learning, which helped facilitate construction of his identity as an active learner despite being older. In one of his written texts, John specifically addressed the value of community-based learning and the support he received there:

I appreciate UBC Learning Exchange. It helped me so much. It made me understand, love and respect technology. So, I have to overcome being too old. It is not easy to learn. I honestly thank volunteer teachers and tutors, who have helped me so much!

Sam, who came to Canada as a refugee from Iran, also mentioned that he enjoyed being back in the classroom because it allowed him to utilize his knowledge as an English language learner and envision a more hopeful future.

S: I think I can speak English and I know everything I want to say I want to want. I need to communicate but I can't adjust me with this situation to communicate with people. Because people are [speaking] fast and [it is] completely different from the classic class [context]. Writing or speaking this is one of [my] biggest problems. I told you I knew a lot of vocabulary, a lot of vocabulary.

N: and has your English changed, because you are going to the UBC Learning Exchange?

S: yes, yes. With I think yes. Because [of] my communication [and] my movement I see a lot of people and become active, become active.

N: you became more active?

S: yes, more active yes, and happier and more hoping for the future.

However, Sam also recognized the prestige of the university that had established the program, suggesting that he enjoyed the status of being a learner there. When I asked him to describe the program to me, he remarked:

UBC Learning Exchange is a good centre, good for learning for training. And people are facilitators are volunteer and have a good relation and communication and they are active. Always I tell the people to come there because I like that centre, I enjoy that centre. I tell everyone. I love the name UBC Learning Exchange. Good name, because UBC is most famous university in the world. Everybody needs to come to exchange and remain here, everybody to go to go ahead to promote [it].

Here Sam not only reiterates his appreciation for the practices established at the centre, he also suggests that its name carries a certain prestige. Being a learner in this centre carried special significance for Sam.

Having outlined some of the identities that were constructed within the context of the UBC Learning Exchange, I now turn to the illustrative story of Justin who was among the most active learners at the UBC Learning Exchange through participating in multiple learning activities. In addition to the Seniors Storytelling Club, he attended other English language classes and extra-curricular activities with his wife Cindy. He described the two of them as “active and busy people.” Notably, at the time of the project Justin was seriously considering volunteering as a language facilitator in the program. This plan, however, did not come to fruition as Justin and Cindy travel a lot to visit their children (who lived in different countries) and relatives in Taiwan.

7.4.1 Justin: “UBC language so different, so nice”

I know more about this organization [UBC Learning Exchange]. They are well prepared, well organized, [have] all kind of lessons. Oh, such good choices, you know. And [they] have facilitator training, you know. Intensive training for you to let you know how to teach English to the newcomers. So, I feel so happy now. I joined about six weeks [ago], but during these six weeks I find that my English has made progress. So, in the near future it will be very smooth, more fluent. I feel so happy and I enjoy it. Very good. Yeah. Before, we joined there to only learn English. And now I can learn how to teach. UBC Learning Exchange, whoa, so different, so nice.

I chose the quote above from my interview with Justin because in it he specifically addressed how participation in community-based learning allowed him to imagine new roles for himself. Justin’s language learning journey and reasons for attending community-based programs were different from those of the other members of the Seniors Storytelling Club. As a wealthy and more privileged language learner, Justin’s decision to relocate in Canada was driven by a desire to see the world. He often shared stories about his access to educational opportunities across Metro Vancouver and his attendance of concerts, art gatherings, and sports activities.

Overall, Justin’s language learning experiences were framed by intersecting identities of an ageing, middle-class cosmopolitan, engaged language learner, and good citizen. Justin often talked at length about being a good immigrant and a Canadian citizen. He remarked on getting an education, obtaining professional training, and living a law-abiding life and he often characterized his own life in Canada using similar terms. One of the reasons why Justin sought out flexible language learning programs was because he believed that they would enhance his language learning by allowing him to experience the “daily life of Canadian ways” unlike those

that followed a rigid curriculum. He explained in the interview that local events such as festivals were another venue where he could learn about Canadian culture:

This is our characteristic, we are originally interested in that subject, you know? We are anxious to learn. The main purpose is to learn more about Canadian culture, so we join many kinds of festival activity, local event.

Justin's observations of the UBC Learning Exchange focused on the structural organization of the centre, the professionalism of the people who worked there, and the resources that were readily available to the learners. In addition, Justin viewed the UBC Learning Exchange as a place of high standards and the recognized brand of a prestigious university with which he was willing to be associated:

So, we almost expert, you know, in Vancouver area, because we learn so many [ways] how to teach, how to learn English. But from here we can compare, how to be good at teaching, [what is] a good conversation class, you know. So UBC Learning Exchange is the best. Well organized, so good and well prepared, yeah. Because UBC original is expert professional to teach, [teaching here] is the best.

This quote suggests that Justin chose the UBC Learning Exchange as an exemplary place for learning English because of the prestige afforded by its affiliation with the university. In addition, in his oral narratives about learning English in a community-based setting, Justin mobilized the discourses of active ageing to his advantage and exercising significant agency in a variety of contexts. Having had access to a variety of resources, Justin appreciated community-based language learning as an accessible and engaging form of education. In the excerpt above, Justin positioned himself as an expert who had attended various educational programs and had

actively seized on them, according him the expertise to rank and evaluate the programs available across Metro Vancouver.

Justin's written stories focused on his positive experiences and successes in community-based language learning contexts. In an essay titled "My Experiences in Canada," Justin illustrated his experiences after he had immigrated by using examples from his active engagement in the educational opportunities available to him.

I like to study, so when I first came to Canada, I started looking for a house near the library. Finally, I settled down in my house very close to the library. I spent a lot of time in the library. I read a lot of books concerning Canadian history, geography, politics, economics, religion, natural resources, community resources, etc. Next year I set a plan. I started to cross Canada from the West Coast to the East, from the South to the North. I visited most cities in Canada. Second, I started to visit local government offices, such as provincial government, City Hall, RCMP, Gas, Hydro, TV, ICBC; immigrant services like Mosaic and Success, Multicultural Society and Neighbourhood House, etc. I became very familiar with these community resources. Third, I started to connect with social activities. I attended most of the conversation classes, where I can meet people, make friends, share culture, exchange life experience. I learned a lot during my life and now it is the time for me to give back what I got from those volunteers and the government. I think giving back is better than receiving. I feel very happy here in Canada.

Justin opens his essay by stating that his desire to learn informed most of his life choices, including his search for a house. His ability to choose a house that was conveniently located, language proficiency that allowed him to seek information through reading, and financial freedom to travel and experience Canadian culture are all examples of the discourses of a

successful active individual who is agentive in forging his own path after immigrating. Justin's knowledge and ability to access community resources and his desire to learn and succeed were akin to getting access to a global cosmopolitan community of active seniors who enjoy life to the fullest. Thus, Justin positioned himself as an international elite in a position of cultural privilege. In addition, he displayed certain pride in his ability to perform detailed research and partake in multiple municipal services. Interesting here is Justin's choice of narrative structure and his self-positioning as someone who has benefited from free resources and is now willing to give back. In fact, he enrolled in a facilitator training course at the UBC Learning Exchange and was getting ready to lead his first class in the fall of 2015.

Research on people's desire to volunteer suggests that it often takes the form of one-day engagements (Hyde, Dunn, Bax, & Chambers, 2016) depending on multiple reasons such as the search for "a rewarding experience" (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991, p. 281) or to foster relationships with others. Justin sought the rewarding experience of being a volunteer and supporting other immigrants. However, to my knowledge he could not sustain his volunteering.

In his discussion of language learning as an immigrant senior, Justin rarely addressed the topics of ageing, community-building, or seeking new friends. Instead, he talked about being content with his life and enjoying the fruits of his labour. He wanted to put effort into extending his life and mental and physical well-being as highlighted in this excerpt from a written text he produced called "When I am at the Age of 84":

I am not interested in making money. I don't have any energy to keep in touch with any political problems. I like travelling and I like to embrace the nature. I pay more attention to the diet. I like relaxing, it can keep me in good physical and mental condition.

In addition, Justin explicated his experiences in community-based English language training programs by suggesting that such participation would allow him to continue realizing his life goals of travelling the world and writing a memoir about his experiences. He believed that speaking and writing English and having a Canadian passport would help him achieve these goals. In class, Justin often offered suggestions on topics that in his opinion would be more relevant to older learners. He also expressed the need for explicit language skill training, which suggests that he viewed community-based language learning programs as places where he could participate in traditional skills training activities.

Previously a high-ranking administrator in Taiwan, Justin's professional identity had an impact on his desire to access community resources. Justin spent six months of the year in Vancouver and used the second half of the year to travel. While in Vancouver, participation in various community-based language learning programs structured his and his wife's time. Justin considered their active participation in community activities to be an important part of their lives in Canada. In the interview, he specifically addressed this idea:

We are very free, we [have travelled] across Canada, visit all the cities, even in the Metro Vancouver area we are intensive, you know? To know everything, all kinds of activity, we took it from the newspaper, from the local newspaper, Metro Burnaby news, so from there we can find any kind of activity we can join, so we have to make a schedule for the whole month, you know. So, resource, community resource is very important.

In this account Justin alludes to his social status as well as active outlook on life. He describes himself as a free, engaged individual who knows where to get information from sources in many languages and how to apply this knowledge to access community resources. By claiming that he and his wife are "intensive," want to "know everything," and participate in "all

kind of activity” Justin’s interview response indicates his preoccupation with staying active and productive at a later stage of life. In Justin’s case, English language learning fulfills this desire, and he considers community-based language learning to be the best way to develop his potential. Justin talked about being proud of the social status his Canadian citizenship gave him. He took extreme pride in being a Canadian and, because of Canada’s status as a globally respected country, he valued being recognized as a Canadian by others.

Justin’s experiences with the contact zone of community-based language learning can be characterized by the qualities of active engagement, construction of new identities, and the development of an expanded role in the learning community and beyond. For example, in the interview Justin talked about being exceptionally informed about community events in Metro Vancouver and serving as serves as a central resource about these events for other immigrant seniors. He also shared how proud he was to be able to travel and see the world despite his age and being retired. Justin’s concern about his productivity and remaining active empowered him to thrive socially across different contact zones. Moreover, he was also able to fully explore these experiences in a community-based setting. Specifically, the seniors-friendly, community-focused practices of the English Conversation program played a significant role in the realization of his identity as an active learner. This identity was closely intertwined with his other social identities as a successful retiree and community-engaged immigrant. By drawing on these identities, Justin envisioned new roles for himself as a role-model for other immigrants, a leader at the UBC Learning Exchange, and an expert on the educational opportunities available to seniors in Metro Vancouver.

7.5 Summary

In the previous chapter, we saw that learners in this study possess a high degree of agency in shaping their language learning experiences. In this chapter, I highlighted how this agency was realized as the learners navigated the three dimensions of the contact zone in which they negotiated meaning and constructed new discourses that in turn shaped the narratives they produced about their language learning experiences. The data analysis presented in this chapter addressed the second set of research questions with a particular focus on older immigrants' experiences of participating in community-based language learning initiatives.

The first theme addressed seniors' perceptions of community-based learning as a contact zone in which they can establish new and meaningful connections. This theme was especially salient in Bu's case where feeling lonely and wanting to form new connections across various communities was particularly evident. His immigration story was different from the other participants in the study because he first arrived in Quebec and spent considerable time in francophone Canada. For Bu, community-based language learning served as an extension of his social circles and a place where he could find friends and have fun while learning English. Similar to Jacqui's experiences, Bu's participation in the UBC Learning Exchange fluctuated between being on the periphery of the program and being at its centre. He was able to navigate the learning activities offered at the UBC Learning Exchange and to advocate for himself and his friends while also envisioning himself as the future leader of a language class. That being the case, it can be argued that it is within the flexible context of a community-based language learning program that Bu enacted his agency to the fullest.

The second theme addressed the complexity of community-based learning as a contact zone saturated with power relations that result in an imbalance between feelings of synergy and

mediating discordances. Indeed, as a contact zone the Seniors Storytelling Club was saturated by asymmetrical relations of power, which manifested as conflict in the classroom. I observed participants speaking over each other, bringing up tenuous topics, and engaging in heated debates. On the other hand, I observed instances of mutual support and synergy as participants co-constructed a unique intercultural and linguistic context of their interaction. To illustrate how an older immigrant might navigate the synergetic and discordant interactions I presented the case of Jacqui who shared an inspiring tale about being able to flourish as a language learner. Jacqui's early life in Canada was clouded by multiple negative experiences, feelings of inferiority, and the understanding that her prior experiences were not transferable to her new social context. She actively tried to gain more knowledge in order to fully belong to Canadian society. In addition, her description of the UBC Learning Exchange highlighted its special role in her life. Initially, she occupied the peripheral position of someone who appreciated the opportunity to learn but was self-conscious about her limitations. Over time, she increasingly felt welcomed and needed. She also came to realize that her experiences made an important contribution to the programming of the centre. In her narratives, Jacqui shared about the experience of trying to learn a new language at a mature age and reinforced the importance of access to education at her age.

Finally, the third theme illuminated the new identities and roles that the participants were able to construct as a result of learning English within the contact zone of community-based programs. Indeed, my analysis suggests that participants were grateful and proud to be members of the learning community at the UBC Learning Exchange. Many spoke at length about their desire to take up leadership roles and give back as volunteers at the centre. In particular, Justin's stories provide insight into the multiple identities that older learners might construct through

participation in community-based initiatives. His privileged background distinguished him from the other members of the Seniors Storytelling Club. Justin especially valued having access to local community resources and actively participated in the seniors programming offered throughout Metro Vancouver. Through his participation, Justin hoped to understand Canadian culture so that he would be able to become a legitimate member of Canadian society on his own terms without abandoning his desire to travel internationally. In addition, Justin used his participation in community-based language learning to build upon his already existing privileges and minimise any potential marginalization that he might have faced otherwise.

Overall, all the three seniors were agentic in their search for language learning programs that would recognize them as members of the community. Despite contextually different trajectories, all three successfully navigated the contact zones of language learning with the help of the staff and peers. As a result, all of them wanted to give back to their learning community and expressed a desire to take on more active roles in the English Conversation program. There is a clear connection between Jacqui's, Bu's and Justin's narratives and those presented in Miller's (2014) research. In her study, the adult learners reproduced "normative perceptions of responsabilized individuals who are agentic in essence" (Miller, 2014, p. 140). Similarly, Jacqui's, Bu's and Justin's engagement in community-based learning was described as agentic. Their agentic capacities could only be realized "in relation to existing sense-making norms" (Miller, 2014, p. 140) and mobilized differently in the various contexts of interaction. In other words, Jacqui, Bu, and Justin were able to develop a sense of themselves as agentic seniors while participating in the social practices available to them, and they in turn drew on these experiences to reconstitute themselves as agentic.

Chapter 8: Discussion and Implications

8.1 Introduction

In my final chapter I consider the implications of my study in the area of research, theory, and practice. First, I summarize the findings of Chapters 6 and 7. Reflecting on the process of developing and facilitating the Seniors Storytelling Class, I outline the impact of this project and consider its limitations. In addition, I outline the possible extensions of this research into future inquiries. Finally, I revisit the promise I made to the research participants at the beginning of this project and consider how this project continues to shape me as a researcher and an educator.

To investigate the research questions, I developed and co-facilitated the Seniors Storytelling Club that ran for ten weeks through the English Conversation Program at the UBC Learning Exchange. English and other languages were spoken during class time. The stories the participants created portrayed their language learning experience as a journey to find belonging and purpose in Canadian society, as a way to forge new identities, and as a victory over societal prejudices such as racism, ageism, and linguicism. The participants' stories were presented in a variety of forms, including oral, written, and multimodal. Inspired by this diversity, I edited and secured funding for the publication of these stories as an illustrated book after the course was completed. The teaching practices employed during the ethnographic part of the study supported the use of narrative and storytelling as productive strategies for language learning in community-based settings.

I started the research project inspired by my own teaching experience at the UBC Learning Exchange. I also wanted to address the lack of research on the English language learning experiences of immigrant seniors and explore the pedagogical opportunities that might support their language learning trajectories. In my literature review, I found that older learners are an

overlooked population, and that representations of this population often fail to recognize them as “multidimensional people with complex lives” (Findsen, 2007, p. 551). I believe that firsthand testimonies, such as the ones shared by the participants in this project, have immense potential to influence public discourse about immigrant seniors and to help shape policy on the development of educational opportunities for this demographic.

8.2 Summary of Findings

In the development of my study, I drew on interdisciplinary frameworks to situate it in the fields of educational gerontology and language and literacy research. By analysing the written and spoken narratives of the research participants, my involvement in the development and delivery of the Seniors Storytelling Club, and by observing the in-class interactions between the learners I aimed to present a holistic and contextualized picture of English language learning for older learners.

In Chapter 6, I examined the data that addressed the experience of language learning in later life in general. My findings suggest that as an agentive endeavour, language learning in later life is intertwined with specific challenges related to learners’ age, social status, immigration experiences. In the case of this study, it was guided by desire to engage with cultural communities but was a vulnerable practice that had a significant emotional impact on the older learners. My elaboration on three main themes related to the over-arching construct of agency—ageing and longevity, cultural engagement and belonging, and vulnerability and resilience—highlighted why the research participants decided to learn English after immigrating to Canada.

Regarding the first theme, my findings echoed previous research on lifelong learning as a component of seniors’ sustained self-efficacy in later life (Leung et al., 2006; Leung et al., 2008).

My analysis of the data suggests that for many research participants, the learning of English played an important role in staying active, sustaining cognitive health, and contributing to their longevity. This theme supports existing research on the health benefits of learning language in later life (Bialystok & Craik 2010; Lam, Tang, Leung, Chiu, 2001). As it turns out, many seniors initially enrol in educational programs to stay mentally sharp. An illustrative example of this is found in the narratives of Cindy, a retired immigrant from Taiwan. Her narratives suggested that she experienced learning English as a leisure activity and as part of her active lifestyle. Acutely aware of age-related challenges, Cindy pursued learning English to ensure her longevity. Analysis of Cindy's data echo findings from multiple studies that examine the impact of learning on the wellbeing of older adults.

Regarding the second theme, my study illuminates the research participants' objective of ensuring cultural engagement and belonging through learning English, and their search for cultural connections outside their established social circles. An example of how agentic older learners pursue cultural integration is seen in Julia's narratives, which suggested that she felt the need to speak English proficiently in order to stay engaged with Canadian culture. She compared her desire to be culturally aware with the lack of engagement of other seniors who felt content in their established cultural communities. Agentic in pursuing knowledge about Canadian culture and learning English by detailing the numerous language programs, Julia seemed to take pride in being an active participant in the language learning programs available to newcomers.

Regarding the third theme, the research participants spoke about the emotional impact of learning English in later life and expressed feelings of vulnerability. However, they also constructed identities as resilient learners. While any language learning journey can be challenging it is particularly so for older learners who are surrounded by ageist, ableist, and other

discriminatory discourses. As an example, John displayed a desire for lifelong learning while simultaneously noting his vulnerability as an older immigrant.

In Chapter 7, I took a closer look at the data in relation to the second research question, which addressed seniors' experiences in community-based English language learning programs. I conceptualized the Seniors Storytelling Club as a contact zone. My analysis suggests that as a contact zone, community-based language learning is formed through and saturated by power relations and their negotiations, the mitigation of these power relations can be conducive to relationship-building, and as such a community-based program could become a space for learners to imagine new social roles for themselves. The three illustrative cases that I chose to spotlight in this chapter were by Jacqui, Bu, and Justin because they represented the themes of connection, synergies and discordances, and expanding roles, which mirrored the themes generated through the analysis of the larger data set.

First theme addressed the importance of connections that are established in community-based language learning. English Conversation presented the research participants with an opportunity to overcome their isolation and meet people who shared their interests. Moreover, I observed that the research participants grew closer through their participation in the Seniors Storytelling Club. In addition, many of them continued taking classes at the centre. Bu was one of the participants who spoke powerfully of the value of community-based language learning and his desire to make new friends through it. In fact, he was able to make friends in each of his classes. The aspects of community-based language learning that Bu found to be most accommodating included the small class sizes and the fun nature of the lessons.

Second theme represents complex relationships that learners construct within the contact zones of community-based learning programs. My analysis suggests that the process of language

learning in community-based settings sometimes led to experiencing synergies and at times discordances. I argue that this occurs due to the nature of community-based education, because it often aims to be responsive to the learner's needs, which at times may conflict or accord with those of others in the class. Jacqui's story provides an example of this. She came to the UBC Learning Exchange after having lived in Canada for 30 years. Due to earlier experiences through her daily interactions in Vancouver, she harboured negative thoughts about her capabilities as a language speaker. Standing in sharp contrast to her narratives about her day-to-day experiences, her descriptions of the UBC Learning Exchange were positive and full of appreciation. Jacqui's narratives also revealed that despite her agentive search for language learning opportunities, she faced significant barriers until she found the UBC Learning Exchange where her agency was fully realized through interactions with other members of the learning community. As a result of attending classes in the English Conversation program she was able to build upon her strengths and reclaim her standing in the social networks that she encountered throughout her daily life. At the same time, Jacqui reacted negatively to those learners who had other goals for attending the program and she expressed discomfort when facing conflict in the classroom. Other learners, for example Ann and Justin, navigated the discordances with determination to have their voice heard by the other members of the learning community and did not shy away from conflict.

The third theme represented community-based language as a space where participants were able to expand their social roles. Some participants mentioned that, due to learning English at the UBC Learning Exchange, they considered taking up leadership roles, imagined themselves as future language teachers, and served as resources for each other. Justin, one of the participants, imagined community-based language learning as a vehicle for his social advancement and a way to forge new and more powerful identities. Concerned with matters of prestige, Justin noted that

the programs offered at the UBC Learning Exchange were more relevant and interesting for him than those offered in other community-based settings.

In sum, Bu's, Jacqui's, and Justin's narratives addressed the unique nature of community-based language learning that allowed them to explore their talents and desires. Bu discussed the opportunity to overcome social isolation, Jacqui spoke about the value of a community that recognized one's talents, and Justin emphasised the impact of lifelong learning on creating new identities.

8.3 Implications

There are several implications from my research that I consider important for the academic literature on older adult learning, research methodology, and pedagogical practices. In this section, I discuss these three domains.

8.3.1 Implications for Theory

Despite the global proliferation of Universities of the Third Age (Flora Moritz da Silva, Irineu Manoel de Souza, & Rudimar Antunes da Rocha, 2017; Small, 2017) and studies on the well-being of older adults (Kaplanová, Přidalová, M, Zbořilová, 2018; Peralta, Martins, Gómez Chávez, Cortés Almanzar, Marques, 2018), in language and literacy research seniors remain a neglected population (Park & Brenna, 2015) as language instructors often aren't provided the training and resources to effectively engage with older learners (Słowik, 2017). This research project adds to the growing body of literature and knowledge in educational gerontology, applied linguistics, and community-based research.

As part of my study, I conducted an extensive review of the interdisciplinary literature that addresses the issues of ageing, learning in later life, and the state of English language learning programs available for immigrants in Canada. I see limitations in the current body of knowledge

about the following topics. First, despite years of educational gerontology research, there is a gap in the empirical research on the language learning histories of older adults, especially to do with immigrants in North America. Furthermore, the scope of the inquiry into community-based learning is rather limited as much of the research focuses on recent or younger immigrants (such as young mothers and youth). An investigation of the learning experiences of older adults who are not recent immigrants would present educators with a more extensive picture of the learning issues across more contexts and also possible strategies for accommodating older learners. As such, the research described in this thesis provides new information on the language learning experiences of older immigrant adults

8.3.2 Implications for Research

This study has theoretical and methodological implications for research with older learners. As the research shows, adult learners of English as an additional language often lack access to established social networks (Cervatiuc & Ricento, 2012) and they may find themselves challenged to construct new identities by complying with or resisting positions that society ascribes to them (Block, 2007). Supporting this argument, the narratives constructed within the contact zone of the English Conversation program at the UBC Learning Exchange represent older adults' negotiations of power "in all of their ambivalence and unfinalizability" (Frank, 2005, p. 972). The Seniors Storytelling Club was constructed as a contact zone and a communal learning space that was generated by the narrative techniques I brought to the participants' language learning experiences. The seniors acted as agents by both directing and challenging the learning process. The language learning classroom became a contact zone in which multiple discourses intersected with and scaffolded the construction of the learners' social and cultural identities. The class served as a contact zone in which communication across nationalities and

age groups led to the building of complex social connections within the classroom. While the class had a preplanned structure, many of the learners chose not to follow the planned prompts in their storytelling practice, thus displaying their agency. The flexible nature of community-based learning that is not subjected to external evaluation within a rigid language learning framework creates conditions for older adult language learners to enact agentic choices in their language learning. Agency, as a “socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn, 2001, p. 112), can be exercised within the contact zone of language learning. By choosing their own storytelling topics, the learners took control not only of the direction of their learning but of the whole process of authoring themselves as cultural experts whose experiences are to be recognized and celebrated. In turn, my and June’s recognition of the learners’ agencies created opportunities for their self-authoring as agents of their own learning.

This study infused the methodology of narrative ethnography with creative practices (such as drawing and fiction writing). I was able to navigate multiple data sources and bring them together for the benefit of the community I was working with. In their article “Creating Alternative Realities: Arts-based Approaches to Transformative Learning,” Butterwick and Lawrence (2009) write: “the arts are a way to communicate our stories in ways that connect with others” (p. 35). My research suggests that arts-based language learning can be a useful tool for language learning in later life and that it contributes to sustained lifelong learning after immigration.

The methodology developed for this dissertation study has considerable implications for educational gerontological and applied language research. It shows that narrative ethnography in classroom settings can provide a multifaceted and contextualized understanding of older immigrants’ language learning experiences. As noted earlier, narrative ethnography is a

relatively underrepresented methodology in language and literacy research. I believe that this study presents the promising practice of a reciprocal context-sensitive research engagement that can be replicated in other settings. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that not all participants responded well to this methodology. For example, some learners (e.g. Bu) did not provide data on the topics I prepared, while others (e.g. Sam, Tom) did not always follow the formats that I anticipated. At the time of the study, I ceded my control over the production of the narrative data. Such challenge of eliciting narratives would need to be considered in development of future studies that wish to employ similar research design.

8.3.3 Implications for Practice

As the global phenomenon of ageing is increasingly becoming the focus of research, policy, and activism (Rodwin & Gusmano, 2006; Smith, 2009; Wilmoth, 2016) my study contributes to the larger conversation about pedagogical practices that cater to older learners. Researchers that have spent time studying older language learners maintain that these learners experience learning in multiple and unique ways (Andrew, 2012) and therefore need special educational models (Ramírez Gómez, 2016a) and funding for these programs. My research findings support the importance of flexible learning environments (Kim & Merriam, 2010), social connections (Golding, 2011a), and recognition of informal learning experiences (Shan & Walter, 2014; Kubota, 2011) in the learning experiences of older adults. The older learners who participated in my study appeared to benefit from low-threshold and easily accessible educational opportunities that incorporate creative storytelling; the study suggests that learners in other programs might too.

In an extensive review of the state of education for older adults, British gerontologist Frank Glendenning (2001) notes that “there is a wider appreciation that exercising the mind as well as

the body can lead to a better quality of life in older age” (p.69). The practices developed for the Seniors Storytelling Club serve as an example of an innovative learning experience for older adult language learners. For example, the use of a variety of storytelling prompts facilitated the participants’ language development, connection and collaboration in the classroom, and deep reflection about their lives as older immigrants. Moreover, this research indicated the potential usefulness of a selection of topics familiar to older learners, such as immigration, intergenerational relationships, and experiences with English. Finally, older-adult language education framed as an embodied creative practice of storytelling reveals a potential to increase the learner’s investment in learning and contribute to community building. In essence, it served as recognition of learners’ agency and facilitated multidimensional process of learning in later life.

Many seniors-oriented programs aim to foster active mindsets and encourage learners to reinvent themselves or become leaders in their communities (Boulton-Lewis, 2010; Cruikshank, 2003). I observed a similar result after my project came to its conclusion. For example, Justin enrolled in a facilitator training program planning to begin as a volunteer peer-teacher in the English Conversation program and Bu was planning to do the same. Jacqui gave a series of workshops to the patrons of the centre during the research project and afterward as well. Other learners enrolled in the arts-based activities offered by the UBC Learning Exchange and brought their peers to attend classes there as well. Because the learners were able to define their learning goals, many participants expanded their participation at the UBC Learning Exchange (for details, see Balyasnikova & Gillard, 2018). The development of similar educational programs can prove to be beneficial for practitioners working with ageing populations.

At the same time, this research yielded the following suggestions for further development of language learning programs for immigrant seniors. First, the learners' agentic resistance to prepared story-sharing prompts suggests that soliciting topics directly from the learners would enhance their experiences in the course. This suggestion was also expressed in a number of individual interviews, during discussion of the overall programming available to seniors through the English Conversation program. Second, several participants expressed the need for more focused language skills training. Learners communicated that the lack of language support was a barrier to the production of their identity texts during the course of the study. Therefore, I see potential for further development of creative approaches to language learning together intertwined with form-focused language teaching.

8.4 Future Directions for Research

This research study inspired me to consider ways to impact classroom practices and curriculum development, and deepen other researchers' understanding of the complexities of learning in later life. There are several ways to build on this dissertation research in the future.

First, there is a gap in our understanding of the role creativity plays in the language learning experiences of older immigrants. Creativity in later life has been explored from the perspective of how it benefits seniors' cognitive functions (Price & Tinker, 2014), social (Fisher & Specht, 1999; McHugh, 2016) and physical well-being (Yuen, Mueller, Mayor, & Azuero, 2011). While making an important contribution to our understanding of older adults' experiences and needs, few of these studies address how creativity can enhance language learning and create opportunities to discuss the complex issues faced by immigrant seniors. Second, building on the theoretical lens of this study, educational gerontologists can explore how concepts of agency and affect (Ahearn, 2013; Ahmed, 2004) can be used to understand language learning in later life.

Third, drawing on the teaching practices developed and observed during this research it is evident that there is a missed opportunity to further conceptualize the language classroom as a contact zone in which older learners should be regarded as agents of their own meaning-making. Finally, future language researchers could draw on theories of critical educational gerontology (Formosa, 2002, 2005, 2011) to better understand the social issues that affect language learners in later life. I consider narrative ethnography to be a particularly useful method that allows researchers to consider issues such as who produces particular kinds of stories, in what circumstances are researchers accountable to the people who share their stories with them, and why do certain discourses gain popularity (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008, p. 250). For example, by drawing on an antiracist paradigm in second language education (Kubota & Lin, 2009) it might be possible to address the question “Is gerontology ready for anti-racist pedagogy?” (Karasik and Kishimoto, 2018) through narrative ethnographic work in the diasporic communities of Canada.

8.5 Final Reflection

As members of the Seniors Storytelling Club, the research participants, June, and I engaged in a collaborative practice that involved oral and written storytelling. Sharing our personal narratives created a space where our vulnerability served to strengthen the connections between us. My goal was to understand the relationship between the program that housed my research, myself as researcher, and the research participants through an ongoing critical self-reflection. As a result of this dissertation project, I learned to respect the voices of the people I work with, to build meaningful relationships, and to develop community-building capacity through my research. In addition, by sharing the story about losing my grandmother I also made a promise to honor and respect the stories shared with me by the research participants. I hope that I was able to keep my promise. I am committed to community-based research ethics and

sustaining relationships with the community stakeholders who supported my study, and I remain engaged in the lives of the members of the Seniors Storytelling Club.

In my opinion, the real value of community-engaged narrative ethnographies is that they draw on the desire of the research participant to articulate possibilities for educational change. I hope that this study will serve as an example of “collaborative, change-oriented research that engages faculty members, students, and community members in projects that address a community-identified need” (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003, p. 5). The narratives created during this study paint a nuanced picture of the language learning experience when it is intertwined with the personal obstacles such as overcoming of difference, inequality, ageism, and other forms of discrimination. These narratives do not paint a static picture of learning as an isolated process of success and accumulation of knowledge, instead they help us understand language learning as agentive and constituted through building relationships within one’s community. In Ann’s words:

My hope is to be able to speak in English more fluently and understand more. It can make me feel more confident. I know that with my age getting older, my memory will get worse. I will probably never reach my goal, but I am sure if I keep learning and trying my best, I will get closer and closer. Otherwise, with the spirit of our over 80-year-old classmates and the article “90-year-old woman starts elementary school” I am encouraged to keep learning English. If they can do it, so can I.

References

- Adult Learning and Education. (2012). *Canada progress report for the UNESCO global report on adult learning and education and the end of the United Nations literacy decade*. Toronto, Canada: Council of Ministers of Education.
- Ahearn, L. M. (2001). Language and agency. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 30(1), 109–137.
- Ahearn, L. M. (2010). Agency and language. In J. Jaspers, J. Verschueren, & J. O. Östman (Eds.). *Society and language use* (pp. 28–48). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins.
- Ahearn, L. M. (2011). *Living language*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Ahearn, L. M. (2013). Privileging and affecting agency. In C. Maxwell & P. Aggleton (Eds.), *Privilege, agency and affect. Understanding the production and effects of action* (pp. 240–247). London, England: Palgrave Macmillan
- Ahmed, S. (2004). *The cultural politics of emotion*. London, England: Routledge.
- Ahmed, S. (2012). *On being included: Racism and diversity in institutional life*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Andrew, P. (2012). *The social construction of age: Adult foreign language learners*. Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters
- Ang, I., & St. Louis, B. (2005). Guest editorial: The predicament of difference. *Ethnicities*, 5(3), 291–304.
- Arxer, S., Ciriza-Lope, M., Shappeck, M., & del Puy Ciriza, M. (2017). *Aging in a second language: A case study of aging, immigration, and an English learner speech community*. New York, NY: Springer.

- Atkinson, R. (2002). The life story interview. In J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research* (pp. 121–140). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Atkinson, R. (2007). The life story interview as a bridge in narrative inquiry. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 224–245). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: An analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 1(3), 385–405.
- Auerbach, E. R. (2000). Creating participatory learning communities. Paradoxes and possibilities. In J. K. Hall & W. G. Eddington (Eds.), *The sociopolitics of English language teaching* (pp. 143–164). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Bakhtin, M. M., & Holquist, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Balyasnikova, N., & Gillard, S. (2018). “I love to write my story”: Storytelling and its role in seniors’ language learning. *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education*, 30(2), 81–90.
- Balyasnikova, N., Gillard, S., & Korcheva, G. (2018). Circles within circles: Storying pedagogical practice, literacy research and community engagement. In R. McGray & V. Woloshyn (Eds.) *Proceedings from Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education*, (pp. 14-21), Regina, SK, Canada. Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education. Retrieved from <https://www.dropbox.com/s/dd53vdyatvg9w5c/CASAE%202018%20May%2025.compressed.pdf?dl>

- Balyasnikova, N., Higgins, S., & Hume, M. (2018). Enhancing teaching English as an additional language through playfulness: Seniors (Ethno) Drama Club in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. *TESOL Journal*, 9(3), 481–497.
- Banerjee, M., Wohlmann, A., & Dahm, R. (2017). Living autobiographically: Concepts of aging and artistic expression in painting and modern dance. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 40, 8–15.
- Barcelos, A. M. F. (2008). Learning English: Students' beliefs and experiences in Brazil. In P. Kalaja, V. Menezes, & A. M. F. Barcelos (Eds.), *Narratives of learning and teaching EFL* (pp. 35–48). New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Barkhuizen, G. (2011). Narrative knowledging in TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 45(3), 391–414.
- Barkhuizen, G. (2014). Narrative research in language teaching and learning. *Language Teaching*, 47(4), 450–466. doi:10.1017/S0261444814000172
- Barkhuizen, G., Benson, P., & Chick, A. (2014). *Narrative inquiry in language teaching and learning research*. London, England: Routledge.
- Battersby, D., & Glendenning, F. (1992). Reconstructing education for older adults: An elaboration of the statement of first principles. *Australian Journal of Adult and Community Education*, 32(2), 115–121.
- Becker, B. (1999). Narratives of pain in later life and conventions of storytelling. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 13(1), 73–87. doi:10.1016/S0890-4065(99)80007-3
- Becker, G., & Beyene, Y. (1999). Narratives of age and uprootedness among older Cambodian refugees. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 13(3), 295–314. doi: 10.1016/S0890-4065(99)80098-X
- Bell, J. S. (2011). Reporting and publishing narrative inquiry in TESOL: Challenges and rewards. *TESOL Quarterly*, 45(3), 575–584. doi:10.5054/tq.2011.256792

- Benson, P. (2011). Language learning careers as an object of narrative research in TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 45(3), 545–553. doi:10.5054/tq.2010.256793
- Benson, P. (2014). Narrative inquiry in applied linguistics research. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 34, 154–170. doi:10.1017/S0267190514000099
- Benson, P., & Nunan, D. (Eds.). (2004). *Learners' stories: Difference and diversity in language learning*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Berman, H. J. (1994). *Interpreting the aging self: Journals of later life*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Bernard, C. (2011). Oral history and ageing. *Working with Older People*, 15(1), 47–48. doi:10.5042/wwop.2011.0120
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. London, England: Routledge.
- Bialystok, E., & Craik, F. I. (2010). Cognitive and linguistic processing in the bilingual mind. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 19(1), 19–23.
- Bialystok, E., Abutalebi, J., Bak, T. H., Burke, D. M., & Kroll, J. F. (2016). Aging in two languages: Implications for public health. *Ageing Research Reviews*, 27, 56–60.
- Block, D. (2007). *Second language identities*. London, England: Continuum.
- Blommaert, J. (2010). *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Booth, W. (2014). From the field: Changing Vancouver's Downtown Eastside [blog post], Retrieved from <http://www.decoda.ca/news-events/media/e-bulletin/the-decoder-april-2014/>
- Boulton-Lewis, G. M. (2010). Education and learning for the elderly: Why, how, what. *Educational Gerontology*, 36(3), 213–228.

- Boulton-Lewis, G. M., & Buys, L. (2015). Learning choices, older Australians and active ageing. *Educational Gerontology*, 41(11), 757–766.
- Boulton-Lewis, G. M., Buys, L., & Lovie-Kitchin, J. (2006). Learning and active aging. *Educational Gerontology*, 32(4), 271–282.
- Boyd, S., Johnson, J. L., & Moffat, B. (2008). Opportunities to learn and barriers to change: Crack cocaine use in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. *Harm Reduction Journal*, 5(1), 34–34. doi:10.1186/1477-7517-5-34
- Brady, E. M., & Sky, H. Z. (2003). Journal writing among older learners. *Educational Gerontology*, 29(2), 151–163.
- Brady, E. M., Holt, S. R., & Welt, B. (2003). Peer teaching in lifelong learning institutes. *Educational Gerontology*, 29(10), 851–868.
- Brandoburová, P., & Adamovičová, S. (2016). Creative life story work with seniors. *Journal of Education Culture and Society*, 6(1), 54–63.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77–101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Breheny, M., & Griffiths, Z. (2017). “I had a good time when I was young”: Interpreting descriptions of continuity among older people. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 41, 36–43. doi: 10.1016/j.jaging.2017.03.003
- Bridwell, S. D. (2013). A constructive-developmental perspective on the transformative learning of adults marginalized by race, class, and gender. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 63(2), 127–146. doi: 10.1177/0741713612447854
- Broeder, P., Bremer, K., Roberts, C., Vasseur, M. T., & Simmonot, M. (1996). *Achieving understanding: Discourse in intercultural encounters*. London, England: Longman.

- Burke, D. M., MacKay, D. G., Worthley, J. S., & Wade, E. (1991). On the tip of the tongue: What causes word finding failures in young and older adults? *Journal of Memory and Language*, 30(5), 542–579.
- Burnaby, B. (1998). Community-based ESL: An assessment of a federal pilot initiative. *TESL Canada Journal*, 6(1), 27–39.
- Burnett, K. (2014). Commodifying poverty: Gentrification and consumption in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. *Urban Geography*, 35(2), 157–176.
- Burns, A., & Roberts, C. (2010). Migration and adult language learning: Global flows and local transpositions. *TESOL Quarterly*, 44(3), 409–419.
- Butterwick, S., & Lawrence, R. L. (2009). Creating alternative realities: Arts-based approaches to transformative learning. In J. Mezirow & E. Taylor & Associates (Eds.), *Transformative learning in practice: Insights from community, workplace and higher education* (pp. 35–45). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons
- Bynum, L. L., & Seaman, M. A. (1993). Motivations of third-age students in learning-in-retirement institutes. *Continuing Higher Education Review*, 57, 12–22.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (1997). Safe houses in the contact zone: Coping strategies of African-American students in the academy. *College Composition and Communication*, 48(2), 173–196.
- Canagarajah, S. (2013). Theorizing a competence for translingual practice at the contact zone. In S. May (Ed.), *The multilingual turn: Implications for SLA, TESOL and bilingual education* (pp. 88–112). London, England: Routledge. doi:10.4324/9780203113493
- Carlock, R. H. (2016). La unión hace la fuerza: Community organizing in adult education for immigrants. *Harvard Educational Review*, 86(1), 98–122. doi:10.17763/0017-8055.86.1.98

- Carnegie Community Centre Seniors' Guide (n.d). Retrieved from <https://vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/carnegie-centre-seniors-programs.aspx>
- Carragher, L., & Golding, B. (2015). Older men as learners: Irish men's sheds as an intervention. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 65(2), 152–168.
- Carrière Y., Martel, L., Légaré, J., & Picard, J.-F. (2016). *The contribution of immigration to the size and ethnocultural diversity of future cohorts of seniors*. (Catalogue no. 75-006-X). Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/75-006-x/2016001/article/14345-eng.pdf?st=CCGacy2Y>
- Cervatiuc, A., & Ricento, T. (2012). Curriculum meta-orientations in the language instruction for newcomers to Canada program. *The Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education*, 24(2), 17–31.
- Chao, X., & Mantero, M. (2014). Church-based ESL adult programs: Social mediators for empowering family literacy ecology of communities. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 46(1), 90–114. doi: 10.1177/1086296X14524588
- Chase, S. (2005). Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln, *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 651–680). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Chené, A. (1991). Self-esteem of the elderly and education. *Educational Gerontology: An International Quarterly*, 17(4), 343–353.
- Chow, R. (2014). *Not like a native speaker: On languaging as a postcolonial experience*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- City of Vancouver (2013). Downtown Eastside local area profile. Retrieved from <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/profile-dtes-local-area-2013.pdf>

- City of Vancouver (2015). Downtown Eastside Plan. Retrieved from <http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/downtown-eastside-plan.pdf>
- City of Vancouver (2018). Downtown Eastside Plan. Retrieved from <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/downtown-eastside-plan.pdf>
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Clark, F., Heller, A. F., Rafman, C., & Walker, J. (1997). Peer learning: A popular model for seniors' education. *Educational Gerontology: An International Quarterly*, 23(8), 751–762.
- Cnaan, R. A., & Goldberg-Glen, R. S. (1991). Measuring motivation to volunteer in human services. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 27(3), 269–284.
doi:10.1177/0021886391273003
- Coady, M. (2013). Adult health learning and transformation: A case study of a Canadian community-based program. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 63(4), 321–337. doi: 10.1177/0741713612471419
- Coffey, S., & Street, B. (2008). Narrative and identity in the “language learning project”. *The Modern Language Journal*, 92(3), 452–464.
- Cole, Y. (2014). Rent increase for low-income Chinatown seniors could set "terrifying precedent", says Pivot lawyer. *The Georgia Straight*, Retrieved from <https://www.straight.com/news/583316/rent-increase-low-income-chinatown-seniors-could-set-terrifying-precedent-says-pivot-lawyer>
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(5), 2–14.

- Cooperrider, D. L., Whitney, D. K., & Stavros, J. M. (2003). *Appreciative inquiry handbook* (Vol. 1). San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Cox, J. G. (2017). Explicit instruction, bilingualism, and the older adult learner. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 39(1), 29–58.
- Creech, A., & Hallam, S. (2015). Critical geragogy: A framework for facilitating older learners in community music. *London Review of Education*, 13(1), 43–57.
- Crowther, J., Maclachlan, K., & Tett, L. (2010). Adult literacy, learning identities and pedagogic practice. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 29(6), 651–664.
- Cruikshank, M. (2003). *Learning to be old*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Cummins, J. (2007). Rethinking monolingual instructional strategies in multilingual classrooms. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics/Revue Canadienne de Linguistique Appliquée*, 10(2), 221–240.
- Cummins, J., & Early, M. (2011). *Identity texts: The collaborative creation of power in multilingual schools*. Stoke-on-Trent, England: Institute of Education Press.
- Cusack, S. A. (1994). Developing leadership in the Third Age: An ethnographic study of leadership in a seniors' center. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 13(2), 127–142.
- Cusack, S. A. (1999). Critical educational gerontology and the imperative to empower. *Education and Ageing*, 14, 21–37.
- Czarniawska, B. (2004) *Narratives in social science research*. London, England: Sage.
- de Medeiros, K. (2005). The complementary self: Multiple perspectives on the aging person. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 19(1), 1–13. doi: 10.1016/j.jaging.2004.02.001

- de Medeiros, K., & Rubinstein, R. L. (2015). "Shadow stories" in oral interviews: Narrative care through careful listening. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 34, 162–168. doi: 10.1016/j.jaging.2015.02.009
- Decalmer, P., & Glendenning, F. (Eds.). (1993). *The mistreatment of elderly people*. London, England: Sage.
- Deters, P., Gao, X., Miller, E. R., & Vitanova, G. (2015). *Theorizing and analyzing agency in second language learning: Interdisciplinary approaches*. Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.
- DeSantis, G. (2014). Community-based research and advocacy for change: Critical reflections about delicate processes of inclusion/exclusion. In Jeffery, B., Findlay, I., Martz, D., Clarke L. (Eds.), *Journeys in community-based research*. Regina, Canada: University of Regina Press.
- Duay, D. L., & Bryan, V. C. (2008). Learning in later life: What seniors want in a learning experience. *Educational Gerontology*, 34(12), 1070–1086.
- Duff, P. (2012). Identity, agency, and second language acquisition. In S. M. Gass & A. Mackey (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 410–426). London, England: Routledge.
- Duff, P. & Doherty, L. (2015). Examining agency in (second) language socialization research. In P. Deters, X. Gao, E. R. Miller, G. Vitanova (Eds.), *Theorizing and analyzing agency in second language learning. Interdisciplinary approaches* (pp. 54–73). Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.

- Duff, P., Wong, P., & Early, M. (2000). Learning language for work and life: The linguistic socialization of immigrant Canadians seeking careers in healthcare. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 57(1), 9–57.
- Ehrman, M. E., & Oxford, R. L. (1995). Cognition plus: Correlates of language learning success. *The Modern Language Journal*, 79(1), 67–89.
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- English, L. M., Irving, C. J. (2015). *Feminism in community. Adult education for transformation*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Faulkner, A. E. (2016). Financial literacy education in the United States: Library programming versus popular personal finance literature. *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, 56(2), 116–126.
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 80–92. doi:10.1177/160940690600500107
- Ferrer, I., Grenier, A., Brotman, S., & Koehn, S. (2017). Understanding the experiences of racialized older people through an intersectional life course perspective. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 41, 10–17. doi: 10.1016/j.jaging.2017.02.001
- Findsen, B. (2007). Freirean philosophy and pedagogy in the adult education context: The case of older adults' learning. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 26(6), 545–559.
- Findsen, B., & Formosa, M. (2011). *Lifelong learning in later life. A handbook on older adult learning*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense.

- Fisher, B. J., & Specht, D. K. (1999). Successful aging and creativity in later life. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 13(4), 457–472. doi:10.1016/s0890-4065(99)00021-3
- Fisher, B. J., & Specht, D. K. (1999). Successful aging and creativity in later life. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 13(4), 457–472.
- Fleming, D. (2007). Adult immigrant ESL programs in Canada: Emerging trends in the contexts of history, economics, and identity. In J. Cummins & C. Davison (Eds.), *International handbook of English language teaching* (pp. 185–198). New York, NY: Springer.
- Fleming, D. (2010). Becoming citizens: Racialized conceptions of ESL learners and the Canadian Language Benchmarks. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 33(3), 588–616.
- Fleming, D. (2015). Citizenship and race in second-language education. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 36(1), 42–52.
- Flood, M., & Phillips, K. D. (2007). Creativity in older adults: A plethora of possibilities. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 28(4), 389–411. doi:10.1080/01612840701252956
- Flora Moritz da Silva, Irineu Manoel de Souza, & Rudimar Antunes da Rocha. (2017). Third age university, social and institutional commitment. *Extensio: Revista Eletrônica De Extensão*, 14(27), 4–18.
- Flowerdew, J., & Miller, L. (2013). Narrative inquiry in a second language context: Stories from Hong Kong. In G. P. Barkhuizen (Ed.), *Narrative research in applied linguistics* (pp. 41–61). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Foley, D. E. (2002) Critical ethnography: The reflexive turn. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 15(4), 469–490. doi:10.1080/09518390210145534
- Formosa, M. (2000). Older adult education in a Maltese University of the Third Age: A critical perspective. *Education and Ageing*, 15(3), 315–339.

- Formosa, M. (2002). Critical gerogogy: Developing practical possibilities for critical educational gerontology. *Education and Ageing*, 17(1), 73–86.
- Formosa, M. (2002). Critical gerogogy: Developing practical possibilities for critical educational gerontology. *Education and Ageing*, 17(1), 73–86.
- Formosa, M. (2005). Feminism and critical educational gerontology: An agenda for good practice. *Ageing International*, 30(4), 396–411.
- Formosa, M. (2011). Critical educational gerontology: A third statement of first principles. *International Journal of Education and Ageing*, 2(1), 317–300.
- Formosa, M. (2012). Lifelong education for older adults in Malta: Current trends and future visions. *International Review of Education / Revue Internationale De l'Education*, 58(2), 271–292.
- Forsey, M. G. (2010). Ethnography as participant listening. *Ethnography*, 11(4), 558–572.
- Frank, A. W. (2002). Why study people's stories? The dialogical ethics of narrative analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1(1), 109–117.
- Frank, A. W. (2005). What is dialogical research, and why should we do it? *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(7), 964–974.
- Frank, A. W. (2010). *Letting stories breathe. A socio-narratology*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Frank, A. W. (2012). Practicing dialogical narrative analysis. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Varieties of narrative analysis* (pp. 33–52). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fryer, M. (n.d). Inside or Outside? Learning on the Edge [web log post]. Retrieved from <http://www.margofryer.ca>

- Gao, X. (2010). *Strategic language learning: The roles of agency and context*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Gerzak, R. (2017, November 05). Controversial condo decision in Vancouver's Chinatown may be 'unprecedented', *The Globe and Mail*, Retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/controversial-condo-decision-in-vancouvers-chinatown-may-be-unprecedented/article36840400>
- Gibb, T. L. (2008). Bridging Canadian adult second language education and essential skills policies: Approach with caution. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 58(4), 318–334.
- Gillard, S. & Balyasnikova, N. (2015). *Fear, courage, and joy: Three conversations at the Learning Exchange*. Unpublished manuscript, UBC Learning Exchange, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.
- Glendenning, F. (1993). Educational gerontology and gerogogy: A critical perspective. *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 13(1-2), 5–21.
- Glendenning, F. (2001) Education for older adults. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 20(1-2), 63–70.
- Glendenning, F., & Battersby, D. (1990). Educational gerontology and education for older Adults: A statement of first principles. *Australian Journal of Adult and Community Education*, 30(1), 38–44.
- Golding, B. G. (2011a). Older men's wellbeing through community participation in Australia. *International Journal of Men's Health*, 10(1), 26.
- Golding, B. G. (2011b). Social, local, and situated: Recent findings about the effectiveness of older men's informal learning in community contexts. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 61(2), 103–120. doi:10.1177/0741713610380437

- Goodall, H. L., Jr., (2004). Commentary: Narrative ethnography as applied communication research. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 32(3), 185–194.
doi:10.1080/0090988042000240130
- Gubrium, J., & Holstein, J. A. (1999). At the border of narrative and ethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 28(5), 561–573.
- Gubrium, J., & Holstein, J. A. (2008). Narrative Ethnography. In S. N. Hesse-Biber, P. Leavy (Eds.), *Handbook of emergent methods*, (pp. 214–265), New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Guillemin, M., & Gillam, L. (2004). Ethics, reflexivity, and “ethically important moments” in research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(2), 261–280.
- Guo, Y. (2013). Language policies and programs for adult immigrants in Canada: A critical analysis. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 45(1-2), 23–41.
- Hampshire, K., Iqbal, N., Blell, M., & Simpson, B. (2014). The interview as narrative ethnography: Seeking and shaping connections in qualitative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 17(3), 215–231.
doi:10.1080/13645579.2012.729405
- Han, H. (2009). Institutionalized inclusion: A case study on support for immigrants in English learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 43(4), 643–668. doi:10.1002/j.1545-7249.2009.tb00190.x
- Han, H. (2011). Social inclusion through multilingual ideologies, policies and practices: A case study of a minority church. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 14(4), 383–398. doi:[10.1080/13670050.2011.573063](https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2011.573063)

- Han, H. (2014). "Westerners," "Chinese," and/or "Us": Exploring the intersections of language, race, religion, and immigrantization. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 45(1), 54–70. doi:10.1111/aeq.12047
- Haque, E. (2011). A Foucauldian approach to language policy: The case of Canada. *OLBI Working Papers*, 3, 95–107.
- Haque, E. (2012). *Multiculturalism within a bilingual framework: Language, race, and belonging in Canada*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Haque, E. (2017). Neoliberal governmentality and Canadian migrant language training policies. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 15(1), 96–113. doi:10.1080/14767724.2014.937403
- Haque, E., Cray, E., Ramanathan, V., & Morgan, B. (2007). Constraining teachers: Adult ESL settlement language training policy and implementation. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41(3), 634–642.
- Hardman, J. C. (1999). A community of learners: Cambodians in an adult ESL classroom. *Language Teaching Research*, 3(2), 145–166.
- Haseloff, W. (2001). Oral history: Collaboration and the ageing. *Oral History Association of Australia Journal, The*, 23, 24–29.
- Helm, F., & Dabre, T. (2018). Engineering a "contact zone" through translanguaging. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 18(1), 144–156. doi:10.1080/14708477.2017.1400509
- Heo, J., Chun, S., Kim, B., Ryu, J., & Lee, Y. (2017). Leisure activities, optimism, and personal growth among the young-old, old-old, and oldest-old. *Educational Gerontology*, 43(6), 289–299.

- Higgins, C., & Stoker, K. (2011). Language learning as a site for belonging: A narrative analysis of Korean adoptee-returnees. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 14(4), 399–412.
- Hohti, R., & Karlsson, L. (2014). Lollipop stories: Listening to children’s voices in the classroom and narrative ethnographical research. *Childhood*, 21(4), 548–562.
doi:10.1177/0907568213496655
- Holstein, M. B., & Minkler, M. (2003). Self, society, and the “new gerontology”. *The Gerontologist*, 43(6), 787–796.
- hooks, b. (1990). Marginality as a site of resistance. In Ferguson, R. et al. (Eds.), *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory*, (pp. 341–343). New York, NY: Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Hori, S., & Cusack, S. (2006). Third-age education in Canada and Japan: Attitudes toward aging and participation in learning. *Educational Gerontology*, 32(6), 463–481.
- Hubenthal, W. (2004). Older Russian immigrants’ experiences in learning English: Motivation, methods, and barriers. *Adult Basic Education*, 14(2), 104–126.
- Huhtala, A. (2014). Creating oneself through narratives: Agency in first-semester university students’ career plans. *Apples: Journal of Applied Language Studies*, 8(1), 29–45.
- Humphreys, M. (2005). Getting personal: Reflexivity and autoethnographic vignettes. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11(6), 840–860.
- Hyde, M. K., Dunn, J., Bax, C., & Chambers, S. K. (2016). Episodic volunteering and retention: An integrated theoretical approach. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 45(1), 45–63. doi:10.1177/0899764014558934

- Jackson R.L.,II, Moshin J. (2010). Identity and difference: Race and the necessity of the discriminating subject. In Nakayama, T.K. & Halualani, R.T. (Eds.), *The handbook of critical intercultural communication*, (pp. 348–363). Oxford, England: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Josselson, R. (1996). On writing other people's lives: Self-analytic reflections of a narrative researcher. In R. Josselson (Ed.), *The narrative study of lives, Vol. 4. Ethics and process in the narrative study of lives*, (pp. 60–71). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Jovchelovitch, S., & Bauer, M. W. (2000). *Narrative interviewing* [online]. London, England: LSE Research Online.
- Kaplanová, T., Přidalová, M., & Zbořilová, V. (2018). Adiposity and physical activity in physically active and inactive elderly women at the university of third age in Palacký University Olomouc. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 18(2), 792–799.
- Karasik, R. J., & Kishimoto, K. (2018). Is gerontology ready for anti-racist pedagogy? A survey of educators' practices and perspectives. *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 39(1), 3–20.
- Kasper, G., & Prior, M. T. (2015). Analyzing storytelling in TESOL interview research. *TESOL Quarterly*, 49(2), 226–255. doi:10.1002/tesq.169
- Kee, Y. (2010). Educational gerontology in Korea: An interpretive and critical study. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 29(1), 93–110.
doi:10.1080/02601370903471734
- Kerr, T., Wood, E., Small, D., Palepu, A., & Tyndall, M. W. (2003). Potential use of safer injecting facilities among injection drug users in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 169(8), 759–763.

- Kim, T. Y., & Kim, Y. K. (2015). Elderly Korean learners' participation in English learning through lifelong education: Focusing on motivation and demotivation. *Educational Gerontology*, 41(2), 120–135.
- Kim, Y. S., & Merriam, S. B. (2010). Situated learning and identity development in a Korean older adults' computer classroom. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 60(5), 438–455.
doi.org/10.1177/0741713610363019
- Kirkham, S. R., & Anderson, J. M. (2002). Postcolonial nursing scholarship: From epistemology to method. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 25(1), 1–17. doi:10.1097/00012272-200209000-00004
- Kubota, R. (1999). Japanese culture constructed by discourses: Implications for applied linguistics research and ELT. *TESOL Quarterly*, 33(1), 9–35. doi:10.2307/3588189
- Kubota, R. (2003). New approaches to gender, class, and race in second language writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 12(1), 31–47. doi:10.1016/S1060-3743(02)00125-X
- Kubota, R. (2004) Critical multiculturalism and second language education. In B. Norton & K. Toohey (Eds.), *Critical pedagogies and language learning* (pp. 30–52). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Kubota, R. (2011). Learning a foreign language as leisure and consumption: Enjoyment, desire, and the business of eikaiwa. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 14(4), 473–488.
- Kubota, R. (2015). Race and language learning in multicultural Canada: Towards critical antiracism. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 36(1), 3–12, doi: 10.1080/01434632.2014.892497

- Kubota, R., & Lin, A. (Eds.) (2009). *Race, culture, and identities in second language education: Exploring critically engaged practice*. London, England: Routledge.
- Kuklewicz, A., & King, J. (2018). "It's never too late": A narrative inquiry of older Polish adults' English language learning experiences. *The Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language*, 22(3).
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2008). *Cultural globalization and language education*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Kuyvenhoven, J. (2009). *In the presence of each other: A pedagogy of storytelling*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Laceulle, H., & Baars, J. (2014). Self-realization and cultural narratives about later life. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 31, 34–44. doi: 10.1016/j.jaging.2014.08.005
- Lam, L. C., Tang, W. K., Leung, V., & Chiu, H. F. (2001). Behavioral profile of Alzheimer's disease in Chinese elderly: a validation study of the Chinese version of the Alzheimer's disease behavioral pathology rating scale. *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 16(4), 368–373.
- Larsen–Freeman, D. (2019). On language learner agency: A complex dynamic systems theory perspective. *The Modern Language Journal*, 103(S1), 61–79.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Lee, E. (2008). The "other (ing)" costs of ESL: A Canadian case study. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 18(1), 91–108.

- Lee, E. (2014). Doing culture, doing race: Everyday discourses of “culture” and “cultural difference” in the English as a second language classroom. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 36(1), 80–93. doi:10.1080/01434632.2014.892503
- Lemieux, A., & Sanchez Martinez, M. (2000). Gerontagogy beyond words: A reality. *Educational Gerontology*, 26(5), 475–498. doi: 10.1080/03601270050111887
- Leskowitz, S., & Hemphill, D. (2013). DIY activists: Communities of practice, cultural dialogism, and radical knowledge sharing. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 63(1), 57–77.
- Leung, A., Chi, I., & Chiang, V. (2008). Chinese retirees’ learning interests: A qualitative analysis. *Educational Gerontology*, 34(12), 1105–1121.
- Leung, A., Lui, Y. H., & Chi, I. (2006). Later life learning experience among Chinese elderly in Hong Kong. *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education*, 26(2), 1–15.
- Ley, D., & Dobson, C. (2008). Are there limits to gentrification? The contexts of impeded gentrification in Vancouver. *Urban Studies*, 45(12), 2471–2498.
- Linden, I. A., Mar, M. Y., Werker, G. R., Jang, K., & Krausz, M. (2013). Research on a vulnerable neighborhood: The Vancouver Downtown Eastside from 2001 to 2011. *Journal of Urban Health*, 90(3), 559–573.
- Lippi-Green, R. (2012). *English with an accent: Language, ideology and discrimination in the United States*. London, England: Routledge.
- Liu, S., & Blomley, N. (2013). Making news and making space: Framing Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe Canadien*, 57(2), 119–132.
- Mackey, A. & Sachs, R. (2012). Older learners in SLA research: A first look at working memory, feedback, and L2 development. *Language Learning*, 62(3), 704–740.

- Mackie, J., Fumano, D., & Lee-Young, J. (2017, November 08). Developers shocked city turned down Chinatown development. *Vancouver Sun*, Retrieved from <http://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/developers-shocked-city-turned-down-chinatown-development>
- MacQueen, K. (2014, March 24). What rules apply in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside? *Maclean's*, Retrieved from <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/what-rules-apply-in-vancouvers-downtown-eastside/>
- Maderer, P., & Skiba, A. (2006). Integrative geragogy. Part 1: Theory and practice of a basic model. *Educational Gerontology*, 32(2), 125–145. doi: 10.1080/03601270500388158
- Mattingly, C., & Lawlor, M. (2000). Learning from stories: Narrative interviewing in cross-cultural research. *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 7(1), 4–14.
- McConatha, J. T., Stoller, P., & Oboudiat, F. (2001). Reflections of older Iranian women Adapting to life in the United States. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 15(4), 369–381. doi:10.1016/S0890-4065(01)00029-9
- McElroy, J. (2017, November 06). City of Vancouver rejects proposed Chinatown condo at 105 Keefer Street. *CBC News*, Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/105-keefer-chinatown-tower-beedie-decision-1.4390486>
- McHugh, M. C. (2016). Experiencing flow: Creativity and meaningful task engagement for senior women. *Women & Therapy*, 39(3-4), 280–295. doi:10.1080/02703149.2016.1116862
- McIntyre, J. (2012). The development and recovery of social capital through community-based adult learning. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 31(5), 607–621. doi:10.1080/02601370.2012.693955

- Medel-Anonuevo, C., Ohsako, T., & Mauch, W. (2001). *Revisiting lifelong learning for the 21st century*. Hamburg, Germany: Institute for Education.
- Merriam, S. B., & Kee, Y. (2014). Promoting community wellbeing: The case for lifelong learning for older adults. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 64(2), 128–144.
- Miller, E. R. (2010). Agency in the making: Adult immigrants' accounts of language learning and work. *TESOL Quarterly*, 44(3), 465–487.
- Miller, E. R. (2014). *The language of adult immigrants: Agency in the making*. New York, NY: Multilingual Matters.
- Miller, E. R. (2016). The ideology of learner agency and the neoliberal self. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 26(3), 348–365. doi:10.1111/ijal.12129
- Moody, H. R. (1976). *Educational Gerontology*, 1(1), 1–76.
- Morgan, B. (1998). *The ESL classroom: Teaching, critical practice, and community development*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Morgan, B. (2002) Critical practice in community-based ESL programs: A Canadian perspective. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 1(2), 141–162. doi: 10.1207/S15327701JLIE0102_03
- Murphey, T., & Carpenter, C. (2008). The seeds of agency in language learning histories. In P. Kalaja, V. Menezes, & A. M. F. Barcelos (Eds.), *Narratives of learning and teaching EFL* (pp. 17–34), London, England: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Narushima, M., Liu, J., & Diestelkamp, N. (2017). I learn, therefore I am: A phenomenological analysis of meanings of lifelong learning for vulnerable older adults. *The Gerontologist*, 58(4), 696–705.

- Ng, R., & Shan, H. (2010). Lifelong learning as ideological practice: An analysis from the perspective of immigrant women in Canada. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 29(2), 169–184. doi:10.1080/02601371003616574
- Nikander, P. (2009). Doing change and continuity: Age identity and the macro-micro divide, *Ageing and Society*, 29(6), 863–881.
- Nimrod, G., & Ben-Shem, I. (2015). Successful aging as a lifelong process. *Educational Gerontology*, 41(11), 814–824.
- O'Donnell, V., & Tobbell, J. (2007). The transition of adult students to higher education: Legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice? *Adult Education Quarterly*, 57(4), 312–328. doi:10.1177/0741713607302686
- Oxford, R. (2018). A developmental perspective on third-age learning. In D. Gabrys-Barker. (Ed.), *Third Age learners of foreign languages* (pp. 3–18). Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Park, J., & Brenna, B. A. (2015). The value of writing for senior-citizen writers. *Language and Literacy*, 17(3), 100–117. doi:10.20360/G27W2C
- Pavlenko, A., & Blackledge, A. (Eds.). (2004). *Negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Pedersen, K., Sandvik, L., & Waal, H. (2007). Evaluation of DTES: A simple drug-taking scale. *Addiction Research & Theory*, 15(6), 637–649.
- Peralta, M., Martins, J., Gómez Chávez, F., Cortés Almanzar, P., & Marques, A. (2018). Self-rated wellbeing and physical activity associations in European older adults. *European Journal of Sport Science*, 18(7), 1038–1044.
- Pettitt, N. (2019). Weaving reciprocity in research with(in) immigrant and refugee communities. In M. Bigelow and D. Warriner (Eds.), *Critical reflections on research methods: Power*

- and equity in complex multilingual contexts* (pp. 143–156). Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Pfenninger, S. E., & Polz, S. (2018). Foreign language learning in the third age: A pilot feasibility study on cognitive, socio-affective and linguistic drivers and benefits in relation to previous bilingualism of the learner. *Journal of the European Second Language Association*, 2(1), 1–13. doi: 10.22599/jesla.36
- Phoenix, C., & Sparkes, A. C. (2009). Being Fred: Big stories, small stories and the accomplishment of a positive ageing identity. *Qualitative Research*, 9(2), 219–236. doi: 10.1177/1468794108099322
- Pillow, W. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(2), 175–196.
- Pot, A., Keijzer, M., & De Bot, K. (2018). The language barrier in migrant aging. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 1–19, doi:10.1080/13670050.2018.1435627
- Pratt, M. L. (1991). Arts of the contact zone. *Profession*, 33–40.
- Pratt, M. L. (1992). *Imperial eyes: Travel writing and transculturation*. London, England: Routledge.
- Pratt, M. L. (2016). Lessons for losing. *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 16(1), 245–252.
- Pratt, M. L. (2018). Aesthetics, politics, and sociolinguistic analysis. *Language Sciences*, 65, 18–25. doi:10.1016/j.langsci.2017.02.005
- Price, K. A., & Tinker, A. M. (2014). Creativity in later life. *Maturitas*, 78(4), 281–286. doi:10.1016/j.maturitas.2014.05.025

- Prins, B. (2006). Narrative accounts of origins. A blind spot in the intersectional approach? *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 13(3), 277–290. doi: 10.1177/1350506806065757
- Prins, E., Toso, B. W., & Schafft, K. A. (2009). “It feels like a little family to me”: Social interaction and support among women in adult education and family literacy. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 59(4), 335–352.
- Purdie, N., & Boulton-Lewis, G. (2003). The learning needs of older adults. *Educational Gerontology*, 29(2), 129–149. doi: 10.1080/713844281
- Puroila, A., Estola, E., & Syrjälä, L. (2012). Does Santa exist? Children's everyday narratives as dynamic meeting places in a day care centre context. *Early Child Development and Care*, 182(2), 191–206. doi:10.1080/03004430.2010.549942
- Ramirez Gómez, D. (2016a). Critical geragogy and foreign language learning: An exploratory application. *Educational Gerontology*, 42(2), 136–143.
doi:10.1080/03601277.2015.1083388
- Ramirez Gómez, D. (2016b). *Language teaching and the older adult: The significance of experience*. New York, NY: Multilingual Matters.
- Randall, W. L. (2008). Getting my stories straight: A narrativist in quest of congruence. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 22(2), 169–176. doi: 10.1016/j.jaging.2007.12.008
- Ray, R. E., & Fine, M. (1999). Researching to transgress: The need for critical feminism in gerontology. *Journal of Women & Aging*, 11(2-3), 171–184.
- Reed, J. (2007). *Appreciative inquiry: Research for change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Roberson Jr., D. N., & Merriam, S. B. (2005). The self-directed learning process of older, rural adults. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 55(4), 269–287.

- Robertson, L. (2007). Taming space: Drug use, HIV, and homemaking in Downtown Eastside Vancouver. *Gender, Place and Culture*, 14(5), 527–549.
- Rodwin, V. G., & Gusmano, M. K. (Eds). (2006). *Growing older in world cities: New York, London, Paris and Tokyo*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Rusch, D., Frazier, S. L., & Atkins, M. (2015). Building capacity within community-based organizations: New directions for mental health promotion for Latino immigrant families in urban poverty. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(1), 1–5.
- Santos, M. G., Handley, M. A., Omark, K., & Schillinger, D. (2014). ESL participation as a mechanism for advancing health literacy in immigrant communities. *Journal of Health Communication*, 19(S2), 89–105. doi:10.1080/10810730.2014.934935
- Schulz, R. A., & Elliott, P. (2000). Learning Spanish as an older adult. *Hispania*, 83(1), 107–119. doi:10.2307/346149
- Seo, Y. K., & Mazumdar, S. (2011). Feeling at home: Korean Americans in senior public housing. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 25(3), 233–242. doi:10.1016/j.jaging.2011.03.008
- Shan, H., & Walter, P. (2014). Growing everyday multiculturalism: Practice-based learning of Chinese immigrants through community gardens in Canada. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 65(1), 19–34. doi: 10.1177/0741713614549231
- Shi, L. (2009). Chinese-Western “contact zone”: Students’ resistance and teachers’ adaptation to local needs. *TESL Canada Journal*, 27(1), 47–63.
- Shore, R., (2017, April 12). Welcome to Hell: A walk through the Downtown Eastside. *Vancouver Sun*, Retrieved from <http://vancouversun.com/uncategorized/the-green-man/welcome-to-hell-a-walk-through-the-downtown-eastside>

- Singh, P., & Doherty, C. (2004). Global cultural flows and pedagogic dilemmas: Teaching in the global university contact zone. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38(1), 9–42.
- Skilton-Sylvester, E. (2002). Should I stay or should I go? Investigating Cambodian women's participation and investment in adult ESL programs. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 53(1), 9–26.
- Słowik, A. (2017). Listening in older second language learners: The teachers' perspective. *The Journal of Education, Culture, and Society*, (1), 148–163. doi:10.15503/jecs20171.148.163
- Smagorinsky, P., Jakubiak, C., & Moore, C. (2008). Student teaching in the contact zone: Learning to teach amid multiple interests in a vocational English class. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(5), 442–454.
- Smakman, D., Heinrich, P. (Eds.). (2018). *Urban sociolinguistics: The city as a linguistic process and experience*. New York, NY : Routledge.
- Small, M. (2017). Analysis of an organisation : A university of the third age (U3A), Mornington, Victoria. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 57(1), 147–158.
- Smith, A. (2009). *Ageing in urban neighborhoods. Place attachment and social exclusion*. Bristol, England: The Policy Press.
- Smith, H. A. (2003). Planning, policy and polarisation in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 94(4), 496–509.
- Soto Mas, F., Ji, M., Fuentes, B. O., & Tinajero, J. (2015). The health literacy and ESL study: a community-based intervention for Spanish-speaking adults. *Journal of Health Communication*, 20(4), 369–376.

- Statistics Canada. (2014). Canada's population estimates: Age and sex. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-quotidien/140926/dq140926b-eng.pdf?st=H60sbu4W>
- Strand, K., Marullo, S., Cutforth, N., Stoecker, R., & Donohue, P. (2003). Principles of best practice for community-based research. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 9(3), 5–15.
- Talmy, S. (2010a). Qualitative interviews in applied linguistics: From research instrument to social practice. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 30, 128–148.
- Talmy, S. (2010b). The interview as collaborative achievement: Interaction, identity, and ideology in a speech event. *Applied Linguistics*, 32(1), 25–42.
- Tam, M., Boulton-Lewis, G., Buys, L., & Chui, E. (2017). Similarities and differences in views of ageing and learning in Hong Kong and Australia. *Educational Gerontology*, 43(8), 393–403.
- Taylor, E. W. (2007). An update of transformative learning theory: A critical review of the empirical research (1999–2005). *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 26(2), 173–191.
- Taylor, L. E., Taylor-Henley, S., & Doan, L. (2005). Older immigrants: Language competencies and mental health. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health = Revue Canadienne De Santé Mentale Communautaire*, 24(2), 23–34. doi:10.7870/cjcmh-2005-0012
- Tedlock, B. (1991). From participant observation to the observation of participation: The emergence of narrative ethnography. *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 47(1), 69–94.

- Tedlock, B. (2004). Narrative ethnography as social science discourse. In N. Denzin (Ed.), *Studies in symbolic interaction* (Vol. 27, pp. 23–31). Bingley, England: Emerald Group Publishing.
- Thomson, M. S., Chaze, F., George, U., & Guruge, S. (2015). Improving immigrant populations' access to mental health services in Canada: A review of barriers and recommendations. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health, 17*(6), 1895–1905.
- Towle, A., & Leahy, K. (2016). The Learning Exchange: A shared space for the University of British Columbia and Vancouver's Downtown Eastside communities. *Metropolitan Universities, 27*(3), 67–83. doi:10.18060/21387.
- Tran, T. V. (1990). Language acculturation among older Vietnamese refugee adults. *The Gerontologist, 30*(1), 94–99.
- TripAdvisor (2010). Downtown Eastside - what's the extent of this “danger” area? [online forum] Retrieved from https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowTopic-g154943-i81-k3947906-Downtown_Eastside_what_s_the_extent_of_this_danger_area-Vancouver_British_Columbia.html
- Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending damage: A letter to communities. *Harvard Educational Review, 79*(3), 409–428.
- Turner, J. (2017, July 31). City on drugs: The dark pull of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. *CBC Radio*, Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/ondrugs/city-on-drugs-the-dark-pull-of-vancouver-s-downtown-eastside-1.4229455>
- Turner, V. (1969). *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- UBC Learning Exchange. (2015). *Untitled Report*. Retrieved from: <https://magic.piktochart.com/output/5164198-untitled-report>

- United Nations Population Fund. (2012). *Ageing in the twenty-first century: A celebration and a challenge*. Retrieved from <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Ageing%20report.pdf>
- United Nations Population Fund. (2018). *World population dashboard: Canada*. Retrieved from <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/CA>
- Warnes, A. M., & Williams, A. (2006). Older migrants in Europe: A new focus for migration studies. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 3(8), 1257–1281.
- Warnes, A. M., K. Friedrich, L. Kellaher, & S. Torres. (2004). The diversity and welfare of older migrants in Europe. *Ageing & Society*, 24(3), 307–326.
- Warriner, D. (2007). Language learning and the politics of belonging: Sudanese women refugees becoming and being “American”. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 38(4), 343–359.
- Warriner, D. (2016). ‘Here, without English, you are dead’: Ideologies of language and discourses of neoliberalism in adult English language learning. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 37(5), 495–508.
- Warriner, D., Bigelow, M. (Eds.). (2019). *Critical reflections on research methods: Power and equity in complex multilingual contexts*. Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Weedon, C. (2004). *Identity and culture: Narratives of difference and belonging*. New York, NY: Open University Press.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Wengraf, T. (2001). *Qualitative research interviewing: Biographic narrative and semi-structured methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Whitney, D. K., & Trosten-Bloom, A. (2003). *The power of appreciative inquiry: A practical guide to positive change*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.
- Wilder, L. K., Vázquez-Montilla, E., & Greene, J. (2016). Unmasking the faces of diverse university students and professors through narrative ethnography. *Multicultural Learning and Teaching*, 11(2), 151–158.
- Wilmoth, J. (2016). Demographic perspectives on global population aging. In M. Harrington Meyer & E. A. Daniele (Eds.) *Gerontology: Changes, challenges, and solutions* (pp. 1–23). Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.
- Withnall, A. (2006) Exploring influences on later life learning. *International Journal of Lifelong Learning*, 25(1), 29–49.
- Woo, A., Dhillon, S, Stueck, W., Hager, M. Hume, M., Bailey, I, & Lopes, L., (2017, November 12). On Cheque Day, a toxic mix of money and drugs in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. *The Globe and Mail*, Retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/on-cheque-day-a-toxic-mix-of-money-and-drugs-in-vancouvers-downtowneastside/article33462579/>
- World Health Organization. (2007). *Global age friendly cities: A guide*. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO.
- Wu, Z., & Penning, M. (2015). Immigration and loneliness in later life. *Ageing and Society*, 35(1), 64–95.
- Xu, S., & Connelly, M. (2010). Narrative inquiry for school-based research. *Narrative Inquiry*, 20(2), 349–370.

Yuen, H. K., Mueller, K., Mayor, E., & Azuero, A. (2011). Impact of participation in a theatre programme on quality of life among older adults with chronic conditions: A pilot study. *Occupational Therapy International*, 18(4), 201–208.

Appendix A Participant recruitment letter

LOOKING FOR PARTICIPANTS

Dear senior learners of English:

We are looking for Level 3 learners to take part in a study of seniors' experiences in UBC Learning Exchange.

Next term, on April 18th, 2016 we are opening a special class. This class will be similar to regular conversational groups, but will also involve creating posters, writing and sharing stories about cultures, your life in Canada and other topics!

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to enroll in this Level 3 class and take part in class activities developed especially for this project. In addition to taking this class, if you would like, you will have three individual meetings with one of co-facilitators to share your stories personally.

If you participate, you may take one more class per week.

For more information about this study, or to sign up for the class, please contact Spring Gillard at the front desk or Natalia Balyasnikova XXXX.

Thank you!



a place of mind

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

寻求研究参与者

亲爱的学员：

您好！

我们现邀请年龄在上英语 3 级学习者参加卑诗大学关于年长者英语学习经验的研究项目。

下学期从 2016 年 4 月 18 日开始，我们将开设一个特别的英语课程！该课程与其他对话课程类似，但是会增加海报制作以及您在文化和加拿大的生活等方面的故事分享等课堂活动。

作为该研究项目的参与者，您需要首先注册该 3 级课程，并且参加为研究项目而设计的各项课堂活动。参与课堂学习之外，在您自愿的前提下，您还可以参加 3 次面对面访谈。在访谈中您可以跟该课程的教师之一分析您的故事。

为答谢您的参与，您可以每周比其他学院多上一次英语课。

更多关于该研究项目或者注册该课程的信息，请联系接待处 Spring Gillard 或者 Natalia Balyasnikova XXXX。

该项目的主要研究者是 Ryuko Kubota 博士，她是教育学院语言与读写教育系的教授，她的联系方式是 XXXX 或者 XXXX。

感谢您的参与！



a place of mind

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

尋求研究參與者

親愛的學員：

您好！

我們現邀請年齡在上的英語 3 級學習者參加卑詩大學關於年長者英語學習經驗的研究項目。

下學期從 2016 年 4 月 18 日開始，我們將開設一個特別的英語課程！該課程與其他對話課程類似。但是會增加海報製作以及您在文化和加拿大的生活等方面的故事分享等課堂活動。

作為該研究項目的參與者，您需要首先註冊該 3 級課程，並且參加為研究項目而設計的各項課堂活動。參與課堂學習之外，在您自願的前提下，您還可以選擇參加 3 次面對面訪談。在訪談中，您可以跟課程的教師之一分享您的故事。

為答謝您的參與，您可以每週比其他學員多上一次英語課。

更多關於該研究項目或者註冊該課程的信息，請聯繫接待處 Spring Gillard 或者 Natalia Balyasnikova XXXX.

該項目的主要研究者是 Ryuko Kubota 博士，她是教育學院語言與讀寫教育系的教授，她的聯繫方式是 XXXX 或者 XXXX.

。

感謝您的參與！

Appendix B Consent forms



a place of mind

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

**Department of Language and Literacy Education
Education Centre at Ponderosa Commons
6445 University Boulevard
Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z2
Tel XXXX
Fax XXXX**

Consent Form

Principal Investigator: Dr. Ryuko Kubota, Professor, Department of Language and Literacy Education, Faculty of Education, Phone XXXXXXXX
Co-Investigator: Natalia Balyasnikova, Ph.D. student, Department of Language and Literacy Education, Faculty of Education, Phone XXXXXXXX

Title of the study: Culture, identity, and belonging of senior ESL learners: A case study of a community-based program.

We want to learn more about your experience as an ESL learner at the UBC Learning Exchange. More specifically, we are interested in why you decided to learn English the UBC Learning Exchange, and how this experience has impacted your life.

What is involved if you participate?

In order to participate in this study, you will need to attend 10 weekly classes starting April 18th, 2016, during which you will discuss different topics, write essays and stories. Natalia will be co-facilitating and observing these classes. All essays that you write or any other written texts you produce during the class will be collected for analysis. You will also be asked to participate in three 30 to 40-minute-long individual interviews with Natalia. **Interviews will be scheduled** during the class observation period and within two following months. The interview will be conducted in English and will be audio-recorded with your permission. You may ask for an interpreter or use the dictionary during the interview. You can also ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time in the interview. The exact time and location of the interview will be arranged with Natalia at your convenience. After the interview Natalia may contact you for a follow-up conversation (up to 30 minutes long) in order to check transcription and interpretation of your interview. You may refuse any of research activities (e.g. hand in your written texts, participate in the interviews) without giving a reason and there will be no repercussions for this decision.

What will be done with the information that is collected?

The results of this study will be used in Natalia's doctoral thesis research. The results will be presented at conferences, published in research journals, and could be shared with the UBC

Learning Exchange for the development of ESL curriculum. If you would like to know the results of this research, we will be happy to make the information available to you.

What are the risks of participating?

There are no known risks to your participation in this study. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose to pull out of the study and leave the class completely at any time without giving a reason and without any negative impact on your access to further services from the UBC Learning Exchange.

What are the benefits of participating?

Your participation will help us deepen understanding of the impact of community-based ESL education on seniors and may contribute to overall development of this community. In addition, you will be able to reflect on your own learning experience and may be able to integrate the reflection in your personal and language development. There are no monetary benefits associated with participation in the study.

How will we keep your identity safe?

Your confidentiality will be protected both during and after data collection. The name of the UBC Learning Exchange will appear in the report, but your name will be substituted with a different name. Also, any real names of the people or institutions you discuss will not be used in any presentation or publication of this research. All data, including all digital audio recordings, will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the principal investigator's (**Dr. Kubota**) UBC office for the minimum of five years after the study ends. MP3 files of raw audio-recorded interview data will be encrypted, and their transcription and translation recorded in Microsoft Word will be password protected. All the translation and transcription will not contain any real names or other identifiers and will not be distributed to third parties.

More questions or concerns?

If you have any questions or concerns about what we are asking of you, please contact Natalia Balyasnikova (XXXX) or Dr. Ryuko Kubota (XXXX). Additionally, the telephone and fax numbers of the department are listed at the top of the first page of this form.

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at XXXX or if long distance e-mail XXXX or call toll XXXX

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY: Culture, identity, and belonging of older adult ESL learners: A case study of a community-based program

Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative impact on your access to further services from the UBC Learning Exchange.

- Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.
- Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Participant Signature

Date

Printed Name of the Participant signing above

Optional:

If you wish to receive a summary of the research results, please write a phone number or email address in the space below:

Phone number (optional):

E-mail address (optional):

同意書

主要研究者: Dr. Ryuko Kubota, 博士 语言与读写教育系的 XXXX

合作研究者: Natalia Balyasnikova, 博士研究生 语言与读写教育系的 XXXX

題目:老年英語學習者的文化、身份和歸屬感：關於社區英語教學項目的研究

我們想了解您作為英語學習者在 UBC 社區學習項目中的經歷。我們尤其感興趣的是：您為什麼決定在 UBC 社區學習項目中學習英語以及這種英語學習經歷如何影響了您的生活。

參與內容

如參與該項研究，您將需要註冊一個 10 周的英語課程。該課程開始於 2016 年 4 月 18 日，期間您會參與各種討論、寫作文和故事。Natalia 是該課程的教師之一，同時她也將會進行課堂觀察。您在該課程中所有的書寫文本都將會作為數據進行收集和。Natalia 將邀請您參加三次訪談，每次訪談大概持續 30-40 分鐘。訪談時間會安排在上課期間以及兩個月之內。所有的訪談會用英語進行並且會在您允許的前提下進行錄音。您可以在訪談中要求翻譯人員在場或者使用詞典翻譯。您也可以隨時要求關閉錄音設備。Natalia 會根據您的意願來安排訪談的具體時間和地點。訪談之後，為確保訪談內容和翻譯的準確性，Natalia 也許會再次聯繫您進行一次後續的訪談（時間不超過 30 分鐘）。您有權利拒絕參加任何以科研為目的的活動（例如，上交您書寫的文章或者故事、參加訪談等），也不需要告知您的拒絕理由，您的決定不會對您有任何影響。

所收集數據的使用

該研究的結果將會用於 Natalia 的博士論文研究。研究結果還將可能用於學術會議或者以學術文章形式發表；還可能用於 UBC 社區學習項目的 ESL 課程建設的參考。如果您想了解該研究的研究結果，我們會很高興為您提供相關信息。

參加該研究的風險

目前沒有關於您參加該研究的已知風險。您完全有權利拒絕參加。如果您願意參與該研究，您可以在任何時間無條件退出 你可以離開類，這絕不會影響您使用 UBC 社區學習項目的任何服務。

參加該研究的意義

您的參與將會幫助我們進一步了解社區英語教育對年長者的影響，甚至可能影響該社區的未來發展。除此之外，您可以回顧和審視自己的經歷，這可以幫助您未來在 UBC 社區學習項目中更好的學習。參與該研究不會產生任何與金錢相關的利益。

我們如何保護您的身份信息？

在收集數據期間和之後，您的個人身份信息將會得到保護。雖然 UBC 社區學習項目的名稱會出現在將來的報告中，但是您的姓名將會以假名代替；同時，您提過的所有的個人姓名和機構名稱都不會出現在任何關於該研究的會議報告和出版物中。包括數字化音頻在內的所有數據，在研究結束後，都會被保存在主要研究者在 UBC 辦公室的（帶鎖）文件櫃內

5 年。原始訪談錄音的 MP3 文件會被加密，而訪談內容的轉錄和翻譯等文檔文件也會用加密文件保存。所有的翻譯和轉錄文本都不會包含任何人的真實姓名或者其他身份信息。這些文本也不會被披露給第三方。

其他問題或者顧慮？

如果您需要了解更多關於參與該研究的信息，請聯繫 Natalia Balyasnikova XXXX 或者 Ryuko Kubota 博士 XXXX。此外，語言與讀寫教育系的電話和傳真號碼也在該同意書第 1 頁頂端列出。

如果您對作為研究參與者的權利或者在參與研究的過程中有任何疑慮或者不滿，請撥打 UBC 科研道德辦公室的研究參與者投訴熱線 XXXX，如果您不在溫哥華，您還可以發送電子郵件至 XXXX

فرم رضایت

عنوان مطالعه : فرهنگ، هویت و تعلق از زبان آموزان ESL ارشد : مطالعه موردی از یک برنامه مبتنی بر جامعه.

ما می خواهیم برای کسب اطلاعات بیشتر در مورد تجربه خود به عنوان یک یادگیرنده ESL در آموزش بورس UBC. بیشتر به طور خاص، ما علاقه مند به همین دلیل شما تصمیم به یادگیری زبان انگلیسی آموزش بورس UBC هستند، و چگونه این تجربه زندگی خود را تحت تاثیر قرار داده است.

آنچه در آن درگیر است اگر شما شرکت کنید؟

به منظور شرکت در این مطالعه، شما نیاز به شرکت در کلاس های هفتگی 10 شروع 2016 آوریل 18، در طی آن شما موضوعات مختلف مورد بحث، ارسال مقالات و داستان. ناتالیا با همکاری تسهیل و رعایت این کلاس ها. همه مقالات که شما ارسال و یا هر متون نوشته شده دیگر شما در طول کلاس تولید خواهد شد برای تجزیه و تحلیل جمع آوری شده. همچنین از شما خواسته خواهد شد برای شرکت در مصاحبه سه 30 تا 40 دقیقه به طول فرد با ناتالیا. مصاحبه خواهد شد در طول دوره مشاهده کلاس و در عرض دو ماه پس از برنامه ریزی شده. مصاحبه به زبان انگلیسی انجام و صوتی ضبط شده با اجازه شما خواهد بود. شما ممکن است تقاضای مترجم و یا استفاده از فرهنگ لغت در طول مصاحبه. شما همچنین می توانید از آنها بخواهید برای ضبط به خاموش در هر زمان در مصاحبه تبدیل شده است. زمان دقیق و مکان مصاحبه خواهد شد با ناتالیا در راحتی خود را مرتب. پس از مصاحبه ناتالیا ممکن است به شما برای یک مکالمه پیگیری (تا 30 دقیقه) به منظور بررسی رونویسی و تفسیر مصاحبه خود تماس بگیرید. شما ممکن است هر یک از فعالیت های تحقیقاتی امتناع (به عنوان مثال دست در متون نوشته شده خود، شرکت در مصاحبه) بدون دادن عقل و وجود خواهد داشت بدون عواقب این تصمیم.

چه خواهد شد با اطلاعات جمع آوری انجام می شود؟

نتایج حاصل از این مطالعه خواهد شد در تحقیقات پایان نامه دکتر ناتالیا استفاده می شود. نتایج خواهد شد در کنفرانس ارائه شده است، در مجلات تحقیقات منتشر شده، و می تواند با آموزش بورس UBC برای توسعه برنامه درسی ESL به اشتراک گذاشته. اگر شما می خواهی به دانستن نتایج این تحقیق، ما خوشحال به اطلاعات در دسترس شما خواهد بود.

خطرات ناشی از شرکت کننده هستند؟

هیچ خطر شناخته شده به مشارکت خود را در این مطالعه وجود دارد. شما حق دارید که حاضر به شرکت در این مطالعه است. شرکت در این مطالعه کاملاً داوطلبانه است. شما می توانید به از مطالعه جلو و طبقه ترک به طور کامل در هر زمان بدون دادن یک دلیل و بدون هیچ گونه تاثیر منفی بر دسترسی شما به خدمات بیشتر از آموزش بورس UBC.

مزایای شرکت چیست؟

مشارکت شما کمک خواهد کرد که ما درک عمیق تر از تاثیر آموزش ESL مبتنی بر جامعه در سالمندان، و ممکن است به توسعه کلی از این جامعه کمک می کند. علاوه بر این، شما قادر خواهید بود به تأمل در تجربه یادگیری خود خواهد بود و ممکن است قادر به یکپارچه سازی انعکاس در توسعه شخصی و زبان خود را. هیچ منافع پولی در ارتباط با مشارکت در این مطالعه وجود دارد.

چگونه می خواهیم امن حفظ هویت خود را؟

شما محرمانه خواهد شد هم در طول و پس از جمع آوری داده ها محافظت می شود. نام آموزش بورس UBC در گزارش ظاهر خواهد شد، اما نام خود را با نام های مختلف جایگزین. همچنین، هر نام واقعی مردم یا نهادهای شما صحبت خواهد شد در هر ارائه یا انتشار این تحقیق استفاده نمی شود. تمام داده ها، از جمله تمام ضبط های صوتی دیجیتالی، خواهد شد در کابینه تشکیل پرونده قفل شده در دفتر محقق اصلی در (دکتر ها Kubota) UBC برای حداقل پنج سال ذخیره می شود بعد از مطالعه به پایان می رسد.

فایل های MP3 از داده ها مصاحبه های صوتی ضبط شده اولیه خواهد شد رمزگذاری شده و رونویسی و ترجمه آنها ثبت در مایکروسافت ورد توان رمز عبور محافظت خواهد کرد. همه ترجمه و رونویسی شامل هر نام واقعی یا دیگر شناسهها و نمی خواهد به اشخاص ثالث توزیع نمی شود.

بیشتر سوال یا نگرانی؟
اگر شما هر گونه سوال و یا نگرانی در مورد آنچه می خواهیم از شما، لطفا با XXXX و یا دکتر Ryuko ها Kubota XXXX. علاوه بر این، شماره تلفن و فکس از بخش ها در بالای صفحه اول این فرم ذکر شده است.

اگر شما هر گونه نگرانی و یا شکایت در مورد حقوق خود را به عنوان یکی از شرکت کنندگان تحقیق و / یا تجربیات خود را در حالی که شرکت در این مطالعه، با شرکت تحقیقات خط شکایت در دفتر UBC اخلاق پژوهش در XXXX و یا اگر الکترونیکی فاصله طولانی a. پست الکترونیکی و یا تلفات تماس رایگان XXXX

رضایت به شرکت در مطالعه : فرهنگ ، هویت و تعلق زبان آموزان ESL بزرگسالان مسن تر : مطالعه موردی از یک برنامه مبتنی بر جامعه

شرکت در این مطالعه طور کامل به شما است. شما حق دارید که حاضر به شرکت در این مطالعه است. اگر شما تصمیم به شرکت ، شما ممکن است را انتخاب کنید تا از مطالعه جلو در هر زمان بدون دادن یک دلیل و بدون هیچ گونه تاثیر منفی بر دسترسی شما به خدمات بیشتر از آموزش بورس UBC.

- امضای شما زیر نشان می دهد که شما یک کپی از این فرم رضایت را برای سوابق خود را دریافت کرده اند.
- امضای شما نشان می دهد که شما رضایت به شرکت در این مطالعه است.

Giấy chấp thuận

Tiêu đề của nghiên cứu: Văn hóa, bản sắc, và thuộc của người học ESL cao cấp: Một nghiên cứu trường hợp của một chương trình dựa vào cộng đồng.

Chúng tôi muốn tìm hiểu thêm về kinh nghiệm của bạn như là một người học ESL tại Học khoản UBC. Cụ thể hơn, chúng tôi đang quan tâm đến lý do tại sao bạn quyết định học tiếng Anh học tập Trao đổi UBC, và làm thế nào kinh nghiệm này đã ảnh hưởng đến cuộc sống của bạn.

Điều gì là liên quan nếu bạn tham gia?

Để tham gia vào nghiên cứu này, bạn sẽ cần phải tham dự 10 lớp học hàng tuần bắt đầu từ ngày 18 tháng 4 năm 2016, trong đó bạn sẽ thảo luận về chủ đề khác nhau, viết các bài luận và những câu chuyện. Natalia sẽ được đồng tạo điều kiện và quan sát các lớp này. Tất cả các bài tiểu luận mà bạn viết hoặc bất kỳ văn bản bằng văn bản khác mà bạn tạo ra trong các lớp học sẽ được thu thập để phân tích. Bạn cũng sẽ được yêu cầu tham gia vào các cuộc phỏng vấn cá nhân ba 30-40 phút dài với Natalia. Các cuộc phỏng vấn sẽ được sắp xếp trong thời gian lớp quan sát và trong vòng hai tháng sau. Các cuộc phỏng vấn sẽ được tiến hành bằng tiếng Anh và sẽ có âm thanh ghi lại với sự cho phép của bạn. Bạn có thể yêu cầu một thông dịch viên hoặc sử dụng từ điển trong buổi phỏng vấn. Bạn cũng có thể yêu cầu máy ghi âm được tắt bất cứ lúc nào trong cuộc phỏng vấn. Thời gian chính xác và vị trí của cuộc phỏng vấn sẽ được sắp xếp với Natalia một cách thuận tiện. Sau cuộc phỏng vấn Natalia có thể liên lạc với bạn cho một cuộc trò chuyện tiếp theo (dài 30 phút) để kiểm tra phiên mã và giải thích các cuộc phỏng vấn của bạn. Bạn có thể từ chối bất kỳ của hoạt động nghiên cứu (ví dụ tay trong các văn bản viết của bạn, tham gia vào các cuộc phỏng vấn) mà không đưa ra lý do và sẽ không có ảnh hưởng quyết định này.

Điều gì sẽ được thực hiện với các thông tin được thu thập?

Các kết quả của nghiên cứu này sẽ được sử dụng trong nghiên cứu luận án tiến sĩ Natalia. Kết quả sẽ được trình bày tại hội nghị, công bố trên tạp chí nghiên cứu, và có thể được chia sẻ với các Học khoản UBC cho sự phát triển của chương trình giảng dạy ESL. Nếu bạn muốn biết kết quả của nghiên cứu này, chúng tôi sẽ được hạnh phúc để làm cho thông tin có sẵn cho bạn.

những rủi ro của việc tham gia là gì?

Không có rủi ro được biết đến với sự tham gia của bạn trong nghiên cứu này. Bạn có quyền từ chối tham gia vào nghiên cứu này. Sự tham gia trong nghiên cứu này là hoàn toàn tự nguyện. Bạn có thể chọn để kéo ra của nghiên cứu và rời khỏi lớp học hoàn toàn bất cứ lúc nào mà không cần đưa ra lý do và không có bất kỳ tác động tiêu cực đến việc bạn truy cập các dịch vụ khác từ các học Trao đổi UBC.

những lợi ích của việc tham gia là gì?

sự tham gia của bạn sẽ giúp chúng ta hiểu sâu hơn về tác động của giáo dục ESL dựa vào cộng đồng người cao niên, và có thể đóng góp vào sự phát triển chung của cộng đồng này. Ngoài ra, bạn sẽ có thể để phản ánh về kinh nghiệm học tập của bạn và có thể tích hợp các phản ánh trong sự phát triển cá nhân và ngôn ngữ của bạn. Không có lợi ích tiền tệ liên quan đến việc tham gia vào nghiên cứu.

Làm thế nào chúng tôi sẽ giữ danh tính của bạn an toàn không?

Bạn bảo mật sẽ được bảo vệ trong và sau khi thu thập dữ liệu. Tên của Học khoản UBC sẽ xuất hiện trong báo cáo, nhưng tên của bạn sẽ được thay thế bằng một cái tên khác. Ngoài ra, bất kỳ tên thật của những người hay tổ chức bạn thảo luận sẽ không được sử dụng trong bất kỳ bài

thuyết trình hoặc công bố nghiên cứu này. Tất cả dữ liệu, bao gồm tất cả các bản ghi âm âm thanh kỹ thuật số, sẽ được lưu trữ trong một tủ khóa ở văn phòng (Dr. Kubota) UBC các điều tra viên chính của cho tối thiểu năm năm sau khi nghiên cứu kết thúc. các file MP3 audio ghi dữ liệu phỏng vấn liệu sẽ được mã hóa, và phiên âm và bản dịch của họ được ghi trong Microsoft Word sẽ được mật khẩu bảo vệ. Tất cả các bản dịch và phiên mã sẽ không chứa bất kỳ tên thật hoặc các định dạng khác và sẽ không được phân phối cho các bên thứ ba.

câu hỏi hoặc quan tâm nhiều hơn?

Nếu bạn có bất kỳ câu hỏi hoặc quan tâm về những gì chúng tôi đang yêu cầu của bạn, xin vui lòng liên hệ với Natalia Balyasnikova (XXXX) hoặc Tiến sĩ Ryuko Kubota (XXXX). Ngoài ra, điện thoại và số fax của các bộ phận được liệt kê ở trên cùng của trang đầu tiên của mẫu này.

Nếu bạn có bất kỳ mối quan tâm hoặc khiếu nại về các quyền của mình như một người tham gia nghiên cứu và / hoặc kinh nghiệm của mình khi tham gia vào nghiên cứu này, liên hệ với Đường dây Khiếu nại Nghiên cứu tham gia tại Văn phòng UBC Nghiên cứu Đạo đức tại XXXX hoặc nếu khoảng cách dài e- email XXXX hoặc gọi số miễn phí XXXX

Appendix C Introductory questionnaire

Please fill out this short questionnaire. Thank you!

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Marital Status: *Married* || *Divorced* || *Widowed* || *Never married*
4. Number of people in family:
5. Country of birth:
6. How do you identify yourself? *Canadian* || *Asian Canadian* || *Immigrant* || *Other*
7. First language (mother tongue):
8. Other languages that you speak:
9. Highest level of education:
10. How long have you lived in Canada?
11. How long have you lived in Vancouver?
12. Are you currently employed?

Appendix D Interview protocol

1. Tell me about...
 - How long you have been studying English
 - Experience of/Reasons for learning English at your age
 - Most memorable learning experience at the UBC Learning Exchange
 - Accomplishments of which you are the most proud
 - Connections you have made here
 - How the UBC Learning Exchange helps you in your daily life
 - The most interesting topics learned at the UBC Learning Exchange
 - Any materials that were useful for your everyday life
 - What you did before coming to Canada
 - Your expectations about your life in Canada
 - First impressions of Canada, Vancouver, local community
 - Brief, memorable encounters with strangers in Canada
 - A place that is important to you here
 - Positive relationships you have in your community
 - Challenges you overcame along the way
 - Advice you would give to people who want to immigrate
2. You mentioned, could you elaborate on this?
3. Why did you mention ...?
4. Is there anything else you want to say?