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'I Was Surprised to See You in a Chinese School': Researching Multilingually Opportunities and Challenges in Community-Based Research

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1. INTRODUCTION

Community language schools are multilingual educational contexts that provide children from migrant and ethnic communities (alongside their mainstream schooling) with learning opportunities to maintain diverse and often under-represented heritages and languages. These schools—characterized by a variety of languages and literacy practices of their pupils, parents, and teachers (Li and Wu 2008; Creese and Blackledge 2010; Chen and Zhang 2014), and often with an explicit agenda focused on maintenance and transmission of migrant and minority languages and cultures—represent ideal sites to investigate language practices and ideologies, systems of ideas which drive behavioural choices (Berger and Luckmann 1966).

Previous studies in the context of community schooling have investigated the interaction between language, identity, and the experience of pupils,

parents, and teachers (e.g. Francis *et al.* 2008). Other studies focused on language practices as a means of discussing notions of language, culture, and identity (Wu 2006; Creese *et al.* 2007). Yet, little attention has been paid to the important role of researchers' linguistic resources in conceptualizing, planning, conducting, and presenting their studies, and the role of power and ethics in researcher–researched relationships, and their implications for researchers engaged in multilingual research.

In this article, we make a theoretical and methodological case for embedding a researching multilingually approach in multilingual researcher practice, specifically, in the context of community language schools, but which may have applicability to other multilingual research sites. We offer some emergent implications for researchers who are working multilingually to guide them in shaping and developing their own projects. Drawing on the previous work of both authors (Ganassin and Holmes 2013; Holmes *et al.* 2013; 2016), we understand 'researching multilingually' as:

> The process and practice of using, or accounting for the use of, more than one language in the research process, e.g. from the initial design of the project, to engaging with different literatures, to developing the methodology and considering all possible ethical issues, to generating and analyzing the data, to issues of representation and reflexivity when writing up and publishing. (Holmes *et al*. 2016: 101)

The term 'researching multilingually' acknowledges the identities of the researcher and researched as multilingual individuals: 'Anyone who can communicate in more than language, be it active (through speaking and writing) or passive (through listening and reading)' (Li 2008: 4); and the environment in which the research is undertaken. We also draw on the concept of translanguaging as a linguistic practice (as discussed by Canagarajah 2013; García and Li 2014) to understand how multilingual researchers make strategic use of their linguistic resources as they communicate with others in the research context.

To discuss opportunities and challenges offered by a researching multilingually approach in the context of community language education, we draw on a 14-month ethnographic study conducted by Sara Ganassin (2017, 2018) across two Mandarin schools located in different counties in Britain. We use her study to illustrate the value and importance of a researching multilingually approach in guiding the researcher's decision-making about what languages to use when, where, and with whom, and the reasons for this.

Studies in community language schools are typically conducted by researchers who share the linguistic and ethnic background of the school's community as a means of gaining 'insider' status and building trust (Wu 2006; Du 2010; Mau 2013), or by 'mother-tongue' researchers in mixed-team research who share the language of the school's participants, thus facilitating data collection (e.g. in the study by Mau *et al*. 2009).

As research sites, these schools pose multilingual challenges to researchers, and even more so in Chinese language community schools as speakers of different varieties of Chinese (e.g. Cantonese, Hokkien, and Mandarin), English speakers, and speakers of other languages circulate and communicate (Wang 2017). Yet, the opportunities and challenges offered by the researchers' own linguistic resources, and their impact on their linguistic decisions and choices in all phases of the research process have been largely neglected in such studies.

Hence, our study is guided by the following research question that emerged from a methodological gap in the extant literature:

> RQ: What opportunities and challenges does a researching multilingually perspective offer researchers in the context of (Chinese) community language education?

In drawing on a researching multilingually perspective, we investigate how the researcher's multilingual resources—alongside the many languages in circulation in a Mandarin Chinese community school—shape the researcher's linguistic decisions and actions throughout the research process. We also explore the ethical and reflexive dimensions of such research, and the power relations they entail. By uncovering these practices, we aim to build researcher capacity in multilingual research settings that improves understanding and representation of people of other languages and the cultures in which they reside.

Our study is important for three main reasons. First, research methods' handbooks seldom offer guidance on how to undertake research in other languages, bridge multiple social contexts (linguistic, generational, and religious), and engage with communities who may not be print literate and who, instead, understand the world through narrative and relational ways (Warriner and Bigelow 2019). In ethnographic research, for example, there is a 'silence' around researcher preparation for fieldwork and competence required in the field (Tremlett 2009; Gibb and Danero-Iglesias 2017), resulting in many researchers feeling uncertain about their language resources in their research processes.

Second, in the context of internationalization of higher education, multilingual researchers may be researching in English and their supervisors may be 'monolingual' English language speakers: multilingualism often goes unnoticed and remains a hidden dimension of a doctoral study (Robinson-Pant and Wolf 2016); furthermore, there is little incentive, support, or training available to both parties in mobilizing multiple linguistic resources (Singh 2017).

Finally, Gramling (2016: 208) opines that 'human speakers are always less and more than monolingual'. The result may be that so-called 'monolinguals' dwell—or are obliged to dwell for structural reasons often beyond their control—in one language for their research despite having other linguistic repertoires (Jostes 2010 cited in Gramling 2016: 5).

Although we acknowledge the importance of issues related to meaning-making and meaning loss in language (e.g. the emergence of slippages in meanings as researcher and participants move across languages), these do not represent a primary concern for this study and their analysis goes beyond its scope.

2. CHINESE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS AS (RESEARCHER) MULTILINGUAL SPACES

The literature on Chinese community schools offers insights into the linguistic complexity that researchers encounter in these multilingual education contexts. In different parts of the world, Chinese (primarily Cantonese and Mandarin) community schools are linguistic communities where pupils and their families can maintain diverse and often under-represented heritages and languages (He 2006; Curdt-Christiansen and Hancock 2014; Lu 2014), including various dialects or varieties (e.g. Hokkien and Hakka) that are not formally taught but used, particularly by parents, outside classroom contexts.

Policies, pedagogical approaches, curricula, and textbooks vary from school to school. However, the planned curriculum tends to be delivered in Chinese (i.e. Chinese language, including Mandarin and Cantonese). The bi- and multilingual nature of the schools has the potential to accommodate learners', and their families', different linguistic abilities, repertoires, motivations, and expectations about community education (Wang 2017).

The forthcoming cited studies highlight the importance of the researcher's and participants' shared linguistic and ethnic background for gaining access and trust (Du 2010; Mau 2013), and the major role played by Chinese (Cantonese- and/or Mandarin-speaking) researchers (Li 1993; Wu 2006; Wang 2017). Previous research on Chinese community schooling (e.g. Wu 2006; Mau *et al*. 2009; Mau 2013) was often conducted by mixed researcher teams. Chinese-speaking researchers (Cantonese or Mandarin according to the focus of the schools) undertook the data collection (classroom observations, interviews with pupils and adults) because informants were likely to view them as 'insiders', and therefore, trustworthy. By contrast, Wiley *et al*. (2008), in their study on Chinese and dialect diversity, offered participants the possibility of responding in either Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese) or English, and alleviated linguistic power imbalances by permitting participants to choose their preferred language of communication.

This review of studies of Chinese community schooling shows the prominence of multilingualism and the ways in which language practices within the schools, for example, among pupils, parents, and teachers, have been the object of extensive investigation. However, the above-mentioned studies do not explicitly discuss the multilingual possibilities in the spaces where the research occurs, and the researcher's own linguistic resources and reflexive accounts. Furthermore, alternative perspectives, for example, those from

'outsider' researchers, who cannot rely on shared ethnicity and/or native speakership to gain trust and access in the Chinese community schools, are missing.

When multiple languages and intercultural communication are a part of the research process, as in the study undertaken by Ganassin (2017, 2018) and reported here, the researcher–researched dynamics and the ethical processes they embody become even more complex (Holmes 2016). While Gilgun (2010) argues that the researcher's reflexivity, for example, individual experiences and background, deserves further exploration, we highlight the important role of the researcher's linguistic resources in the research process. We present our framework for this exploration in the next section.

3. THE THEORETICAL STANDPOINTS OF THE STUDY: RESEARCHING MULTILINGUALLY

To investigate our research question—how researchers draw on and make choices concerning their linguistic resources in theorizing, shaping, undertaking, and writing up their research—we are guided by the researching multilingually framework developed by Holmes *et al.* (2013, 2016). The framework involves three dimensions. The first dimension explores researchers' developing awareness of the multilingual possibilities in their research, purposeful decision-making through all its stages (planning, implementation, and representation), and applying those decisions across all aspects of a study.

The second dimension concerns the research spaces where researchers must draw on their linguistic resources to position themselves vis-a-vis the research itself. These include: (i) the researched phenomenon or subject of study (in this article, Ganassin's (2017, 2018) doctoral research on Chinese community schools in Britain); (ii) the research context (two Chinese community schools); (iii) the researcher resources (the researcher's language competencies and resources); and (iv) the representational possibilities (inclusion of data in English and Chinese).

The third dimension concerns how researchers establish and nurture relationships with their participants and stakeholders, and which languages support these processes.

Overall, the framework lends space to the (multi)lingual habitus of researchers and participants, and offers researchers the opportunity to resist the structural monolingual determinants of the research context (Apter 2014; Gramling 2016) (e.g. in the case of Ganassin, the convention in Anglophone universities that doctoral theses should be conceived, conducted, and delivered in English). Andrews *et al.* (2018) have further highlighted the value of linguistic preparation prior to entering the field (as ethnographers do), and that researchers might develop a translingual orientation, following Canagarajah (2013), by acknowledging their own linguistic resources and the languages in circulation in the study.

We include two additional standpoints to the original framework—reflexivity and ethical representation—important in researching multilingually praxis, and under-discussed in studies of Chinese community schooling. Reflexivity accounts for the values, beliefs, and knowledge that researchers bring into their studied context (Woodin 2016). Qualitative research is often an interactive process, where researcher and researched jointly negotiate the research context, the focus, and topic of the research, the processes by which data are generated, and how each comes to know and understand the other as knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation is constructed (Holmes 2016). Research is also shaped by both the researcher's and participants' subjectivities and individual positioning (Denzin and Lincoln 2000), and important for this study, each of their linguistic subjectivities and associated power relations in their intercultural communication (Warriner and Bigelow 2019). Drawing on our earlier multilingual researcher analysis in migrant community research (Ganassin and Holmes 2013), we observed the researcher/researched linguistic power dynamics as each exercises relational identity and power in their privileging of certain languages over others (as have others before us, e.g., Silverstein 1992; Kramsch 2009; Blommaert 2010). The role given to language in these processes—by researchers and researched—is worth further attention.

Researching multilingually also requires an ethical stance. Researchers have the capacity to exercise linguistic agency as they negotiate trust, ethics, power, and face over questions of who may enter the discourse; and who speaks for whom, how, when, and where (Krog 2011). This agency is especially important when working with under-represented, marginalized, and vulnerable groups (Warriner and Bigelow 2019). As a researcher and practitioner who has worked and researched in nongovernmental organizations and migrant communities, Ganassin foregrounds the researcher's responsibility to ensure not only effective participation of and communication with the participants but also to maintain an ethical representation of those involved (Cannella and Lincoln 2011). As O'Neill (2010) contends, researchers need to demonstrate a commitment to cultural—and, we add, linguistic—justice to avoid cultural and linguistic domination, non-recognition, and misrecognition of their participants' linguistic identities.

4. METHODOLOGY

The data set for this study comes from an ethnographic study that investigated the significance of Mandarin Chinese community schooling as an intercultural space in Britain. The study drew on social constructionism (Berger and Luckmann 1966) to understand how the pupils and adults at the school negotiated the interplay among language, culture, and identity. Table 1 provides an overview of Study A.

In this article, we focus on Study B which used a researching multilingually approach to revisit the data set of Study A. The key differences highlighted in

Table 1: Overview of Study A: Ganassin's (2017, 2018) ethnographic study

	Study A: Ganassin's ethnographic study
Focus	The intercultural dimension of Mandarin-Chinese community schooling in the UK
Research approach	Two-stage approach: theory driven (top-down) and data driven (bottom-up)
Methodology	Qualitative; ethnographic
Methods of data collection	Semi-structured interviews (adults); visually mediated focus groups (pupils); participant observation (classroom teaching and informal settings)
Overview of the data set	72 h of participant observation; 18 one-to-one semi-structured interviews with adults (8 parents and 10 teachers); and three visually mediated focus group sessions with 23 pupils using 15 cartoon storyboards and nine Venn diagrams produced by pupils
Methods of data analysis	Thematic analysis under three broad categories guided by the study's research questions: Chinese language, culture, and identity
Languages of data analysis and presentation	The data analysis considered the languages (English and/or Mandarin) used in the interviews, focus groups, and in the visual artefacts. All the data were presented in their original languages (English and Mandarin) and data in Mandarin were translated into English
Ethics	The study received ethical approval from the university where it was based and participants were informed accordingly about anonymity and confidentiality, the right to withdraw, and the right to ask questions about the study. Fictional names were given to the two schools and all the participants

Study B involved: the focus, the methodology, and the methods of data analysis.

Table 2 summarizes the features of our researching multilingually study.

The qualitative methodology we adopted to answer our research question in this article required a double hermeneutic or two-stage understanding and interpretation: where Ganassin tries to make sense of her experience of researching multilingually in her ethnographic study; and where both authors seek to make sense of Ganassin' s sense-making (Smith and Osborn 2008). We drew on the researching multilingually framework (top-down) which directed us to the multilingual aspects of the research spaces and the relationships experienced by Ganassin. Following Braun and Clarke's (2012) bottom-up thematic analysis method, we generated initial codes looking for 'sensitising concepts [that] offer[ed] ways of seeing, organizing and understanding experience' and which might be used as 'points of departure from which to study the

Table 2: Overview of Study B: researching multilingually study

	Study B: Researching multilingually study
Focus	Importance of a researching multilingually approach in the context of community schooling
Research approach	Two-stage approach: theory driven (top-down) and data driven (bottom-up)
Methodology	Qualitative
Methods of data collection	Derived from Study A
Overview of data set	Existing data set of Study A
Methods of data analysis	Thematic analysis under two categories guided by researching multilingual framework: research spaces and relationships
Languages of data analysis and presentation	Consistent with Study A
Ethics	Consistent with Study A

data' (Charmaz 2003: 259). We searched for key themes, then reviewed, defined, and named them using the two researching multilingually concepts of 'spatiality' and 'relationality'.

From these significant episodes and guided by our research question, next we offer a 'thick description' (Geertz 1983) of vivid and compelling examples of developing researcher awareness and decision-making. We draw on the research spaces and the relational dimensions of Study A to illustrate these processes and to explore the opportunities and challenges offered by a researching multilingually perspective.

4.1 Languages of the researcher, researched, and Chinese languages

The ethnographic study (Ganassin 2017, 2018) is multilingual in multiple ways. At the time, Ganassin was an Italian doctoral student in a British university and a community worker working across multiple languages. Along with Italian and English, Mandarin is the third language in her repertoire as she studied Chinese language at the undergraduate level in Italy and then spent nearly two years working in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Her assessed level of proficiency in Mandarin is equivalent to *Hànyǔ Shuǐpíng Kǎoshì* (HSK, 汉语水平考试) Chinese proficiency test level IV, equivalent to the B2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). She can converse in Mandarin about a wide range of daily topics and read and write approximately 1,500 characters. Ganassin has also a basic understanding of Cantonese as she spent six months working in

Guangdong province, but she cannot speak it. Her other languages, French (B1 CEFR level) and Spanish (B2 CEFR level), played a minor part in the data collection process as she encountered a small number of participants whose experiences of migration or personal circumstances (e.g. marriage) had exposed them to these languages.

Second, the participants in the study, and the research site itself, are multilingual. All the 18 adults who were part of the study were first-generation migrants from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Taiwan and were fluent in at least one variety of Chinese (e.g. Cantonese or Mandarin) as well as in English. The 23 pupil-participants were aged between 5 and 17 years. Six of them (15 to 17 years old) recently migrated to the UK from Mainland China; they had Mandarin as their first language (the language they speak at home) and basic English proficiency. The 17 other pupil-participants (5–13 years old) were second-generation migrants from Mainland China or Hong Kong or from mixed heritage families and all had English as their preferred language. Their command over Chinese varied: five pupils were exposed to Mandarin language at home but reported not to be confident speakers; two considered themselves as fluent speakers of Mandarin; eight pupils spoke Cantonese at home and considered themselves as fluent speakers; and two pupils could understand Hakka but could not speak it.

Different varieties of Chinese languages were also at play at research sites. To capture the participants' repertoires, following Ganassin's (2017) study, we use the term 'Chinese' as an umbrella term. Although普通话 *pǔtōnghuà*—which in Chinese means 'common speech'—is the official language of the People's Republic of China (PRC) (Jin and Dervin 2017), there are at least six other major 方言 *fāngyán* (varieties or dialects)of Chinese classified along geographical and linguistic-structural characteristics; they are: 吴语 *wúyǔ* (including Shanghainese), 赣语 *gànyǔ*, 湘语 *xiāngyǔ* (spoken in Hunan), 闽语 *mǐnyǔ* (including Hokkien), 客家语 *kèjiāyǔ* (Hakka), and 粵语 *yuèyǔ* (including Cantonese) (Abbiati 1992; Li 2006). Northern varieties of Chinese—also known as Mandarin dialects—are largely mutually intelligible (Ramsey 1987). The other six (or seven) groups fall under the category of southern varieties, and they are generally unintelligible to one another. Elsewhere, such varieties would be recognized as distinct languages, albeit with significant influence from 普通话 *pǔtōnghuà* (Jin and Dervin 2017).

In the English language scholarly publications and public discourse, the term 'Mandarin' is widely used as a more convenient synonym for 普通话 *pǔtōnghuà* when referring to the standard language spoken in Mainland China, Singapore, and Taiwan (Zhu and Li 2014). However, the languages used in the PRC (普通话 *pǔtōnghuà*), Taiwan (國語 *guóyǔ* 'national language'), and Singapore (华语 *huáyǔ*, literally 'Chinese language', the term also used in Malaysia) vary, for instance, in terms of phonetics and discourse norms (He 2008). Following Zhu and Li (2014), we use the term Mandarin for consistency with the literature (e.g. He 2008; Zhu and Li 2014; Jin and Dervin 2017).

Two southern varieties—Cantonese and Hakka—were particularly important in Ganassin's (2017, 2018) ethnographic study as they were spoken as the first or second language by a number of adults. They were also spoken or at least understood by a number of children and widely used in informal conversations between adults in the schools. Cantonese, predominantly used in Hong Kong, Macao, and in different areas of the Guangdong and Guangxi provinces of the PRC, is the second most spoken variety of Chinese in the world (Ethnologue 2019a). Because of its unique literary tradition and historical significance, it enjoys the status of 'prestige dialect' (Abbiati 1992). Hakka, with over 48 million users, is spoken in Southeastern Mainland China, Taiwan, and other parts of South East Asia, including Malaysia (Ethnologue 2019b). Nowadays, the Hakka language is on the decline in a number of settings, its value having been undercut by the dominance of Cantonese and, more recently, by the diffusion of Mandarin (Constable 1996).

The two schools taught Mandarin-Chinese, using simplified Chinese characters—the writing system adopted in the PRC—and adopted the 拼音 *pīnyīn* romanization system. Here, we follow the same conventions in this study as in previous publications (Ganassin 2017, 2018).[1]

5. RESEARCH SPACES

Here, we discuss how the four research spaces of the study—research phenomenon, context, resources, and representational possibilities—contributed to Ganassin's developing researcher purposefulness.

5.1 The research phenomenon: realizing researching multilingually possibilities

For some researchers, their own language resources can feel valuable from the outset of their research, while for others a particular experience (e.g. conducting data collection abroad) triggers their interest in multilingual research practice (Holmes *et al.* 2016). At the outset of the study, Ganassin demonstrated an interest in multilingual research theory and praxis, stimulated by her prior experience of conducting participatory research with multilingual refugee communities in the UK (Ganassin and Holmes 2013), and later through her involvement in the Researching Multilingually network project.[2] From the realization phase of the project, the researcher had some awareness that the multilingual possibilities of the project itself could merit attention. First, the multilingual aspects of the studies of Chinese community schooling (discussed earlier) were important in developing Ganassin's awareness of the potential linguistic and cultural complexity of the research sites (e.g. the existence of hierarchies of languages). Second, she gained useful insights from two people she knew who attended the research site; neither was a fluent Mandarin speaker, one being a Malaysian-born speaker of Hokkien—a *Min* variety spoken in throughout the parts of South East Asia, and the other

a speaker of Hakka. Further, her own linguistic and cultural researcher identity and positioning appeared to offer a different perspective—as a linguistic and cultural 'outsider' but with some 'insider' knowledge and experience of Chinese and China. However, the multilingual opportunities and challenges that she might encounter were not easily predictable; nor were the relationships she might develop with the participants.

Overall, the linguistic complexity of the research context, alongside Ganassin's multiple linguistic resources, prompted her to reflect on several matters: How would her position as a second-language speaker of both English and Chinese impact her access to the research sites, and her relationships with the participants? How would the presence of multiple languages inform choices about methodology and methods, data collection, and analysis? What representational issues would she need to address along the way (e.g. representing multiple languages in the writing up of her study and disseminating her research)?

5.2 The research (macro- and micro-) context: English as lingua franca

The researcher's first informed and purposeful decision concerned the main language of the research. Ganassin's decision to use English as the principal language in the data collection phase and as the language of research instruments was formed by two factors. First, her doctoral study was located in an English-speaking university where her first language, Italian, was marginalized as it was not recognized as an academic language; nor was it likely to be spoken by any of the participants. Second, although she can engage in informal conversation with people in Mandarin on a range of topics, she believed her level was insufficient to conduct full interviews with participants. Thus, since the language of the research—English—was neither her first language nor that of the participants, throughout the research process she became aware of the need to engage in a constant process of translation of participants' individual narrations, and of her Italian thinking and voice into English.

While the study was located in the wider English-speaking macro-context of two English counties, within the micro-context of the research sites (the two Chinese community schools), different languages were at play: (i) Mandarin, the official language of the schools and the first or second language of participants and other stakeholders; (ii) other varieties of Chinese spoken by several adults and pupils, including a number of study participants; and (iii) English, often used as a lingua franca to enable communication between speakers of different varieties of Chinese, and generally used by pupils to communicate with their peers. Other languages were also part of the context of the school, for example, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Malay, the first languages of a minority of parents who were not part of the ethnographic study.

Through her initial communication with participants at the schools, Ganassin gained a deeper awareness of the researching multilingually

challenges she would encounter (the consideration phase). She was surprised to witness how English, and not Mandarin, was mostly used as a lingua franca in communication among Chinese parents. Albert, a parent and a confident multilingual speaker, pointed out:

> Some people need to use English with other Chinese [parents] in the school. Many Mainlanders only speak Mandarin and there are people from Fujian, Malaysia, or even Cantonese people that cannot speak Mandarin almost at all. Very few people are like me and can juggle all the languages and get a choice. (Albert's interview, 12 January 2014)

Albert's language repertoire, which included English, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Hakka, allowed him to choose his language of interaction with others in the school. As Nala, a teacher, confirmed:

> Some people do not have the language skills to communicate. They only speak their own languages. If you speak Mandarin to them, they wouldn't even understand. (Nala's interview, 15 May 2014)

Although the schools' focus was on Mandarin Chinese, the language landscape was multilingual. This multilingual environment, therefore, challenges findings in the literature claiming that Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese) native-speaker researchers are in a privileged position to engage participants in the schools (Wu 2006; Mau 2013) as sites where a Chinese heritage language is shared. Instead, this multilingual landscape supports the need for multilingual approaches to Chinese community schooling, and hence the added strengths multilingual researchers bring, including their ability to conduct research in the lingua franca of the research context.

5.3 The researcher's resources: multimodality and translanguaging

The researcher's resources of multimodality and translanguaging were used by Ganassin to both capture the multilingual dimension of her study and engage with participants.

Through her observations, she was alerted to the classroom multilingual communicative practices (English, Mandarin, and other varieties of Chinese) as pupils moved across languages to interact with one another and with their teachers. She, therefore, decided to introduce multimodality (here, visual methods) into her methodology to offer pupils the opportunity to use those different languages in the data collection process, as they did in the classrooms.

To elicit learning experiences from pupils she asked them to complete two visual tasks (cartoon storyboards and Venn diagrams) which provided a platform for deeper discussion in the focus groups. To be enrolled in the school all children were required to have basic literacy in English. Pupils had the option to use drawings or text to complete their templates as the task states 'feel free

to use the space as you want with words, drawings, etc.' As Ganassin guided pupils through their tasks (written in English), she verbally invited the use of both Chinese and English so that pupils could comfortably express their ideas in their preferred language/s. The following examples (Figures 1–4) show how pupils engaged with the multimodal dimension of the study as they made different choices concerning languages.

Eleven-year-old Lucas and a number of his classmates expressed pride in their Chinese literacy skills, combined drawings, and written narratives in English and Chinese characters:

Other pupils, including six-year-old Danny who was one of the younger participants, preferred the use of drawings:

Other pupils decided to make exclusive use of words because either they were not keen on drawing or they felt that words were more appropriate to address the task as Emily did in completing her Venn diagram (Figure 3).

Furthermore, a number of pupils, who were recent immigrants from Mainland China and had limited English, made exclusive use of Chinese characters to describe their experience of community schooling. Figure 4 shows how 16-year-old Jinlin decided to use his template.

Through the use of multimodal methods, pupils demonstrated their ability to choose their preferred language(s) and their awareness of their own language affordances. In the early phase of the study, the pupils had become aware of Ganassin's ability in Chinese, which also gave them the opportunity to express

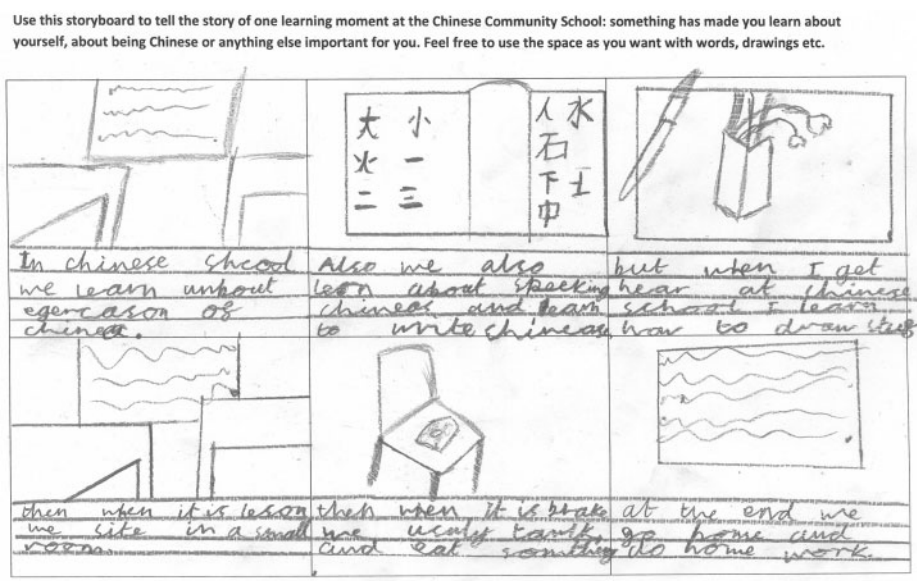

Figure 1: Cartoon storyboard created by Lucas (11 years old)

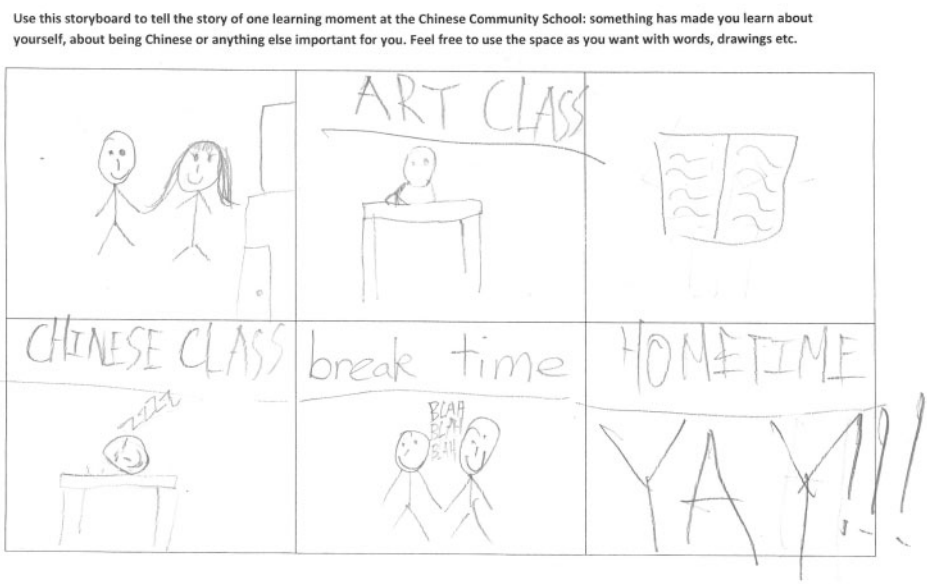

Figure 2: Cartoon storyboard created by Danny (6 years old)

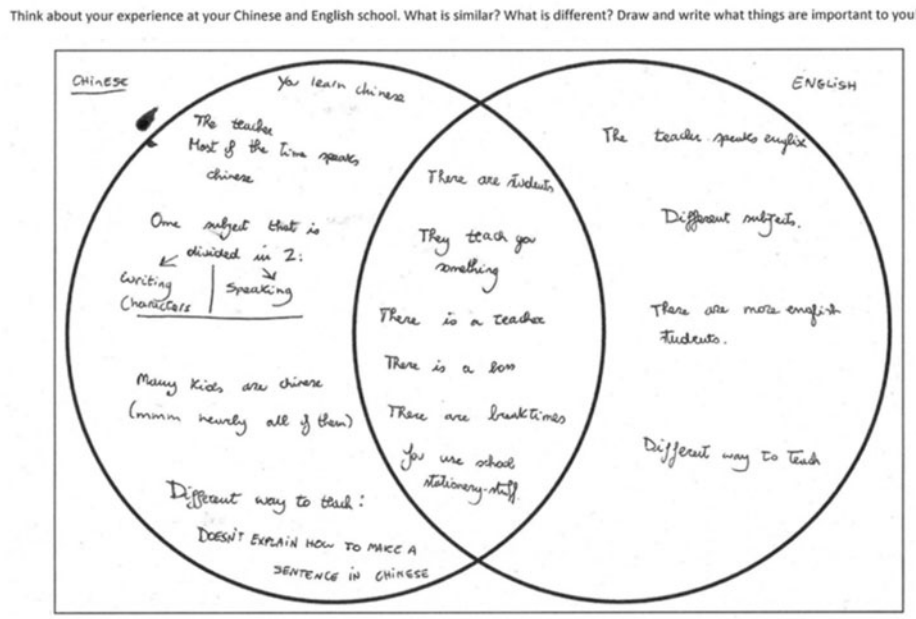

Figure 3: Cartoon storyboard created by Emily (12 years old)

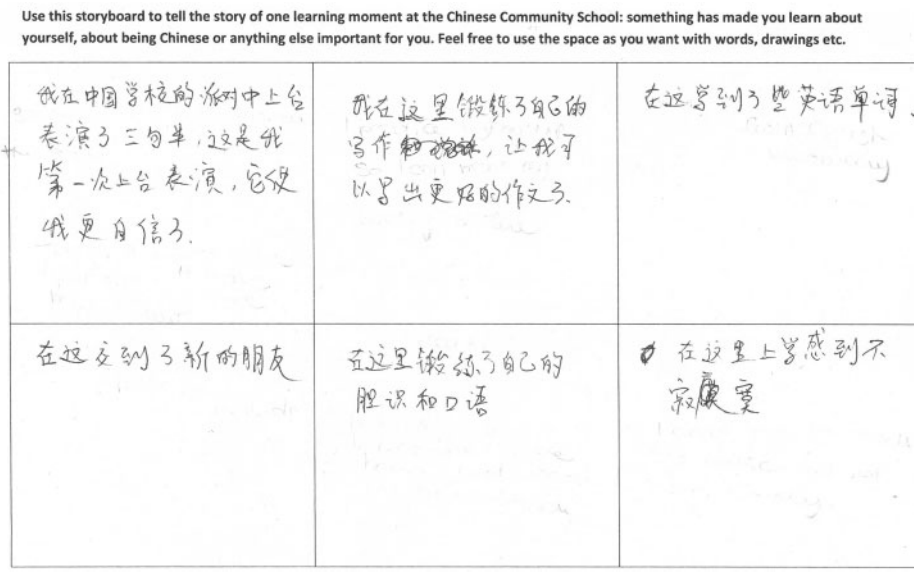

Figure 4: Cartoon storyboard created by Jinlin

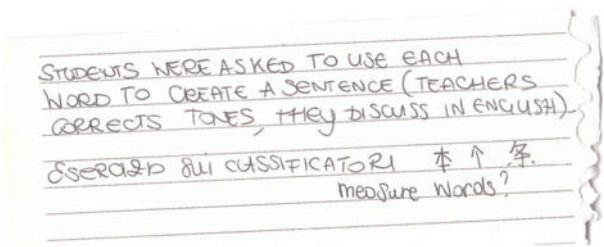

Figure 5: Research field note, December 2014, Apple Valley School

themselves in their preferred language. Thus, their choices to use English and/or Chinese were enabled by the researcher's own linguistic resources and her linguistic sensitivity towards her participants' multilingualism.

Translanguaging—defined by García and Li (2014: 80) as the 'flexibility of bilingual learners to take control of their own learning, to self-regulate when and how to language, depending on the context in which they're being asked to perform'—played a dominant role in the classroom communicative practices. Through translanguaging practices, pupils negotiated identity positions, agency, and power in the research process. Similarly, the importance of translanguaging as a creative and strategic deployment of the researcher's full linguistic repertoire emerged in this study. Ganassin drew on her Chinese and

other language resources to engage with participants through translanguaging (Li and Zhu 2013; García and Li 2014; Creese and Blackledge 2015); translanguaging also allowed the researcher to capture complexity in the interactions among speakers (García and Li 2014).

Furthermore, the researcher's multilingual resources, and her ability to move across and draw on different languages, enabled her to document her observations in the schools and to record how participants used their own languages. In recording observational data (ethnographic field notes), Ganassin made notes in simplified characters or using the 拼音 *pīnyīn* romanization system to document, for example, her observation of classroom teaching, noting how participants used their language repertoires (see Figure 5). Italian had also been present throughout the study. Towards the end of the writing up process, Ganassin realized that some of her research notes were in Italian, especially regarding observations related to Chinese grammar or history, subjects that she had studied in her Chinese language and history degree in Italy (see Figure 5).

Italian also informed her choice of literature, for example, the research conducted by Sabattini and Santangelo (2005) on Chinese history. Accessing publications in multiple languages (Chinese, Italian, and English) enabled her to provide a wider perspective on the studied phenomenon, beyond that usually taken by mono- or bilingual (English or Chinese) researchers.

Thus, the researcher's reflexive position vis-a-vis her own multilingual repertoire and the multilinguality in the research context resulted in her use of translanguaging and flexible multilingualism; and shaped her choice to adopt multimodal methods and to explore the literature beyond that published in English. These processes illustrate the importance of acknowledging translanguaging and the researcher's multilingual repertoire as researcher resources in both data collection and undertaking a literature review.

5.4 Linguistic representational possibilities: engaging a diverse readership

The final research space concerns the representational possibilities of the study. Ganassin had two main concerns: (i) trying to achieve a faithful representation of participants' voices and (ii) engaging with linguistically diverse readers (participants, community language school educators, other members of the Chinese community, and researchers). To address these concerns Ganassin decided to present the data in their original languages, as exemplified in the following classroom interaction:

> Teacher: 现在是 *xiànzài shì* Elsa <now it's Elsa's turn>. Elsa come here. Use whichever character makes sense to you, 没关系 *méi guānxì*<never mind>.
>
> Elsa: I don't know, 不好意思*bù hǎo yìsī* <sorry> (she returned to her desk). (Research field note, 1 February 2015)

Furthermore, this multilingual presentation of the data enables the reader to engage with the linguistic complexities of classroom communication. The representation of participant voices and languages played a key role in the study of classroom language practices. For example, the researcher examined the importance of translanguaging as a teaching and learning strategy (as presented in Supplementary Appendix). As pupils and their teacher simultaneously drew on different language resources to accomplish teaching and learning, consistent with the work of Creese and Blackledge (2010) and Canagarajah (2013), the importance of translanguaging as a pedagogic strategy became evident in the data analysis process, and thus needed to be conveyed to readers through this multilingual data presentation.

The researcher's experience of studying Chinese as a foreign language also informed the choices in data presentation. When reviewing the literature on Chinese community schooling, she had noticed that researchers tended to present data exclusively in Chinese characters, then provide a translation (e.g. He 2008; Li and Wu 2008; Creese and Blackledge 2010). However, as she found this choice potentially disengaging for readers with little or no command of Chinese characters, she adopted processes of transliteration and translation, presenting the text in both simplified characters and 拼音 *pīnyīn*, with English translations in parentheses. As Holmes *et al.* (2016: 100) suggest, multilingual researchers need to attend to 'the potential readers of the research so they can gain access to the nuances available to the researcher-translator'.

Overall, our examples and analyses illustrate how a researcher's developing awareness of her own linguistic resources across these four research spaces bring opportunities and challenges to a study: no language should be ruled out at any stage as it may be important in accessing studies in other languages, shaping and conducting the data collection, and representing the data.

6. RESEARCH RELATIONSHIPS

Next, we turn to relationality in the research process, and how a researching multilingually perspective can support the negotiation and management of relationships, and the development of trust with adult and pupil participants.

6.1 Negotiating access: the researcher as a community member

While negotiating access into the research site has been well documented (Burgess 1991; Magolda 2000; Marshall and Rossman 2006), Ganassin approached access to the two schools aware of her status as a cultural and linguistic 'outsider' (Woodin 2016), and thus the potential difficulties this identity may bring in being accepted. Although she had contacts who acted as gatekeepers, she continuously had to negotiate her presence in the schools. Informed by her prior experience of working with communities (Ganassin and Holmes 2013), she believed that research was a two-way process whereby researchers too need to give something back to their participants.

At Apple Valley School, she became a volunteer helping out with events to establish her presence and build trust. At Deer River School, she developed a friendship with one of the mothers, Chloe. Several months after this meeting, Chloe expressed the importance of the shared relationship for their interview:

> Chloe: Now that I know you and we are friends, I will speak to you like a Chinese speaks to another Chinese, which means that I will tell you the truth. What people really think.
>
> Researcher: Do you mean that Chinese people only tell the truth to other Chinese?
>
> Chloe: It's not about that. Because I know that you lived there [China] and you understand some of the language and our culture . . . it makes things easier. (Chloe's interview, 15 January 2015)

Chloe's confession highlights how personal relationships are essential for researchers to access participants' lived experiences and collect truthful accounts, and hence a faithful representation of participants' voices (Krog 2011).

As the study developed and Ganassin succeeded in recruiting participants, her outsider status was mitigated: people in the research site became more supportive, for example, by offering to help with translations. Seven months after Albert's interview, she noted the following in her researcher diary:

> Albert said: 'I was surprised to see you in a Chinese school and a bit sceptical. Then I was impressed by the fact that you speak a bit of Mandarin. But even more about how many things you know about our country [China] that people here [in the UK] don't really know. This first impression of you was like ''wow''. That's why I wanted to be part of your study. [. . .] And other people saw you showing commitment which is why you got many participants'. (Research field note, 6 July 2014)

Both Chloe's and Albert's accounts capture the challenge of the researcher's cultural and linguistic positioning in the community language education context: from the initial perception as outsider, to gaining acceptance as an insider by giving back to the community. Together, they negotiated a relationship of trust and a shared ethical commitment to participate openly and truthfully in the research process.

6.2 Conducting research in English: challenges and opportunities

The decision to use English as the main language of the study (e.g. the language of research protocols) impacted the recruitment of participants. Some parents perceived their English was insufficient to take part in an interview. These perceptions were usually due to recent experiences of migration, or their

status as housewives with few opportunities to use English. For example, Ganassin noted in her diary how, after a number of conversations, Ming (a parent) decided not to be interviewed:

> I was surprised when Ming declined my suggestion to be interviewed. She said that her English is poor and that she would feel embarrassed. (Research field note, 2 March 2014)

This perception was not always shared by Ganassin as, with some degree of translanguaging in informal conversations, they could comfortably understand each other. Unlike some Chinese researchers (e.g. Mau 2013; Li 2014; Wang 2017), Ganassin could not draw on the status of Chinese 'native speaker' to recruit and engage Chinese-speaking participants. Therefore, some potential participants were precluded from the study.

However, given the presence of multiple varieties of Chinese in the research sites, determining the vantage point of a native speaker is potentially problematic. For some of the parents, Mandarin was as much a foreign language to them as English because they were speakers of other varieties of Chinese (namely, Cantonese). Similarly, Mandarin-speaker researchers may also have encountered issues in the recruitment of participants whose first language was not Mandarin.

On the other hand, conducting research in English, a shared second language of all the adult participants and the researcher, offered an opportunity in building researcher–researched relationships (as illustrated in this conversation between the researcher and Jun, one of the teachers):

> Jun: We use these 'sholes' [soles]? in the shoes. Is it how they say that?
>
> Researcher: I think that it's 'soles'. I will check.
>
> Jun: It's ok. You understood anyway. Sometimes as foreigners, we cannot know all the words and say them properly. (Research field note, 29 June 2014)

Jun's acknowledgement of a shared linguistic identity with Ganassin as 'foreigners' enables Jun to relax somewhat at the realization that linguistic power between them is neutralized.

The benefits of conducting research in a shared second language are also evident from the following research field note:

> After her interview, Rose [teacher] told me 'I appreciate how you never correct people when they speak English, like English people often do; it makes people much more comfortable'. (Rose's interview, 28 September 2014)

Like Jun, Rose emphasized how the researcher's non-judgemental acceptance of participants' (English) language skills can be beneficial to the researcher–researcher relationship.

Our examples confirmed how a common background of migration can make the researcher and researched approachable to each other.

6.3 Choosing not to use interpreters and the value of translanguaging

At the outset of the study, Ganassin made the conscious decision not to use interpreters—an important decision in relationship-building. First, she thought that the mediation of an interpreter would have potentially created a sense of distance. Second, she wanted to engage fully with the data during the different research phases. Third, her previous experience of working with interpreters, including in contexts involving legal casework, raised ethical (e.g. confidentiality) and practical issues, and therefore her study would not benefit from their involvement. Finally, as a self-funded student, she did not have the financial resources to pay for interpreters. These factors prompted her to consider the opportunities offered by both the research context and her own linguistic resources. As the following conversation with teacher, Alice, shows, translanguaging offered an alternative to the use of interpreters:

> Alice: [. . .] Do you know the story of the rabbit on the moon?
>
> Ganassin: Is it 嫦娥奔月 Cháng é bēn yuè <Chang'e flies to the moon>? [name of the legend]
>
> Alice: Yes, exactly 当然是那个 dāngrán shì nà gè<it is indeed that>legend. Your Chinese is good, you are good. (Research field note, 4 May 2014)

Concerned that her English was 'not too good', Alice consistently engaged in translanguaging with the researcher. By so doing, the researcher and the participant drew upon the multilingual skills naturally present in the research context, according to communicative purposes (Li and Wu 2008), and without the mediation of an interpreter.

At the same time, adult participants valued Ganassin's ability to engage with the collective memories evoke by certain Chinese idiomatic expressions. As a teacher, Ting explained:

> Things like the story of the ducks in the pond they [pupils] would not understand, they would laugh. Because they were not brought up in China, they cannot appreciate the 鸳鸯戏水 yuānyāng xì shuǐ <Mandarin ducks playing in the water>, why they are important for us as symbol of love. Because you [researcher] studied in China before, you are different [from pupils] and I think that you can appreciate the ducks and understand why they are beautiful. (Ting's interview, 18 October 2014)

Here, the teacher assumed that Ganassin could access the symbolic meaning of the Mandarin ducks because, unlike her pupils who were all British-born and did not have first-hand experience of living and studying in China, she had

experience of living in China. This excerpt reinforces the argument that, in the teachers' views, the researcher's wider background, including her experience of living in China, was as important to engage with participants as her ability to understand particular lexical meanings in Mandarin.

Overall, by drawing on her language repertoire without using interpreters, Ganassin believed that she could maintain a sense of ownership of the study, value the language repertoires of those involved, and represent the multilingual nature of the research context.

6.4 Adult-researcher and child-participants: 'And, may I ask, why are you interested in Chinese people'?

Our final theme concerns Ganassin's positioning as a non-native speaker of English as an opportunity in establishing relationships with pupils who had English as their first and preferred language.

As the researcher engaged in weekly observation sessions, she found that her position as a speaker of English as a foreign language, and more generally her identity as a 'foreigner' (neither English nor Chinese), was triggering their interest in the research. Pupils at Deer River School—who were all aged between 12 and 13 years at the time of the study—became curious about her background, her presence in their school, and her life in Italy, as illustrated in this focus group:

> Roy: Where are you from? You don't sound from here.
>
> Lily: No, and you don't look like the English [people].
>
> Julian: Portugal or maybe Argentina? [. . .]
>
> Researcher: I am from Italy. What about you?
>
> Roy: I am just local. Well, a local Chinese, from Scotland. And, may I ask, why are you interested in Chinese people? (Focus group at Deer River School, 11 October 2014)

As the pupils used the identity marker of ethnic appearance and nationality as they negotiated their relationship with the researcher, they were also interested in developing more understanding of her identity. In her study on migrant children's identity in Italy, Amadasi (2014) argues that the observation of child-participants and researcher interactions offers further insights into how the identity of participants and researchers alike is constructed in research contexts. While conceiving of identity as relational elucidates the ways in which participants interact with one another, it provides understanding not only of how they construct their identities—negotiated dialogically with the researcher—but also how they position the researcher in terms of group membership.

A further consideration concerns the researcher's identity as cultural and linguistic 'outsider' and power dynamics in research. In fact, as children and

young people live in an adult-dominated world, issues of power are likely to affect their relationship with adult-researchers (Punch 2002). When conducting research with these pupils, they were in the advantageous position of expressing themselves in their preferred language, which possibly helped to at least partially rebalance power issues.

In sum, our analysis has shown how the researcher's status as cultural, ethnic, and linguistic 'outsider' with an interest in the Chinese world facilitated the relationship-building process with pupils and triggered their interest in the research process and in the researcher's own identity.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Our purpose in this article was to investigate the opportunities and challenges of a researching multilingually perspective through a multilingual researcher's experience of an ethnographic study in Chinese community language education. Two main conclusions emerge from our study.

First, the researching multilingually framework was valuable in raising Ganassin's awareness of her multilingual researcher identity, and the opportunities this presented. This awareness led to her purposeful decision-making in mobilizing her multiple languages (e.g. English, Mandarin, and Italian) in the researcher spaces (spatiality) and in building relationships (relationality).

Concerning spatiality, we showed that the researcher's language choices across the four research spaces (phenomenon, context, resources, and representational possibilities) shaped the entire research process (e.g. project design, choice of literature, data collection, analysis, and write-up). These choices resulted from her developing awareness of her own linguistic resources; initially, she ruled out the importance of Italian, her first language, but she then realized that it was a useful resource to access literature not translated in other languages. They also resulted from her emergent awareness of the resources present in the research macro- and micro-contexts, for example, the choice to introduce multimodality aimed to engage pupils and capture the multilingual nature of their classroom interactions where translanguaging often occurred.

Concerning relationality, we demonstrated how a researching multilingually approach can facilitate the researcher–researched rapport-building process. We showed how Ganassin's choices to use English as the main shared lingua franca, and to not use interpreters, were informed by her previous professional experience in migrant communities and shaped by a desire to engage first-hand with participants without the use of mediators. The use of English as the main lingua franca offered both opportunities and challenges: researchers and participants developed a relationship based on a common migrant status where linguistic power was neutralized; however, it prevented the participation of parents with limited English language skills. Mobilizing her Chinese, for example, through translanguaging, enabled her to communicate with parent and

child participants (when English was lacking), and thus develop rapport and trust.

Overall, our examples illustrate how purposeful decision-making concerning language choice can, for example, mitigate the researcher's linguistic (and ethnic) 'outsider' status, enabling him or her to build relationships with participants that are not dependent on a shared first language (unlike previous studies of community schooling cited earlier).

The second conclusion highlights how reflexivity and ethics, infused throughout the researching multilingually process, can enrich the researching multilingually framework. A researching multilingually perspective shifts the research gaze to the linguistic resources of the researcher: how these are mobilized in the research spaces and how they support the forging of relationships. It also draws attention to the role of power and ethics in such relationships, showing that a non-judgemental acceptance and accommodation of participants' language skills are fundamental in building rapport and trust.

Overall, we argue that there is no one-size-fits-all researching multilingually approach. Our study did not aim to be prescriptive, but rather to offer guidelines for researchers about how to approach and shape their own study.

The following four implications emerge from these conclusions:

First, we encourage researchers to be alert to the multilingual dimension of their studies, for example, the researchers' own repertoires; and the wider research context (e.g. the languages of the participants, the research site, and funding, supervisory, and institutional requirements). Researchers have both the possibility and responsibility to make informed decisions concerning how, when, and why they mobilize languages throughout all the stages of their research to ensure the trustworthiness of the research and its representation to wider audiences. These considerations may help counter the hegemony of English, notably in dissemination and publication of research (Curry and Lillis 2017; Zheng and Guo 2018).

Second, we demonstrate that researching multilingually opportunities may be salient in both macro- and micro-context of a study. English acted as the main lingua franca in our research micro-context, and it was also the dominant language of the macro-context. However, we acknowledge that these two dimensions might not fully overlap and other linguae francae might be used to bridge communication in the micro-contexts. These ideas may equally apply to research in other community school contexts. For example, in the micro-context of Arabic community schooling in The Netherlands, where Dutch is the language of the macro-context, other linguae francae such as French might be used to gain access to and engage with participants.

Third, although our considerations are specific to our research context, the research outcomes highlight the importance for other (multilingual) researchers to recognize, value, and be reflexive about their own linguistic resources; to use these in an ethical manner across the research spaces and in constructing relationships to ensure representation of participants' voices; and to account for power dynamics. Researchers should engage in constant and

critical (self-) reflection about how these resources can serve as opportunities, but also present challenges, in shaping and informing decisions about the research process.

Finally, we understand that a researching multilingually approach may work differently for (self-ascribed) monolingual researchers who may encounter distinctive challenges in engaging in multilingual research. For example, monolingual researchers are unlikely to adopt translanguaging as a research strategy as it involves the ability to move across different languages. These researchers may have to investigate alternative ways of building trust, gaining access, and establishing an 'insider' status. Our study demonstrated that the researcher's insider/outsider status couldn't be exclusively determined by shared language and 'ethnic identity': an 'outsider' researcher can draw on alternative resources, for example, an interest in the researched community or a shared migrant status to gain acceptance and trust.

To conclude, we see researching multilingually not just as an approach which foregrounds the researcher's multilingual resources but as a theoretical and philosophical stance that any researcher operating in multilingual contexts can adopt. Not all researchers are multilingual, but a researching multilingually approach can be undertaken by any researcher operating in a multilingual context. Although self-ascribed 'monolingual' researchers may lack the linguistic flexibility and multilingual resources we have described in this study, they can be alerted to the linguistic complexity of the research spaces and the relationships engendered within them, for example, they can reflect on the implications of working with interpreters (as illustrated in Andrews' 2013 study), and develop a more translingual orientation (Canagarajah 2013; Andrews *et al*. 2018). With this awareness comes the possibility of more informed decision-making in research methodology and process.

Our findings invite new thinking on the importance of a researching multilingually approach in community-based research, and more generally, a deeper understanding of and account for the multilingual dimension of a multilingual researcher's experience. Our findings show that in community research there is no neutral all-encompassing, privileged position—or language—that researchers can use. We extend this stance to multilingual researcher experience more generally, where linguistic insider/outsider distinctions become blurred, and hybrid enactments of such positions—whether multilingual or monolingual—bring both opportunities and challenges. As Holquist (2014: 8) argues, 'Conceiving language [as a single entity] blinds us to its fractured nature'; and Gramling (2016: 5), inspired by Holquist (2014), claims that monolingualism is 'a logical fallacy in a linguistically heterogeneous world'. Our findings endorse this philosophical perspective, offering implications more generally, for self-ascribed monolingual researchers: We invite them to reflect more deeply on their understanding of the multilingual dimensions of their researcher experience, and account for these aspects in their research. Ultimately, we believe that a researching multilingually researcher disposition, informed by researching multilingually

praxis, permits circulation and mobility of all languages across research spaces and relationships, thus leading to more authentic, robust, and trustworthy research outcomes.

NOTES

1 Simplified Chinese characters, 简体字 *jiǎntizì*, are used in this study and in previous publications with the exception of 國語 *guóyǔ*, the *de facto* official language of Taiwan where traditional characters are used. All Chinese characters are romanized in 拼音 pīnyīn for consistency.

2 The research project 'Researching Multilingually' (AH/J005037/1) from which the researching multilingually framework emerged was funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council, UK. Sara Ganassin was midway through her research on Chinese community language education when the framework was published, and thus its application to her study represents a retrospective analysis.

SUPPLEMENTARY DATA

Supplementary material is available at *Applied Linguistics* online.

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