Multiple Schools, Languages, Experiences and Affiliations: Ideological Becomings and Positionings

Mary H. Maguire, McGill University; Xiao Lan Curdt-Christiansen, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Abstract
This article focuses on the identity accounts of a group of Chinese children who attend a heritage language school. Bakhtin’s concepts of ideological becoming, and authoritative and internally persuasive discourse, frame our exploration. Taking a dialogic view of language and learning raises questions about schools as socializing spaces and ideological environments. The children in this inquiry articulate their own ideological patterns of alignment. Those patterns, and the children’s code switching, seem mostly determined by their socialization, language affiliations, friendship patterns, family situations, and legal access to particular schools. Five patterns of ideological becoming are presented. The children’s articulated preferences indicate that they assert their own ideological stances towards prevailing authoritative discourses, give voice to their own sense of agency and internally persuasive discourses, and respond to the ideological resources that mediate their linguistic repertoires.

Ideological Becoming: Ever New Ways to Mean
Language and ideologies, in the form of language beliefs, representations and assumptions, are intertwined (Wollard, 1998). We begin with textual accounts of multiple school experiences written by two Chinese boys, Zhu Zi-Mu and Li Yang.\(^1\)

![Figure 1. Me](image-url)
My name is Zhu Zi-Mu. I am nine years old and come from the city of Nanjing in China. At present, I attend a French school, but before I attended an English school. In the weekend I also go to the Chinese school. Therefore, I can speak three languages: French, English and Chinese. My performance at all three schools is very good.

I like making friends, and I have many. They all love to be with me. They say that being together with me make them happy. I have a lot of interests. I like playing basketball, collecting Pokémon cards, drawing and also playing computer games. I am a boy who enjoys both study and play. (Zhu Zi-Mu, MARCH 2001)

Translation: When I was five, I entered my first school. That was in Belgium, a very good French school. Then I came to Québec; here I still attend a French school. This year, I had an opportunity to enter my first Chinese school. Here, I learn Chinese language and Chinese mathematics, which makes me very interested in Chinese things. Comparing the Chinese school to the French school, I like the French school more, because French is easier for me and I have more friends. I find studying at the Chinese school is a little hard, I know too few Chinese characters. Because I am a Chinese child, I have to learn Chinese. (Li Yang, May 2000)
These identity accounts resulted from a larger ethnographic inquiry into multilingual children’s cultural positionings and identity politics in heritage language contexts. Identity accounts refer to representational accounts of speakers and writers about aspects of themselves, their reference points, subject positionings, and perceptions of linguistic socio-cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991; Hall, 2003). These accounts frame our exploration of these children’s language ideologies as reflected in their Chinese written texts.

Announcing his competence in three languages, Chinese, English and French, Zhu Zi-Mu articulates his positive evaluation of his multiple school experiences and social networking ideology (Wake, 2005). Friendship is the basis for his identity as a competent language learner in three languages and his positioning as a “boy who likes to study and play”. Li Yang reveals the complexity of his language affiliations in school contexts and where he has lived. He attributes his allegiance to learning Chinese to his Chinese identity: “Because I am a Chinese child, I have to learn Chinese”. Like many children who participated in this study, Li Yang and Zhu Zi-Mu live at the crossroads of three languages and two school environments with various ideologies and discursive practices. The boys are typical representatives of the many “Allophone” children (children of immigrants whose home language is neither English nor French) who grow up learning several languages in Quebec, a unilingual French province with a prevailing political discourse of monolingualism.

Bakhtin’s concepts of ideological becoming, and of authoritative and internally persuasive discourse, guide our understanding of these children’s ideological positionings. By focusing on their articulated language affiliations and school preferences, we examine their engagement in “a kind of apprenticeship - a trying out and trying on of language ideologies” (Gonzalez & Arnot-Hopffer, 2003). We use the term language ideologies as defined by Wollard (1998, p. xxii): “representations whether explicit or implicit that construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world”. Ideological becoming refers to developing ways of viewing the world, belief systems, positionings and values, and their interacting and aligning with others.

Thus, the children construe their language ideologies by appropriating from the language and cultural communities in which they participate or aspire to belong. They negotiate existing macro level discursive structures to create their own positionings of self and ideological becoming. This becoming occurs within ideological environments, or “contact zones” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 14), that offer affordances or constraints for socializing and learning. Schools are not only institutional physical arrangements of the material artifacts of schooling, but also key socializing spaces where children negotiate various discourses and degrees of authority. Children’s identity accounts offer local instances of these negotiations. Ormerod and Ivanic claim that “texts can be examined as textual objects carrying meaning about a topic and reflecting meaning making processes and as a material object, reflecting and anticipating physical processes” (Ormerod and Ivanic, 2000, p. 96). We argue that the children’s texts reveal their developing ideologies and positionings, and their points of reference, as they appropriate or resist prevailing
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discourses (Suarez, 2002). The texts also reveal human consciousness which, according to Bakhtin, comes into existence through the medium of the surrounding ideological world and finds itself “inevitably facing the necessity of having to choose a language” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 295). Bakhtin further argues that language is inherently dialogical: “language for the individual consciousness lies on the borderline between oneself and another. The word in language is half someone else’s. It becomes 'one’s own' when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 293-294). If every utterance is filled “with echoes and reverberations of other utterances” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 51), then children’s utterances and texts are always dialogic because they are answering others’ words and discourses. Taking a dialogic view of language and learning raises questions about schools as socializing spaces and ideological environments. How do trilingual/multilingual children like Zhu Zi-Mu and Li Yang negotiate becoming themselves when they experience school in more than one language and ideological environment? What can we learn about children’s developing language ideologies? Drawing on Bakhtin’s dialogic theory of discourse and self that assumes a fusion of languages and social worlds, we focus on the patterns of alignment that emerged in their identity accounts. Schools may position children, but children also position themselves as they seek “to fashion themselves” to themselves and others in particular contexts and construct their own reflexive projects of selfhood (Ivanic, 1998). Ivanic argues that “writing is an act of identity in which people align themselves with socio-culturally shaped possibilities of selfhood, playing their part in reproducing of challenging dominant practices and discourses, and the values beliefs and interests which they embody” (Ivanic, 1998, p. 31). Children respond to the discourses in their personal, social, historical trajectories and temporal worlds. We take the position that the "coming together of diverse voices" in multiple languages, cultures and places offers children new possibilities and spaces for understanding the world and ever “newer ways to mean” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 51) in their ideological becoming.

Ideological Becoming and Ideological Environments: Authoritative and Internally Persuasive Discourses

Language ideologies are constantly constructed and reconstructed in discursive interactions at the micro and macro levels (Maguire, 2005). When children speak or write, they engage in dialogues that are socially situated within multiple power relations and evaluative orientations. Children signal their awareness of different relations and orientations in their utterances and texts which reveal their social actions and ideologies in various contexts (Maguire & Graves, 2001). They interpret their own locations in their socio-cultural and discoursal contexts and in, as Zhu Zi-Mu says, “being together”.

Authoritative discourse refers to official discourses such as official government policy and legislation, the discourse of tradition, and generally acknowledged beliefs and voices of authority. Internally persuasive discourse refers to the everyday discourse of social interaction; it is the discourse of personal beliefs and ideas that influence responses to the world and others. Bakhtin characterizes internally persuasive discourse as "opposed to
one that is externally authoritative is, as it is affirmed through assimilation, tightly interwoven with one’s own words” (1981, p. 345). He maintains “the authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally” (1981, p. 342). Through their written identity accounts, the children in this inquiry articulate their own ideological horizons.

To appreciate these horizons requires a dual focus on macro and micro levels. The macro level focus is on discursive practices and authoritative discourses such as the labeling of three language groups in Quebec (Anglophone, Allophone and Francophone). The micro level involves processes of identity construction, self reflexivity and the creative potential for becoming that emerge when children differentiate between the two clusters of discourse or create for themselves, as Bakhtin puts it, “the language of the moment”. As newcomers to Quebec, Zhu Zi-Mu from Nanjing in China, and Li Yang from Belgium, must attend French school. Indeed, the authoritative discourse of the Charter of the French Language (commonly known as Bill 101 or Loi 101) legally demands that Allophone children attend French school. This 1977 legislation made French the sole official language of Quebec. Pursuant to Section 72, Certificate of Eligibility for English Schools, access to the English school system is carefully monitored and normally restricted to those children whose parents have been educated in English in Canada, although the law makes some exemptions available.

Zhu Zi-Mu’s internally persuasive discourse, in which he aligns himself with his friends (“being together with me”), reveals his evaluative stance as a boy who enjoys “both study and play” in all three languages. Li Yang also alludes to the difficulties some Chinese children experience learning Chinese. Like many Allophone children, he negotiates the discursive practices of his French school, which he perceives as a friendly ideological environment. However, Allophone children in Quebec with varying immigration experiences move through different school trajectories. Because of the competing political discourses in Canada and Quebec, some children attend an English school and others a French school during the week as well as a Saturday heritage language school. Others attend trilingual schools that teach English and French as second or third languages in addition to the heritage language.

**Locating the Chinese Zhonguo School within Ideological Environments**

Many children in our larger project experienced two competing authoritative discourses within a complex politics of recognition in different ideological environments. From a macro perspective, these discursive spaces are embedded in conflicted socio-historical discourses of language ideologies, immigration patterns and diverse communities of practices and access to schools (Maguire, 2005). Canadian political discourse centers on majority / minority language contexts within an English / French discourse of linguistic and cultural duality based on the Official Languages Act and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In Quebec, the official language is French, and Quebec school boards are linguistically organized. Quebec political discourse refers to three language groups as
Francophones, Anglophones and Allophones (Others), the latter being all whose home language is neither English nor French. The authoritative discourse of Bill 101 leaves no doubt about immigrant parents’ legally attributed identity. Some children may attend either a French or English school. Thus, alignment and code switching among the children in the Saturday schools take varied patterns that seem mostly determined by their socialization, language affiliations, friendship patterns, family situations and legal access to particular schools. The patterns of the children’s discourse and texts written in the Chinese Saturday school must be located within an additional authoritative discourse of Confucianism.

Confucianism, a set of ethical codes instructing people how to live together in harmony, has had a profound influence on Chinese literacy practices and education and still influences people’s attitudes, social practices and views of learning (Curdt-Christiansen, 2003). Confucianism emphasizes an authoritarian ideology and hierarchical relationships within the family, society and the state. In Confucian tradition, effort, diligence and willpower are core features of the learning process and are closely connected to the ways Chinese teachers and children experience and view education. This ideology of diligence, studying hard, and tenacity is embedded in the Chinese community in Montreal and the children's Saturday school.

The Chinese heritage schools in Montreal, established to maintain ‘Chinese’ traditions and language, use different dialects and phonetic systems (Pinyin or Zhuyinfuhao) as instructional tools for teaching either simplified or classical Chinese characters. As an ideological environment, the Zhonguo School (pseudonym) is located within two authoritative discourses, the political discourses and linguistic duality of Quebec and Canada and the Confucian ideology of Chinese Saturday school. Zhu Zi-Mu’s and Li Yang’s comments reflect the diversity among Montreal Chinese children as they negotiate their identities and ideological stances within these Chinese and Canadian/Quebec ideological environments. Some have difficulty communicating in Chinese with other Chinese children either because of language loss or dialect differences. Others express strong affiliation to their Chinese grandparents in China and allegiance to China, its people, culture and language, and as a motherland.

The Zhonguo School was founded in 1994 as a private Saturday school to respond to Chinese parents’ needs for language affiliation and cultural maintenance. The school is a discursive space without any formal connection to Quebec school boards and government, and has neither a legal voice in the public discourse of schooling nor a building of its own. It is the largest of eight Chinese Heritage schools in Montreal. Because Zhonguo School classes are conducted in rented space in a post-secondary institution on the weekends, it has no visible signs that signal its ideological environment as a Chinese school. Of Zhonguo's 1000 pupils, who are predominantly Chinese, eighty percent come from Mainland China, ten percent from Hong Kong, and the remaining ten percent either come from Taiwan, or are children of Chinese and Canadian parents. The school’s mission is to teach Mandarin Chinese, the phonetic script Pinyin, and simplified
Chinese characters, the standard script of China today. The school offers courses in Mandarin language arts, mathematics, Chinese chess, drawing/painting, national dance, music, and martial arts. English and French courses are also available for newcomers. Most of the teachers were professional teachers in China. The literacy resources are standard textbooks that teach Chinese moral and cultural values and reflect the Chinese national curriculum, which many of the children have difficulty engaging (Curdt-Christiansen, 2006). The discursive practice within the ideological environment of the Zhonguo School is mainly teacher-centered following Mehan’s (1979) I (initiation)-R (response)-E (evaluation) structure. This practice reflects typically authoritative and transmission oriented ideology in education.

Data Sources and Participants
The data reported here emerged from a larger ethnographic, interpretive study of trilingual Chinese children’s literacy practices in Montreal (Curdt-Christiansen, 2003). That study focused on Chinese immigrant children’s literacy practices at home and in heritage language school over a two-year period from 1999-2001. Data sources included classroom observation, interviews with children, teachers and parents, observation of literacy activities at home, and analysis of selected children’s compositions in three languages (Chinese, English, and French). For the present paper, we have examined a selection of thirty-seven pieces, short essays and /or diary entries, and family letters in Chinese. Translation is provided by the first author, who is a member of the Chinese community.

The 2003 study involved a systematic classroom observation of seven classrooms from kindergarten through grade 6. In the present paper, we have chosen texts written by 23 grade 3 and 25 grade 4 pupils in Chinese language classrooms. The participants were chosen because of their receptiveness and willingness to articulate their perceptions about schools and languages. They also represented the various categories of immigrant children in Canada, in that 15 were born in Canada, 27 were born in China, and six were born in other countries and emigrated to Canada with their parents (see Table 1). Among this group, 27 had lived in Canada for more than three years, and 21 for fewer than three years. The majority attended French public schools.

Table 1. Students’ Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Residence in Canada</th>
<th>Birth Place</th>
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<td>China</td>
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<td>French School</td>
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<td>Private English School</td>
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Articulated Preferences: Ideological Becomings in Discursive Spaces
Bakhtin argues that “in each epoch, in each social circle, in each small world of family, friends, acquaintances and comrades in which a human being grows and lives, there are always authoritative utterances that set the tone” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 88). In this inquiry,
we find that children leave textual traces of intertwined authoritative utterances and discourses that reflect their school experiences, friendships, teachers’ discursive practices, memories of arriving in Canada, and their strong investment in learning three languages, which they perceive as social-cultural-linguistic capital in the marketplace. Some texts reveal that the participants negotiate and border-cross institutional spaces and identify with the authoritative discourses of both schools, their Chinese “every Saturday” school and their mainstream “everyday” school. The texts analyzed here include a range of genres such as short essays, diaries, and family letters. We present samples of children’s texts that they shared according to their articulated school preferences. The preferences they expressed can be placed into three categories: 1) liking both schools, 2) liking the Chinese school, and 3) liking the French school. The texts reflect the children’s identification with and ideological positionings within these discursive spaces and languages. In revealing their emerging consciousness of their multiple school experiences and discursive practices, they unveil patterns of alignment that they are appropriating, reproducing, challenging, or even resisting.

_Ideological Tacit Double Voicing: I Like Both Schools_

In the texts presented here, the children articulate a preference and liking for both schools and languages. Thus, they ideologically position themselves in more than one location and language either explicitly or tacitly. More often than not this means cultivating friends and double voicing with others. Double voicing refers to utterances or part of utterances that are attributable to two speakers at once. Bakhtin argues that in moving from authoritarian to internally persuasive discourse, the internally persuasive word is “half-ours and half-someone else’s”. Children’s utterances are double voiced in the sense that they are responding to their own internally persuasive discourse and the authoritative discourse of others, which may include parents, teachers and children from language communities other than their own. These communities offer varying possibilities of ‘otherness’ or varying degrees of ‘our-own-ness’, varying degrees of awareness and attachment (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 89). These communities’ discourse carries its own evaluative tones of familiarity or strangeness, which children assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate to their own needs and circumstances. These accented tones, in turn, influence their connectivity to particular places and guide their actions and projects for selfhood. For example, nine-year-old Yang Xiao’s perceptions of school are strongly associated with friendship and making “some new friends”.
Yang Xiao

Translation:
I like [my] Chinese school and I also like [my] French school. I like the Chinese school, because I can learn Chinese and make friends. In addition, I can see some Chinese sceneries in the Chinese textbooks, such as the Sun-Moon Lake, the Great Wall, the Gate of Heavenly Peace in Beijing … At the Chinese school, our teacher also teaches us how to write an envelope, a message, and a New Year’s greeting card. I like my French school, because I can learn French and make some new friends there. The teachers there also teach us about the animals, plants and insects in the nature. At the music class, we play recorders and the music teacher teaches us how to read music notes. I have been in Canada for one year and half. I also like Canada. (Yang Xiao, May 1999)

His grade three teacher, Mrs Guan, considers Yang Xiao to be a good student in this class because “he is a newcomer and has not forgotten all his Chinese yet.” Like Zi-Mu, Yang Xiao can access mediational means in two contact zones. For example, French enables him to participate in the activities at his ‘everyday’ school. In addition to learning a new language, his access to and competence in Chinese and the French provide him with the means to enter the ‘French’ peer group to which he aspires to belong in the Chinese school. The children tend to code switch based both on friendship patterns and their weekday public school, reflecting their perception of the cultural capital of a French social network ideology (Curdt-Christiansen, 2006).
Yang Xiao discusses his studies and discursive activities, including making friends, at his two schools. Learning Chinese, becoming knowledgeable about China, seeing “some Chinese sceneries in the Chinese textbooks” and learning natural science are all meaningful activities for him as he grows up a triliterate Allophone in Montreal. They affirm his active academic and social involvement in both schools. The semiotic resources available offer him the affordances to become a competent member of both school communities. When describing his schools, Yang Xiao discusses his affiliation with China, its geographical landscape represented in his Chinese textbooks and particular material places such as the Sun-Moon Lake, the Great Wall, and the Gate of Heavenly Peace in Beijing. These are discursive representations of Chinese culture, art and history. They take on the role of an authoritative discourse that demands that Chinese students acknowledge their value as cultural historical spaces. Noteworthy is the last sentence in his text: “I have been in Canada for a year and half, and I also like Canada”. His concluding statement reveals his perception that he is recognized as a relative newcomer to a new country.

Mei-ling expresses similar self-confidence and a sense of identification with “both schools”. She was four years old when she came to Canada and began attending the Zhonguo School. In Figure 4, Mei-ling offers a tacitly double-voiced text that is re-accented with her own intentions of being successful and reveals her allegiance to her motherland” country:
Mei-ling’s attachment to both schools is related to her ideology of academic success, accomplished by engaging in activities such as competing in science projects and performing well. In her opinion, receiving a good education is the primary purpose of going to school, and acquiring “lots of knowledge” is her most important task. Many Chinese families embrace these values and support competition. They tend to view schooling as the primary way to obtain upward social mobility. Mei-ling appropriates and internalizes this ideological belief in her successful school performance. At her French
school, she proudly announces that the scientific knowledge she gained enabled her to win the science prize. She values having a competitive edge over her peers. Many Chinese parents equate winning prizes with social success (Curdt-Christiansen, 2003). Being able to “write some short essays” is a rewarding experience that has motivated her to “continue learning Chinese” so that she can serve “her motherland” when she grows up. Her writing shows traces of communist ideology of a kind often seen in literary works on heroic figures. Her internally persuasive goal of learning Chinese is for the sake of “her motherland”. An interesting question here is whether this internally persuasive discourse is a response to previous authoritative discourses and the voices of her parents, or whether it is Mei-ling’s own ideological stance.

Yang-Xiao and Mei-ling acknowledge their agency in appropriating cultural knowledge through Chinese and French, the two languages accessible to them as mediational tools in their learning and socialization. They are either being taught “lots of knowledge” or are in a position to “make friends” in both contact zones and languages. They perceive that their communicative competence in these languages provides them with opportunities to act upon their worlds, including entering social groups, interacting with others, and actively engaging in academic studies in more than one language, ideological environment and discursive space. We now examine the ideological stances of children who prefer the Chinese school and articulate a strong ideological allegiance to their Chinese roots and language inheritance.

**Ideological Allegiance: I am Chinese and I Miss China**

Rampton (1990) distinguishes between language inheritance (maintaining continuity among people in a closely linked group) and language affiliation (connecting groups that are otherwise diverse). Earlier we argued that the children’s articulated language inheritance is closely associated with their teachers’ discursive practices within the Zhonguo School’s ideological environment. In schools, students can experience both authoritative and internally persuasive discourses that are embedded in different pedagogical approaches. Bakhtin’s distinctions between the two discourses are linked to the ways in which children are invited to engage with texts either by ‘reciting by heart’ or ‘retelling in one’s own words’ (1981, p. 340). The former resembles authoritative discourse while the latter reflects internally persuasive discourse. Bakhtin maintains that “retelling a text in one’s own words is to a certain extent a double-voiced narration of another’s words” (1981, p. 341). Faced with having to choose more than one language in their ideological becoming, multilingual children can appropriate or resist the discourse or words of others, including the discourse of different schools serving as contact zones for language encounters. In her text, Zheng Can alludes to memorization and “remembering the new characters” in her classroom at the Zhonguo School in Montreal.
Figure 5. “I can remember the new characters”

Memorization and repetition are commonly used pedagogical devices in teaching Chinese both in China and in Chinese schools overseas (Curdt-Christiansen, 2003; Wong, 1992). One can infer from Zheng Can’s text that these discursive practices are used in her Chinese class. Learning characters can present difficulties for some children. Zheng Can’s statement “I can remember the new characters” reaffirms her view that memorizing characters is an important challenge in her Chinese school. In addition to her articulated ability to “memorize new characters”, her attachment to the Chinese school as a friendly ideological environment also connects to other discursive activities such as “playing with classmates”, being allowed to “draw on the blackboard”, engaging in activities in the classroom and having games on the last school day. For Zheng Can, Chinese is an ideological identity marker. As a mediational tool, it provides her with opportunities to accomplish social interactions and academic tasks, assert her identity as Chinese, and articulate her identification with the Chinese school.

The next text, by ten year old Yang Jia-hua, who had lived in Canada for six years, also articulates his perception of the Chinese language as a mediational tool that facilitates his communication with the significant others in his daily life. Like Mei-ling, he identifies himself as Chinese, also the reason he gives for preferring the Chinese school and his strong identification with China and with his Chinese relatives.

Do You Like Chinese School or French School?

I like the Chinese school, because I can remember the new characters. At recess, I can play with my classmates, the teacher also allows me to draw on the blackboard. During the class hours, sometimes the teacher lets us guess riddles, sometimes she asks us to recite the text. The last day at school, she also gives us small gifts and plays games with us.

(Zheng Can, MAY 2001)
Indeed, "going to Chinese school" is connected to Yang Jia-hua’s self-acknowledged Chinese identity. Knowing Chinese also facilitates his understanding among the members of the Chinese community. These members have a common cultural and ideological background of shared beliefs, allowing them to interact and participate in school discursive practices in more than one language. For some children like Zheng Can, the Chinese language enters their consciousness and influences their ideological becoming and positioning as “Chinese”. For children like Zheng Can, the Chinese Saturday school is the preferred ideological environment in which this becoming occurs. However, Zhu-zi offers another reason why the Chinese Saturday school becomes a preferred ideological environment for some children.

As Zhu Zi-Mu and Li Yang’s texts signaled, gaining entry into a social peer group is a key issue for children, especially for those from 8 to 12 years old. Newcomers at this age can encounter challenges when they enter a new school in their host country. Not being accepted at the public school can be a painful experience. For this reason, language and cultural differences make some children feel more ideologically affiliated to the Zhonguo School where they feel they belong. When children feel unaccepted or misrecognized (Taylor, 1994) they may seek alternative resolutions and ideological environments to mark their existence and identity. Zhu-zi nostalgically shares her strong personal sense of belonging at the Zhonguo School that links back to living in China. This geographical space becomes a real material place and a re-imagined space with familiar sounds and resonating memorable experiences.

Figure 6. I am Chinese

I like the Chinese school, because I am Chinese. The common language makes it easier for us to understand each other. It also makes it easier for me to do my homework because Mommy can help me with Chinese. I have been in Canada for six years. I miss China as I have an older brother and older sisters who played with me. I also miss my grandpa and grandma very much.

(Yang Jiahua, 08 MAY 99)
She evokes her desire for “living there in China”, missing seeing “people with yellow skin and black hair,” and hearing “the familiar sounds of our language.” We have encountered many children who have lived in Canada for a relatively short time and who express a similar nostalgic identification with their homelands. As these newcomers have been socialized in Chinese, they express a strong representational attachment to Chinese in internally persuasive discourse. This expression enables them to connect to their new socio-cultural worlds. However, their linguistic behaviors and communicative styles are not always appreciated in their host country. Lack of recognition can make children feel rejected and reluctant to participate in social activities at an “everyday” school. They may seek alternative spaces and ideological environments to find acceptance and recognition. Some children like Yang Jia-hua and Zhu-zi view Chinese as a resource to communicate with members of their extended families and their re-imagined extended community. Appropriating the discourses of two different ideological environments and maintaining dialogic links with their extended families in another geographical space are ways in which some children maintain a ‘Chinese identity’. For example, Xin-Xin writes the following letter to his grandparents in China from Montreal.
Xin-Xin provides his grandparents with his perspective on his daily life in Canada where he attends a French school. Chinese is a useful tool to express his affection for distant extended family members on the other side of the Pacific Ocean: “I miss you all very much”. His deference to his elders is signaled in his closing salutation: “Grandson Xin-Xin with respect.”

Noteworthy in these children’s texts are their illustrations of the complexity of the communicative and ideological roles that Chinese plays in their lives. It is not only a tool to express their emotions and link them to extended family members, it also connects them to their identity and cultural positioning as Chinese and ensures a sense of belonging at the Saturday Chinese school. Thus, in varying degrees, Chinese plays a psychological role in their feelings of recognition and acceptance, rejection or resistance. The Zhonguo School is the ideological environment where many of the children can use a familiar mediational tool to socialize and establish friendships with other Chinese children. However, their language use and discourse choices in this context are not confined to Chinese in spite of their strong ideological affiliation to it. English or French are used for social communication on the playground or outside the classroom, and they...
frequently compete for ideological value despite the children’s strong ideological positioning as Chinese. The Chinese school is a miniature social cosmos of trilingualism. Some children express a preference for their Chinese school. For others, the school reflects their experiences in a society where power and authority are expressed through mainstream authoritative discourses, language legislation, and language choices in either English or French. The children’s linguistic encounters present some of them with conflicts and dilemmas in establishing their own voice, ideological becoming and choosing a language.

**Ideological Conflicts and Dilemmas: I Use My Broken French for Communication**

When authoritative and internally persuasive discourses interact in children’s ideological becoming, conflicts and dilemmas may arise. Mediational means can be constrained by social inequality, which is related to historical precedents and institutional power and authority. In the Zhonguo School’s mini-multilingual cosmos, English and French languages are sometimes more valued, visible and influential than Chinese. For example, some children who are socialized in English and French at their "everyday" schools, tend to use these languages more than Chinese for social communication, even in a Chinese heritage language environment. This means that gaining access to a social group and establishing friendships at the Zhonguo School is sometimes carried out in the children’s second or third language. Twelve-year-old Qui-Qui, who recently immigrated from Mainland China, talks about her dilemmas over her language choices at the Zhonguo School:

> If I don’t speak French at the Zhonguo School, the other children will think that I am stupid or a "xin yimin" (new immigrant). It is very bad if they think I am a “xin yimin” because it means that I am poor and don’t know anything and don’t understand anything. I would try to use my broken French to communicate with other children at the [Zhonguo] school although I speak Chinese much better than some kids, but I was afraid to be an outsider, and I didn’t want to be an outsider and I didn’t want the others to think I was stupid. (Interview with Qiu-Qiu)

Qui-Qui’s dilemma illustrates the authority of the two mainstream languages as they compete for recognition and as she fashions her own ideological becoming. Some children at the Chinese school equate her Chinese behavior with the typical behaviors of recent arrivals from China and with poverty and ignorance. Qui-Qui reveals her desire to be recognized as belonging to the mainstream Quebec French culture by trying to communicate with her classmates in French without being fluent in that language. The tension between the overtones of authoritative discourse of the French mainstream school and her internally persuasive discourse is revealed as she reflects about her dilemma. Her self-reflection reveals her wish to fit in and be accepted within a presumed ideological environment like the Zhonguo School that should have more in common with her Chinese background than the mainstream schools. Since she thinks that being a
newcomer implies being perceived as economically disadvantaged and ignorant of the mainstream culture, she perceives this status will result in a negative social identity and low social class. Some children like Qiu-Qiu use their limited French with peers in informal contact zones to avoid being treated as “stupid” or as someone “who knows nothing”, a “xin yimin”.

The children’s texts reveal that the Chinese school represents a socializing and ideological space. It provides a place for learning Chinese culture and traditions. For some, the school is also a socializing location for Chinese children to interact with each other, although interactions may occur in another language. For other children, it is a symbolic ideological environment that offers an attachment to other Chinese and the Chinese culture. As a third space (Soja, 1996), it can also be a stressful contact zone as children experience the authoritative discourses of Canadian linguistic and cultural duality and negotiate between two dominant mainstream groups. In struggling to maintain the internally persuasive discourse of their Chinese heritage and being Chinese, they also make choices about their own ideological affiliations with the two dominant mainstream ideological environments.

**Ideological Affiliations: I Like English More. I Like My French School**

Thus far, the children’s texts affirm their socialization as a powerful influence. Schools as mainstream ideological environments in socialization and ideological becoming transmit not only academic knowledge but also the socio-cultural knowledge and practices of mainstream society. In a unilingual province like Quebec and a city like Montreal where multilingualism is increasingly the norm, children’s ideological affiliations (connecting to groups that are otherwise diverse) to two mainstream languages reveal interesting differences in their articulated preferences for either English or French schools as they take on the linguistic rules and socio-cultural norms associated with those languages. Their daily discursive practices in English and French may lead them to use the languages as mediational tools in their own positioning. However, these practices can also constrain their ideological allegiance to their heritage language and culture. Their experiences with two mainstream languages occur through formal language instruction in mainstream institutional contact zones and through informal socialization experiences with peers in and out of classrooms, which may lead to their ideological allegiance being channeled away from their heritage. We present texts written by children who articulate their ideological affiliations to French or English schools. These preferences can be linked to their own internally persuasive discourse to forge a place for themselves within the larger prevailing authoritative political discourses that govern access to English schools in Quebec. We turn to Zhan Yu-Qian who admits he likes Chinese but “likes English more”: 
Zhan Yu-Qian’s father worked as an engineer in a major private enterprise in Singapore. Zhan Yu-Qian learned to speak English there, and now he attends an English public school in Montreal. He explains that he started learning English when he was five and continued using it in school contexts in Singapore and Canada. Such extensive contact with English has enabled him to internalize the processes of mastering a powerful hegemonic language tool like English, which he feels makes him “like English more.” It is interesting to speculate whether this affiliation is a value-laden choice, made to obtain the necessary social capital of communication in the world, which he perceives to be associated with English, or whether it is his parent’s response to an exception in Bill 101 that allows some immigrants to Quebec, provided they do not intend to stay in the province, to obtain provisional access to English schools for their children. Or is the authoritative discourse influencing his preference related to the hegemonic power of English worldwide? His comment “I like English more” is shared by quite a few students at the Zhonguo School who feel more comfortable with French or English than with their mother tongue. Chen Min-Rei explains his French school and language preferences in this text “I like the french school.”
I am Chen Min-Rei.

I am studying at two [kinds] of schools. One is French school, the second is Chinese school. I like French School, because I know more French (I no more French than Chinese). I have been in Canada for six years. I came here when I was four sui [years] old. I am ten sui [years] now.

(Chen Min-Rei, MAY 2000)

Min-Rei’s experiences reflect the challenges that many children face when entering a new ideological environment with new rules, languages, and cultures. The tensions between these cultures can have a negative effect on the maintenance of their mother tongue, especially if the home language/culture is perceived as having little value. Min-Rei’s affiliation with his French school is a result of years of contact and socialization in a French context which by law is mandatory for Allophones. His text seems to indicate that his Chinese and English language competence is less than that of some of the other children. This language loss can be related to the lack of access to reading materials, insufficient occasions for social interactions with Chinese speakers, and Min-Rei’s own perceptions of the Chinese language as having less value and little relevant functioning in his everyday life. Lily Wong-Fillmore argues that “a language does not have much of a chance of surviving unless many children are being socialized in it and children are encouraged to see it as a useful communicative tool and an important part of who they are” (1996, p. 437). Min-Rei and Yu-Qian’s preferences for English or French schooling confirms that children’s language development cannot be isolated from the social, cultural and linguistic environments in which they live and use language (Maguire, 2005). When ideological environments are embedded with “identity politics” (Taylor, 1994) and power relations, the accessibility and availability of mediational tools can be limited and unequally distributed. Commenting on the limited resources – inadequate mediational tools – at the Zhonguo School, Gao Chu-Yong explains why he prefers his French school:
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Figure 11. I like my French School

Gao Chu-Yong’s text provides another look into the complex power relations between mainstream schools and heritage language schools in Montreal. Since heritage language schools often operate in rented spaces and have no visible presence as ideological environments, these schools do not offer children representations of their culture. Moreover, students must observe the rules of the rented places and thus have limited possibilities of making their own representational spaces. As a perceived space (Lefebvre, 1991), the school’s lack of visible spatial and physical characteristics as a distinct ideological environment can create a sense of detachment from the heritage school. It does not encourage a feeling of belonging or ownership and presents a stark image to children that they are nothing more than temporary visitors to the heritage language school. This sense of not belonging to the Chinese school for some children contrasts with their French or English school, where they may claim membership of a class, ownership of a school and mediating spaces for establishing friendships and developing a social network.

As children compare the resources available in their mainstream schools and their heritage schools, they internalize which ideological environments are considered most valuable in the linguistic marketplace. The observation that the heritage language school lacks mediational resources such as computers represents an understanding that the mediational resources belong to somebody else, and this understanding can lead to ideological conflicts or resistance to the heritage school. Gao-Chu Yong’s description of her Chinese school shows that children’s socialization does not occur in value-free ideological environments. Some children, who articulate a feeling that Chinese lacks

The school I like

I love to go to my French school, because I have many friends there. At my French school, there are computers, library, canteen and an art studio. But those things do not exist in the Chinese school. The age differences among the students in the Chinese school are very big. The people at the Chinese school are strangers to me. In comparison, I like my French school better.

(Gao Chu-Yong, MAY 2001)
functionality and connectivity to their lives, may adopt a stance of ideological resistance to environments and resources that they perceive as having a minority status.

**Ideological Resistance**

Ideological resistance can manifest itself in different ways, either explicitly or implicitly, and for a variety of reasons. The question of how much Chinese is used in a Canadian or Quebec context is often posed by Chinese children like Gui Shuang-Yang. Attendance at a heritage language school is often a parental choice and takes on an authoritative discourse and obligatory role as revealed in Gui’s exclamation: “I have to learn Chinese well!”

![Gui Shuang-Yang](image)

I like French, because Chinese is very hard to memorize, and is not used too often. But I am a Chinese, I have to learn Chinese well!

I have been in Canada for five years, and I really like Canada.

(Gui Shuang-Yang, MAY 2001)

**Figure 12. Chinese: The Infrequently Used Language**

Many Chinese parents want their children to maintain contact with Chinese language and culture. However, the Chinese language with its complex writing system requires, as Gui Shuang-Yang states, extensive memorization and repetition, which some children perceive as drudgery. Some Chinese children reported that their social networks are compromised when they have to sacrifice every Saturday to “learn Chinese” while their French/English school peers can enjoy weekends to play. Therefore going to Chinese school is not always enjoyable, nor is it perceived as social capital for some children if they cannot make many friends. Liu Mu-nan explains that as he pursues activities such as ice skating and hockey, he becomes more attached to his new host country. However, he also confesses that this attachment is linked to his evaluative stance towards Canadian and Chinese teachers’ discursive practices.
In China, teachers are seen as authority figures and respected elders. The perception of a teacher’s role as a controller of knowledge inevitably results in an authoritative classroom discourse and transmission of ideology as earlier mentioned in connection with the Zhonguo School. Thus, knowledge is not open to challenge or exploration. Some children like Liu Mu-nan become aware of the different teaching practices in their everyday school and the Chinese Saturday school and travel back and forth with ease between those ideological environments. Others, like ten year old Feng-feng, express their resistance to the discursive practices in the heritage school that they perceive as boring, and equate their learning there with meaningless dictations and memorization tasks.

**Figure 13. Canada in My Eyes**

I came to Canada with my Dad and Mom when I was eight. At that time I didn't like Canada at all. As I was away from Grandpa, Grandma and my friends, everything seemed so strange to me in Canada.

Time flies and four years have passed, I am becoming more and more fond of Canada. Here, I can go ice-skating, play ice hockey, go inline-skating, go swimming, and play baseball... Moreover, I have a secret to confess (why I like Canada), that is: the teachers are kind here, and they don't give heavy home works, and school finishes earlier.

I like Canada, and I also love China. Because that is the place where I was born.

(Liu Mu-nan, 8 MAY 1999)
Figure 14. Studying Chinese = Dictation

Feng-feng’s reflections on his Chinese class are confirmed in observations of the language arts classrooms where repetition and rote learning are an important part of the children’s activities. Understandably, the absence of an easily discernible relationship between Chinese written and oral forms, as well as the abundance of homophones, can be problematic for some children. However, the differences between the teaching, cultural and socialization practices in their weekday and Saturday schools are the most striking barriers to the active engagement in their study of the Chinese language. Feng-feng articulates his preference for his French school: “there is no action in the [Chinese] class … I like action.” Resisting a pedagogical approach based on memorization and repetition, he prefers the opportunities his weekday school offers for creating stories and engaging in dialog.

In China, children are raised to be obedient, conform to group norms and persist in the absence of feedback at essentially boring tasks. At home, the belief in Confucius’s presumption that everyone is teachable has impelled parents to encourage their children to work hard and be persistent and diligent. Stories that promote diligence and hard work such as “If you work hard enough, you can grind an iron rod into a needle” – in other words, that perseverance spells success, are common in the literacy resources and influential in the lives of Chinese people. Overtones of this authoritative discourse emerge in Liu Mu-nan’s allusion to “kind teachers and heavy homework.” Many Chinese parents interviewed believe that the Canadian educational system was less rigorous than the Chinese one.

Teachers at the Zhonguo School, who have been socialized into the Confucian culture and influenced by their teaching experiences, have certain expectations of their pupils. But not all children in this inquiry met their teachers’ expectations. Children bring with them an accumulation of prior experiences that together with their ideological upbringing and cultural background form their attitudes and world views, which sometimes differ.
from their teachers’ views. These differences are particularly noticeable among children who were born in Canada or immigrated before formal schooling. For example, Da-wei commented on learning Chinese in the Chinese school: “Learning Chinese is not like learning French, it doesn’t need any intelligence, only memorization.” When children like Feng-feng and Da-wei perceive the Chinese school as different from their French/English school, they tend to develop negative attitudes towards the Chinese Saturday school. This negativity can result in a resistance to Chinese. Feng-feng’s and Da-wei’s comments provide evidence that ideological differences can present obstacles for maintaining heritage languages, especially when the heritage language school is perceived as a “boring” and unattractive place. However, the majority of the Chinese children in this inquiry are able to position themselves and take from the authoritative discourses what they need to forge their own ideological becoming in more than one language and environment.

Echoes and Reverberations of Others’ Utterances: Ever Newer Ways to Mean
We return to our beginning, which is also our ending. A dialogic view of language entails being responsive to the voices of others (Bakhtin, 1990). From a Bakhtinian perspective, “consciousness never gravitates towards itself but is always found in intense relationship with another consciousness” (1984, p. 32). Ideological becoming occurs in environments that either offer children opportunities or constrain them in their own positioning. For many Chinese children as newcomers in this inquiry, each school space represents a different ideological environment where they negotiate their access to socializing spaces such as a playground, social group, or classroom. Associated with each social space are the languages, or mediational means, they use to establish a sense of belonging. Gee argues that the availability of mediational means can change the “kind of person” we are “from moment to moment in the interaction, and from context to context, and, of course, can be ambiguous or unstable” (Gee, 2001, p. 99). Equal access to mediational means is not a given in every context.

The Chinese children in this study refer to their different schools as their “everyday” school and “every Saturday” Chinese school. When children are socialized into different discursive practices, they compare the differences among these practices and evaluate them from their own cultural locations and perspectives. We presented examples from children’s texts and dialogues about their experiences of multiple schools and languages. Some children see the Chinese Saturday school as a pleasant place, others see it as a place that offers an ideological connection to their culture, and still others see it as a social space where they can meet their friends. Some perceive it as very different from their weekday school. While some children accommodate and appropriate these differences in their own ideological becoming, others develop negative attitudes towards “having to attend” the Chinese Saturday school, which in turn leads to their resistance to learning the Chinese language. Although some children did perceive the Chinese Saturday school as an unpleasant place, most of them considered learning Chinese a necessary part of growing up, aligned themselves with Chinese culture, and expressed their allegiance to China and being Chinese. Many see learning Chinese as an ideological
obligation towards their families and an important part of their identity. They draw on the socio-cultural resources of the three languages to construct their own language systems, affiliations and ideological becomings.

Important implications at the macro policy level are these trilingual children’s diverse textual efforts and cultural and ideological positionings within multiple languages. Many ethnographic studies have documented how cultural contexts shape teaching and learning processes and shown how home and school contexts affect children’s literacy socialization. However, few inquiries within the Canadian context focus on how multilingual children from non-mainstream backgrounds negotiate discursive literacy practices in more than one language and culture. This omission is surprising given Canada’s political discourse and legislation such as the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the 1988 Official Languages Act, and the 1988 Canadian Multiculturalism Act.

From a multilingual perspective, the children’s texts confirm that what children experience as literacy practices in community, heritage language, and mainstream classroom contexts are not neutral, and not only cultural, but also political and social phenomena. The children’s texts reflect multiple spheres of influence that are interwoven with their sense of agency, discursive choices, identity politics, power, and status.

From a theoretical perspective, their writing offers us an opportunity to examine the implications of Bakhtin’s dialogic theory of discourse and emerging selfhood, which assumes a fusion of languages and social worlds in consciousness. The children’s ideological positioning emerges from a complex interaction of voices, contexts, and investment in multilingual literacy practices and personal histories. The variation in their perspectives challenges second language acquisition theory, research and practice, which assume homogeneity among second language learners.

The children’s texts indicate that they assert their own ideological stances towards prevailing authoritative discourses, give visible voice to their own sense of agency and internally persuasive discourses, and respond to the various ideological resources that mediate their multilingualism and linguistic repertoires. They appropriate the echoes and reverberations of others’ utterances and find their own “ever newer ways to mean”. Creating their acts of meaning involves appropriating socio-cultural attitudes and evaluative stances towards self and others. Their textual efforts and perspectives have deeper theoretical salience, political significance, and pragmatic value than second language researchers usually attribute to them or recognize in mainstream research inquiries.

Relevant to our interpretation of the children’s texts and voices is the notion of the “politics of recognition” (Taylor, 1994). Taylor maintains that “non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being” (Taylor, 1994, p. 25), because who we are is
largely defined through our interactions with others. Gee argues that “when any human being acts and interacts” (2001, p. 99), he is recognized as a “certain ‘kind of person’ or even several different ‘kinds’” (p. 99). As the children in this inquiry reflect on their school experiences they, like their parents, reveal their preferred socio-cultural-linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991), the mediational means for engagement in social activities in the linguistic market place. In interpreting the data in this inquiry, we argue that multilingual children’s acts of finding their voices can only occur in conditions of equity, social justice and mutual respect. We hope that this inquiry will contribute to an expanded dialogue on language ideologies and multilingual children’s ideological becoming and being.

Notes
1. This article emerges from a larger research project “Multilingual children’s Identity Construction: Negotiating Multiple Literacies in Heritage Contexts” funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and a grant-in-aid from the Research Foundation of the National Council of Teachers of English. The prime objective of our research is to understand how children from non-mainstream backgrounds, who have diverse school experiences, negotiate their multilingual literacies in multiple spaces.

2. All translations are by Curdt-Christiansen. In case of code-switching within a Chinese text, the English word is printed in bold typeface.

3. An earlier version of this paper was published by Curdt-Christiansen, X.L. in Housen, A., Mettewie, L., Pierrard, M., Van Mensel, L.& E. Witte (Eds)(2005), Proceedings of Language, Attitudes and Education in Multilingual Cities (pp. 27-52). Brussels: Royal Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts. This paper is being printed with permission from Proceedings of Language.

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