

Dancing between languages: constructing a confident bilingual identity during acculturation

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Abstract

Para un inmigrante, el lenguaje juega – de manera consciente o inconsciente – un rol central mientras integra una identidad bilingüe durante el proceso de aculturación. El contexto multicultural de Auckland presenta un escenario multilingüe donde un inmigrante aprende a construir e integrar una identidad al bailar entre lenguajes. Este estudio responde a la pregunta: ¿Qué influye en la construcción de la identidad bilingüe de un inmigrante durante el proceso de aculturación? Y explora por medio de dos construcciones, una metafórica y otra real, las experiencias de dos inmigrantes y los retos de aculturación bilingüe que experimentan al tratar de “encajar” en una sociedad de habla inglesa (Nueva Zelanda). Utilizando el método Lego Serious Play, este estudio narra en un argumento verbal y visual, cuatro factores que influyen en la construcción de la identidad bilingüe de un inmigrante: El desarrollo de la competencia bilingüe, los retos y oportunidades que presenta el estrés aculturativo, el impacto de las actitudes sociales negativas en la autoconfianza de los inmigrantes, y por último, el costo de lealtad social que implica la elección del lenguaje. Cinco, seis, siete, ocho (Five, six, seven, eight) empieza el baile entre lenguajes...

I am a bilingual immigrant and Spanish is my first language. I have written my abstract in Spanish to reflect how the meaning of bilingual ideas is often lost through language translation. For an immigrant, language plays – in a conscious or unconscious way – a central role while integrating a bilingual identity during acculturation. The multicultural context of Auckland presents a multilingual stage where an immigrant learns how to construct and integrate a bilingual identity while “dancing” between languages. This study answers the question: What influences the construction of an immigrant’s confident bilingual identity during acculturation? The study explores, through a metaphorical and a real construction, the experiences of two immigrants and their bilingual acculturation challenges in New Zealand (NZ). Using the Lego Serious Play method, the study narrates - through a verbal and visual argument - four factors influencing the construction of an immigrant’s bilingual identity during acculturation: firstly, the development of bilingual competence; secondly, the challenges and opportunities of acculturative stress; thirdly, the impact of negative social attitudes on

immigrants' self-confidence; and finally, the linguistic choice and the implications of its loyalty cost. Five, six, seven, eight (Cinco, seis, siete, ocho) and so the language dance begins...

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Table of Contents	4
List of Figures	6
Acknowledgements.....	7
Attestation of Authorship	8
Chapter One: Introduction	9
1.1 Overview of immigration policy in New Zealand	9
1.2 Acculturation and language challenge	10
1.3 Personal rationale for the study	10
1.4 Overview of chapters	12
Chapter Two: Literature review	13
2.1 Introduction	13
2.2 Theoretical framework	14
2.3 Reviewing the literature	15
2.3.1 <i>The building base: Acculturation</i>	15
2.3.2 <i>The building blocks: Bilinguality during acculturation</i>	20
2.3.3 <i>The construction: Building an immigrant's self-confidence through bilingual competence</i>	22
2.4 Conclusion: Reflecting on the final construction.....	26
Chapter Three: Methodology.....	28
3.1 Research questions.....	28
3.2 Ontology and epistemology	28
3.3 Methodology	29
3.4 Methods and data collection.....	30
3.4.1 <i>LEGO® Serious Play®</i>	30
3.4.2 <i>Focus group</i>	32
3.5 Data analysis.....	33
3.6 Recruitment of participants	35
3.7 Ethical considerations.....	35
3.8 Conclusion	37
Chapter Four: Findings	38
4.1 Introduction.....	38
4.2 Self-perceptions.....	39
<i>Maria</i>	39

<i>Thalia</i>	42
4.3 Perceptions of language	44
4.4 Perceptions of social attitudes	49
4.5 The acculturation experience	52
4.6 Conclusion	55
Chapter Five: Discussion	56
5.1 Theme 1: The development of bilingual competence during acculturation requires linguistic readiness, context sensitivity, and increased social interlinguistic opportunities	57
5.2 Theme 2: Acculturative stress created by bilingualism, loneliness, and self-doubt, can be turned into opportunities for linguistic empowerment and cultural pride.....	59
5.3 Theme 3: Negative social attitudes from native and non-native English-speaking groups influence an immigrant's self-perception and linguistic confidence	60
5.4 Theme 4: The bilingual immigrant dance between languages brings a linguistic choice and a cultural loyalty cost	61
5.5 Theme 5: The construction of a bilingual self in harmony involves a detachment from a pre-conceived self to a new bilingual confident self	63
5.6 Conclusion	65
5.7 Limitations of the study	65
Chapter six: Conclusions and Recommendations	66
References.....	72
Appendices.....	82
Appendix A. Ethics letters.....	82
<i>First letter – first ethics approval</i>	82
<i>Second letter – second ethics approval</i>	83
<i>Third letter - amendment to the data collection protocol</i>	84
Appendix B. Tools	85
<i>B1 Semi-structured questions for focus group</i>	85
<i>B2 Process used to implement the LSP method</i>	87
<i>B3 Participant Information Sheet</i>	88
<i>B4 Consent form</i>	91

List of Figures

Figure 1 Mahmoodi-Shahrehabaki's (2018) Model	14
Figure 2 Aligning the Metaphor of Construction to the Analysis of Data	34
Figure 3 Maria's Self-Representation in Spanish	39
Figure 4 Maria's Self-Representation in English	41
Figure 5 Thalia's Self-Representation in Bahasa	42
Figure 6 Thalia's Self-Representation in English	43
Figure 7 Maria Symbolising how she Perceived People's Focus on her English Language Skills or Looking Down at her	51
Figure 8 Symbols of an Element that Participants Missed from their Home Countries	54
Figure 9 A Self-Constructive Acculturation Journey while Dancing Between Languages	56
Figure 10 Main Findings	67
Figure 11 Recommendations	68
Figure 12 My Acculturative Bilingual Self-Confidence Construction Journey, Dancing Between Languages	69

List of Tables

Table 1 Structure of Findings	38
Table 2 Process of LSP	87

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this work is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

María Alejandra Soto Ortiz Tirado

Date: 11th February 2022

Chapter One: Introduction

My personal experiences and the papers I studied during my Master of Education at AUT, led me to this research topic, as I became interested in how other immigrants experienced bilinguality during their acculturation to NZ. Bilinguality is understood as the fluent use of two languages (Hammers & Blanc, 2000) and acculturation as the process of adaptive change that an immigrant experiences in his/her values, beliefs, and behaviours following intercultural contact (Berry, 1997). The direction of this research was towards a greater understanding of the factors that influence the construction of an immigrant's bilingual identity during acculturation to NZ. To achieve this, the first step in this research journey was to explore the history of the immigration policy in NZ, as it provided the context to understanding settlement experiences in this immigrant destination.

1.1 Overview of immigration policy in New Zealand

Following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, NZ became a settler country when British immigrants arrived in large numbers (Greif, 1995). For the next 100 years, NZ adopted an assimilation immigration policy favouring English, Irish, and European groups, while strong discrimination was evidenced against other cultural groups including the Chinese (Ip & Murphy, 2005) and South Asians (Greif, 1995). This unofficial Whites only policy (Sang & Ward, 2006) resulted in NZ by 1945, being considered "one of the most homogeneous societies of European settlement" (Ward & Lin, 2005, p. 156).

In 1987, the Immigration Act stopped discriminating on an ethnic basis and promoted the arrival of immigrants from non-traditional source countries (Winkelmann, 1999) and shifted NZ from a homogeneous to a heterogeneous, multicultural, and multilingual society (Sang & Ward, 2006; Ward & Lin, 2005). According to the 2018 census (Statistics NZ, 2018), nearly half (41.6%) of Auckland's population was born overseas. In this multicultural city there are six main ethnic groups: 1) European (53.5%), 2) Māori (11.5%), 3) Pacific Peoples (15.5%), 4) Asian (28.2%), 5) Middle Eastern/Latin American/African (2.3%) and 6) other ethnicities (1.1%). Diversity is at its greatest in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) a superdiverse city (Gray, 2016) which Tapaleao (2014) described as more ethnically diverse than London or Sydney. Such cultural diversity promotes a multilingual society. Statistics NZ (2018) stated that, apart

from English, the most commonly spoken languages in Auckland are *te reo* (Māori language), Northern Chinese, Hindi, and Yue Chinese. All immigrants, regardless of their country of origin or their spoken language, undergo a largely unconscious acculturation experience as they settle into their new country.

1.2 Acculturation and language challenge

The acculturation experience involves adaptive changes in values, beliefs, and behaviours, triggered by intercultural contact with a new dominant mainstream culture (Berry, 1997). This process of psychological and sociocultural change is motivated by a desire to belong and fit into the new society and can be accompanied by acculturative stress. For second language speaking immigrants, acculturative stress can cause emotional and cognitive challenges (Hammers & Blanc, 2000) as they negotiate the integration of different linguistic and ethnic identities (Chen & Mensah 2018; Chen 2020; Phinney & Haas 2003; Phinney, 2006) constructed by and through language (Evans, 2018). Apart from contributing to the construction of a positive immigrant bilingual identity, English linguistic proficiency may represent for immigrants in NZ as either enabling or as an obstacle to participating in intercultural dialogue (Huot et al., 2020). Thus, an immigrant's ability to fit into an English-speaking society and to co-exist in harmony with two different linguistic identities, shaped by the English language and their first language during acculturation, relies on their language proficiency and self-confidence to construct and integrate a bilingual identity.

1.3 Personal rationale for the study

This study was focused on the challenges and changes that bilingual immigrants experience during acculturation by constructing their sense of self through language. During my acculturation experience in NZ, I have been learning how to dance between languages. While dancing between Spanish (my first language) and English (my second language), I became aware of the identity conflict caused by the simultaneous use of languages. After immigrating and communicating most of the time in English as my second language, an awareness of my identity conflict started, as I realised that my self-perception and self-confidence changed, depending on the language that I was using and the context in which I used it. This conflict was caused by the constant

negotiation of my first and second language and my now two cultural identities. This conflict - I think - lead to three positive outcomes: 1) the awareness on my own process of bilingual identity construction; 2) the bilingual reconciliation of my cultural identities; and 3) an increased compassion for other bilingual immigrants in a process of self-reconciliation through language. Because of this personal experience, I have become passionate about how the acculturation experience unfolds an awareness of bilinguality and the role of bilinguality when we try to make sense of ourselves in order to fit into a new society.

I should stress that I acknowledge my own bias, as I bring a personal perspective to the research, however, I believe this has been a benefit. It has firstly, enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of my own experience, and secondly, allowed me to be empathetic and understand the broader immigrant acculturation experience. Guided by an interpretive and constructionist approach, and being aware of my own subjective understandings, I therefore prioritised the participants' verbal and non-verbal voices in the data collection and analysis prior to bringing my own interpretations

The purpose driving this research was to make a contribution by increasing awareness of bilinguality challenges during acculturation amongst two groups. Firstly, it aimed to grow awareness in immigrants from non-English-speaking backgrounds, of the psychological and identity impacts of bilinguality during acculturation, and secondly, to grow understanding for native English speakers, of the language and psychological struggles that immigrants face in the pursuit of belonging to two (or more) cultural groups in which their identity is either rooted or in the process of being rooted. In this way, I hoped to encourage two things: firstly, the self-confidence construction of a bilingual immigrant to feel capable of participating in the mainstream's society through a multicultural dialogue, and secondly, the positive integration of multilingual groups in NZ.

1.4 Overview of chapters

After presenting an overview of the immigration policy in NZ, an introduction to the acculturation and language challenge, and the personal rationale for the study in Chapter one, Chapter two builds, through a metaphorical construction, an argument based on the theory of acculturation and bilinguality. Chapter three explains the methodology and research design, concluding with ethical considerations. Chapter four presents (in a visual and verbal way) the findings associated with self-perceptions, perceptions of language, social attitudes, and the acculturation experience. Chapter five focuses on the discussion and weaves the four key influences on the construction of a bilingual identity with the theory and literature. Finally, Chapter six concludes with a summary of the study, the key findings, and the value of my personal learning experience while writing this dissertation.

Chapter Two: Literature review

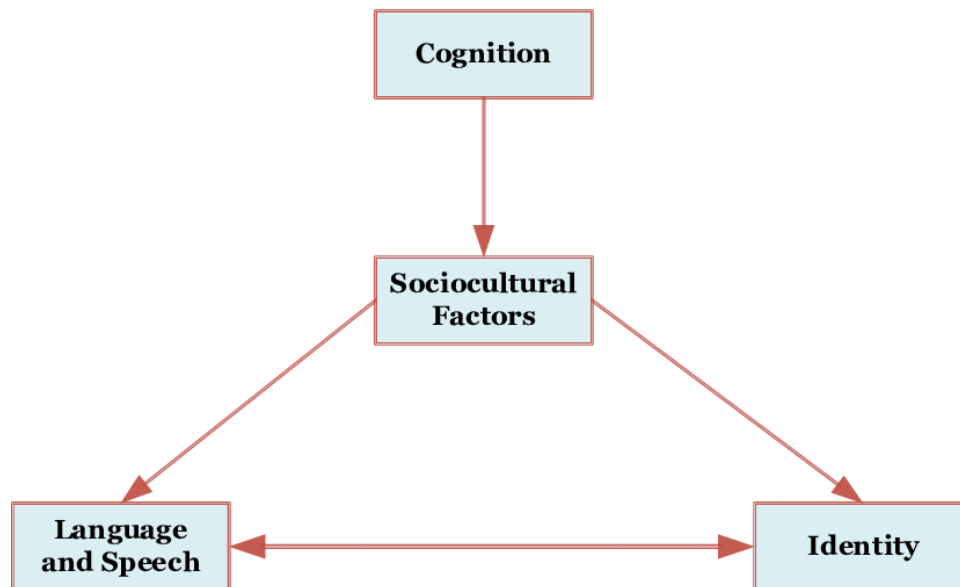
2.1 Introduction

Using the focus of language, the literature review introduces the metaphor of a physical construction as a link with the selected method of Lego-building. The chapter is therefore structured in three parts, covering acculturation, bilinguality, and the construction of self-confidence, presenting each as interdependent aspects to building the construction. Firstly, *the building base* has its foundation in the acculturation context and processes, the psychological stressors and motivators of an immigrant's adaptation to the new society. Secondly, the *building blocks of the construction* represent the bicultural context, the language loss and language choice that scaffold the bilingual competence supporting the immigrant's bilingual integration of identities. Finally, the *whole construction* is the bilingual self-concept resulting from the immigrant's self-esteem and self-confidence, supported by the bilingual competence built on the foundations of acculturation, and resulting in a construction of a bilingual self in harmony, and confident of achieving successful integration. Before moving into the literature review, a theoretical framework linking these ideas is presented in Figure 1.

2.2 Theoretical framework

Figure 1

Mahmoodi-Shahrebabaki's (2018) Model



From “Language and Identity: A Critique,” by M. Mahmoodi-Shahrebabaki, 2018, *Journal of Narrative and Language Studies*, 6(11), p. 221. Copyright 2018 by Journal of Narrative and Language Studies.

Mahmoodi-Shahrebabaki's (2018) model of language and identity, proposed that cognition and sociocultural factors may have a dominant influence in moulding identity unconsciously through language. Although this model does not include acculturation theory, it supports an understanding of the cognitive, linguistic, and behavioural changes affecting the construction of an immigrant's identity during acculturation. This model presents a visual approach of the dynamic relationship of immigrants' cognition being affected by sociocultural factors, which in turn influence the construction of a bilingual identity through language use and speech production. Such a relationship of elements contributes to shaping, either positively or negatively, an immigrant's bilingual competence, thus determining their capability to overcome the mental health challenges resulting from the stress of the acculturation experience.

When immigrants acculturate in a second language, they experience acculturative stress that leads to conflict identity (Berry, 1997; Phinney, 2006). In seeking to adapt to a new context through host language adoption, immigrants rely on their cognitive abilities.

Abilities described by Costa et al. (2006) such as memory and conceptual and lexical access, are necessary for producing speech and to communicate. However, when one of the languages is not used (commonly the first language) these cognitive abilities are affected, causing language loss (Hulsen, 2000), which can impact on an individual's self-concept (Rubio, 2014) and decrease their confidence. This confidence is also affected by sociocultural factors. For example, when trying to maintain group membership in different cultural groups (Barkhuizen, 2006; Phinney, 1989) social discriminatory attitudes towards the use and competency of language can be negatively perceived by an immigrant.

Mahmoodi-Shahrehabaki's (2018) framework is used in this study to explore and understand how language proficiency, developed through cognitive abilities, can influence the construction of an immigrant's bilingual identity during acculturation. The framework was supported by De Fina's (2012) work, which proposed the process to construct an identity has its roots in social interaction, whereas Kiraly (2014) argued that identity is influenced by the mainstream power and its social norms. Lewis (2021) noted that in NZ, the unconscious creation of identity is guided mainly by assimilation expectations, without critical examination by either mainstream or minority groups.

2.3 Reviewing the literature

The metaphorical construction underpinning the literature review has its foundation on acculturation, because it is the context, or base, where an immigrant - in the pursuit of sociocultural belonging - starts to raise questions about self, which can lead to identity conflict. The experience of identity conflict unfolds self-awareness of the factors such language that influence identity construction. While metaphorically dancing between languages to integrate two linguistic identities during acculturation, a bilingual immigrant becomes aware of the barriers (language loss) and opportunities (language choice) moulding a bilingual self-concept and leveraging bilingual competence to overcome identity conflict.

2.3.1 The building base: Acculturation

Although the first studies on the human intercultural experience are believed to have their roots in antiquity (Rudmin, 2003; Sam & Berry, 2006) the definition of acculturation is still evolving. *Acculturation*, according to Redfield et al. (1936, as cited

in Berry, 1997) is: “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (p. 7). Berry (2005) argued that the process of acculturation tends to produce more changes in one of the groups, namely the minority ethnic group, and that acculturation occurs at both the group and individual level. Chirkov (2009) even stated that defining acculturation has become a field of study itself. He highlighted common attributes from different definitions of acculturation: contact of two or more cultures; changes or mutual influences in the interacting groups; time dimension; and group or individual acculturation. Based on this analysis of common elements, his work highlights a link between the concepts of acculturation, identity transformation, and bicultural identity integration. My working definition, based on the literature and focused on my topic, is that acculturation is a process of psycho-socio-cultural change influenced by intercultural contact that results in identity transformation.

Berry’s (1997; 2006a) acculturation theory suggests that immigrants who are motivated and want to belong to their new host society, undergo adaptive changes in values, beliefs, and behaviours, derived from the process of intercultural contact. Berry (1997) explained that during this process, two distinct cultural groups with power differences are formed: a dominant group, which he referred to as the “mainstream” (the host society), and a minority ethno-cultural immigrant group, which he referred to as the “non-dominant group.” Such power differences promote either immigrants’ separation, when discrimination and unwelcoming experiences are perceived, or their integration (Berry, 1997), when the acculturation experience promotes inclusion and both self and social acceptance.

According to Berry’s (1997) acculturation theory, the stress experienced by immigrants during acculturation while dealing and participating with two cultures in contact “undermines life changes” (p. 18), as it impacts on mental health, creating identity confusion. While experiencing such a grieving process (Akhtar, 1995; Ainslie, 2005; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1984), immigrants also deal with acculturative stress, which can manifest as anxiety, depression, loneliness, and a sense of dislocation. Masgoret and Ward (2006) highlighted discriminatory social attitudes from the host society as a

significant stressor on immigrant acculturation and positive adaptation, and Phinney (2006) identified learning a new language and set of behaviours to fit into the new cultural group as a source of acculturative stress.

Berry (1997) theorised that behaviour shifts occur as an immigrant experiences cultural contact. This involves three sub-processes: *culture learning* as a new set of behaviours is adopted from the host society; *culture shedding* of previous behaviours that no longer fit the new context; and *culture conflict* when there is a problematic perception of the adoption or loss of behaviours. This latter shift may increase acculturative stress. To cope with these behavioural changes during psychological acculturation, Berry (1997) proposed that an immigrant is presented with two choices:

1) to maintain or discard their own cultural elements; or 2) to seek to be (or not) part of the mainstream culture. This choice results in the immigrant's selection of one of two acculturation orientations or strategies: assimilation, or integration. For example, an immigrant who seeks to adopt English as their preferred language and not maintain their first language, would assimilate into the NZ mainstream. Those seeking bilingualism would be drawn towards integration, in which cultural identity and language are maintained in the private domain, while English as a second language is learned and used in the public domain in order to participate in the host society.

An immigrant selecting an integration orientation in their psycho-socio-cultural acculturation to the new society, will maintain their ethnic identity and at the same time participate in the host society (Berry, 1997). While studies reported in the literature suggest that integration carries a low level of acculturative stress (Meca et al., 2017; Ward & Kus, 2012) not all researchers agree. Phinney and Haas (2003) and Ward et al. (2011) noted identity conflict as an outcome, while group membership conflict has also been identified as a potential stressor (Barkhuizen, 2006; Phinney, 1989), as the decision of the immigrant to integrate is also impacted by the reception of group membership, which is an additional potential stressor. Such membership lies at the heart of ethnic identity.

Phinney (1996) defined *ethnic identity* as "the sense of commitment and belonging to one's ethnic group, a dynamic construct that changes over time and context" (p. 145).

She identified changes in ethnic identity that occur during acculturation. An immigrant with an integration approach will re-define their sense of commitment to their original ethnic group while discovering a new sense of belonging to a new cultural group. Barkhuizen (2006) argued that a conflict of loyalties between memberships of an immigrant's cultural groups becomes evident through language. The immigrant makes efforts to maintain their cultural roots through their first language, while at the same time making efforts to learn and improve proficiency in the mainstream language. This tension aligns with Phinney's (1989) stages of ethnic identity: an unexamined stage prior to immigration, followed by an ethnic identity search exploring one's own culture in the face of a different and mainstream culture, and finally, a stage of achieved ethnic identity involving an acceptance of being different.

The level of acceptance of a group member can depend on language proficiency. Kramsch (1987) claimed that language is a "functional tool" to communicate with. Developing second language proficiency, allows an immigrant to communicate and to verbally participate in an intercultural dialogue. Kramsch (1987) defines this as being "interactionally competent on the international scene" (p. 367). She argued that proficiency enables language accuracy, and thus increases communicative ability with native speakers. In NZ, studies of immigrants' English proficiency (Cooper & Barkhuizen, 2002; Plumridge et al., 2012; Roach & Roskvist, 2007) report that gaining English language proficiency is a critical factor for achieving integration and successful bilingualism. Despite the advantage of language proficiency for balancing two cultures and two identities, the social attitudes of the mainstream can also add to an immigrant's acculturative stress.

Berry's (1997) acculturation theory notes that the integration orientation should reflect mutual accommodation of the mainstream and minority groups and is successful when the mainstream society is open and inclusive. While many studies confirm that integration is the most positive acculturation option for immigrants (Meca et al., 2017) other studies report that when the host society prefers assimilation of minority cultures into the mainstream (Roblain et al., 2016), acculturative stress increases. In the NZ context, a national survey of mainstream attitudes towards immigrants (Ward & Masgoret, 2008) reported that although 87% of respondents supported a multicultural ideology and integration approach, when presented with a choice of cultural groups, the most preferable immigrants were considered to be those

from English-speaking backgrounds. Immigrants with a greater cultural distance from the mainstream culture and refugees, were the least preferred groups. Along similar lines, Rothman (2008) reported that host cultural groups commonly perceive out-groups that are very different from the mainstream as threatening. Rothman (2008) suggested that this mainstream perception may present obstacles to social inclusion and immigrants' integration. On the other hand, Roblain et al.'s (2016) research reported the positive impact on host society attitudes when immigrants demonstrated cultural adoption through language. In this case, mainstream attitudes were warmer, as they perceived immigrants to be identifying with the host nation.

The issue of acceptance (on the part of the minority group) or promotion (by the mainstream) of assimilation without critical examination by each of the groups, was labelled by Lewis (2021, p. 36) as "assimilation as false consciousness." Social attitudes and an unconscious expectation of assimilation can lead to discrimination, particularly in a workplace. Studies evidencing discrimination and linguistic disadvantage for immigrants are found in the literature (Buchanan et al., 2018; Sang & Ward, 2006; Tankosić et al., 2021). While social attitudes can represent barriers against growing an immigrant's sense of belonging to a host society, they can equally provide opportunities for sociocultural inclusion if awareness amongst mainstream and immigrant groups favours not only a multicultural ideology, but a multicultural practice.

Collier (1989) made an interesting observation in his research on social attitudes of a native cultural group about an immigrant in the process of integrating his ethnic identities. He suggested that immigrants' families in their home country may have unrealistic expectations of the immigrant's second language acquisition without considering the pressure this may add to an already challenging acculturation experience. King and Fogle (2013) argued that these pressures add to immigrants' acculturative stress, placing them in the vulnerable position of self-criticism and family disappointment.

The literature reviewed thus far suggests that host language adoption and proficiency is a path towards the mainstream's acceptance of immigrants, and favours an

intercultural dynamic that benefits the immigrant's acculturation and sense of belonging. As English proficiency is also a vehicle for immigrants' participation in an English dominant world (Olsen, 2011) and empowers an immigrant's ethnic identity integration, challenges and opportunities associated with an immigrants' bilinguality in an English-speaking context are considered next. To continue with the construction metaphor, once the foundations on acculturation have been laid, the base is ready for the bilingual scaffolding.

2.3.2 The building blocks: Bilinguality during acculturation

The metaphorical building blocks of the construction are the words that shape two linguistic identities. The bilingual ability to access words (lexical access) is the linguistic aspect of this study. The practice of this bilingual ability, to dance between languages to access different worlds during acculturation, develops language proficiency. Bilingual proficiency enables a sense of bilingual competence, and therefore strengthens the construction of a positive bilingual self-concept. In this way, the building blocks of bilinguality frame an immigrant's self-concept in a bicultural acculturating context.

According to Stuart and Ward (2011a), NZ is a bicultural society by tradition. Although having its roots in a Māori and British population, they note that this country has become a multicultural nation where almost one in four persons has been born overseas. The increased migration is matched by an increase in ethnic and linguistic diversity, creating a space in which immigrants become aware of their bilinguality or multilinguality.

Hammers and Blanc (2000) defined *bilinguality* as "the constant oral use of two languages" (p. 6). A bilingual person is someone who possesses knowledge of two languages and is able to speak with fluency in each, as if a native speaker (Turnbull, 2018). Fluency indicates bilingual competence, a factor that may favour an immigrant's socio-cultural adjustment in the host society. Turnbull (2018) argued that although a bilingual person may be ready to communicate and make meaning in two languages, the social context itself could present limitations to practising this bilingual competence. This context includes limitations for both the ethnic and mainstream group. He noted that NZ is becoming increasingly bilingual (English and *te reo*),

however, he believes there is insufficient acknowledgement and support of other minority languages. This limits ethnic groups' linguistic interaction, induces immigrants' first language loss, and consequently, their identity confusion.

Hulsen (2000) defined *language loss* as losing a native or first language (L1) while living in a second language (L2) environment. This language loss involves two processes: language shift and language attrition. The former refers to the gradual decrease in the use of L1, while the latter refers to decreasing competency in L1. In bilingual immigrants, language shift and attrition affected by limited contact with L1 speakers affects cognitive performance (Gollan & Kroll, 2001). According to Costa and Ivanova (2006), bilingual speakers deal with speech production in two languages, which involves a cognitive process of conceptual, lexical, and phonetic representations. The lexical level "where words are represented" (Costa et al., 2006, p. 138), is particularly pertinent to immigrants. Researchers (Costa et al., 2006; Hulsen, 2000) have suggested that reduced contact with L1 affects the ability to access words in that language (lexical access), creating language loss during speech production. For immigrants this means that when communicating a message in English, in an English context, their cognitive access to L1 is deactivated, and therefore it becomes more difficult to retrieve specific L1 words. While experiencing language loss immigrants may believe they are forgetting words, which may affect their self-confidence. Hulsen (2000) argued that the lexical knowledge is not lost from memory, but may be reduced and become more difficult to access under time or social pressures, or after a long period of disuse. This supports Turnbull's (2018) argument that NZ needs more initiatives to promote and favour minority language use and contact, with a responsibility to care for the linguistic needs and rights of its residents, and thus benefit their bilingual practice.

From a positive perspective, despite language loss and the potentially stressful emotional response to continuous linguistic awareness (Trudell, 1993, as cited in Barkhuizen, 2006), bilingual people may be empowered by the possibility of language choice, as they develop the ability to switch between languages depending on their needs. He proposed that with L1 they may utilise sentimental attachment when connecting with their family and cultural heritage in what Berry (1997) termed "the private domain" (home, family, and friends)

and then use what he referred to as instrumental attachment through L2, to meet practical needs in the public domain (participation in education, commerce, or the labour market). This is a similar relationship to Berry's (1997) integration orientation with native culture maintenance and mainstream cultural adoption.

Noels et al. (1996) argued that when two ethnolinguistic groups come into contact, there are changes in identity and behaviour influenced by language. According to Chirkov (2009b), language is "as an active, constructive, and meaning producing means of organizing people's lives and experiences" (p. 178), and therefore, should not be ignored in the acculturation process of an immigrant. Language plays a role in the construction of an immigrant's identity during acculturation, as it is through language expression that "people make themselves" (Hardcastle, 2009, p. 187). Kramsch (2000) argued that it is also through language that people create signs and signifiers that mediate between them and the environment, thus speakers from different languages need a common language of signs and signifiers for interacting with each other.

In the NZ context, it is the English language that enables intercultural dialogue between groups. For immigrants from non-English speaking backgrounds and the English-speaking mainstream, this can result in power differentials, as non-native English-speaking immigrants may be at a linguistic disadvantage. As language is the primary resource for developing social identity and group membership (Miller, 2000; Phinney, 1989; Stuart & Ward, 2011a) the practice of bilingual competence may either benefit intergroup integration and thus an immigrant's self-confidence, or threaten self-confidence if judgement and discrimination are perceived by the immigrant. Thus, the building blocks of bilinguality which scaffold linguistic proficiency, equip an immigrant with a sense of competence to achieve a less stressful integration of linguistic identities. The "framing" of this bilingual competence, sustained by acculturation foundations, can now support the full construction: the immigrant's bilingual self-confidence.

2.3.3 The construction: Building an immigrant's self-confidence through bilingual competence

The final construction represents the integration of a bilingual self in harmony. *Harmony* is understood as the positive and balanced integration of two parallel linguistic identities moving together in what I term a bilingual dance during acculturation. Such an

integration becomes possible through bilingual competence framing an immigrant's self-perception. This section reviews how self-perception is constructed through language, and considers factors influencing a second-language immigrant's self-esteem and self-confidence.

Before interacting with others, we interact with ourselves. Hardcastle and Medway (2009) posited that "ideas come first: words follow" (p. 186). Therefore, we first make an idea of ourselves (conceptual layer) and then represent that idea through words (lexical layer). Evans (2018) argued that language is interwoven with the nature of being, as it shapes identity and allows us to make sense of ourselves. Because of the changing nature of self (Elliot, 2013) due to influences of the social world, identities can be multiple. This applies particularly to immigrants, who, even though they first construct an identity through L1 and make sense of themselves in relation to their native culture, evolve this identity during acculturation and turn it into an emergent bilingual identity (Turnbull, 2018) as they adopt the host nation's language and behaviours. Elliot (2013) described this as a process of self-definition, in which individuals structure their identity in relation to their socio-cultural experience. During acculturation, by behaving and communicating differently, immigrants re-define who they are. This process aligns with Phinney's (1989) stages of ethnic identity development during acculturation (see p. 18 above).

Brown and Zeigler-Hill (2018) described a *self-concept* as people's thoughts and ideas about themselves, that influence their self-esteem and guide their behaviours. Rubio (2014) suggested two key components of an individual's sense of self: firstly, a sense of competence that is related to one's abilities and attitudes and perceptions of self-efficacy, and secondly, a sense of worthiness related to beliefs and feelings about self-worth. Although self-esteem is mainly influenced by social contact (Rosenberg, 1965, as cited in Rubio, 2014), both the sense of self-competence and self-worthiness also contribute to perceptions of self-confidence. When immigrants perceive themselves as competent and worthy in both cultural groups in which they interact and to which they seek to belong, mental health problems caused by acculturative stress may be reduced. However, the perception of self-esteem during language use may vary with an immigrant's second language skills. Heyde (1979) suggested that English language

learners perceive a stronger self-esteem with oral production and listening comprehension and perceive a weaker self-esteem with reading performance. Tims (2009) agreed that positive social intergroup contact, and practice in the four key learning language skills (speaking, writing, listening, and reading) would reinforce (and build) immigrants' self-esteem during acculturation. Similarly, Noels et al. (1996) noted that self-confidence derives from a self-perception of communicative competence, which if high, reduces levels of anxiety when using a second language.

Applying Kramsch's (2014) argument that the construction of identity is influenced by culture and language, immigrants in re-defining their bilingual identity will build a new self-concept in another language. This is confirmed in studies of multilingual speakers who construct different self-concepts for each language they speak, however, this often leads to identity conflict (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985). During the process of re-discovering who they are, immigrants question what makes them who they are.

Identity conflict arises not only from grappling with two languages, but also from the process of re-defining two (or more) cultural identities (Ward & Lin, 2005). Mercer (2011) explained that language learners construct a self-concept through a descriptive and evaluative dimension, depending on how they perceive themselves through each language. While they may describe and evaluate themselves in one way through one language, they may describe and evaluate themselves differently through their second language. For example, in their first language an immigrant may perceive himself/herself as more confident, extroverted, and with more communicative tools to express ideas or emotions, whereas in their second language they may perceive themselves less confident, more introverted and with less vocabulary to verbally articulate their ideas. This presents a psychological challenge when attempting to integrate a balanced sense of self during acculturation. This was supported by Ward et al. (2011), when they proposed that managing competing demands from heritage cultures and a mainstream society is reflected in self-concept, and affects an immigrant's beliefs, behaviours, and sense of self.

Apart from the acculturation benefits of developing a positive bilingual self-concept leading to self-confidence, studies on foreign language learning (Clement & Kruidenier, 1985; Rubio, 2014) have claimed that self-confidence increases effort and positive attitudes when learning a foreign language. These studies support the view that if an

immigrant perceives themselves as self-competent, this may positively influence their willingness to communicate. Consequently, if immigrants develop a positive bilingual self-concept, sustained by self-confidence in both linguistic identities, they are likely to achieve a sense of competence and worthiness in both cultural groups, which may contribute to a more positive and less stressful acculturation experience.

For a multicultural country such as NZ, where an increasing number of multilingual speakers interact through English, May (2015) suggested several actions to support immigrants. These included an inclusive language policy, and recognition of the benefits of promoting multilingual education and multilingualism in the public domain. Such actions may benefit immigrants' self-esteem and motivation to increase their English proficiency, and therefore build their capacity to contribute to their host society. However, Cooper and Barkhuizen (2002) pointed to the lack of formal English language provision in NZ for minority groups, limiting their employment opportunities. Sang and Ward (2006) reported that immigrant employability opportunities and associated income and social status are also conditioned by a human capital-based system that identifies skills to select immigrants. However, this places such immigrants (especially second-language speakers) in a disadvantaged position, as even though they may have better qualifications than native-born NZers, they are likely to struggle more than native-English speakers while expressing critical thinking through argumentation and debate (Lun et al., 2010). Boyer (1996) agreed and noted that this can contribute to unemployment and lower incomes.

Studies have suggested that immigrants' unemployment related to their language competence disadvantage, is another source of acculturative stress, as it is linked to depression, anxiety, and poorer psychological adaptation (Abbott et al., 1999, as cited in Sam & Berry, 2006). This immigrant disadvantage was confirmed by Ward and Masgoret (2007) and Barry and Grilo (2003) who note it can be aggravated when immigrants experience discriminatory attitudes in the workplace, which affects their self-esteem.

In summary, the construction of a bilingual immigrant's self-confidence in harmony during acculturation, relies on three elements: firstly, bilingual competence that enables a more positive self-description and evaluation while communicating in two

languages; secondly, social and educational opportunities in the public domain to improve such bilingual competence and proficiency to achieve a sense of self-confidence; and thirdly, the social attitudes and work opportunities that may either deflate or inflate such self-confidence. Thus, when an immigrant achieves positive linguistic self-confidence, that construction is/has been framed by bilinguality and grounded in an acculturation context. However, as acculturation, language, and identity continue to evolve, so does the construction of self. The bilingual immigrant continues to add “floors” to self-confidence, and “insulation” to self-esteem while reconciling two linguistic identities in harmony.

2.4 Conclusion: Reflecting on the final construction

The metaphor used to structure the literature review involves the building base of acculturation that supports the building blocks of bilinguality to construct a bilingual immigrant’s self-confidence capable of experiencing both a positive identity and group integration.

Firstly, the context of acculturation was explored as the building base. Secondly, two key elements or building blocks of bilingual competence were laid upon the acculturation foundation, and finally, the construction of self-confidence through bilingual competence was reflected in the final form of the building blocks. Bilingual individuals develop a sense of who they are through different self-concepts associated with their two languages. This presents an acculturation challenge and stress while integrating two different self-concepts in one bilingual identity. When immigrants develop a positive self-concept, understood as a sense of self-competence and self-worth, they develop positive self-esteem and strong self-confidence. This increases their efforts when learning a second language, and their willingness to communicate, which enhances their work opportunities.

This construction structure supports the exploration of the research question, what influences the construction of an immigrant’s confident bilingual identity during acculturation?

As every ending has a new beginning, with the metaphorical construction completed, the research design with its constructionist approach is the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter follows Crotty's (1998) four elements of research design. Ontology and epistemology laid the foundation for the theoretical perspective, and this perspective informed the methodology, which in turn justified the methods for the data collection and analysis. The chapter concludes with ethical considerations. The research design was informed by the research questions.

3.1 Research questions

What influences the construction of an immigrant's confident bilingual identity during acculturation?

Sub-research questions

- What are the differences between the construction of an immigrant's self-perception in their native language and in English?
- What language learning and shedding occurs during the first six years of acculturation and how does English proficiency change?
- What behavioural shifts occur during an immigrant's acculturation experience?
- How does English proficiency impact an immigrant's self-esteem during acculturation?

These research questions were explored through an ontology and epistemology that aligned with my perspectives on the nature of knowledge.

3.2 Ontology and epistemology

The research design was based on an interpretive and constructionist paradigm and underpinned by my understanding of multiple notions of reality and the subjective nature of knowledge.

Scholars have suggested that subjectivism implies an interdependence between reality, individual consciousness, and social experience to create meaning (Crotty, 1998; Grix, 2004). Scotland (2012) explained that our consciousness - mediated by our

senses - allows us to engage with our version of reality. Following this idea, and from a constructionist approach, Scotland (2012) suggested that despite our subjective perspectives, it is through social interactions that we make meaning of reality. The epistemological assumption underpinning this study holds that we as social beings, create meaning through social interactions, being influenced by our own subjective perspectives of the world.

I selected an interpretivist and constructionist epistemology to explore and interpret the meaning-making process of non-native English speakers and their bilingual experience in NZ. Constructionism proposes that meaning is socially co-created (Andrews, 2012; Burr, 2015) whereas interpretivism attempts to “understand and explain human and social reality” (Crotty, 1998, pp. 66-67). In this research, I aimed to understand and explain the constructions of meaning made by the participants, being aware of the influence of their (and my) subjective interpretations mediated by different socio-cultural contexts and experiences (see Creswell, 2007; Schwandt, 1998). To remove the potential barrier of the spoken language in constructing meaning, the Lego Serious Play method was used, as this enabled the constructions of meaning through a process of active cognition (Cohen et al., 2018) utilising a non-verbal common language. Hermeneutics was selected as the methodology, as it aligns with an interpretivist and constructionist epistemology.

3.3 Methodology

Hermeneutics guided this study because of its subjective interpretative grounding in relation to creating meaning through language. According to Gallagher (1992), the way we perceive reality is shaped by language, and the way we understand it is a linguistic event. Based on this view, Gallagher (1992; 2004) defined *hermeneutics* as the principle and exercise of interpretation; a circular art of understanding (Gallagher, 1992; 2004). Thus, understanding and interpreting is another aspect of the dance between languages. According to Costa et al. (2006), learning a new word in a second language involves translating the word into the first language to find its meaning. In this way, a word in a second language makes sense and the difference in meaning is understood. Gallagher’s (2004) argument presented language as an enabler of the cognitive process of interpretation, whereby in naming and visualising objects through a language, meaning emerges from words, which allows engagement in social interactions. In this study, I

aimed to understand through moderate hermeneutics the participants' subjective perceptions of their bilingual identities. Moderate hermeneutics seemed to be the right approach for this research design because it focuses on understanding the author's intention behind the written (i.e., visual) text, thus enabling a more subjective level of interpretation (Gallagher, 1992), and the creative possibility of co-creating meaning with participants as authors of the text.

3.4 Methods and data collection

Based on the interpretive and constructionist foundation, two methods were used to collect data: 1) LEGO® Serious Play® (LSP) to provide visual and verbal data, and 2) focus group discussions to provide verbal data. The data from this process were collected in digital social interactions due to the restrictions of a COVID-19 lockdown in 2021, rather than the intended face-to-face social interactions.

3.4.1 LEGO® Serious Play®

Papert and Harel (1991) suggested that meaning can be socially constructed when individuals build knowledge structures. Litts (2015) supported this constructionist approach to favour "the spirit of learning through making" (p. 9), in which an actively and consciously engaged learner is able to represent reality through a visible and tangible learning product. Lego Serious Play (LSP) is a visual research method that encourages introspection and provides a metaphorical voice for articulating experiences that are difficult to express verbally. Founded on Papert and Harel's (1991) constructionism and Vygotsky's (2012) ideas of language, thought, and culture, this method facilitates a story-making process of construction of meaning through manual manipulation of Lego bricks (Roos & Victor, 2018). Gauntlett (2007) reported that neuroscientists have found "the hands are not only a source to get information from, or to manipulate objects with, but that thinking with the hands can have meaning in itself" (p. 130).

Costa et al. (2006) argued that language is a pre-condition of thought. Applying this to the current study, this suggests that the participants' thoughts and responses may be conditioned by their native tongue while using English as an additional language. This influenced me to select the Lego method, as it diminishes this language limitation and provides a new common language while still including the opportunity for participants

to verbalise their ideas. Studies that have used LSP as a research method (i.e., Hayes & Graham, 2019; McCusker, 2020; Roos & Victor, 2018; Wengel, 2020) demonstrated these specific benefits for exploring the participants' inner voices by disrupting the common language of thinking (verbal) from one's own language (usually one's native tongue) to the 'language' of Lego. Finding such a common 'language' is an approach in multicultural research contexts (McCusker, 2014). Roos and Victor (2018) highlighted the value of participants engaging with the variety of colours, textures, shapes, and sizes of Lego materials, as they reflect on and share their own subjective meanings of the symbols they represent. This initial hands-on internalised reflection facilitates the articulation of ideas in a verbal language, which benefits the ability of non-native speakers to express themselves.

In this study, the LSP method enabled the tangible construction and interpretation of non-English speaking immigrants' stories during their acculturation in NZ. The participants consciously engaged in the process of building knowledge structures through the construction of Lego self-representations. First, they reflected on a question by engaging in an introspection process based on their own framework of meaning (see Bonner, 1994). Then, they built a Lego structure to represent their reflection, and finally, they verbally shared their interpretations of their Lego constructions. This process of introspection, representation, and interpretation enabled the creation of a shared framework of meaning through the medium of two languages: Lego (Gauntlett & Thomsen, 2013) and English.

The LSP method was used to collect data related to the first sub-research question (see 3.1). Hayes and Graham (2019) and McCusker (2014) provided a clear process for the LSP method. This commonly starts with an introduction followed by a demonstration of a Lego-building example for the participants to become familiar with the construction process. Then, four steps are followed: 1) question or challenge, 2) build,

3) share, and 4) reflect. This was the process followed for the data collection of two Lego constructions, in response to the following questions:

Q1 How do you perceive yourself when you think and speak in your native/first language?

Q2 How do you perceive yourself when you think and speak in English as your second language?

Following each construction, the participants verbally shared the meaning they each attributed to their self-representation; the final step was a shared reflection on the constructions and the meaning attributed to them. Appendix B1 details the LSP process followed during data collection.

Throughout the LSP data collection process, being aware of my own position as a second-language speaking immigrant and my potential bias and subjective interpretation, I was conscious of the need to step back, observe, and respectfully listen to the participants' voices.

3.4.2 Focus group

Following data collection through the LSP method, discussion continued through an online focus group using semi-structured questions (Appendix B2), which collected data related to the second and third research sub-questions. Hayes and Graham (2019) suggested that a focus group enables rich data collection as the participants' interactions with each other may help them explore thoughts that would otherwise not emerge. For second-language speakers, a focus group with another person in a similar situation may reduce the stress of a face-to-face interview. It can also validate data collected using another research method (such as LSP).

Having two participants simultaneously using the LSP method enriched the focus group session, as the participants had already established a relationship through their focus on a construction activity. They appeared confident enough to compare views and emphasise different points of view, as they participated in a dialogue about their acculturation journey, triggering memories and experiences they possibly would not have been able to recall if they had been interviewed separately.

3.5 Data analysis

The verbal data were transcribed by the researcher from the video recording, and the visual data were captured with screenshots and then linked to the verbal data. For example, one participant explained how she shifted from one language to another (verbal data) as she moved a purple piece of Lego from one side of her construction to another, to represent her bilinguality (visual data). Thus, not only was the visual object recorded, but the non-verbal messages were also captured.

A mix of methods were used to analyse the data, drawing on the hermeneutic circle (Gallagher, 1992), the interactional-performative model (Esin, 2011), and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Interpretation was further informed by Mahmoodi-Shahrehabaki's (2018) theoretical framework.

The application of the hermeneutic circle involved a holistic approach in which the researcher shifted from the whole to parts of the data and back to the whole, seeking meaning at different levels. This approach was enhanced by Esin's interactional-performative model, as I felt this was particularly well suited to the integration of the verbal and visual data collected during the LSP process.

The interactional-performative model (Esin, 2011) guided the process of analysing the thematic content and performative narrative structures (Lego constructions), which comprised the visual and verbal information as one data set. According to Esin (2011), this model is appropriate for studies of identity construction, as it guides an analytical process in which not only individual experiences can be analysed, but also the characteristics and influences of the society and culture in which the individuals' identity is constructed. This model linked well to the sociocultural elements of Mahmoodi-Shahrehabaki's (2018) theoretical framework. The value of the model for this study was that it maintained the integrity of the performative and interactivevisual and verbal data with a holistic approach to analysis. For example, by observing the identity-making process through the Lego construction, the researcher observed which Lego pieces were selected and where they were purposefully placed. This was followed by listening to the participants' explanations, to understand why those pieces and locations were selected and how they represented aspects of their identity.

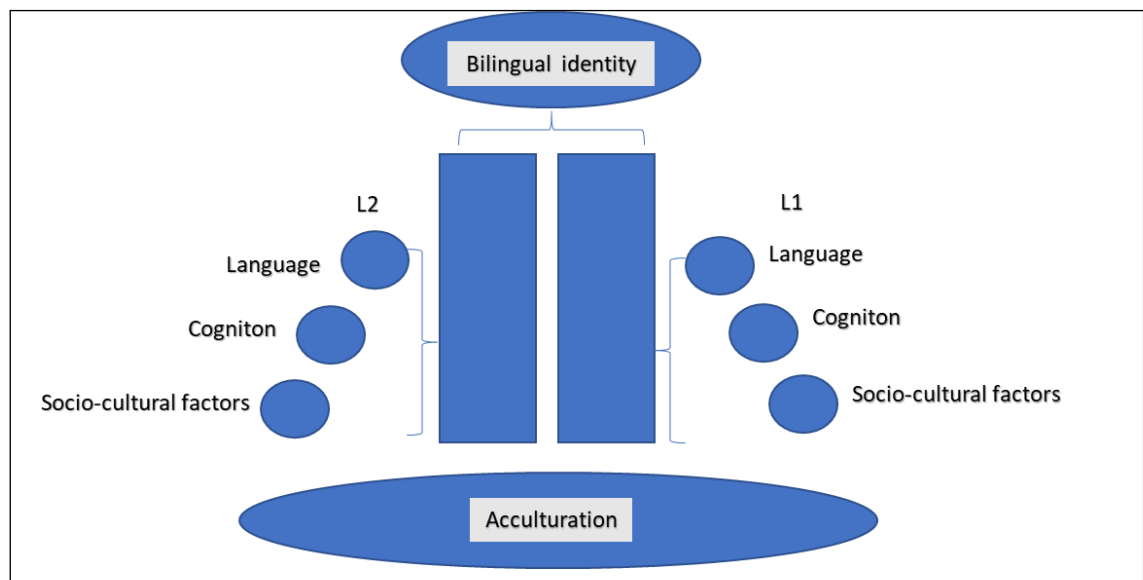
In this way, the verbal and visual performative narration of experiences enriched the analytical process before making an interpretation.

Thematic analysis involved generating categories and codes to search for themes in the data, particularly data collected during the focus group discussion. The thematic analysis was contextualised within Mahmoodi-Shahreabaki's (2018) framework of three theoretical concepts: cognition, socio-cultural factors, and language. These three concepts were used to frame the thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) process of generating initial categories (sociocultural factors, cognition, and language) from which codes were identified to organise patterns of meaning (self-perceptions, perceptions about language, sociocultural factors, and acculturation experience). From these codes and categories, the themes were identified.

To support this analysis, I designed a model showing the link between the framework and my study (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Aligning the Metaphor of Construction to the Analysis of Data



Using this model, I analysed the participants' acculturation experience, and the influence of socio-cultural factors, cognition, and language, on the process of constructing their bilingual identity. It enabled me to observe how the interconnection of factors such as social attitudes from different cultural groups, lexical access, and

bilinguality, shape a parallel linguistic identity. Depending on the influence of these factors, the result is a confident or non-confident integrated bilingual identity.

While the analysis process may appear complex, it suited the nature of the visual and verbal data combination, which required an integrated approach (Esin, 2011) as well as a focus on discrete parts of the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The two contrasting approaches were integrated using the hermeneutic circle. Finally, the theoretical framework presented by Mahmoodi-Shahreabaki, (2018) provided a conceptual link with the elements of the study.

3.6 Recruitment of participants

Two immigrant participants were recruited using purposive criterion sampling, which involves a specific set of selection criteria used to target a specific group of participants who meet the criteria (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In order to follow this process, I used recommendations from my social networks in Auckland. I asked my social contacts to give the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix B3) to people who met the criteria and might be interested in participating. The criteria specified NZ immigrants with residency status from non-English speaking backgrounds, who had lived in NZ for two to six years. For this study, I was interested to explore the experiences of two immigrants coming from different cultural backgrounds and speaking different languages to increase diversity in the data set. 6 people showed interest, however only two met the criteria and were available on the same date for data collection. Participants returned their Consent forms (see Appendix B4).

Both participants were female and aged between 24-34 years old. Maria was an early childhood educator. She was originally from Colombia, spoke Spanish as her mother tongue, and had been living in NZ for five years. Thalia described herself as a “stay at home mum.” She was originally from Indonesia, spoke Bahasa as her mother tongue, and had been living in NZ for the previous three years. Pseudonyms were given to the participants to protect their identity.

3.7 Ethical considerations

The main ethical consideration of this study related to its quality and integrity. This included confidentiality of data and protection of participant privacy, researcher awareness of potential power positioning and subjective bias, ensuring the participants' wellbeing during the data collection phase, and the validity and truthfulness of visual and verbal data.

I complied with all ethical processes required by AUT, including an amendment for online data collection (Appendix A). Formal considerations included protecting the participants' privacy, and confidentiality of the focus group discussion through the use of pseudonyms and informed consent. Due to the nature of the research context, ethical considerations were reviewed and reapproval sought during the research process, as data collection had to move from in-person to online.

Ethical considerations went beyond the formal application for ethics approval. Having an online research session increased my awareness of its benefits: confidentiality was assured, as no one apart from myself as the researcher, had access to the video recording from which data were transcribed for analysis. I was aware that, through the way I was asking questions, I could have triggered reflections on potentially emotional experiences when the participants discussed their immigration experiences. Although I was mindful of the way questions were asked, and sensitive to reactions, with my face on the screen during data collection I could see my own reactions and modify my expressions to appear more neutral to my responses. In some moments during the research session, I turned the camera off to reduce pressure on the participants as they built their Lego representations.

Before and after the online research session, I made sure the participants were feeling safe and grounded. This was particularly important in an online environment where there is a sense of distance created by the technology, in addition to the physical distancing and the lack of non-verbal behaviour cues. I was careful to debrief and check that participants had not experienced any strong emotions on recalling their acculturation experiences. I had stated in my ethics application that, if required, I would follow the AUT ethics guidelines and recommend counselling.

I was mindful of the unequal power between myself as the researcher, and the participants, particularly during the online session. I have acknowledged this throughout different phases of the research. Sharing with the participants the fact that I too was an immigrant with similar challenges, proved beneficial for developing a relationship with them and putting them at sufficient ease to discuss their own experiences. Despite being aware of my own biased perceptions, I had a strong insight into the potential to influence the discussion, and this increased my awareness of needing to listen to the participants' voices and not bringing my preconceptions to my observation. An example of this occurred when discussing the participants' perceptions of language. Thalia made it clear that from her perspective, "language is just language." This contradicted my biased expectation, as I have a deep and emotional perception of language, so listening to her response made me realise that because I perceive language in such a way, it does not mean that other people perceive it the same. Therefore, I became conscious of the importance of following the research design, which protected me from the danger of my own bias at a stage when I was collecting data and listening to the participants in a non-judgmental way before making my interpretations. According to Galman (2009), by allowing the participant voice to be heard first, a more honest and truthful report is possible than one based entirely on the researcher's interpretation. I endeavoured to honour the commitment to prioritise the participants' voices.

3.8 Conclusion

The research design was aligned with Crotty's (1998) argument that, informed by the research questions, each element of the design should show coherence, as each element builds to the next. Thus, to answer the research question as to what influences the construction of an immigrant's confident bilingual identity during acculturation, a constructionist and interpretive ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods provided the framework for the research process. Having recruited the participants, and collected and analysed the data, the next chapter presents the findings.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the analysis of verbal and non-verbal data from two non-native English-speaking participants.

The findings draw from the different analytical approaches and are organised for reporting purposes under four categories (Table 1) and related sub-categories. The structure of the findings reflects the construction metaphor of acculturation as the base, language elements as building blocks, and self-perception/bilingual identity as the complete construction. Underpinning the structure of the chapter is the main research question: What influences the construction of an immigrant's bilingual identity during acculturation?

Table 1 *Structure of Findings*

	Category	Sub-categories
1	Self-perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self in first language • Self in English language
2	Perceptions of language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contextual use of language • Experiences with non-verbal communication • Perceptions of empowerment through language • The process of translation • Language learning and language retention
3	Social attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social attitudes of native English speakers • Social attitudes of native L1 speakers • Social attitudes of non-native English-speaking immigrants
4	Acculturation experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioural shifts • Acculturative stress

In reporting the findings, the participant voice was prioritised, and the researcher's interpretation clearly identified and positioned second.

4.2 Self-perceptions

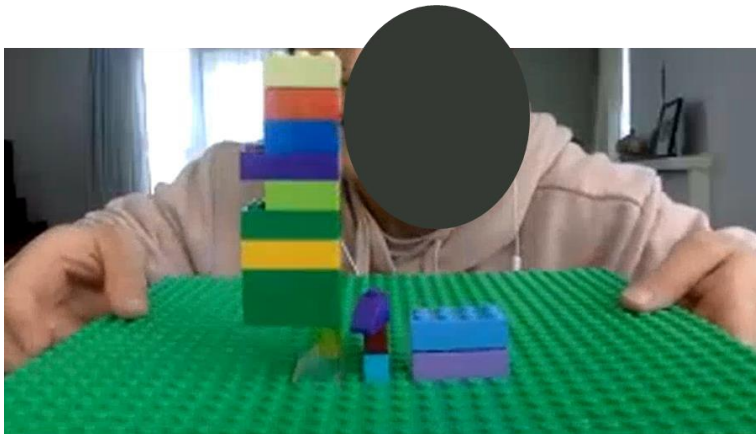
To explore the participants' self-perceptions, they were asked to build a Lego representation of the way they perceived themselves when they thought and spoke in their first language. They were then asked to build a representation of the way they perceived themselves when they thought and spoke in English. This linked to research sub-question one: what are the differences between the construction of an immigrant's self-perception in their native language and in English?

Maria

Maria's first construction of self-representation (Figure 3) represents her self in her mother tongue, Spanish. She built a complex representation involving three different structures, using a number of Lego pieces.

Figure 3

Maria's Self-Representation in Spanish



First, Maria described the colourful and tall structure on the left of the figure, which represented how confident she felt in Spanish, because it was her first language. She explained: "this is my Spanish (*pointing at the bigger structure on the left*). It is a lot of knowledge because it's my first language." However, she also mentioned that since she had migrated to NZ, the base of her knowledge in Spanish had become weak:

Sometimes I feel the base is weak (*pointing at the small pieces holding the biggest part*) not my knowledge, not my confidence, that this is still there (holding the bigger pieces on the top) but whenever there are words I don't remember in Spanish, this plays this weak point here (*pointing at the smaller pieces at the base of her representation*).

Maria talked about the emotions associated with that “weak” feature, and explained: “sometimes if I don’t have the word for the exact context - this kind of breaks everything” (*pushing the piece representing her confidence to break it away from the Lego structure*). She described how she felt when she struggled to remember a word in her first language:

It makes me look like if I’m forgetting my language, which I am not...I feel like people are like “Oh but Spanish is your first language, how come you cannot know that word?” so it makes this so weak that it’s so easily broken (*throwing the biggest part of her representation to the side*) even though it is big.

Then she explained the meaning of the second structure she had built: the piece in the middle with a mobile purple piece on top represented her bilingual self as she moved from one language to the other. She explained the meaning of this purple piece:

I don’t have to detach of who I am to go here or to go here (*moving purple piece from one side to another*) ‘cause a part of me is just moving. If I’m in a context where there’s people who speak both Spanish and English, I’ll be in English but if I have to say something in Spanish I move quickly to Spanish and go back to English. It’s me, it’s not one person here and something here, it’s a part of both.

Following this, she explained the meaning of the third structure: the blue and purple structure on the right, representing some part of her Spanish self that now included a version of herself in English after immigrating to NZ. The English self version provided the words she could not express in Spanish any more. “Sometimes if I need someone or something from English (*pointing at her English self pieces*) like this light blue colour that I don’t have it in Spanish just because maybe I don’t remember the word” She highlighted how interacting with other bilingual people facilitated this process: “...sometimes talking with someone who speaks English and Spanish, it’s fine, because I can use the word in English and I can just turn around (*moving purple piece from one side to another*) and go back to Spanish and it’s okay.”

I interpreted Maria’s self-representation in Spanish as being affected by her acculturation experience, particularly as she reflected that her Spanish-self relied on her English-self, being in constant interaction through bilinguality. The process of moving, breaking and re-assembling the Lego pieces while narrating the meaning

attributed to them, enhanced the verbal data by adding rich value through non-verbal data.

Maria's self-representation in English

To represent herself in English (Figure 4) Maria placed a pink piece at the middle of a construction, where both Spanish and English speakers were looking at her, examining and judging her language skills. She explained that even though she felt confident in English, she also felt that other people focused on her speaking.

Figure 4

Maria's Self-Representation in English



She explained this self-representation:

I consider myself confident in English so I have a solid base, I'm okay but then I always have either Spanish speaking people or English speaking people that are like not exactly maybe judging me but like focusing on when I'm speaking (*highlighting the focus with her hand and with the top orange and purple Lego pieces looking at her pink self*).

My interpretation of this construction was that it focused on one particular acculturation experience which affected her language confidence. Her perception that other people from the cultural groups to which she belonged were focused on her English skills, increased her self-awareness of language use: "so I'm like okay, I have a strong English (*pointing at the blue piece representing that strong part of her English self*) so I feel they pay attention whether I make a mistake, to whether I pronounce something funny. And then same with Spanish speakers." She recognised that she felt "observed and in a constant exam" (*she hides behind her representation*).

Maria's representation of her English self denoted more visual complexity and less verbal data. There was a strong emotional charge in both representations, although a stronger perception of social judgement was evident in her English self-perception. In her English representation, more Lego pieces were used, and in a different way to her Spanish self-representation, the influence of social groups took a central place in the way she perceived herself.

Thalia

Thalia's self-representation in Bahasa is depicted in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Thalia's Self-Representation in Bahasa



Thalia represented herself as a Lego piece speaking Bahasa alongside another Lego piece representing a flatmate who also spoke Bahasa. She exclaimed: “taraaaah! (*in an excited tone*) Just like this. Why? Because I don’t speak Bahasa much here. Usually, I talk Bahasa with one of my flatmates because most of the people here speak in English.” She talked about identity confusion, as she actually did not know which of the two Lego pieces was representing herself:

I don’t know which one is me and which one is the flatmate because I only speak (*looking doubtful*) with a few people who would speak Bahasa....one of our flatmates in the other house is also from Indonesia so I speak Bahasa with him, so yeah, my conversation in Bahasa is only with one person to only one person.

She then mentioned that for her, “language is language” but she recognised the value of Bahasa in keeping a link with special people or family back in Indonesia. “I use Bahasa just for family matters, like if there is someone special here or if some family gets sick, we always speak Bahasa.”

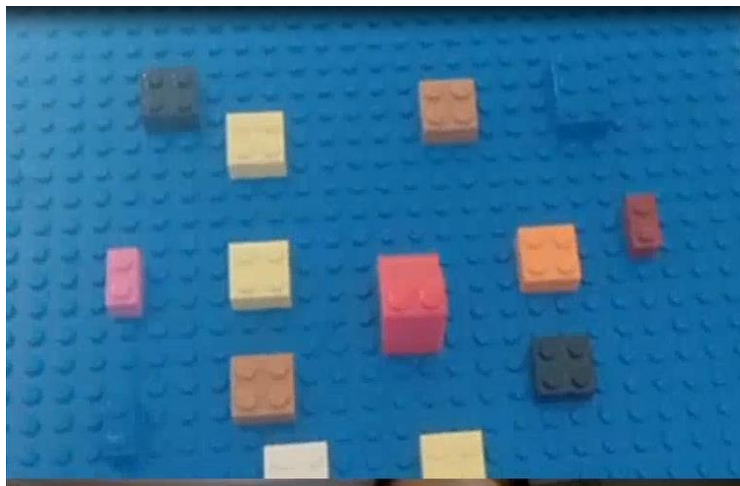
My interpretation of Thalia's construction which appeared to be a much simpler representation than Maria's, made me aware of my own biased expectation of the relationship between language and self-perception. With her limited verbal and visual data, I wondered if Thalia had had an opportunity to reflect on her acculturation experience. Maybe her personality was just less expressive, or she did not feel comfortable talking more about herself at the beginning of the session. With her construction, she demonstrated quite an unemotional expression of her native tongue, suggesting a possible unconscious preference for assimilation, rather than the integration orientation Maria evidenced.

Thalia's self-representation in English

Figure 6 depicts Thalia's construction of her self-representation in English.

Figure 6

Thalia's Self-Representation in English



To represent her perception of her English self, Thalia built a representation of a barbecue party in her NZ backyard. She explained: "this is my Lego, this is so many people (*pointing at all the different pieces around the red piece at the centre*), we are all in a barbecue party (*pointing at the red piece at the centre*), this is fire."

She talked about how she perceived the people in her representation as equals: "we are all in the party and as you can see all my Legos are the same, equal (*emphasising with her hand, a same level*), for me all of us are the same."

She clarified this by saying that she perceived people speaking the same language (English) as equal: “for me, speaking English is like equal with people.” She added that the context where she perceived this equality and non-judgemental environment was with her flatmates: “my social network in NZ is only with the flatmates, so they are not really judging my English...I’m surrounded by my flatmates or the friends of my husband who are also immigrants and English is not their first language.” In these social or family contexts amongst immigrants in NZ, Thalia did not perceive any judgement of her English language skills, but only equality and inclusion.

My interpretation of Thalia’s self-representation in English strengthened the sense that she preferred a multicultural assimilation orientation into her new society.

The verbal and visual data supporting these findings provided me with an opportunity to observe the different ways in which the participants could perceive, represent and explain themselves while unconsciously revealing their self-confidence and language attachment. A key difference that both participants demonstrated from their representations was the approach they took to representing themselves. One built the structures around herself on different levels, and the other built the representation around people on the same level. This difference may be related to the nature of the context where they had their social interactions. This context and their perceived level of language proficiency during such interactions, influenced the way they perceived themselves in different languages and determined the way they adapted to the different contexts. Thalia appeared to be unconsciously heading towards assimilation of the host language among other immigrants who had English in common, while Maria expressed a clear bilingual attachment to both languages associated with an integration orientation. Moving from the big picture of bilingual identity, the next set of findings relates to the building blocks of language.

4.3 Perceptions of language

This section addresses the participants’ general perceptions of the English language related to the context in which they mostly spoke it, the challenges of verbal and written communication, and the advantages of non-verbal language. This set of findings responds to the second and fourth sub-questions: What language learning and

shedding occurs during the first six years of acculturation and how does English proficiency change? Also, how does English proficiency impact an immigrant's self-esteem during acculturation?

In terms of contextual use of language, the two participants described very different situations which affected their bilingual confidence. Maria associated the work environment with the English language, as when she was with her partner she changed to Spanish. This illustrated an acculturation orientation of integration with different practices in the private and public domain (see Berry, 1997). For example, as Maria explained, "for work I'm always set up on English, I know work is a context in English." Thalia on the other hand, used English to communicate with her partner, as they did not speak each other's first language. She therefore used English most of the time: "almost 90% of the time I speak English because also most of the people that I spend time with are my flatmates but I'm a stay-at-home mum." Even though the contexts were different, I interpreted the participants as having different attitudes towards the preservation and use of their mother tongue. While Maria had developed a more personal attachment to language, Thalia recognised that for her "it's only language." This suggested a move towards an assimilation orientation from a language perspective.

Some of the challenges these participants experienced when communicating in English as their second language contained elements of both verbal and written communication. The main challenge they associated with verbal communication was around misunderstandings and the lack of clarity they perceived when interacting with native English speakers. To overcome this challenge, both agreed it was important to communicate in person and use non-verbal language when communicating with speakers of other languages. Maria explained:

I prefer verbal communication in person because if you make a mistake when you're talking you can kind of laugh it out (*changing the tone of her voice and smiling*). You can say "sorry" or let them know you're struggling with something and it's easier, they will take a social cue: "okay she's struggling with this word" or "she is trying to tell me this."

In explaining her challenges in written communication, Maria recognised she experienced self-doubt and felt judged by Spanish speakers on her written English skills when posting her thoughts on social media. I found this an interesting observation as one would expect that perceptions of judgement would come from native English speakers, however, she stated that she did not feel judged by this group on her written skills.

The participants shared examples of their experiences with non-verbal communication. They both used facial expressions, signs, numbers and their hands, to communicate what they were not able to express through words. Thalia explained that when she charged a bond to her tenants, she had to emphasise the amount of money with her fingers, because sometimes her tenants could not understand her pronunciation of certain numbers. Maria also provided an example of this challenge:

Sometimes I try to explain something to get the idea to be done but then if I cannot describe the outcome I want, it is hard to describe the process to achieve it. Sometimes I doubt if I'm being clear enough and I feel the idea might lose its purpose.

Although both participants expressed self-doubt about their verbal and written communication in English, they recognised that finding common words in other languages, and using them with speakers of other languages, had enabled them to engage socially.

Language was perceived as empowering. Despite Maria experiencing discrimination from native English speakers in relation to her language and cultural background, both participants acknowledged that their first language and bilinguality provided a sense of power. Thalia described an example based on her relationship with her mother-in-law: "so you know, like in drama there is a clash between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, If I want to talk about something secret, I talk in Bahasa." In this example, and in contrast to her very simple self-representation in her native tongue, she acknowledged that her first language made her feel empowered, when she used it to avoid conflict situations with speakers of other languages. I observed that Maria agreed with Thalia, through a smile, when she spoke about this power dynamic of language.

The process of translation was a key challenge for both participants, who described how they searched for meaning when they did not understand certain words. Both explained that they used Google Translate or asked their partners to help them understand the meaning of certain words. They recognised that sometimes the literal translation of a word did not portray the real meaning, however, their limitations in vocabulary reduced their options to find the right word at a particular moment (lexical access). Maria explained: “you can use that word in English to express how you’re feeling even though that word in Spanish doesn’t seem right, but you don’t know another synonym to say the word, and that’s frustrating.” Similarly, Thalia explained that she had learnt that using online translators such as the translation function on Facebook or Google Translate, could lead to misunderstandings. She explained that although a non-native speaker could easily translate a paragraph from one language to another, as second-language speakers, they could miss important elements of meaning when not hearing the tone or having a contextual framework to understand the real meaning of the words.

Language learning and language retention was another topic about which they described their experiences. Both participants talked about how they learnt English and other languages in their countries, and how since they had been acculturating in NZ, they had had to learn new terminologies, accents, and slang, and identify the different contexts in which to use them. It was interesting to observe that because of the multicultural nature of Auckland, both had become aware of the importance of increasing their language skills and learning words in other languages (apart from English, Bahasa, and Spanish) to facilitate interactions with other immigrants. To explain her language learning experience, Thalia explained: “my way to learn language is through songs or drama. When I was younger, I watched Mexican telenovelas and Indian movies. I love to learn languages from different countries.” Following this conversation, Maria said that the way she had learnt more English during her acculturation experience was through her university studies and work in different contexts (i.e., hospitality and early childhood education). She noted: “I got to practise my English in very different contexts. Talking to your friends is different to talking in a professional setting. Or chatting with your friends is very different to sending a professional email.” They both described the “Kiwi

English” and Kiwi accent as being different from the American English that they had initially learnt. They also mentioned some of the Kiwi slang they had learnt in NZ and what they did when they did not understand certain words, giving various examples: “hey mate! They speak like wshwhshsh (*making this sound with her voice*). They sound like nasal and if I don’t understand, I just ask them to repeat.” (Thalia). “Sweet as, smokos, the fitter, sparky, I had no idea they called them ‘sparkies!’ It kind of make sense like a spark!” (*symbolising the movement to turn on a match with her hands*). (Maria).

The discussion about language shedding and learning naturally led to exploring their perceptions of language retention, which they described as “very important” because of the link to their families and home countries. They acknowledged how during their acculturation experience they had lost many things, but not their first language, which was something they had been able to keep. Their language came with them and would stay with them, which gave them a sense of security. However, by practising more English, they recognised they had forgotten words in their first language, which made them feel frustrated and even judged by their social networks in their home countries.

Maria narrated an example of how her mother helped her remember words in her first language:

My mum, she tries to help me and starts trying to say random words to see if something triggers the memory of the word. I feel like not judged but more like oh, she is pretending she doesn’t remember Spanish because she speaks English (*in a disappointed tone*).

She also explained how, despite the loss associated with immigrating, language was something she had been able to keep, reinforcing this with:

We kind of lost food now, okay, well I don’t have my family here, so I don’t have my roots here, okay, well, you kind of grow out and learn to live without those things, but then language is something I have with me!

Adding to this, Maria said:

And it’s my Spanish! (clenching her fists doing a proud expression) it’s my Spanish and I can listen to music in Spanish and understand it and watch a Spanish show and understand it or speak Spanish with someone from Colombia, so Spanish is something I keep.

Thalia mentioned how she retained her first language by communicating through a WhatsApp group. This brought up the importance of technological applications to allow distance communication between immigrants and their families and support language retention. She explained: "I still communicate via text with my family in Bahasa through a WhatsApp group and mostly like once a week I call my mum and we speak Bahasa." My interpretations of the participants' perceptions of language, were first, that one of them (Maria) reflected a stronger attachment to language, which demonstrated a clearer orientation towards integration, whereas Thalia tended towards assimilation. Second, this finding reflected the bilingual dance between languages; this was a dance that the participants experienced during acculturation while changing from one language to another, and how they needed to adapt to contextual demands when the communication challenges varied. Despite the perceptions of language loss and the desire to retain their first languages, they faced a number of challenges associated with their use of a second language. Depending on their personal attitude towards these challenges, their bilingual skills and sense of empowerment may grow or be limited by the perceptions of judgment and the availability of resources for communication. However, resources such as non-verbal language and digital translators facilitate the meaning-making process of bilingual communication and favour positive multilingual social interactions.

These findings on language were further affected by the social attitudes expressed by various groups, which also affected the participants' bilingual identity.

4.4 Perceptions of social attitudes

Participants expressed strong perceptions about attitudes from different social groups towards them. These groups included people from NZ who were native English-speakers, people from their home countries who spoke the same first language, and other immigrants who shared English as a common language. This finding provided a further response to the first, second, and third research sub-questions.

One of the participants as an immigrant in a workplace experienced unconscious discriminatory attitudes from NZ native English speakers. Although the participants understood these attitudes seldom had a negative intention, Maria described such

incidents as rude, and ignorant of her cultural background. This affected her self-perception. As she explained:

I have had times when English speaking people here that they ask: "oh where are you from?" And I say "I'm from Colombia" and they say "Oh you have such good English to be from Colombia" and I'm like, is that a praise? Or are you judging? (*laughing nervously*) I know they mean I speak good English but they are saying in an offensive way talking towards Colombian. So, I cannot take that as a compliment if you're putting down the Colombian accent. And It's funny because they are trying to acknowledge that I have a good English, so they are not being mean to me but the fact that they're being rude towards my culture, I don't take it as a compliment, you're judging my culture, my people I'm not just going to say thanks to that. And this has happened so many times in my time here (*in NZ*)

In contrast to Maria's experience in the workplace, Thalia, who did not have a job and had no interactions in a workplace but with her international flatmates, said: "I had a Kiwiflatmate and he has an Indonesian partner and he was trying to get my attention by speaking Bahasa, like numbers one, two." She perceived this attitude to be positive, as if he were intending to connect with her through her first language. Based on these different experiences, the participants reflected on and discussed that there seemed to be greater perceptions of discrimination in a workplace than there was elsewhere.

Both also mentioned some of the attitudes they noticed from their social connections in their home countries in relation to their use of language, concluding that more negative judgement was experienced from their own cultural groups towards their use of English as their second language, than from native English speakers. Maria said that sometimes she felt judged by speakers of her first language and that they were looking down on her. As she has been living in an English-speaking country for some years, there seemed to be a higher expectation from people in her home country, that she should demonstrate good English language proficiency. She explained:

They speak English (*referring to social connections in Colombia*) and they know I speak English but "oh show me how good you are, I'm watching you" (*changing her voice tone to mimic them*). "I'm listening to you." I feel they pay attention to whether I make a mistake, to whether I pronounce something funny.

She represented this sense of being judged in her Lego construction (Figure 7). With the diagonal white, orange, and purple pieces pointing down, and also emphasising the “looking down” expression with her hand, she explained her feelings of being judged by both English and Spanish speakers.

Figure 7

Maria Symbolising how she Perceived People’s Focus on her English Language Skills or Looking Down at her



While talking about perceptions of social attitudes during their acculturation experience in NZ, the participants also described social attitudes from non-native English-speaking immigrants, and noted two types of social attitude they had experienced. Firstly, they experienced an attitude of language inclusion in the private domain. When they were in a private multilingual context (at home with close friends or family), they used English as a common language to be polite, and when they were in a public multilingual context (such as a supermarket or shop), they would not consider it rude to speak their first language, as they were not in direct interaction with people around them. Secondly, they perceived an attitude of mutual support from immigrants also struggling with the host country language, which bolstered their own self-esteem. Two examples illustrate this finding:

If I’m having friends over and they don’t speak Spanish, we wouldn’t speak Spanish ‘cause that would be rude. But if I’m at the supermarket I would speak Spanish and I know other people would not care if they don’t understand. (Maria)

Most of my friends here can't speak English well and I'm okay with it. I also told them that I can't speak it very well either, not to pretend, but to make them feel more secure not to have a low confidence when they speak English. For me everyone is equal regardless of the language. No judgement, everyone is equal. May be different if I would work outside. I'm always at home. (Thalia)

This finding provided three socio-cultural factors (attitudes from native English speakers, attitudes from speakers of the same language, and attitudes from other multilingual immigrants) which influenced the participants' self-perceptions and behaviours in relation to different social groups. On one hand, the perceived sense of discrimination and judgement from the two cultural groups to which they belong in relation to their language use, affected the participants' self-esteem. In another hand, the perceived sense of equality within the immigrant multilingual group brought a sense of security from social encouragement of their language use, which as a result built their self-confidence. Similar to the previous finding on language perceptions, there seemed to be a conscious bilingual behaviour of language selection influenced by social attitudes in particular social contexts.

Having identified specific influences on the building blocks or elements of language identity during acculturation, the final finding considers the NZ acculturation context experienced by the participants.

4.5 The acculturation experience

Neither participant was consciously aware of the acculturation process and the associated theoretical concepts, however, during the focus group phase, I facilitated a general discussion about experiences and stressors during their settlement period which I could relate to the theory. They explained that since immigrating to NZ, they had experienced significant events in their lives such as romantic relationships, growing their families, and experiencing the social restrictions of a pandemic, amongst others. All this was experienced while dealing with a new version of themselves in a new language and in a new country.

Three of the main behavioural shifts that the two participants experienced were: 1) a more relaxed way of dressing up; 2) more outdoor nature activity; and 3) more participation in the second-hand market.

Maria explained a change in the way she dressed:

Back in Colombia I could not leave the front door in PJs, that would be a shame. You need to wear nice clothes and be pretty, while here I actually like it. We go out in *chanclas* (jandals) or slippers and it's fine! No one will look at you, you know? All is relaxing and chilled.

Thalia talked about her increased outdoor activity: "regarding the nature walk, even though I used to be an indoor athlete, now I like to walk a lot outdoors with my son. My neighbourhood is surrounded by lots of bush." She also described how, since she had immigrated to NZ, she shopped in second-hand shops:

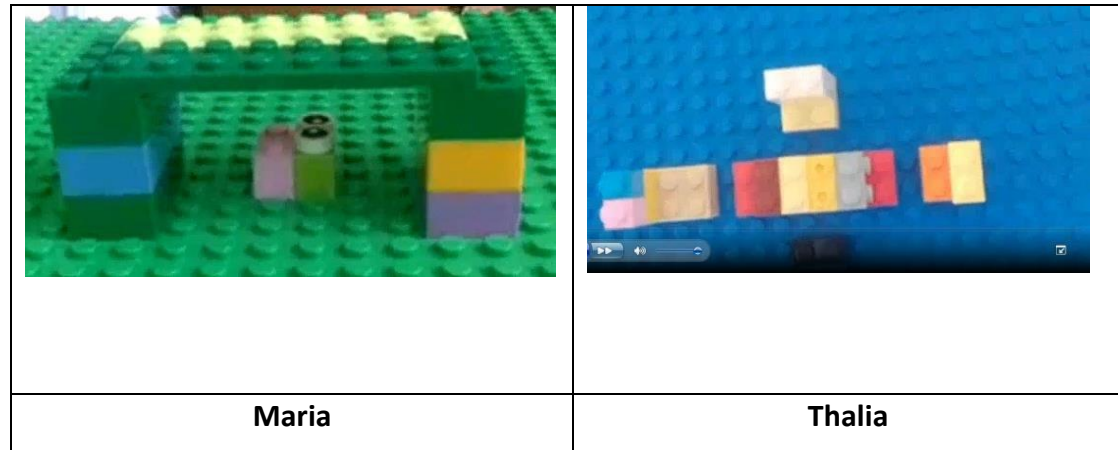
Back in Indonesia I always buy something new. I come from the capital of Indonesia, I was a city girl. But since I came to NZ I find that everything is expensive. So I find that NZ, especially in Auckland, they sell second-hand stuff, so when I came here and then I got pregnant, so if I'm in Indonesia for the first baby I would buy everything new, but in NZ you have to be smart, just buy second-hand but in good condition."

Thalia and Maria's acculturation stories, as the contextual base for adjusting to a new society, exposed the process of loss, adaptation, challenges, and changes, in both perceptions and behaviours. Even though such experiences were leading to a process of personal growth, they faced the challenge of integrating with the mainstream society through different adaptation strategies. Thalia seemed tempted by the social benefits of adopting the English language, while losing some part of her identity in Bahasa, but not Maria, who seemed to be trying to retain a part of her Colombian identity, being strongly attached to her first language. The experience of acculturation uncovered a search for a sense of belonging to two different cultural groups, although that sense of belonging appeared different for each of the participants.

The topic of acculturative stress was not discussed explicitly but exposed through a Lego construction (Figure 8), when each participant was asked to reflect on the element they missed from their home countries. Both reported a sense of missing their family home as a major challenge during acculturation.

Figure 8

Symbols of an Element that Participants Missed from their Home Countries



Maria built a table with two pieces underneath, representing herself and her mother under the same shelter. She explained: “it’s more like the sense of security and belonging that my mum means to me.” Talking about her representation, she said: “this represents the sense of home and shelter” (*using green and pink to represent her mother and herself*). She mentioned that what she missed was that sense of security which “fell apart from her” after immigrating, and “feeling shelter from the world,” something that her mother, who was still in her home country, had not been able to provide for her.

Thalia represented a dining table with chairs around it, saying: “I miss food (*laughing*)... I also miss my mum’s food.” Like Maria, Thalia recognised that she missed her mother and food, two elements that reminded her of that sense of home lost after immigrating. These feelings of homesickness and loneliness reflected acculturativestress and were aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as they were not able to leave NZ and see their families.

Thalia recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic had also brought a sense of dislocation. Due to the social restrictions in Auckland, she had lost the opportunity to engage socially with others, which consequently decreased her opportunities to improve her English language skills. She explained: “before the pandemic we can invite our neighbours and also other international flatmates from different houses but now I think while we are in the pandemic we never had barbecue.”

Despite being away from home and the impact of the pandemic on the participants' acculturative stress, the experience had also helped them develop resilience and achieve personal growth. They concluded that despite the acculturation challenges, they had positively re-defined some parts of themselves through a new language and a new set of behaviours, and highlighted their English proficiency as an advantage in this re-definition process. Maria noted that "having the language is a HUGE advantage 'cause at least you start from somewhere (*positioning her hand in a higher level*), at least you have English." She considered herself "lucky" to arrive in NZ feeling confident in her language skills. Thalia agreed with Maria by saying that for her acculturation experience, having English language skills and feeling confident in them was also a positive thing.

From this finding, I concluded that along with the challenges experienced during the acculturation experience, both participants had noted a growth experience enabled by an increase in language proficiency that strengthened their individual resilience.

4.6 Conclusion

These findings were based on the participants' verbal and non-verbal voices, and their language acculturation experiences in NZ which contributed to the construction of their self-perceptions. Language was central to the participants' integration process, and appeared to me as a dancing compass directing the selection of language, and hence, of identity in specific contexts.

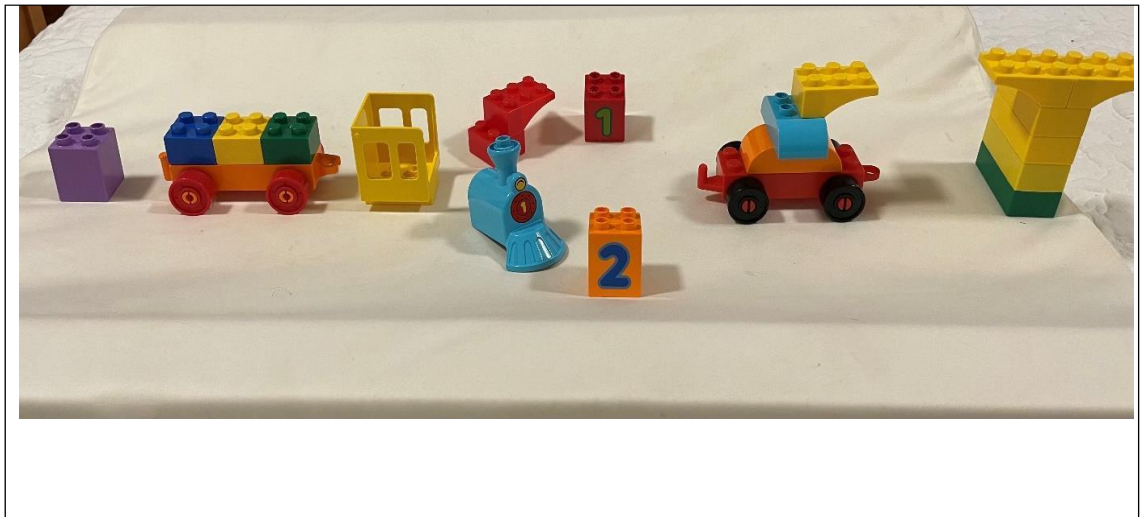
In the next chapter, themes identified from the findings are presented and discussed with links to theory and the literature.

Chapter Five: Discussion

This discussion of themes emerging from the data analysis is linked to the Lego construction (Figure 9) which I built, based on my own ideas, as a mechanism to integrate the themes, literature, and theory, and as a representation of the argument I built in response to the main research question: What influences the construction of an immigrant's bilingual identity during acculturation?

Figure 9

A Self-Constructive Acculturation Journey while Dancing Between Languages



First, an explanation of the Lego construction is needed. It symbolises, from left to right, the factors influencing an immigrant's acculturation journey through the lens of bilinguality: a self-constructive journey in which an immigrant learns how to integrate two linguistic identities to achieve psycho-socio-cultural adaptation.

The purple piece on the left represents an immigrant rooted in one ethnic identity and communicating in one language. After moving to a new country, this immigrant embarks on a bilingual acculturation journey (orange piece with wheels and three pieces on top) detaching from his/her previous self and travelling towards the goal of adaptation (yellow tower on the far right). To achieve this outcome, and through a process of psycho-socio-cultural changes, the immigrant develops linguistic readiness, context sensitivity, and linguistic flexibility (blue, yellow, and green pieces on top of the orange piece with wheels) through the practice of bilingual competence (orange piece with wheels). During the acculturation process, the immigrant may experience

acculturative stress while facing challenges (yellow cage with windows), which are influenced by social attitudes of either L1 (blue diagonal Lego piece) or L2 (red diagonal Lego piece) cultural groups. While shifting between L1 (red piece with #1) and L2 (orange piece with #2), the immigrant attempts to maintain group membership and integrate a bilingual identity (red piece with wheels and orange, blue, and yellow pieces on top). This represents an identity in a process of self-confidence construction (yellow piece on top) to achieve successful adaptation in the host society.

Five themes were identified, which build the argument that the construction of a self-confident bilingual identity during acculturation is influenced by:

- 1) the development of bilingual competence
- 2) the acculturative stress management through the integration of identities
- 3) the social attitudes and expectations of different cultural groups
- 4) the linguistic choice and loyalty cost of bilinguality, and
- 5) the constructed self-confidence to move towards socio-cultural adaptation

5.1 Theme 1: The development of bilingual competence during acculturation requires linguistic readiness, context sensitivity, and increased social interlinguistic opportunities

From the data analysis, it appears that bilinguality enabled the participants to cope with new cognitive, affective, and communicative processes during social interactions and contact with two cultures (the host culture and their native culture) as they acculturated to their new society. This supports the link between language and enculturated behaviours as expressed by Hammers and Blanc (2000), who contended that language behaviour cannot be studied by itself, as it is in constant interaction with other psychological, sociological, and cultural phenomena.

For a positive socio-cultural adaptation, an immigrant needs to be motivated to be linguistically ready to communicate and make meaning in a new language. The findings of this study support two characteristics of bilingual competence identified by Turnbull (2018, p. x), favouring an immigrant's adjustment to sociocultural factors in the host society. He noted the characteristics of "linguistic readiness" to adapt to different

social contexts (built by the ability to produce comprehensive and significant expressions in another language) and fluency in two languages, (built by possessing enough knowledge to use two languages). These characteristics were evident in this study, as both participants fitted Turnbull's (2018) classification of 'emergent bilinguals' as their knowledge and use of English was still developing while they were learning to adapt to different socio-cultural contexts through language. However, being ready for communication is not sufficient, as the social context in the host society can offer either opportunities or constraints to the development of an immigrant's bilingual competence.

Turnbull (2018) argued that bilingual competence is influenced by context sensitivity and readiness to make meaning. The significance of these two concepts was clearly illustrated in this study, which contrasted social interaction in a work context against that of a home context. Thalia was restricted from participating in social or work opportunities for practising her second language out of her home, whereas Maria was exposed to academic and work contexts where she improved her bilingual competence. This supports Hulsen's (2000) notion that social opportunities beyond the home are needed to maintain language, and to practise and hone language skills. The development of these two skills - context sensitivity and readiness for meaning - during acculturation facilitates a positive adjustment to the host culture through social interactions.

One could argue that despite a bilingual person's readiness to communicate and make meaning in two languages, the socio-political context itself could present limitations to practising bilingual competence. Social opportunities increase bilingual competence may be limited or enhanced by linguistic policies and practices. One might expect these to be present to support the linguistic needs and rights of citizens. Turnbull's (2018) argument that minority language groups often interact in isolation was borne out in this study and magnified by the decreased interlinguistic opportunities that participants experienced because of the social restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thus, developing bilingual competence during acculturation (sustained by linguistic readiness and context sensitivity) requires sufficient opportunities for interlinguistic interaction in the host society to prevent an immigrant's feeling of isolation and promote an integrated approach to maintaining cultural heritage.

This theme is depicted in Figure 9 with the bilingual train, in which the mobile feature of bilingual competence (orange piece with wheels), responds to linguistic readiness, context sensitivity, and interlinguistic opportunities during acculturation (blue, yellow, and green Lego pieces on top). The journey is experiential and dynamic, requiring linguistic flexibility and increasing proficiency towards the goal of identity integration.

5.2 Theme 2: Acculturative stress created by bilingualism, loneliness, and self-doubt, can be turned into opportunities for linguistic empowerment and cultural pride

Acculturative stress as described by Berry (1997), is usually associated with the challenges of adjusting in a new host society. While adjusting to NZ, the participants identified three main challenges related to personal or intercultural experiences that caused acculturative stress. Bilingualism was the major acculturative stressor identified by Maria and Thalia, causing anxiety in the learning process of balancing two languages (first language and English). Barkhuizen (2006) contended that this constant linguistic awareness is stressful. Gollan and Kroll (2001) similarly argued that trying to balance two languages might even decrease cognitive performance in the lesser used language, leading to language loss (in the first language) or a lack of competence (in the second language). Further to the challenge of bilingualism, loneliness was another challenge identified by the participants, as separation from their families brought them feelings of insecurity and homesickness. Berry (1997) argued that life changes such as these can have an impact on immigrants' mental health and create identity confusion. This was evidenced in this study with the third acculturative challenge experienced by the participants: self-doubt. In Thalia's self-representation, she reflected self-doubt when she was not able to identify clear aspects of her linguistic identities. This suggested a lack of awareness of her bilingual identity construction process.

While these challenges result in acculturative stress, this can be reduced when immigrants see opportunities in such challenges. Two opportunities identified in this

study were a sense of bilingual empowerment, and a sense of cultural pride. Both participants described empowerment resulting from being able to maintain privacy and power in some conversations by conversing in their first language. Barkhuizen (2006) noted that bilingual empowerment is a linguistic advantage related to having linguistic choice. A second opportunity suggested in this study was the development of cultural pride, as the participants became aware of the rich value of accessing their cultural heritage through their bilingual competence. Both opportunities of bilingual empowerment and cultural pride become accessible when adopting an integration strategy during acculturation, thus reducing acculturative stress (Berry, 1997; Stuart & Ward, 2013; Ward & Masgoret, 2008).

The yellow Lego cage with windows in Figure 9 represents this theme. This piece symbolises how acculturative stressors such as bilingualism, loneliness, and self-doubt can become a “cage” limiting an immigrant’s adaptation to the host society and reducing their self-confidence. However, this cage has windows symbolising opportunities for linguistic empowerment and cultural pride linked to the bicultural nature of an integration strategy. During acculturation, an immigrant may choose to stay in the cage or explore the “windows” of opportunities. This choice may strengthen the sense of self-efficacy and benefit the process of adaptation.

5.3 Theme 3: Negative social attitudes from native and non-native English-speaking groups influence an immigrant’s self-perception and linguistic confidence

Despite the NZ literature on immigrants showing those with strong English proficiency trigger a favourable response from native mainstream speakers (Cooper & Barkhuizen, 2002; Plumridge et al., 2012; Roach & Roskvist, 2007), thus enabling a positive socio-cultural integration, my findings suggest another perspective. One might expect immigrants to experience the greatest judgment from native English-speakers on their language skills. However, this was not the case for these participants, as they described a higher bilingual proficiency expectation from their own cultural groups, which affected their bilingual confidence. Except for Collier’s (1989) view that an immigrant’s relatives have high expectations of second language acquisition and proficiency, the literature

appears to be quiet on this type of expectation by an immigrant's native cultural group living either in their home country, or in the same acculturation country.

Another social factor influencing an immigrant's linguistic confidence revealed in the study was the discriminatory attitudes perceived while demonstrating bilingual competence in the workplace (as illustrated by Maria who felt unconscious discrimination from a work colleague in relation to her cultural roots) and the resultant impacts on self-esteem and confidence to participate further. This supports Tankosić et al.'s (2021) views on linguistic subordination and social stigmatisation.

It appears that negative social attitudes can come from either group, and influence not only an immigrant's self-perception and self-confidence, but also his/her willingness to engage with different cultural groups. This may affect the adaptation process and reduce opportunities to improve bilingual competence.

In Figure 9, the red and blue diagonal Lego pieces symbolise the discriminatory attitudes of a non-native English-speaker in relation to their high expectations of an immigrant's bilingual competence (red Lego piece pointing towards #1) and the attitudes from native English-speakers (blue Lego piece pointing towards #2) towards non-English speakers

5.4 Theme 4: The bilingual immigrant dance between languages brings a linguistic choice and a cultural loyalty cost

Berry's (1997) integration orientation suggests that immigrants simultaneously adjust to both their heritage and host cultures, as they seek a sense of belonging in their new country. Language is a vehicle used by the participants in this study to show their sense of belonging to their different cultural groups. To explain this phenomenon, Noels et al. (1996) proposed a situated approach, in which immigrants achieve psychosocial adjustment while shifting from one ethnic group membership to another, depending on contextual demands and benefits. The participants in this study, beyond discovering the benefits of language choice such as linguistic empowerment and context sensitivity, were also learning how to meet their instrumental and sentimental needs through language, drawing on their bilingual competence.

Barkhuizen's (2006) study noted how bilingual competence enhances instrumental and sentimental attachment through language choice. My participants demonstrated this when attempting to meet practical needs in their acculturating contexts. For example, when communicating with flatmates or earning an income (instrumental attachment), the participants recognised that they shifted to L2, and when attempting to connect emotionally with themselves, their families, and their cultural roots, they shifted to L1 (sentimental attachment). Berry (1997) noted the power differentials that arise between mainstream and minority groups during acculturation, particularly in the public domain such as in a workplace, and he assumed that in the private domain, their first language was the choice of minority groups. My study results suggest that immigrants interacting with other L1 speakers in the same acculturation context, prefer the use of their L1 language in the private domain. However, I conclude that this could bring a sense of disloyalty to their L2 identity, as suggested by Barkhuizen (2006). In the same way, multilingual immigrants meeting in the public domain seemed to prefer English, as it is perceived as a common and equal vehicle for an intercultural dialogue. However, this could also bring a sense of disloyalty to their L1 identity (Barkhuizen, 2006).

Language choice implies a cultural loyalty cost. Barkhuizen (2006) suggested that to achieve membership of different cultural groups, efforts need to be made to maintain loyalty to each group to which the immigrants belong. I described my participants as dancing between languages; a dance that not only met instrumental and sentimental needs, but also increased a sense of belonging. Thus, they danced through their first language as they attempted to maintain membership with their native cultural group, while also dancing in their second language to earn an income, achieve social equality, and succeed in the host society. However, this dance can provoke a decline in the use of L1, causing what Hulsén (2000, p. xx) referred to as "linguistic insecurity." Hence, the possibility of a dance between languages may provide a new opportunity in the acculturation experience, with the construction of identity loyalty through linguistic integration. This indicates a shift away from the perception of language and group membership loss or disloyalty when choosing only one language or cultural group, towards integrating both in one identity through a bilingual dance.

This theme is represented in Figure 9 with the red Lego piece with number one, and the orange piece with number two. These pieces symbolise the dancing language choice between L1 and L2, provoking a cultural loyalty cost and influencing the conscious construction of an integrated bilingual identity while seeking cultural belonging.

5.5 Theme 5: The construction of a bilingual self in harmony involves a detachment from a pre-conceived self to a new bilingual confident self

I believe four influences shape the metaphorical construction of a bilingual identity during acculturation:

- 1) The grieving process involves detaching from a pre-conceived native self
- 2) Bilingual competence emerges from weaving and integrating two linguistic identities
- 3) Social attitudes influence linguistic self-confidence
- 4) A bilingual language choice is made to reconcile group membership and integrate identity loyalty

The first or initial influence of grief and detachment from cultural roots experienced by immigrants is supported by studies of immigration (Ainslie, 2005; Akhtar, 1995; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1984), and often involves the acculturative stress described by Berry (1997) associated with intercultural adjustment. Both participants in this study described behavioural shifts and acknowledged the reality of the experience of loss, while also revealing the anchoring aspect of language in a bilingual identity. Wang et al. (2021) reiterated that language reinforces an immigrant's identity and allows community membership. Thus, this first layer represents the influence of language as a permanent and portable aspect of an immigrant's identity, a security resource available to overcome the experience of loss during acculturation.

The second influence relies on the versatility of bilingual competence and linguistic choice for identity construction and integration. While detaching from a previous self-concept and constructing a new one in a new language, immigrants face the acculturative challenge of uniting their linguistic identities through bilinguality and

Seeking out a new group membership. Through linguistic flexibility, immigrants can turn challenges into opportunities, as they construct an integrated bilingual self-concept, and thus achieve the integration of two linguistic identities and a sense of belonging and loyalty to two cultural groups.

The third layer involves the social attitudes in the acculturating context. As Ainslie (2005) claimed, socio-cultural interactions scaffold an immigrant's self-representation, as they influence the way they perceive themselves and the world around them. Participant self-representations revealed the influence of positive or negative attitudes on their self-concepts and the effects on their self-confidence.

The fourth and top layer in the metaphorical construction represents the immigrant's self-confidence built on the previously described influences. A combination of positive influences may sustain and grow such confidence, benefiting an immigrant's linguistic acculturation (Noels et al., 1996) towards positive psychosocial adjustment. Alternatively, if the influences are negative, such confidence may be deflated, increasing the immigrant's acculturative stress and negatively affecting the adaptation process.

These four layers are integrated during acculturation. and a bilingual identity in harmony is constructed, related in acculturation terms, to a positive adaptation to the new society.

This theme is represented by the last two Lego constructions on the right of Figure 9. This structure reflects the factors that influence the construction of an immigrant's bilingual identity during acculturation. The red Lego piece with wheels symbolises the first layer of an immigrant's construction of self: the grieving and detachment process. The orange piece on top symbolises the second layer: the bilingual competence that allows the integration of two linguistic identities. The blue piece on top of the orange symbolises the third layer: the social attitudes in the acculturation experience that shape the immigrant's self-perception. Finally, the yellow Lego piece symbolises – in an aspirational way – the goal of linguistic self-confidence and the achievement of a harmonious bilingual identity integration. This layered construction is metaphorically moving or making efforts to reach the yellow construction on the right, which symbolises psychological and socio-cultural adaptation.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the argument that the construction of a self-confident bilingual identity during acculturation results from four related influences, each of which was discussed as a theme. Firstly, bilingual competence is a weaver, connector, and adaptor of identities; secondly, the acculturation experience is an opportunity to develop awareness of linguistic empowerment and cultural pride to integrate two linguistic identities; thirdly, social attitudes shape the linguistic confidence and perception of self-acceptance and group acceptance; and fourthly, the capability of linguistic choice, sustained by bilingual competence, helps to maintain linguistic identity loyalty and meet practical and emotional needs.

This assemblage of elements continuously adjusts and evolves in a socio-cultural context, finding new challenges and opportunities and always seeking to achieve some sense of self-acceptance and belonging.

5.7 Limitations of the study

There were three main limitations identified in this study. Firstly, the personal perspective that I bring to this study as a bilingual immigrant could have influenced my interpretations. However, this perspective was also a benefit, as it helped me empathise with the participants and set up an immediate rapport between myself and the participants, thus reducing power imbalances. Secondly, the online data collection process could be considered as a limitation, as a face-to-face session might have yielded richer data. Thirdly, I acknowledge the limited sample size. While this might be a limitation, the value of a study such as this offers the ability to delve deeply into each participant's individual experiences. Nonetheless, caution should be exercised when generalising from the findings.

The final chapter presents my conclusions and some recommendations arising from the findings.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations

In this study, I sought to answer the research question, what influences the construction of an immigrant's confident bilingual identity during acculturation? Focusing on the NZ context, I built a metaphorical construction based on the foundation of acculturation and framed by the perspective of identity integration through bilinguality. Its focus was on an immigrant's self-construction process while developing self-confidence en route to a state of psycho-socio-cultural adaptation. Based on an interpretivist and constructivist epistemology, I captured the experiences of two bilingual immigrants with the LSP method and interpreted these through the lens of hermeneutics as my methodological approach.

The following three sketches represent the main findings (Figure 10), recommendations (Figure 11) and value of the learning experience (Figure 12) of this study. The reason for including these informal sketches rather than using formal diagrams is to illustrate my reflective processes as I engaged with the study.

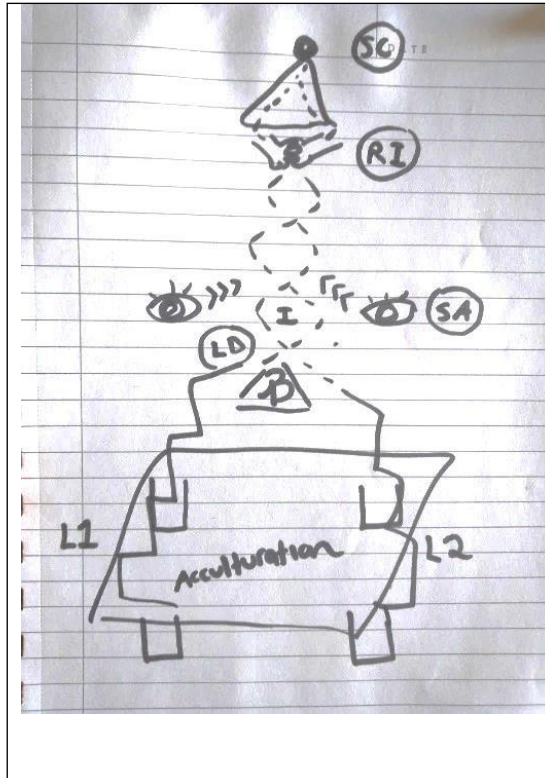
Figure 10*Main Findings*

Figure 10 depicts what this study presents as the key factors influencing the construction of an immigrant's bilingual identity during acculturation. The base of this construction includes the acculturation process as the foundation, with two separate linguistic identities (L1 and L2). Acculturation initiates the process of self-construction and identity integration through language. During this process, an immigrant detaches from L1 (LD - loss and detachment) and starts to integrate (I) two linguistic identities while dancing between languages (pointed intersecting lines). In this metaphorical dance, the immigrant is subject to the social attitudes (SA) of two cultural groups (eyes) observing and judging this process of linguistic integration. While dealing with these influences and the process of linguistic integration, the immigrant learns how to reconcile a bilingual identity (RI – reconciliation of identity) valuing the richness of each identity and achieving a sense of belonging to different cultural groups. Such a reconciliation process balances (triangle) the dance between languages and identities, forming a self-confident bilingual immigrant in a continuous process of self- construction (circle on top).

Based on these findings and their link with the literature, I argue that as immigrants attempt to adapt to a new society during acculturation, various influences can either

construct or destroy their confidence in their ability to achieve psycho-socio-cultural adaptation. Through their linguistic dance between languages, which is observed and judged by native and host cultural groups, an immigrant experiences the challenges of acculturative stress while constructing a bilingual identity. Stressors such as loneliness, anxiety, and self-doubt, can be overcome with developing bilingual competence, unfolding linguistic empowerment and cultural pride. These are two bilingual acculturation keys for successful integration and reconciliation of two linguistic identities and achieving confident participation in cultural groups to which immigrants seek to belong.

The recommendations that came out of my study are represented in Figure 11, and make a case for education as the key to supporting acculturating immigrants who are second-language speakers.

Figure 11

Recommendations

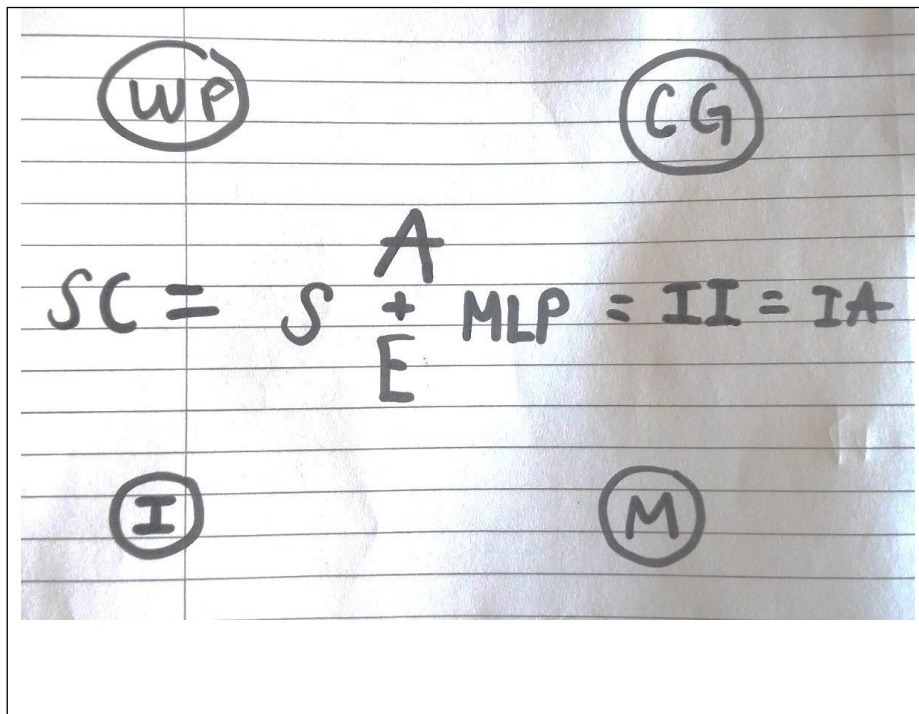


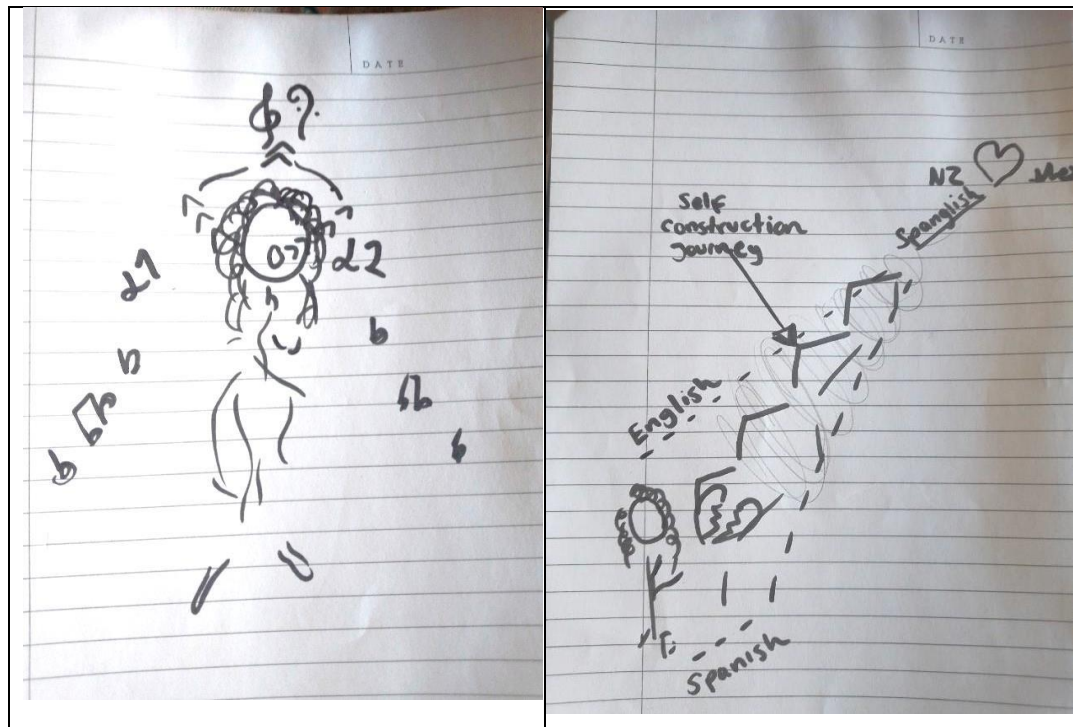
Figure 11 portrays a formula to support the construction of an immigrant's self-confident bilingual identity during acculturation. This study recommends that more support (S) is needed to educate (E) immigrants (I), mainstream society (M), minority cultural groups (CG), and leaders in NZ workplaces (WP) to increase their awareness (A) of the psychological and identity implications for immigrants during a bilingual

process of acculturation. Through public opportunities for multilingual practices (MLP), bilingual immigrants can grow their bilingual competence and self-confidence to prevent language loss and achieve a less stressful process of identity integration (II), resulting in a positive identity adaptation (IA) and contributing to the broader purpose: multicultural social cohesion (SC).

One means of implementing this education recommendation would be to provide academic and workplace settings with information on the power of non-verbal tools, such as LSP, to enable a multicultural dialogue in which the voices of non-native English-speaking immigrants can be seen, heard, and understood. Minority voices willing to participate in their host society should be encouraged and valued rather than limited by self-doubt and speech interference caused by limited lexical access. More information and tools should be available for immigrants to increase their awareness of, and seek support to cope with the psychological impact of their acculturation journey. And lastly, more training in the NZ workplace for locals should be provided to: 1) favour diversity through intercultural communication, 2) increase locals' awareness on immigrants' second language limitations and 3) prevent discriminatory attitudes towards immigrants from non-English speaking backgrounds. Figure 12 depicts my learning experience while undertaking this research.

Figure 12

My Acculturative Bilingual Self-Confidence Construction Journey, Dancing Between Languages



While reading, researching, and reflecting during this research process, I experienced an identity reconciliation process for myself as a bilingual immigrant and student. Seeing through the eyes of other immigrants the double challenges and benefits of bilingual acculturation, and working on my dissertation both in Mexico and NZ, gave me the opportunity to re-frame my own experience of identity integration, which has been invaluable. As an immigrant, I have learnt the importance of developing awareness of the influence of language on the construction of my identity and self-confidence. I have learnt that I do not have to choose between one identity and the other, between one country and the other, or between one cultural group and the other. I now realise I can integrate them and take advantage of the cultural richness of each opportunity. I have learnt that I did not lose anything after immigrating, but won the possibility of identifying, keeping, and sharing the value of two different cultural realities, rather than experiencing an internal fight of identities. I have also learnt how my bilinguality and the social attitudes I have experienced influence the way I perceive myself. Finally, I have learnt that this is a continuous dancing process of constructing my identity in the most harmonious possible way.

The richness of this experience as a bilingual student, was in learning how to undertake qualitative research in a second language. I learnt that working on a master's dissertation in a second language during my own process of acculturation in the middle of a pandemic involved twice the expected effort, but also, twice the satisfaction. Doubled efforts were needed to deal with my own challenges derived from acculturative stress. Doubled efforts were needed to increase my knowledge, vocabulary, and my confidence to read, write, and express my ideas in a second language in a coherent and clear way. Doubled efforts were also needed to reconcile my Spanish-confident student self with my English-insecure student self. However, this doubled effort resulted in doubled satisfaction too: the satisfaction of achieving a personal academic goal of finding a line of research and completing a Master of Education in an English-speaking country. I also experienced professional satisfaction that my research had achieved its purpose, as one of my participants at the end of the session recognised that she had become aware of the implications of language in the construction of her bilingual identity.

Because of the complexity of accurately translating my ideas from one language to the other, another important learning experience during this research was in finding visual tools to support my writing process in a second language. Drawing sketches and building my own Lego constructions to visualise abstract concepts, helped me to reflect on and organise my ideas in a visual way, so I was able to select the right words to express my thoughts. Therefore, I learnt that for a student writing in a second language, the process of accommodating ideas flows better if there is manual and visual stimulation. I consider this learning to be beneficial for my future academic work in English and for my professional work, lecturing or training multicultural audiences. It could also be a useful strategy for other immigrant learners struggling to communicate their ideas verbally in a second language.

Finding the motivation to continue the research through the challenges of 2021 while improving my bilingual competence and self-confidence brought me immense satisfaction, in that I achieved another of the main purposes of this research, which was to express other minority non-English voices that suffer disadvantages and challenges in their bilingual acculturating journey in a new society.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Ethics letters

First letter – first ethics approval

21 June 2021
Lyn Lewis
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Lyn

Ethics Application: **21/192 The influence of English language proficiency on the construction of an immigrant's bilingual identity during acculturation**

Thank you for submitting your application for ethical review. We are pleased to advise that the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTC) approved your ethics application at their meeting on 14 June 2021, subject to:

1. Provision of a revised recruitment protocol ensuring that snowballing involves the contacts passing on the Participant Information Sheet or advertisement, with potential participants contacting the researcher directly to register interest;
1. Provision of an assurance that participants will not be asked to sign confidentiality agreements as this is covered in the Information Sheet and Consent Form for focus groups. Removal of reference to this in the Participant Information Sheet;
2. Provision of a revised data storage plan. AUTC's recently revised guidelines along with a data storage matrix are available on the Research Ethics website at <http://aut.ac.nz/researchethics>;
1. Provision of more than one week for participants to consider their involvement in the research. AUTC recommends a period of at least two weeks;
2. Amendment of the Participant Information Sheet as follows:
 - a. Inclusion of the verbatim wording for counselling from AUT Health Counselling and Wellbeing which can be found on the Research Ethics website at <http://aut.ac.nz/researchethics>;
 - a. Removal of the offer for participants to edit transcripts as this is not appropriate for focus group material;
 - b. Replacement of the reference to 'anonymity' with 'confidentiality' in the privacy section;
 - c. List the qualification the researcher will receive as a benefit of the research;
 - d. Update the name of the Executive Secretary to Dr Carina Meares.

Please provide us with a response to the points raised in these conditions, indicating either how you have satisfied these points or proposing an alternative approach. AUTC also requires copies of any altered documents, such as Information Sheets, surveys etc. You are not required to resubmit the application form again. Any changes to responses in the form required by the committee in their conditions may be included in a supporting memorandum.

Please note that the Committee is always willing to discuss with applicants the points that have been made. There may be information that has not been made available to the Committee, or aspects of the research may not have been fully understood.

Once your response is received and confirmed as satisfying the Committee's points, you will be notified of the full approval of your ethics application. Full approval is not effective until all the conditions have been met. Data collection may not commence until full approval has been confirmed. If these conditions are not met within six months, your application may be closed and a new application will be required if you wish to continue with this research.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, we ask that you use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at ethics@aut.ac.nz.

We look forward to hearing from you,

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTC Secretariat, **Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc: ale.soto.ot@gmail.com

Second letter – second ethics approval

15 July 2021

Lyn Lewis

Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Lyn

Re Ethics Application: **21/192 The influence of English language proficiency on the construction of an immigrant's bilingual identity during acculturation**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 15 July 2024.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Please remove this bullet point from your Consent Form: 'I understand that at the end of the focus group, I will be invited to add or withdraw any information I have shared during the focus group if I so wish'.

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC before commencing your study.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
1. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
2. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard and that all the dates on the documents are updated.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: ale.soto.ot@gmail.com

Third letter - amendment to the data collection protocol

Lyn Lewis
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Lyn

Re: Ethics Application: **21/192 The influence of English language proficiency on the construction of an immigrant's bilingual identity during acculturation**

Thank you for your responses and updated documents for the amendment to your ethics application.

Min The amendment to the data collection protocol (interviews online) has been approved.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Amend the Information Sheet as follows using the current exemplar which can be found on the Research Ethics website at <http://aut.ac.nz/researchethics>;
 - a. Inclusion of the verbatim wording for counselling from AUT Health Counselling and Wellbeing .
 - b. Use the full withdrawal statement.
 - c. Remove Dr Carian Mears name.

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTECH before commencing your study.

Standard Conditions of Approval.

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research and as approved by AUTECH in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTECH prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTECH Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTECH Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.
8. AUTECH grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted. When the research is undertaken outside New Zealand, you need to meet all ethical, legal, and locality obligations or requirements for those jurisdictions.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTECH Secretariat

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: ale.soto.ot@gmail.com

Appendix B. Tools

B1 Semi-structured questions for focus group

INDICATIVE FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

The influence of English proficiency on the construction of an immigrant's bilingual identities

Activity using Lego Serious Play Method

Stage 1 – Learn

a) Getting familiar with the Lego serious play method

- What is the element of your home country or home culture that you miss the most?
- How would you describe your Lego representation? Why is that the element that you miss the most?

Stage 2 – Build, Share and Reflect

a) First language representation

- How do you perceive yourself when you think and speak in your native/ first language? Please build a Lego representation to answer this question.
- Could you please share the meaning of your construction? How does it represent yourself?
- Why did you choose those pieces?
- Why did you choose those colours?
- What is the relationship between those elements?
- What does this piece symbolise?
- What is it like for you to communicate in your native tongue?
- How do you think your construction reflects what it is like for you to think about yourself in your native language?
- What else can you share about your representation?

b) English representation

- How do you perceive yourself when you think and speak in English? Please build a Lego representation to answer this question.
- Could you please share the meaning of your construction? How does it represent yourself?
- Why did you choose those pieces?
- Why did you choose those colours?
- What is the relationship between those elements?
- What does this piece symbolise?
- What is it like for you to communicate in English?
- How do you think your construction reflects what it is like for you to think about yourself in your native language?
- What else can you share about your representation?

c) Discussion on immigrants' communication experience in NZ English

- What commonalities/similarities do you notice in each of the constructions? (their own and the other participant's)

- What differences do you notice in each of the constructions? (their own and the other participant's)

General Discussion Phase

Native/First language

- How important is for you to retain your mother tongue and how do you do it?
- How do you feel when you speak your mother tongue? How do you feel when you speak it in New Zealand's public spaces? How do New Zealanders respond when they hear you speaking your mother tongue?

English

- How important is it for you to learn English in order to fit into NZ society?
- How would you describe your experience as an immigrant thinking and speaking in NZ English?
- Do you translate in your head from your native tongue into English before speaking?
- How do you perceive your English proficiency?
- How do you feel when you try to verbally communicate your ideas in English at your workplace? Or when your colleagues communicate their ideas with you in English?
- How do you feel when you try to communicate your written ideas in English at your workplace?
- What helps you to understand English speakers better? What have you found difficult while communicating with New Zealand English speakers?
- What resources or obstacles have you found in New Zealand during the time you have lived here to improve your English?

Language shedding and learning

- During your time in NZ what new vocabulary have you learnt? Have you changed your accent?
- Have you learnt Kiwi slang? Can you give me some examples of what you now say?
- What ways of speaking have you changed or stopped doing? (ie American English words, translation from mother tongue)
- As you have been speaking English in NZ how has this made you feel about yourself? Has it affected your sense of self-value in any way?

Behavioural shifts and Self-esteem

- How has your English language ability impacted your self-esteem?
- How does the language you speak influence your identity of who you are and how you perceive yourself or how others perceive you?
- What non-verbal behaviours have you picked up from kiwis? Or what non-verbal behaviours have you shed?

Wrap-Up:

- What do you think might be the main challenges for non-native English-speaking immigrants when acculturating to New Zealand?
- What do you think that could be done to support their acculturation experience and to strengthen their confidence?
- How do you respond to the idea that New Zealanders need to become more aware of the challenges that non-English speaking immigrants are facing?

B2 Process used to implement the LSP method

The table below describes how the process was followed while implementing the LSP method.

Table 2 *Process of LSP*

	Description
a) Introduction	The participants were welcomed and introduced to the objectives, rules, and structure of the session. They were allowed to ask any questions they had. They were reminded that they have given Consent for the video recording of the session.
a) Practical example	<p>The participants were introduced to the visual representation building process through Lego. I built a table, as an example, and asked them to build another table with their Lego kits. Then, I built a more abstract concept (Social connections, as an element that I miss from my home country) and asked them to build an element they miss from their home countries, based on their own experiences.</p> <p>They had a time limit to build their representation and once they were ready, they verbally shared what they built.</p> <p>Once they were familiar with the process of Lego construction, I asked the following questions:</p>
Step two	Description
Q1	<p>The participants were asked to construct (within a time limit) a Lego representation in response to the question: How do you perceive yourself when you think and speak in your mother tongue?</p> <p>Once the representations were complete, each participant shared what they built and reflected on their reasons for such a construction. A discussion emerged out of these representations and the implications that acculturation have had in their lives.</p>
Q2	<p>The same process was repeated with the question: How do you perceive yourself when you think and speak in English?</p> <p>For this section, visual data was collected through screenshots made of the Lego representations during the video recording. Verbal data was also collected and transcribed from the recording.</p>

B3 Participant Information Sheet

16 Oct 2021

Project Title: The influence of English proficiency on the construction of an immigrant's bilingual identity during acculturation

An Invitation

I am inviting you to be part of my research project to obtain the qualification of Master in Education. With this project, I would like to explore your views on how the English language proficiency may influence an immigrant's bilingual identity. As part of my Masters' dissertation research, I would like to invite you and another participant to share, through an online interactive session, your immigration and language experiences in New Zealand.

In order to remove any risk of you feeling pressured by this invitation, I have asked a neutral person from my social network to make the initial approach to immigrants who may be interested in the research. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information and feel free to ask me if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. I would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to.

What is the purpose of this research?

Over the past 20 years, New Zealand (and Auckland in particular) has experienced a significant growth in ethnic diversity with the arrival of immigrants from around the world. This has resulted in a multilingual society with many immigrants communicating through English as a common language. Being an immigrant myself, I have experience identity struggles related to the use of language and this experience has made me want to explore with other immigrants, their experiences so that I might better understand the influence that the English language may have on the construction of our bilingual identities. Your contribution by engaging in this research project has the potential to firstly, offer valuable insights to improve communication between native and non-native English speakers and secondly, to empower the bilingual immigrant voice in New Zealand. I believe the outcomes of the research are important because they will add new knowledge in the field of acculturation and sociolinguistic studies on immigrant bilingual identities.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

- You have been invited to participate in the research because you meet the following criteria:
- You were born outside of New Zealand
- You are an immigrant who have been living in New Zealand between 2-6 years
- Your native tongue is different from English

If you agree to participate in the research, you will be one of two NZ immigrants who will contribute to this research. Both participants will work together in a focus group with me as the researcher.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

You have been given the Participant Information Sheet by someone who believes you may be interested in participating. After the reading this Sheet and if you are willing to participate, please get in touch with me (ale.soto.ot@gmail.com) and I will send you a Consent Form and further information about the online focus group meeting.

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

If you know of other immigrants who may be interested in participating in the research, and they meet the criteria listed in the section above, please tell them to contact me directly (Ale Soto) and they will be given a Participant Information Sheet.

What will happen in this research?

If you decide to participate in this research, we will have an online meeting via Microsoft Teams and there are some steps we need to follow due to the current COVID-19 circumstances in Auckland. You

will meet with myself, and another participant for around two hours on a date and time that is convenient for you.

Before the research session

I will need you to read and sign the attached consent form and email it back to me

Once I receive your consent form, we will agree on a date and time that is convenient for you and I will send an invitation via email with the link and instructions to join an online meeting

Once you've accepted the invitation, I will drop off a set of Lego in your home (these will have been sanitised and will be in a sealed contained). I will also include a gift card to say thanks for your time to participate on this research.

During the research session

During the online session you will participate in a focus group where we will share experiences through the use of Lego-building. We will also discuss your language experiences in New Zealand. With your permission, I would like to record our online session, and the responses you and the other participant might share, so that we can focus on our conversation and I will not need to be distracted by taking extensive notes during the session. I will also ask your permission to take some screenshots of the Lego constructions you will build.

What are the discomforts and risks?

I don't anticipate any discomfort or risk in you taking part in the research. If you do experience any discomfort or disadvantage as part of the research, you should let me know immediately.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

We will debrief at the end of the interview and I will check that you are comfortable following our discussion. If you feel that you need to talk to someone about your experience, I can refer you to counselling services. AUT Student Counselling and Mental Health is able to offer three free sessions of confidential counselling support for adult participants in an AUT research project. These sessions are only available for issues that have arisen directly as a result of participation in the research and are not for other general counselling needs. To access these services, you will need to:

drop into our centre at WB203 City Campus, email counselling@aut.ac.nz or call 921 9998.

let the receptionist know that you are a research participant, and provide the title of my research and my name and contact details as given in this Information Sheet.

You can find out more information about AUT counsellors and counselling on <https://www.aut.ac.nz/student-life/student-support/counselling-and-mental-health>

What are the benefits?

Your contribution has the potential to impact the intercultural communication practice in New Zealand between native and non-native English speakers, as well as gaining awareness on your own immigration experience. I also intend to publish journal articles and speak at conferences about the research findings, so there is potential for your views as an immigrant to reach others in New Zealand. You will also be contributing knowledge towards a better understanding of how we might recognise linguistic diversity more effectively in public spaces for the benefit of New Zealand's diverse population.

How will my privacy be protected?

The fact that you are a participant in the research will not be shared with anyone else. Your privacy will be protected and will be confidential in the research. You will be able to choose a pseudonym following the session. Both participants will agree to keep confidentiality and to not share any information from the focus group discussion. In the journal articles or conference presentations I give, your information will not be identifiable as I will not only use your pseudonym and I will select exemplars for illustrative purposes with care, so that your identity will be protected. The data collected will be stored on a password-protected computer or if in hard copy, will be kept in a locked filing cabinet.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

I anticipate the total time involvement expected of you will be around two hours. No additional costs will be involved. As a token of appreciation for your participation, I will be giving you a gift card.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You will have 2 weeks from the time that you receive the Participant Information Sheet to consider whether you would like to participate.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

I will be providing a written summary of the research findings and will send you a copy if you indicate on the Consent Form that you would like to receive the summary. This is the reason why I need to collect your contact details on the Consent Form.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTECH, ethics@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 6038 or my supervisor, Dr Lyn Lewis lylewis@aut.ac.nz, mobile 021 844168.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact:

Researcher Contact Details:

Ale Soto

Phone: 0223231139.

Email: ale.soto.ot@gmail.com

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on the 19th of October 2021.
AUTECH Reference number 21/192.**

*B4 Consent form***Consent Form**

Project title: The influence of English proficiency on the construction of an immigrant's bilingual identity during acculturation

Researcher: Ale Soto

Please check the circles below to show that you give consent for each statement:

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 16/10/2021
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that I will receive an invitation via email to participate in an online session with the researcher and another participant where the discussions will be video and audio-recorded and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then, while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was part, I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ☐ I understand that the researcher will take screenshots of my Lego constructions that I build for the purposes of the research.
- ☐ I permit the researcher to use the screenshots that are part of this study for assessment and publication purposes.
- ☐ I agree to my verbal contribution to the focus group discussion to be used for assessment and publication purposes.
- ☐ I understand that the photographs will be used for academic purposes only and will not be published in any form outside of this study without my further written permission.
- ☐ I agree to confidentiality of the focus group discussion.
- ☐ I understand that my privacy will be maintained, and I will provide a pseudonym by which I will be known.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research, and I give permission to the researcher to drop off a sanitised Lego kit in the address I will write below.
- ☐ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

Participant's address :

Participant's name :

Date:

Please provide contact details if you wish to receive a copy of the findings:

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**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on the 19th of October 2021.
AUTEC Reference number 21/192.**