

# The Importance of a Plurilingual Approach in English-Speaking Higher Education for Language Vitality and Identity Validation

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Tiohtià:ke (Montréal) is  
historically known as a  
gathering place for many First  
Nations.

We recognize and respect the  
Kanien'kehà:ka as the  
traditional custodians of the  
lands and waters on which we  
meet today





# My Positionality

Applied Linguistics/Language Education

Identities: Brasileira; Latina; Spanish and Italian heritage; settler in Canada;  
international student in higher education; first generation immigrant

Languages in my repertoire: Português (Brasil), Español, Italiano, English, and  
Français. I've also studied other languages: Latin, Tupi, Esperanto

# Outline

- Canadian Multilingualism
- Rethinking the Concept of “Language”
- Pluri/Multilingual Turn in Language Education Research
- Study 1: Language and Identity
- Study 2: Plurilingual Approach
- Recommendations
- Q&A





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# Canada is Multilingual

- While Canada has two official languages (English and French), there are over **200 languages**, including Indigenous and immigrant languages.
- Canadian multilingualism is on the rise; between 2011 and 2016 there was an **increase of 13.3%** in the number of people who speak an immigrant language (Statistics Canada 2017)
- Between 2010 and 2020, the number of international students in Canada had a drastic **increase of 135%**, with a decrease of 17% in 2020 compared to 2019 (Canadian Bureau for International Education, n.d.)
- In Canadian universities, the number of international students increased by **327%** between 2010 and 2020, from 153,790 to 503,270 (Global Affairs Canada [GAC], 2017; IIE, 2021).
- Montreal is the city in North America with the highest number of trilingual residents and has **150 languages** are part of the landscape (Statistics Canada, 2017)

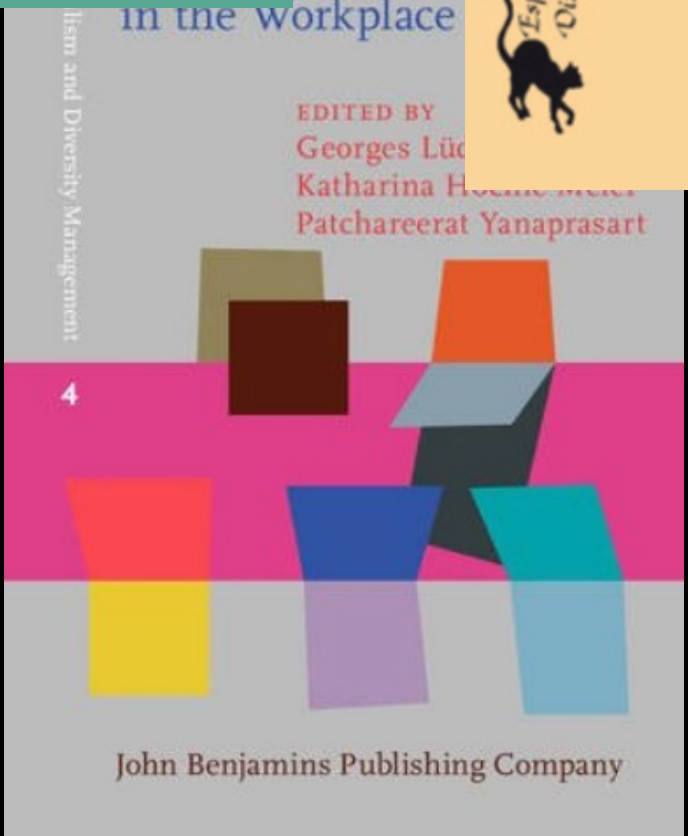
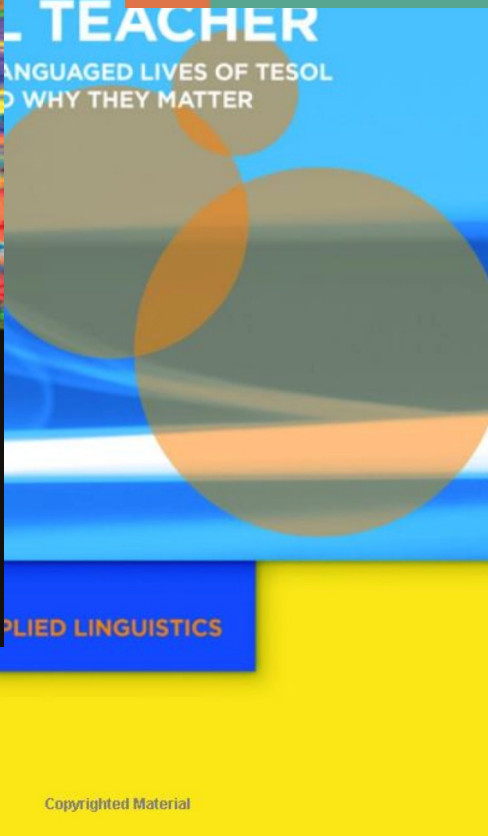
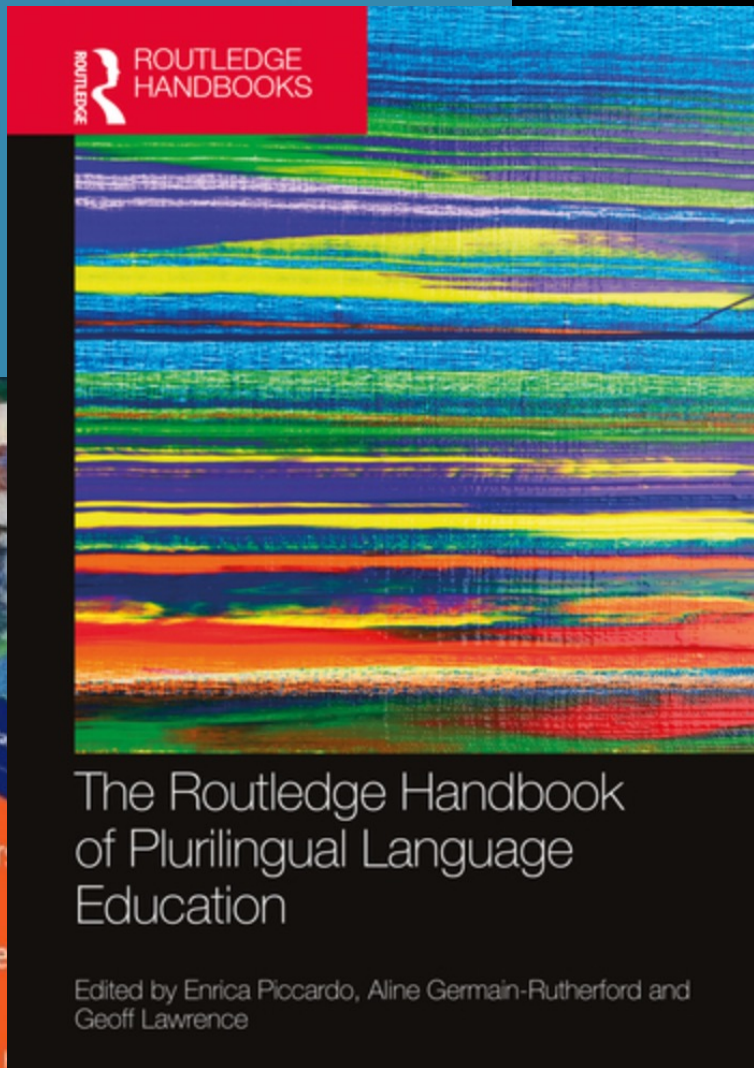
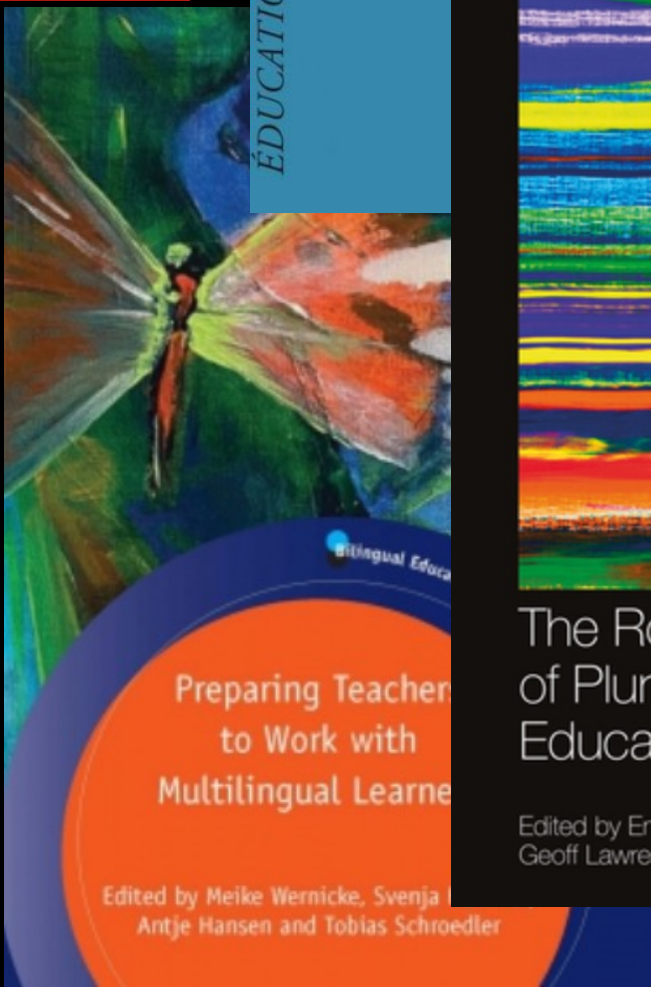
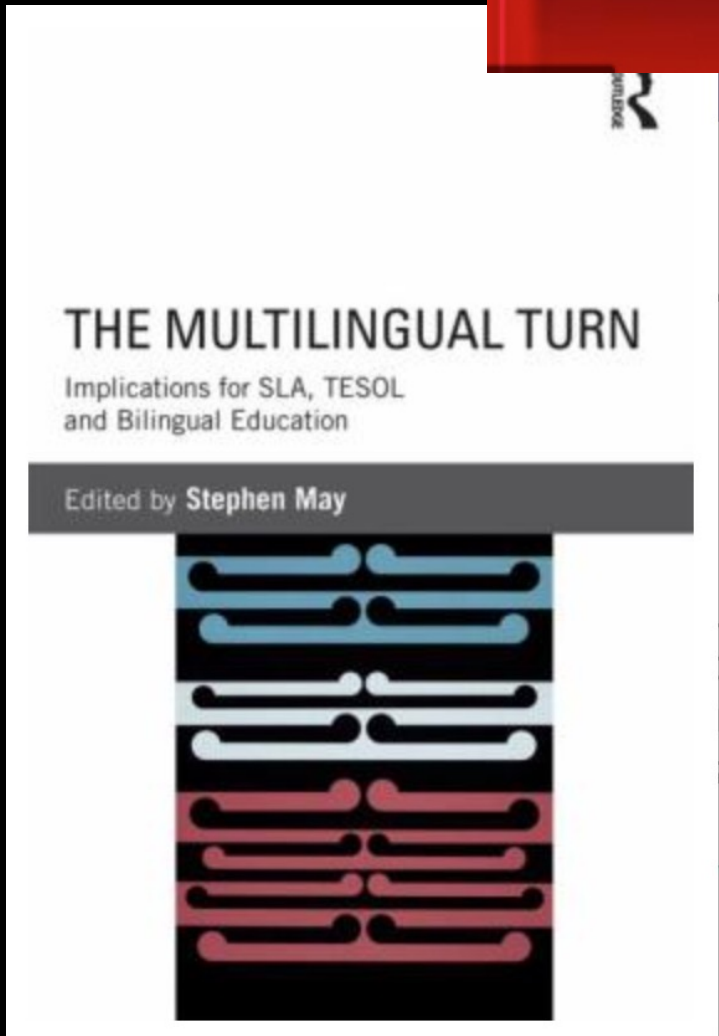
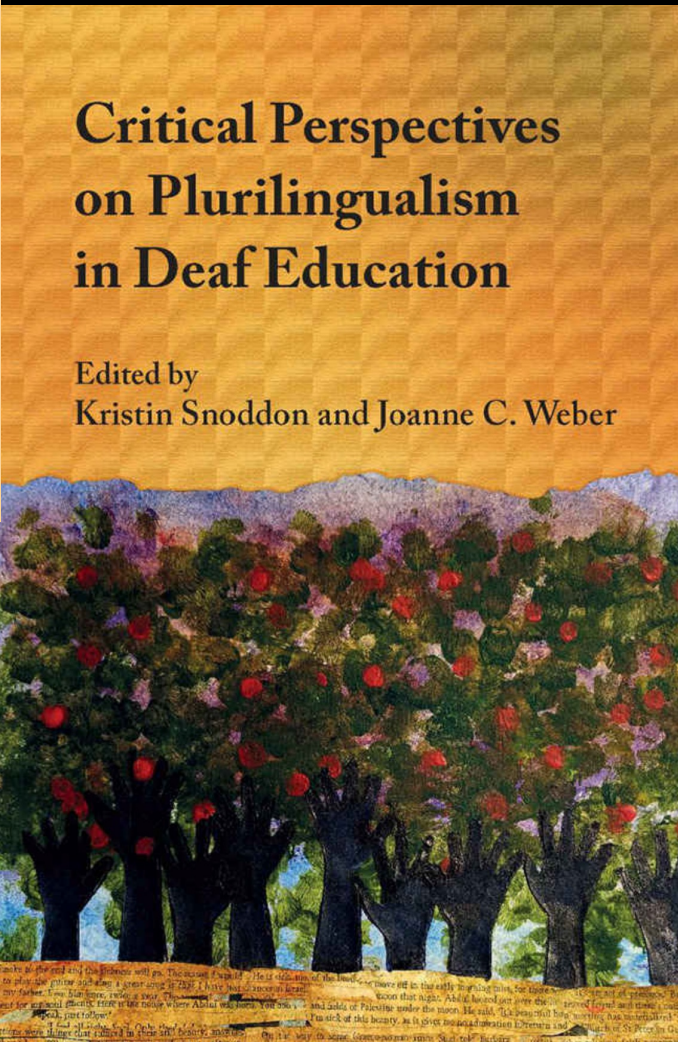
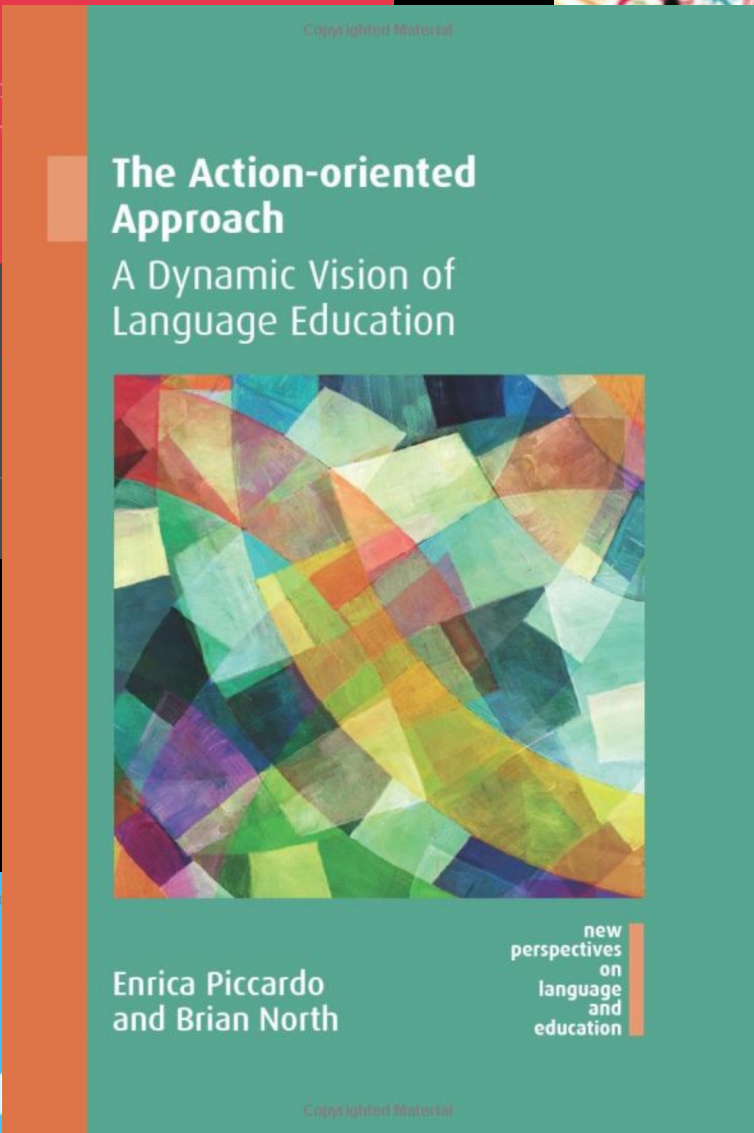
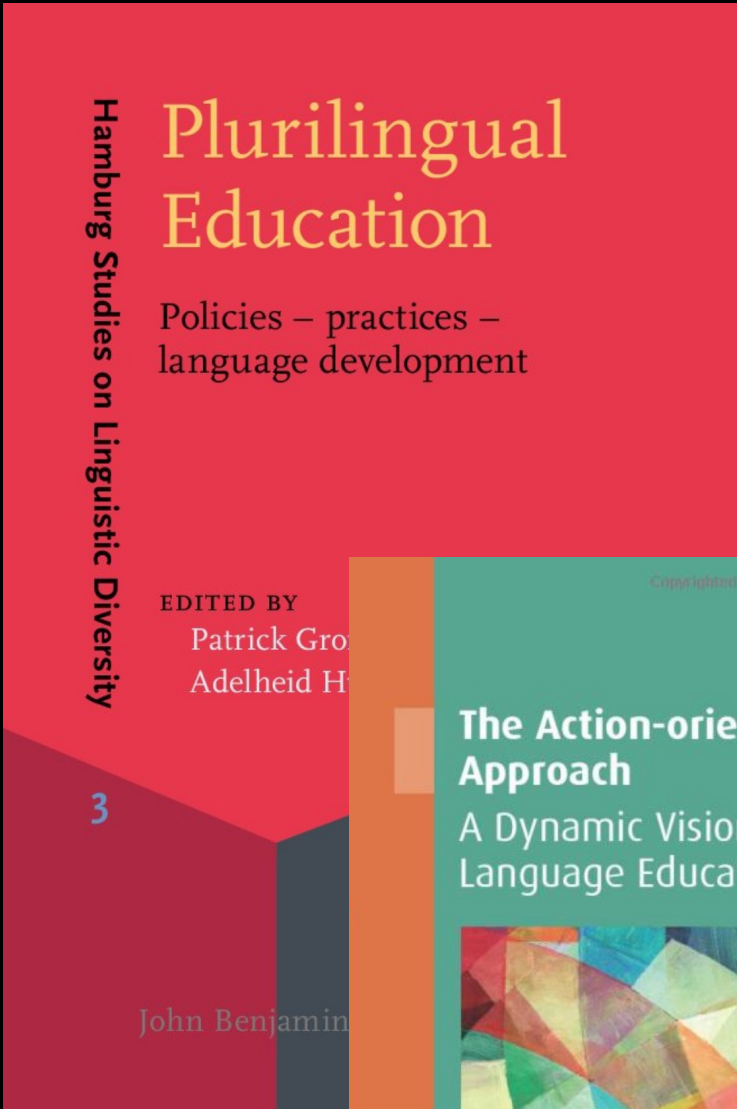
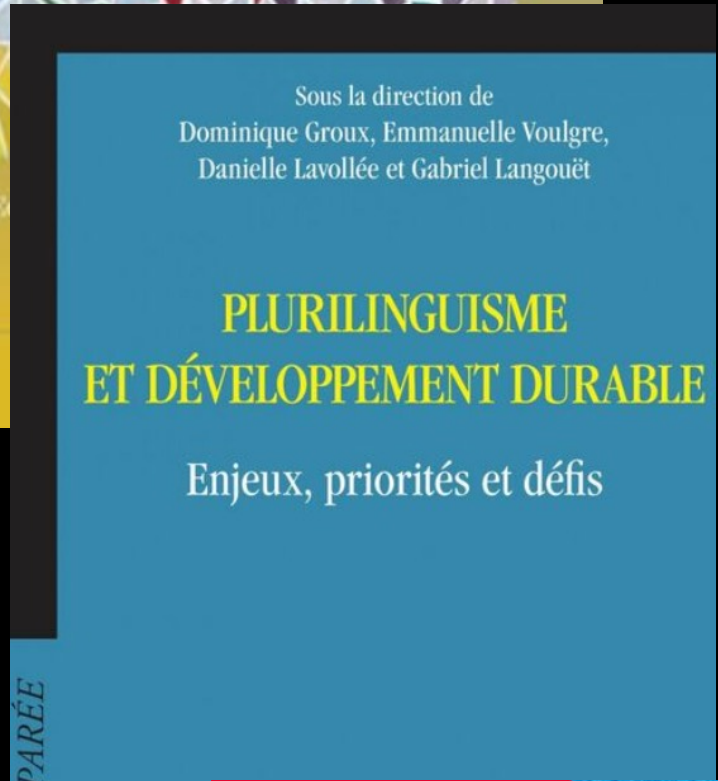
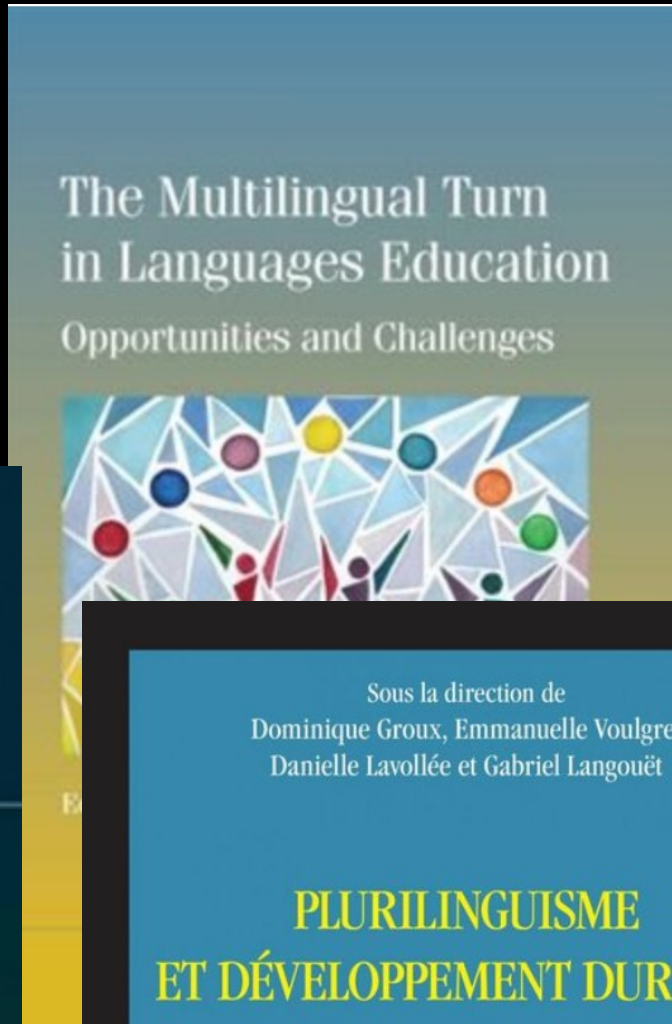
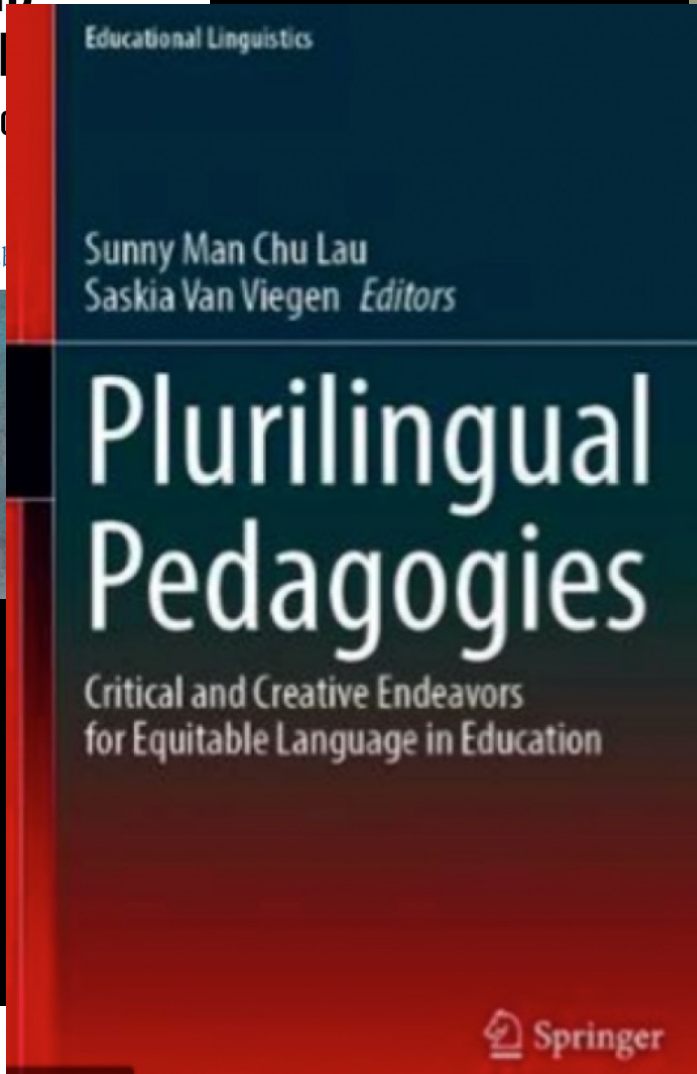
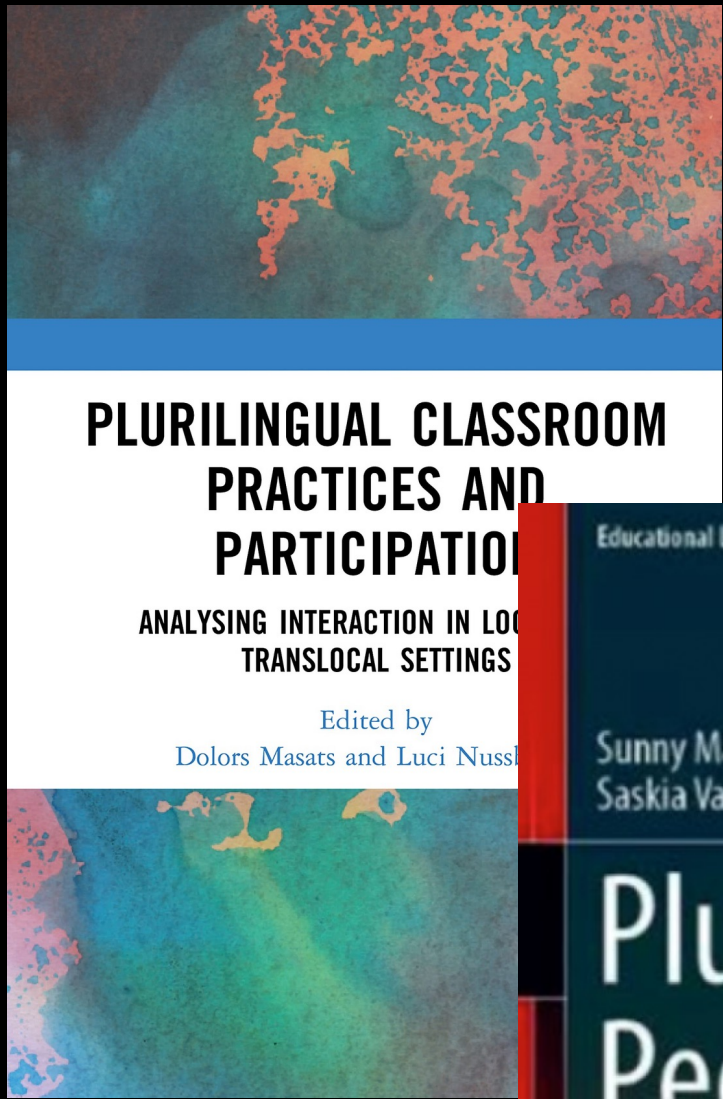


English-speaking higher education institutional policies reflect a '**monolingual disposition**' (Gogolin, 1994) that permeates classroom settings and pedagogical practices (Preece & Marshall, 2020; Sterzuk & Shin, 2021).



Shift from Monolingual/Bilingual  
to Plurilingual Education  
in Recent Years









# Plurilingualism

(Canagarajah, 2009; Coste, Moore & Zarate, 2009; Council of Europe, 2001, 2020; Marshall & Moore, 2016; Payant & Galante, forthcoming; Piccardo et al. 2021; Taylor & Snoddon, 2013)



plural identities

cultures

languages

varieties

semiotic resources



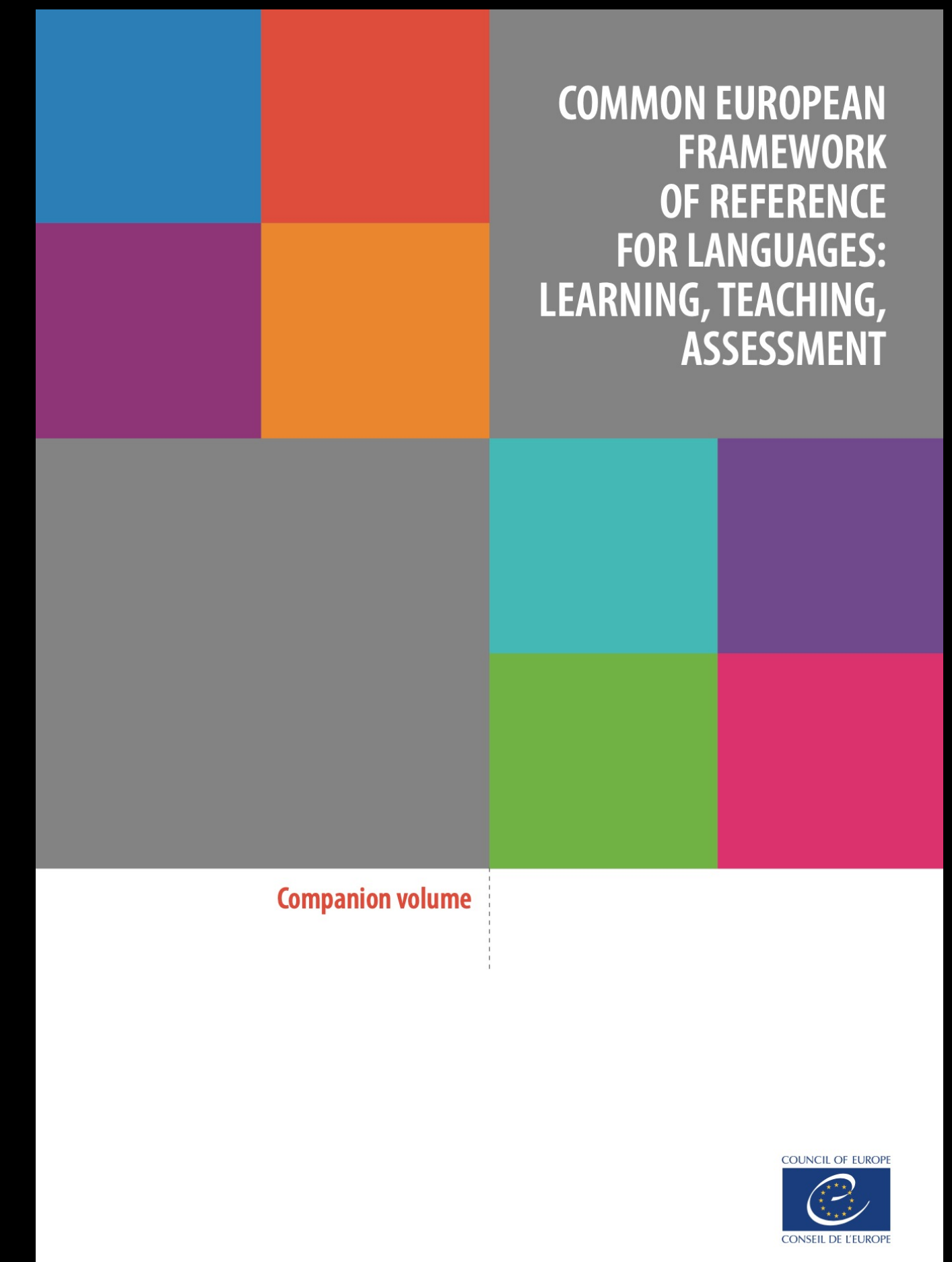
multimodality



# Plurilingualism

“Ability to call flexibly upon an interrelated, uneven, plurilinguistic repertoire to:

- switch from one language or dialect (or variety) to another;
- express oneself in one language (or dialect, or variety) and understand a person speaking another;
- call upon the knowledge of a number of languages (dialects, or varieties) to make sense of a text;
- recognize words from a common international store in a new guise;
- mediate between individuals with no common language (dialect, or variety), even if possessing only a slight knowledge oneself;
- bring the whole of one’s linguistic equipment into play, experimenting with alternative forms of expression;
- exploit paralinguistics (mime, gesture, facial expression, etc.)”





CEFR CV Plurilingual and Pluricultural Competence	Sample of Descriptors
Building on plurilingual repertoire	Can interact in a multilingual context on abstract and specialized topics by alternating flexibly between languages in their plurilingual repertoire and if necessary explaining the different contributions made.
Building on pluricultural repertoire	Can describe and evaluate the viewpoints and practices of their own and other social groups, showing awareness of the implicit values on which judgments and prejudices are frequently based.
Facilitating pluricultural space	Can mediate effectively and naturally between members of their own and other communities, taking account of sociocultural and sociolinguistic differences.
Plurilingual comprehension	Can use their knowledge of contrasting genre conventions and textual patterns in languages in their plurilingual repertoire in order to support comprehension.



# 2 Studies in Higher Education

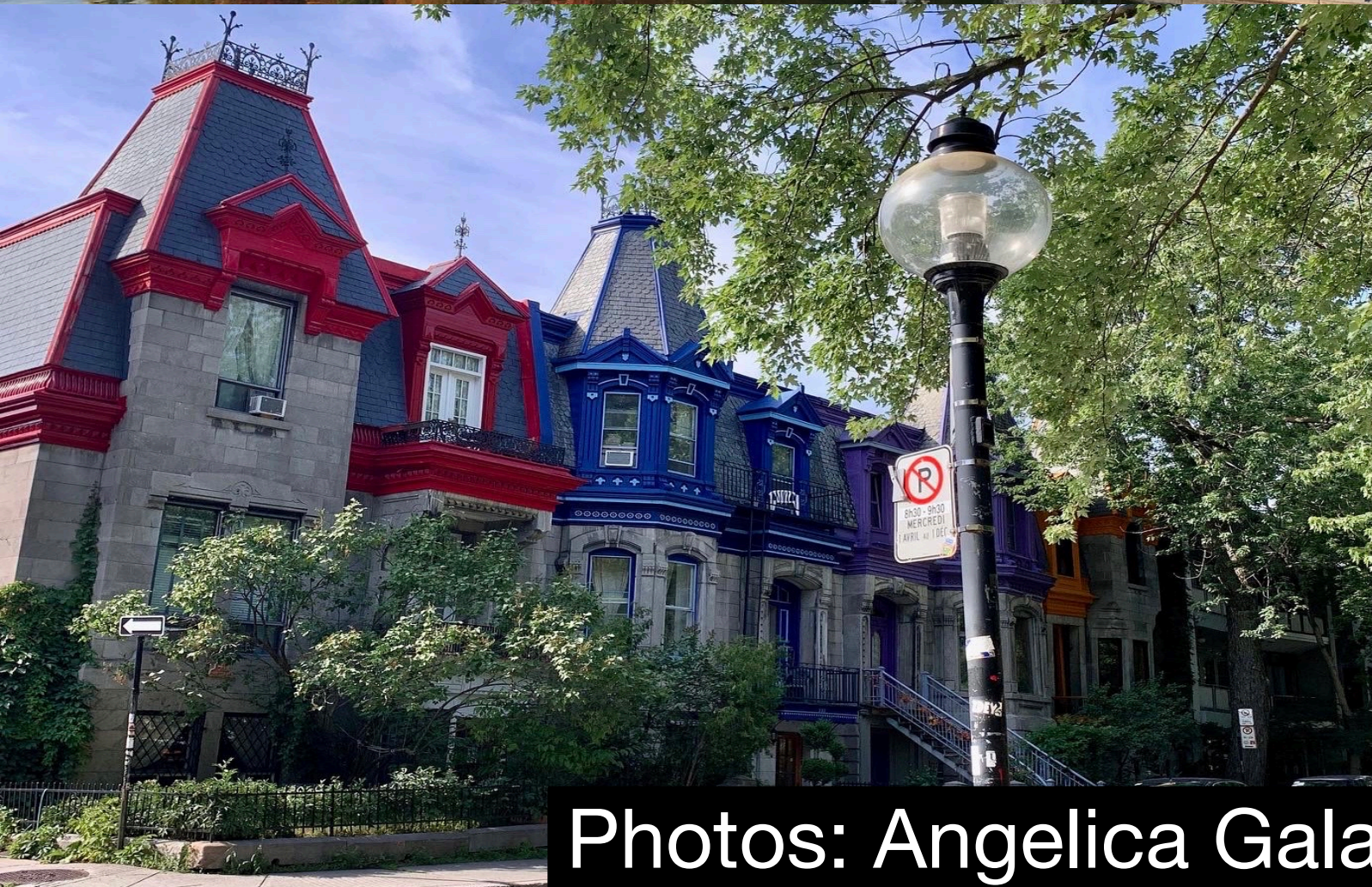
Study 1:

English-speaking  
university in Montreal

Study 2:

English-speaking  
university in Toronto





Photos: Angelica Galante

# Study 1

- English-speaking university in Montréal and our Lab
- 250 participants
- Several programs (e.g., Applied Linguistics, Political Science)
- Criteria: 18+ and speak 2 or more languages
- Recruitment: every student in the class we visited fulfilled the criteria above

Galante & dela Cruz, 2020



# Data Collection

## 3 instruments

1. Demographic Questionnaire
2. Plurilingual and Pluricultural Identity Questionnaire (PPIQ)
3. Plurilingual and Pluricultural Competence (PPC) Scale



# 1. Demographic Questionnaire

How do you identify yourself? a) Indigenous    b) Black    c) Latino/a    d) Middle Eastern    e) Asian  
f) White/Caucasian    g) Mixed race    h) other: \_\_\_\_\_

What do you consider to be your first language? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you consider to be your second language? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have languages other than the ones listed above in your linguistic repertoire? Please indicate the language(s) and the level of proficiency, even if it is very beginner level:

Language	Who do you use this language with? (friends, parents, visitors, colleagues, etc.)	Where do you use this language? (school, home, online, work, streets, community centres, etc.)	Which skills do you use in this language? Reading Speaking Writing Listening ALL of the above	What level of proficiency do you think you have in this language? A1 = Very beginner A2 = Elementary B1 = Intermediate B2 = Upper Intermediate C1 = Advanced C2 = Proficient



## 2. PPIQ

### Plurilingual Identity

*A plurilingual person is someone who knows two or more languages but does not necessarily speak them at the same proficiency level, for example one language can be more fluent than the other. A plurilingual person is also someone who knows variations in the same language, for example, the way a language is used in different regions of the country or in other countries. Do you consider yourself a plurilingual person? Yes or No? Why do/don't you think so?*

### Pluricultural Identity

*A pluricultural person is someone who knows about two or more cultures but does not necessarily adopt them at the same level. A pluricultural person is also someone who knows about differences and similarities between cultures even in the same country/city, for example, the way people behave in different regions of the same country.*

*Do you consider yourself a pluricultural person?  
Yes or No? Why do/don't you think so?*



# 3. PPC Scale

22 items

4-point Likert Scale

Cronbach's Alpha .84

Galante, 2020

## Plurilingual and pluricultural competence (PPC) scale

Please circle the number that represents to what extent you disagree or agree with the following statements.

1 Strongly disagree      2 Somewhat disagree      3 Somewhat agree      4 Strongly agree

1. When talking to someone who knows the same languages as I do, I feel comfortable switching between one language to another language	1	2	3	4
2. I <b>do not</b> accept different cultural values when talking to people from other cultural backgrounds	1	2	3	4
3. When speaking in one language, I may use words of another language in the same sentence to make it easier to communicate	1	2	3	4
4. I <b>never</b> make adjustments in my communication style if the person I am talking to comes from a different cultural background	1	2	3	4
5. I can use the knowledge I have in one language to understand the same topic in another language	1	2	3	4
6. When communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds, I make adjustments in my communication style (if necessary) when talking to them	1	2	3	4
7. I speak at least two languages, but I can also understand some words and expressions in other languages	1	2	3	4
8. I can identify common behaviours from my cultural background and explain them to someone from another cultural background	1	2	3	4
9. When talking to someone who knows the same languages as I do, we should communicate in one language only	1	2	3	4
10. People from other cultural backgrounds should behave like me so we can understand each other	1	2	3	4
11. When talking to someone who knows the same languages as I do, I <b>do not</b> feel comfortable mixing two (or more) languages in conversation	1	2	3	4
12. I understand there are differences between cultures and that what can be considered 'strange' to one person may be considered 'normal' to another	1	2	3	4
13. I <b>do not</b> feel comfortable discussing differences in cultural values when talking to people from different cultural backgrounds	1	2	3	4
14. When speaking in one language, I may use a word or expression in another language to better explain a concept or idea	1	2	3	4
15. Because I am aware of different cultures, it's easy for me to accept different values and behaviours from people who come from other cultural backgrounds	1	2	3	4
16. When learning about a new topic, I <b>never</b> use more than one language	1	2	3	4
17. I must have similar values and beliefs as a person from another cultural background so we can understand each other	1	2	3	4
18. Because I speak two languages (or more), I can learn a new language more easily	1	2	3	4
19. When communicating with people from other cultural backgrounds, I <b>do not</b> try to explain if they misunderstand what I mean	1	2	3	4
20. I can recognize some languages if they are similar to the languages that know	1	2	3	4
21. If I am talking to someone who can speak the same languages as I do, we should both speak in one language only and not mix languages	1	2	3	4
22. I know there are differences in behaviours between cultures so I don't mind adjusting my behaviours to avoid misinterpretations	1	2	3	4



# Sample Items in PPC Scale

When talking to someone who knows the same languages as I do, I feel comfortable switching between one language to another language

I understand there are differences between cultures and what can be considered 'strange' to one person may be considered 'normal' to another



# Results



92.9%

Plurilingual Identity

88.2%

Pluricultural Identity



# 34 Different L1s

L1	%
English	24%
Chinese	24%
French	16%
Arabic	6.8%
Spanish	4%
Greek	2.8%
Persian	2.4%
Italian	2%

100% trilingual+

38% born in Canada

25% born in China

35% born in 39 other countries



# Participants

Mean age = 24.5

37.6% White

30% Asian

9.6% Middle Eastern

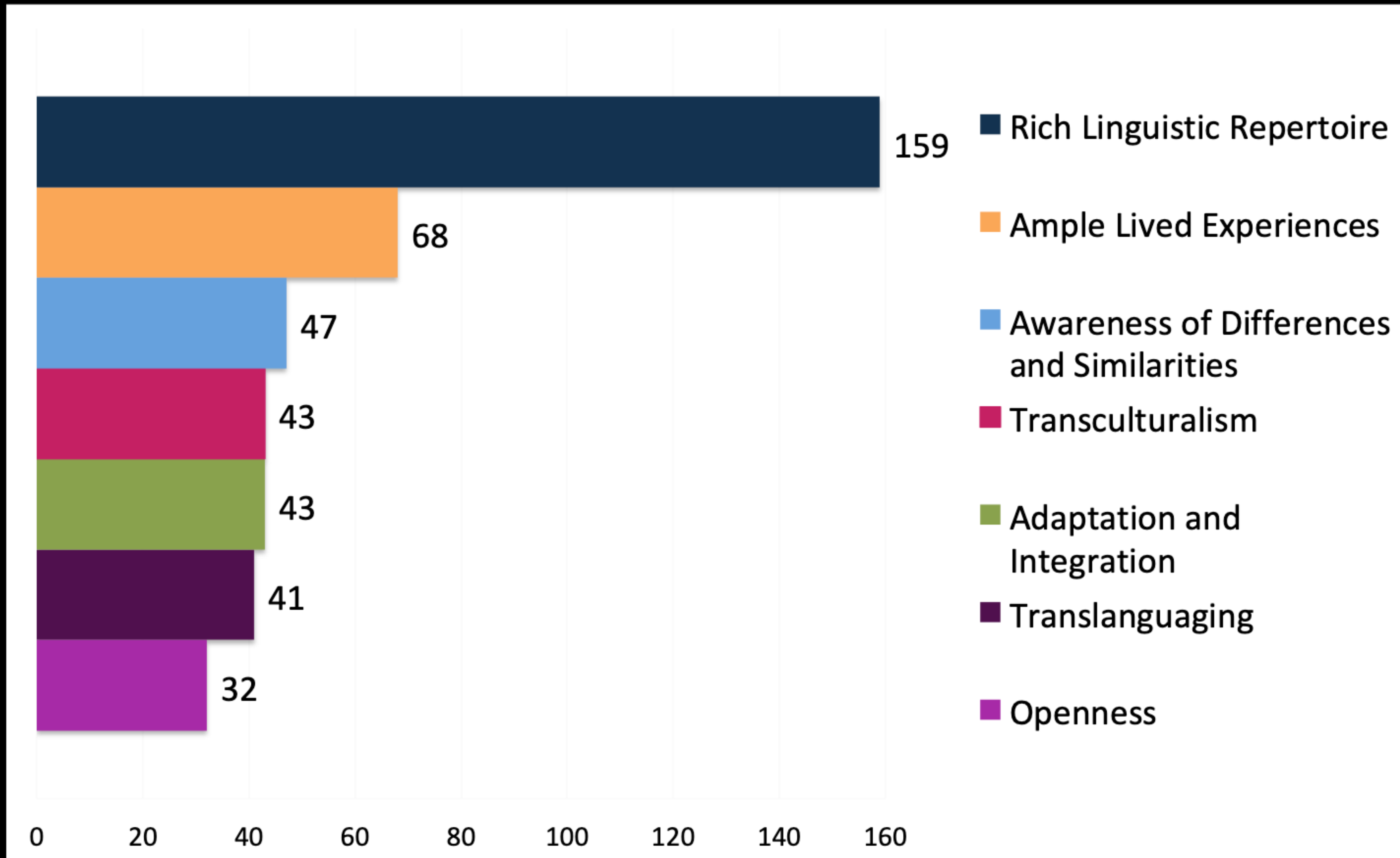
6.8% Mixed Ethnicities

5.2% Latinx

2.8% Black



# 7 Main Reasons





*I was born in Montréal, Quebec as a child of immigrants from Greece.  
Aside from attending Greek school, I studied **English** and **Greek** during  
elementary school, English and **French** during high school, and pursued a  
bilingual diploma in college and studied **English** and **Spanish** in university.  
My educational crisscrossing is prevalent among trilinguals growing up in  
Montréal. **Being plurilingual is who I am and I cannot imagine  
living/working only using one language.***



*I truly believe we are all plurilingual because we all know or have some knowledge of other languages or variations of the same languages.*

*I speak fluent **Arabic** because I'm Moroccan. I speak fluent **French** because it's the second language in my home country. I also speak fluent **Spanish** because I did all my scholarship in a Spanish school back in Morocco. Also, I speak **English** and I am trying to improve my skills.*





Photo from Pixabay

*I feel a **different person when speaking different languages**. For instance, I am more of a shy person when I speak Arabic, but I feel empowered when I speak English. Also, being exposed to different languages, I feel I can easily understand the cultures of the people speaking them. In my home, my family and I translanguage all the time and we created what I like to call a “hybrid culture.”*



Participants who identified  
as **bilingual**, despite  
reporting **more than 2**  
**languages**, were all born in  
Quebec



# There was a positive correlation between PPC Scores and Number of Languages

Number of languages ranged from 3 to 8 ( $M = 3.30$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ )

There was a significant positive correlation between the number of languages and PPC score,  $r(250) = .38$ ,  $p < .001$

This indicates that a high number of languages reported was related to high PPC scores

These Results Have Implications  
for Language Vitality and Identity  
Validation in Higher Education



How Can we Envision the  
Sustainability of Languages?



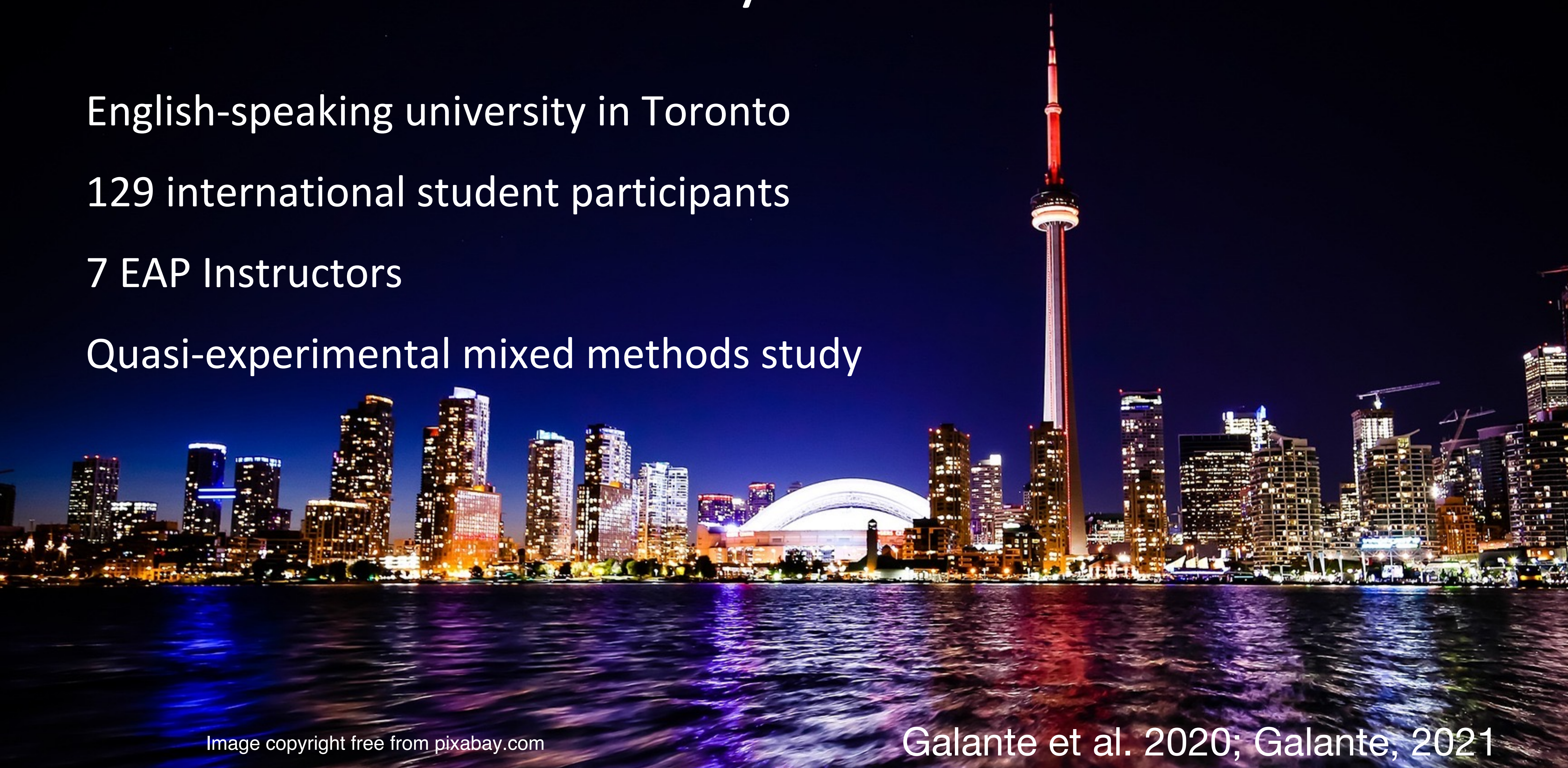
# Study 2

English-speaking university in Toronto

129 international student participants

7 EAP Instructors

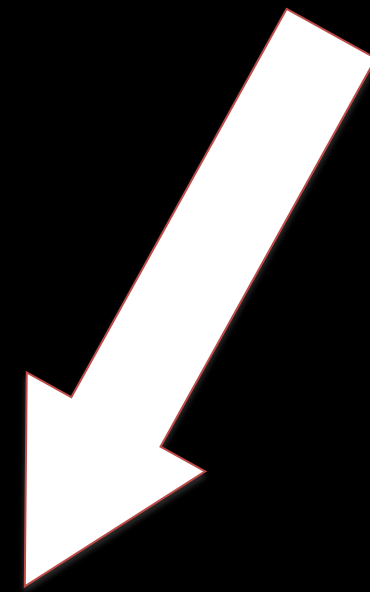
Quasi-experimental mixed methods study





Instructors

7



Comparison Group

Treatment Group

# Student Participants

129

Comparison Group

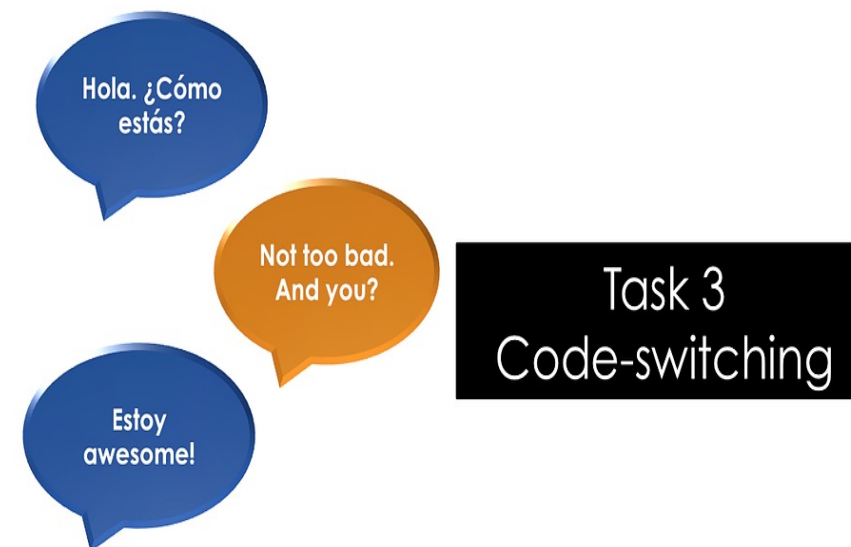
50

Treatment Group

79



Available at  
[www.breakingtheinvisiblewall.com](http://www.breakingtheinvisiblewall.com)



### Task 3 Code-switching

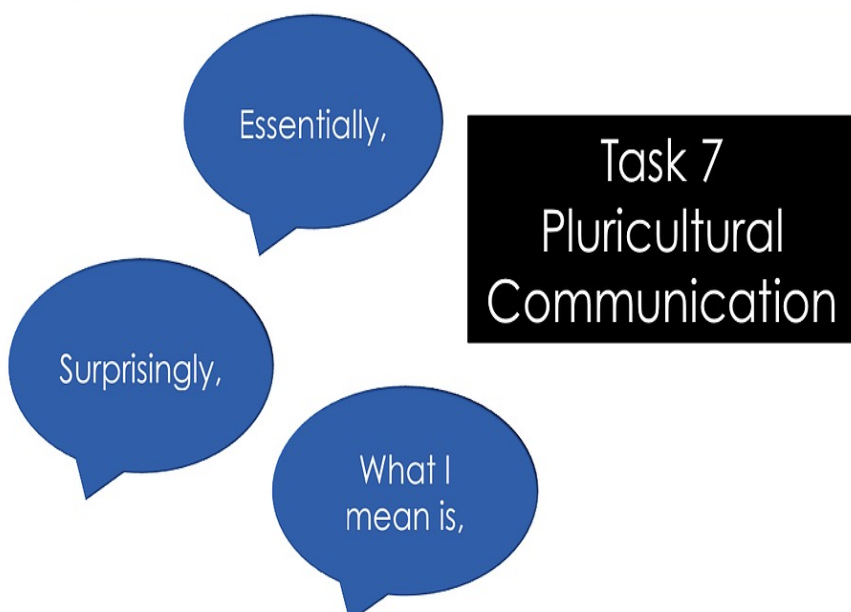
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### Task 4 Local and Global Communities

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### Task 7 Pluricultural Communication

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### Task 8 Intercultural Encounters

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### Task 1 Linguistic and Cultural Landscape

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### Task 2 My Plurilingual Identity

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### Task 5 Idioms in Different Languages

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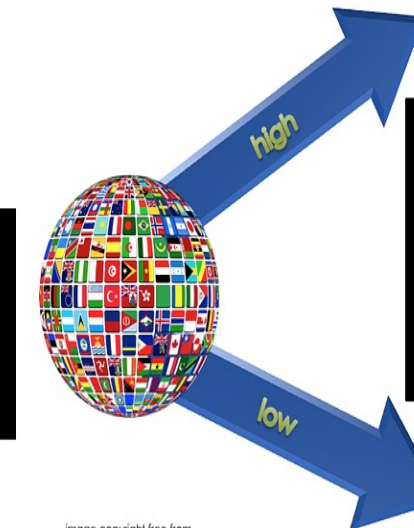


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### Task 6 High and Low Communication Styles

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### Task 9 Intercomprehension

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### Task 10 Final Reflection

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# Instruments

1. Demographic Questionnaire (T & C)
2. Plurilingual and Pluricultural Competence Scale (PPCS) (T & C)
3. Weekly Learner Diary Entries (T)
4. Classroom Observations (T)  
(start, mid-point, end)
5. Focus Group (T)
6. Teacher Interviews (T & C)
7. Vocabulary Test (T & C)



Date . . . No.

**91% of diaries were returned  
(n=72)**

**Total of 672 entries**



# Semi-structured Interviews

Which set of tasks  
(treatment and  
comparison) did you  
find most helpful to  
your students? Why?





## Vocabulary Test

1) Choose one discourse marker below to complete the sentences. Only four should be used.

at the end of the day      unfortunately      similarly      by the way  
in fact      similarly      anyway      however      here's the thing

We invited James to go to the theatre but \_\_\_\_\_ he can't join us.

The whole process of applying to university was quite complex. \_\_\_\_\_ would you like to go out for lunch?

I've spent a whole year learning academic English. It's been hard but \_\_\_\_\_ it was all worth it.

My presentation went really well today. \_\_\_\_\_ how was your presentation?

2) Choose one idiom from the box below to complete the sentences. Only four should be used.

reach for the stars      get your act together      play it by ear      out of the blue  
call it a day      have a chip on your shoulder      burn your bridges      give it a shot

My parents are always complaining that I'm disorganized. They always tell me "\_\_\_\_\_"



# Finding 1

Plurilingual instruction had a **positive** effect on students' plurilingual and pluricultural competence over time

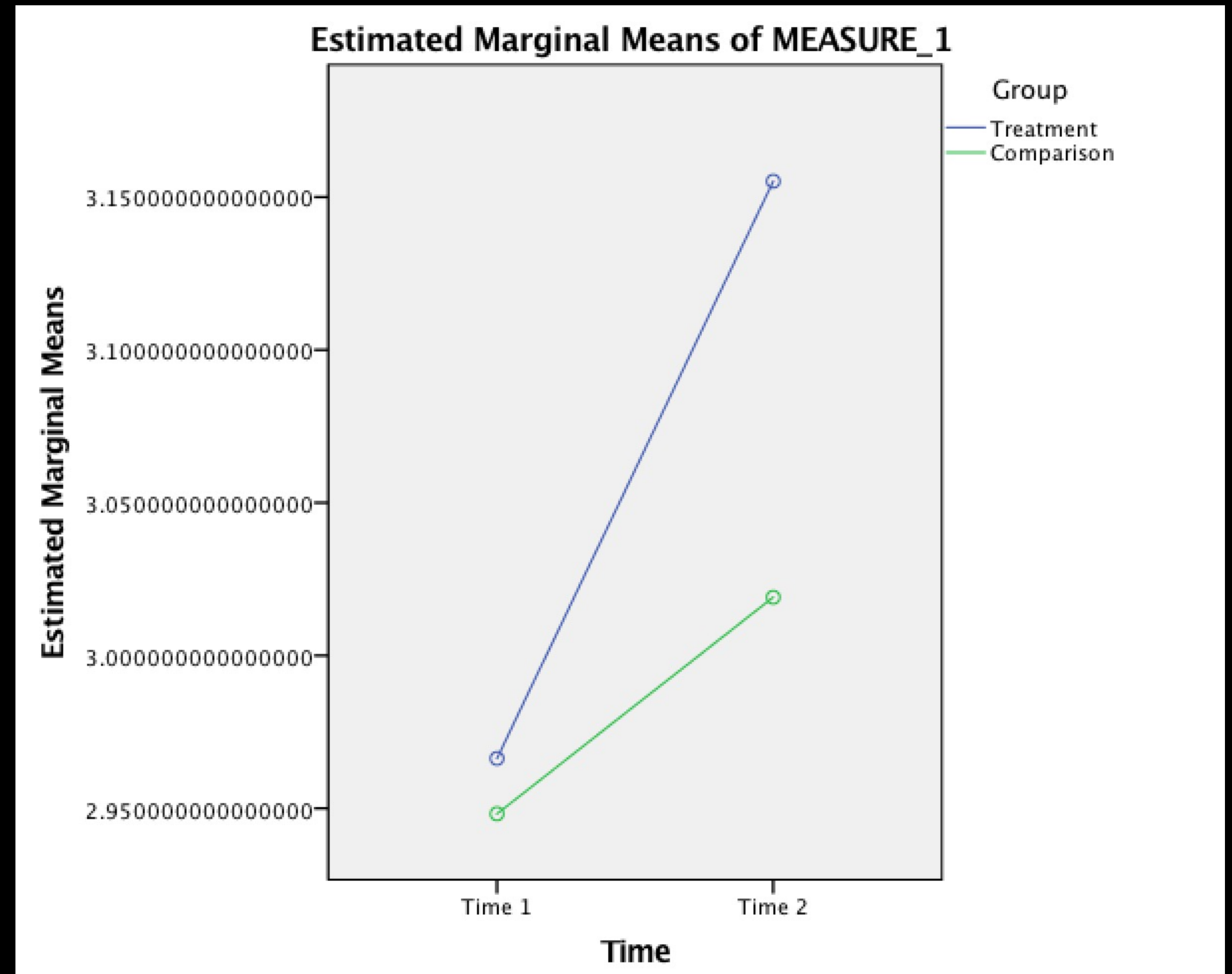


# PPC over Time between Groups

## Independent Samples *t* tests

T1: no significant difference between treatment (M=2.96, SD=.301) and comparison (M=2.94, SD=.323) groups;  $t(127)=.323, p = .747$

T2: a significant difference between treatment (M=3.15, SD=.282) and comparison (M=3.01, SD=.324) groups;  $t(127)=2.51, p = .013$





# Finding 2

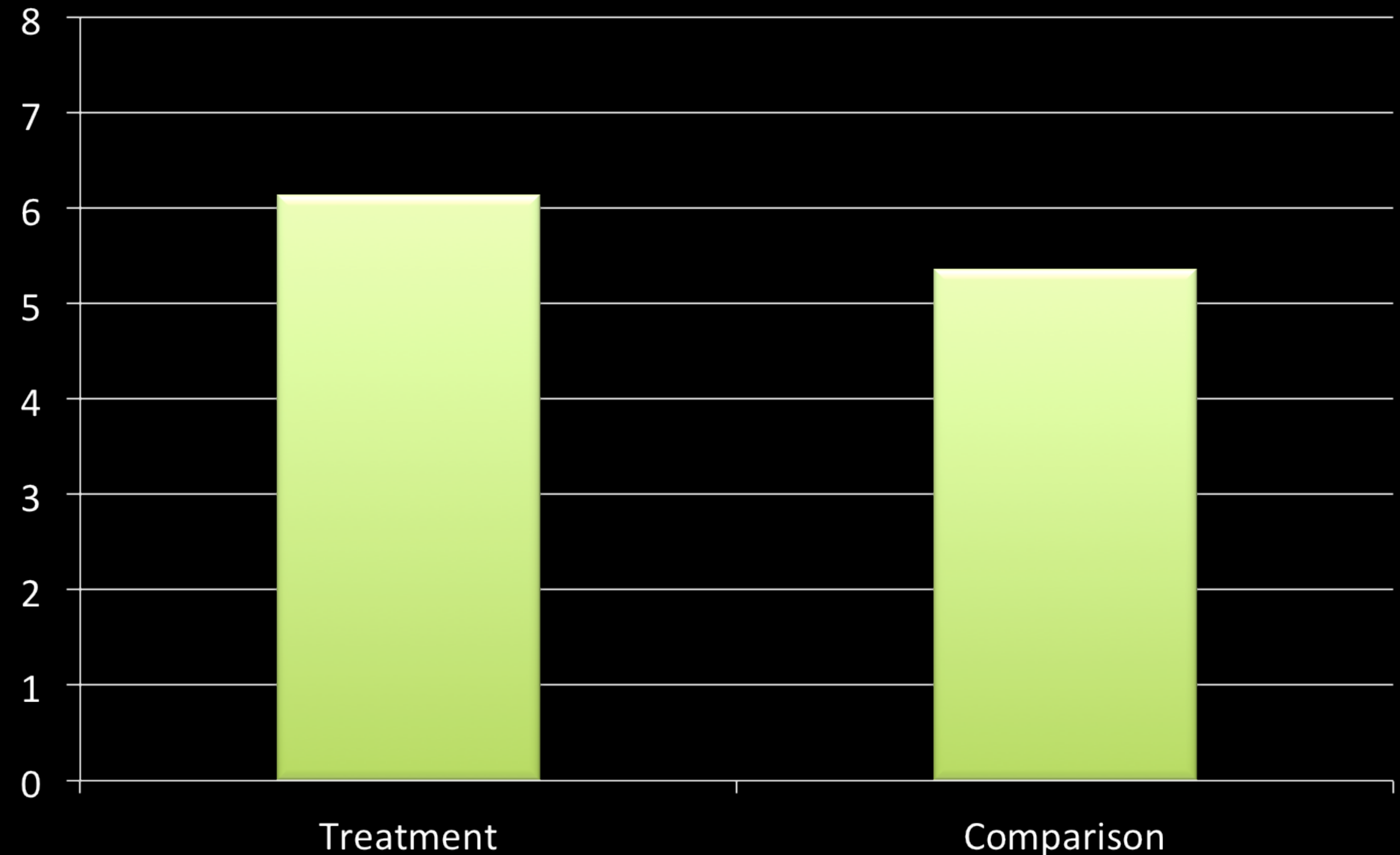
Plurilingual instruction can have a **positive** effect on EAP students' academic vocabulary development



# Academic Vocabulary Scores at T2

Independent Samples *t* tests

T2: a significant difference between treatment ( $M=6.14$ ,  $SD=1.50$ ) and comparison ( $M=5.36$ ,  $SD=1.57$ ) groups;  $t(127) = 2.81$ ,  $p = .006$

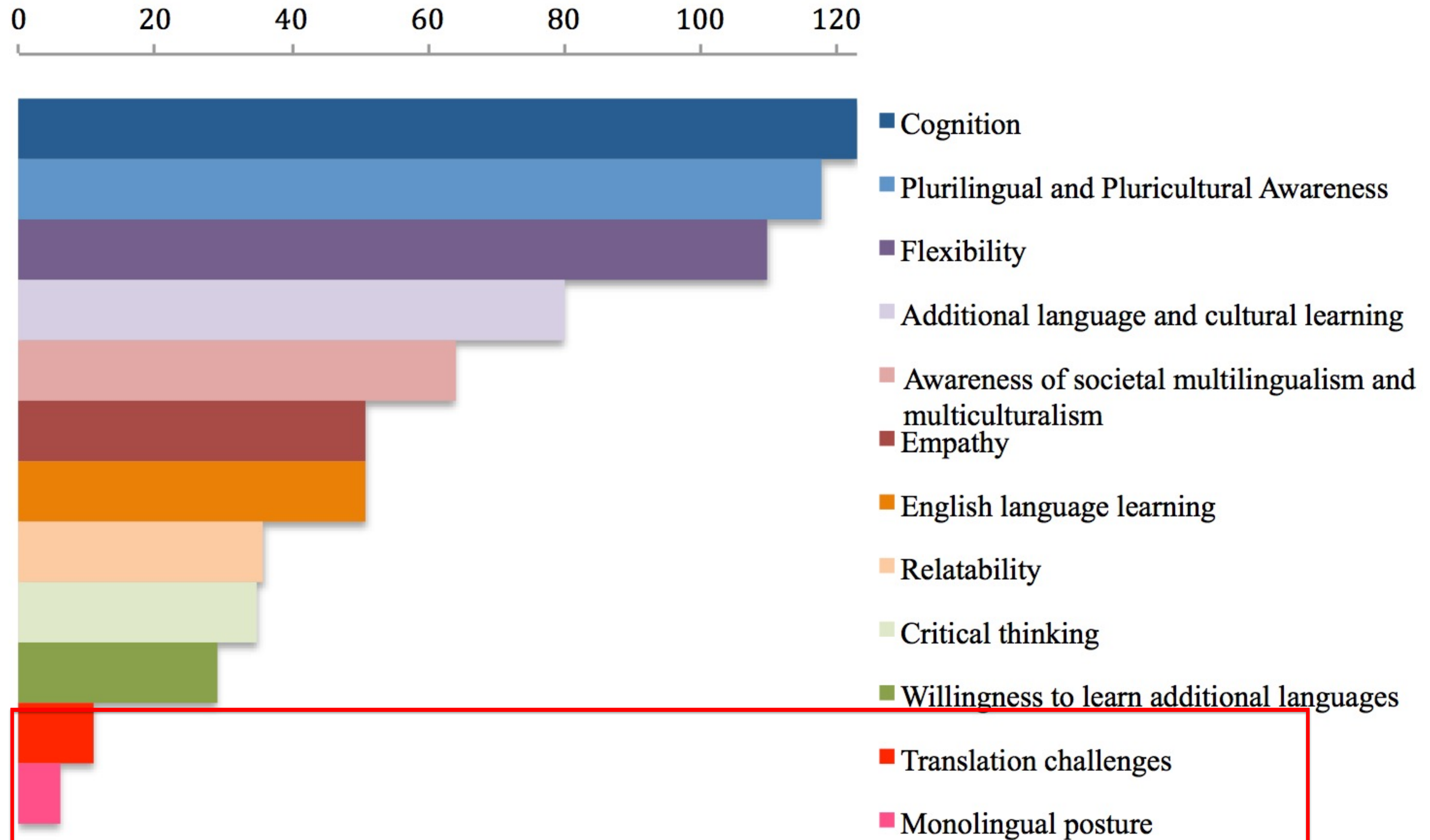


# Finding 3

Plurilingual instruction has  
**several affordances** that monolingual  
instruction may not have



# Students' Perceptions



*In Canadian culture, people are used to using transition words during the conversation to make idea logical. I think this task is very helpful because in China, the transition words are very different from Canadian culture. This task is helpful for both my speaking and writing. It can help me speak and write more logical.*



# Finding 4

All seven instructors **preferred** plurilingual instruction in comparison to monolingual instruction

One main challenge was monolingual policies in higher education

# Conclusion



# Languages and Identities are inextricably linked



Photo from Pixabay



Monolingual/  
bilingual  
discourses  
can pose  
barriers to  
language  
vitality and  
identity  
validation



Photo from Pixabay



# Recommendations



Institutional policies in superdiverse contexts need to recognize the **current multilingual and multicultural reality** for language vitality and identity validation

**Teacher education in plurilingual pedagogy** can challenge instructors' monolingual disposition but it may not be enough for its enactment. Support from institutional stakeholders is necessary



Gracias

Dziękuję Ci

唔該

Спасибо

Obrigada



谢谢

Niá:wen

Merci

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mcgill.ca/PlurilingualLab



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