Languages in relation:
A narrative inquiry into second language development and support in the context of multilingual couplehood

Submitted by **Soo Yeon Yim** to the **University of Exeter**
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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature: ……..

ABSTRACT

The current thesis aims to explore issues regarding the development and support of second languages when two individuals from different linguistic backgrounds come together in romantic, intimate, and meaningful relationship. Based on a thorough conceptualisation of multilingual couplehood and its place within the interdisciplinary topic of intercultural relationships and marriage, this exploratory study seeks to highlight the issues pertaining to communication, and even more precisely, language, how this impacts individual and couple identity, and its significance in multilingual couple contexts

The study and presentation of the research is built on the foundation of a relational philosophy of being and knowing, particularly in line with Gergen's (2009) understanding of 'being-in-relation'. Arguments are presented for a relational ontology and epistemology in hopes of identifying the merits of this perspective, and to promote what I consider a more fitting understanding of identity, relationships, and second language education.

On this theoretical basis, the study adopts the qualitative methodological approach of narrative inquiry to investigate the meaning of language, relationship, and identity in the contexts of four self-identified multilingual couples currently living in the UK. Data was collected by means of three stage interviews: one with each individual of the couple and a final interview with both partners present. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed and subjected to a two-stage narrative analysis.

The findings have uncovered a wide variety of issues regarding intimate relationships and matters related to the development and support of second languages. While it is clear that each couple has differing attitudes and perceptions of multilingual couplehood, and ways of addressing them, there are some commonalities that have emerged, particularly in regards to the negotiation and sharing of languages, which has appeared to be a very complex issue in terms of the manifestation of language support and learning motivation within the couplehood. It has also been found that there are various ways in which partners develop and create their multilingual couple identities, which affects and also is affected by the linguistic and cultural identities of the individuals themselves.

It is clear that second language development and support is a fundamentally relational process in the intimate context of couple relationships, as the detailed narratives of the couples and their linguistic journeys are highly revealing of what is clearly a complex, intricate, and relational ongoing process.

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In the process of writing this thesis, I have come to better understand how I am incapable of any meaningful accomplishment without the guidance, support, inspiration, prayer, and above all, love, of significant others. While I cannot possibly mention (or even recall) all the wonderful beings of my past and present who have contributed in various ways to the thesis I present here, I do feel the need to explicitly express my gratitude to a choice few.

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A special word of gratitude must be said for my eight participants who were willing to share with me their experiences of relationship and language learning. Thank you all for your enthusiasm and openness, and most of all for putting your trust in me, without which the research itself would not have been possible.

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would like to finally thank Dr Inju Chung and Dr Sung Kyun Yim, brilliant scholars but even better parents, for… everything. Mum and Dad, I dedicate this thesis to you.

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0 NARRATIVE BEGINNINGS

> *One of the starting points for narrative inquiry is the researcher's own narrative of experience, the researcher's autobiography. This task of composing our own narratives of experience is central to narrative inquiry.*
>
> *(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:70)*

I am a Korean female in my mid-thirties, and a bilingual speaker of English and Korean, English being my first language (the language I first learnt and developed literacy in) and Korean being my mother tongue (the language of my parents and the language I have a more personal and emotional affiliation with in regards to my cultural identity). I have been an English language teacher for over ten years, with teaching experience first in Korea, and more recently in the UK. I have been a language learner my whole life, starting with the learning of English as my first language, the learning of Korean, my mother tongue, from the age of eight, the learning of German for two years in high school and one year at university, and the learning of Japanese for two months in between.

In 2008, on deciding to undertake a postgraduate degree in the UK, I moved to England with my Korean husband (who is now an ex-partner). His previous exposure to English as a second language had been limited to what he had been taught at school, and the move to a predominantly English-speaking environment motivated him to learn the language for the purposes of furthering opportunities for study and work in England. My personal involvement in supporting him with his English learning was what initially triggered my interest

in the research topic, based primarily on a simple curiosity as to what other couples in similar situations did in their own contexts.

This being said, I have never had first-hand experience of being in a multilingual *and* intercultural relationship, as we were both Korean with the common language between us. Thus, in some ways, I could not empathise completely with my participant couples, who have had to deal with linguistic *and* cultural barriers, and related issues of negotiation and compromise in the processes of developing relationships with their significant others. The same applies to the issue of having to grapple with the host language of a country in which I did not have a relatively high proficiency in.

However, I have had the experience of being invested in supporting a spouse in their second language development, which brings to the study some knowledge of the context as well as a set of assumptions, the main one being that language support and development in couplehood is not a straightforward process. Adding to this is my experience of conducting a study on multilingual couples and language learning as part of my Master's degree, which again, has provided both insight into the topic of study as well as implicit expectations to what I may find in the current research. The unfortunate and painful experience of parting ways with a spouse mid-way through the study may also have cast a different light on the research project as a whole, it ultimately being an inquiry into intimate relationships and processes of negotiation within them.

Remaining conscious of the fact that this dissemination of research is ultimately not about me (or is it all about me?), I leave my narrative beginnings relatively concise, leaving perhaps more meaningful and practical reflections of the research process for the conclusion chapter. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, and

central to the stories we tell about ourselves, others, and the relationships which constitute them.

1 INTRODUCTION

We are in the midst of a rapidly changing world, one in which we find ourselves increasingly developing relationships that extend over and beyond geographical, national, cultural, and linguistic boundaries, which some refer to as the “hyper diversity” of modern societies (Cantle, 2013). In the grand scale of international politics, business, and education, many view this as an inevitable trend, adjusting governmental, corporate, and institutional policies and strategies accordingly. On a more individual level, advancements in international mobility and social media technology have provided increasing opportunities for people to create, maintain, and develop meaningful intercultural relationships, both offline and online.

In order to take part in this global phenomenon, individuals are expected to learn how to communicate with others through various means, perhaps most commonly but certainly not exclusively, using some form of language. It has become common practice for a growing number of individuals to invest much time and effort in learning additional languages that lead to greater opportunities in work, study, and interpersonal relationships. Thus, interest in the subject area of second language learning and teaching has been sustained and developed in academia and in practice, with particular attention to the use of languages and the construction of language identities in intercultural contexts. In other words, the personal aspects of second language development and support have become more prominent.

Parallel to this is an increasing interest in the context of intimate intercultural relationships and marriage as the phenomena becomes increasingly common.

Particular attention is being paid to issues of language and communication, based on perspectives that highlight the significance of these in the more general literature regarding relationships. The centrality of language to interpersonal communication has thus been widely recognised (Markoff, 1977:52; Renalds, 2011:40). However, it is also the case that not all relationships are based on the premise that the individuals in question are fluent in a common language. In any context where people come into contact with each other, bonds can be formed despite the lack of a shared language between the individuals. Furthermore, when these relationships take on a romantic nature and develop into couplehood, the difference in first languages may or may not be an issue, but would most likely be an influential factor in some aspects of the relationship in question.

It is in this cross-section of second language education and intercultural relationship that the study is located by exploring issues regarding the development and support of second languages when two individuals from different linguistic backgrounds come together in romantic, intimate, and meaningful relationship. Fundamentally, it is an exploration of what it means to be in a multilingual relationship, how the issues of different first languages manifest and are negotiated, and how these inform the potential development and support of second languages within the couplehood.

A more detailed rationale of the study is presented in the next section, followed by a statement of the main research question along with an introduction of key concepts. The potential significance and contributions of the research will then be discussed, with a comprehensive outline of the remainder of the thesis and summary to conclude the chapter.

1.1 Rationale for the study

It was in 2009 when I was reading for my Masters degree in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) that I became interested in the current topic. In a module on second and foreign language learning theories, I was introduced to the ideas of the Russian developmental psychologist and academic Lev Vygotsky. I found his work extremely illuminating in its application to language education and theory, and compatible with my own existing views of second language learning and teaching. In particular, I was intrigued by the concept of 'the significant other'. While Vygotsky originally used the term to refer to a parent (more specifically, the mother) in the context of mediational cognitive development in childhood (Van der Veer & Valsiner, 1994:6), its more recent application in educational theory has extended the concept to include teachers or more capable peers (Forman & Cazden, 1985), in other words, any 'other' that assumes the role of mediator in a learning situation. I owe it to my academic naivety that I initially understood 'a significant other' in reference to its more colloquial meaning, i.e., a spouse or partner with whom one is involved in an intimate relationship. This was a reflection of my situation at the time, as my then partner was in the process of learning the English language. Being the more proficient user of English as well as an English language teacher by profession, I found myself naturally taking on the role of language mediator in support of his learning. I became curious of other couples in similar circumstances as to how they managed this dynamic of their relationship. It was also in part the questioning of a common assumption: *The best and quickest way to learn a foreign language is to be romantically involved with someone*

who is a native speaker of that language. Although there are numerous sources of literature and media that may be seen to support this idea (Piller & Takahashi, 2006; Takahashi, 2013), empirical studies seeking to demonstrate its validity have been close to none. It was this variety of factors that encouraged me to conduct research into multilingual couples and their second language teaching and learning practices, which took the form of a small-scale Masters project (Yim, 2009).

In the interpretive and qualitative study that I undertook, five multilingual couples were interviewed about their language learning and teaching practices and attitudes as part of a narrative case study approach. One individual in each of the couples was a language learner, with their partner or spouse naturally taking on the role of language mediator. Within this framework, the importance of affect and mediation in second language learning theory was presented as particularly relevant. Issues of motivation, language anxiety, learner self-esteem, and language desire were discussed along with the mediation theories of Vygotsky and Feuerstein. It was my hope to answer the following questions: How does affect in multilingual relationships influence the ways in which a second language is learned? And to what extent does mediation manifest itself in second language teaching and learning practices in multilingual couples?

In relation to the first research question, the findings showed that the affectual factors inherent in intimate relationships significantly influenced the second language learning practices of individuals. These included aspects of language learning motivation as well as issues of apprehension, confidence, and frustration regarding language. In relation to the second, four themes emerged from the data: responsibility of the language mediator, needs of the language learner, language modification and acknowledgement of the ZPD (Zone of

Proximal Development). In addition, the practices of formal and informal second language mediation within the couplehood were also discussed.

This preliminary study revealed that the affective factors of stability and mutual trust inherent in long-term intimate relationships provided a safe and encouraging atmosphere for the language learner, especially in instances where the relationship provided the main motivation to learn or develop a second language. It was also found that the relationship environment encouraged mediation on the part of the more fluent language user, although the method and frequency of mediation required a certain amount of awareness and negotiation on the part of the two individuals. It became clear that both language learner and mediator needed to be aware of these affective and mediational issues to collaboratively negotiate a method of teaching and learning that worked for the couple.

Perhaps more importantly, the study made apparent the significance of relationships and the complexities of the relational dynamics involved in the learning and teaching of second languages. The sociocultural framework of learner, mediator, and language became increasingly inadequate in understanding the varied relationships that were seen to influence potential second language development in the context of intimate couplehood; the relationship dynamics between the two individuals as romantic partners and as language learner and mediator, the attitudes the individuals had regarding their own and their partner's languages, and the practices involved in the learning and teaching of those languages were all intricately connected, ultimately shaping and being shaped by the individual identities in relation to the couplehood.

The study was thus significant in that it was the first of its kind to explore the topic of second language education in intercultural and multilingual couplehood, but it was clear that there was further work to be done in this area which went beyond the existing frameworks and concepts of identity, motivation, and mediation. My interest has thus been sustained and further fuelled with the recognition of alternative theoretical and methodological perspectives that would be more suitable in approaching this topic of research. In turn, my conviction concerning the contributions of the research has grown stronger, as the study of second language use and practice in intimate relationships has demonstrated its potential to inform more educationally-focused contexts by making salient the various factors influencing second language learning and teaching identities, attitudes, motivations, and practices.

Not only in regards to its possible contributions to second language educational practice, theory, and research, the topic of research is considered significant in its own right. In the context of modern-day relationships, Piller (2001) expresses the importance of language by claiming that "[a] 'good spouse' is no longer just a good housekeeper, breadwinner, or sexual partner, but a *good communicator*" (199, emphasis added). This seems to have particular relevance in the case of intercultural couples (Rohrlich, 1988: 35), where it is common that at least one partner can speak two or more languages (Cools, 2006: 262). Although the prominence of language in marriage has been identified in the earlier literature as well (for example Leisi, 1978, cited in Gundacker, 2010: 30), this interest in the language of couples, particularly the language of multilingual couples, is a relatively recent development, with most of the existing literature specific to this topic having been published since the turn of the 21st century (Piller, 2001; Piller, 2002; De Klerk, 2001; Piller & Takahashi, 2006; Gundacker, 2010; Takahashi,

2010). The current study endeavours to make a significant contribution to intercultural couple research in focusing on issues of language use and negotiation, but more specifically on the potential for second language development within multilingual relationships, a gap in the literature that has yet to be addressed. Put simply, on the premise that languages are an important aspect in the development of meaningful intercultural relationships, it is considered worthwhile to find out how meaningful intercultural relationships can help, or perhaps hinder, the development of second languages.

1.2 Preliminary research question and key concepts

In light of the rationale presented above, the main research question which serves as the starting point of this study is:

How does the development and support of second languages occur in the context of multilingual couplehood?

While a more detailed and specific set of research questions will be developed further in the subsequent two chapters of the thesis, in beginning with this question, it was my intention that the research be of an exploratory nature with the aim of understanding what characterises multilingual couplehood, and what happens in these relationships in regards to second language development and support, further revealing the complexities of how different aspects of the relationship and language learning phenomena shaped one another.

As such, it should be made clear that the study does not involve the measurement or assessment of language proficiency, i.e., how much second language development actually occurs in multilingual relationships. It should also be clarified at the outset that this is a study purposely confined to language sharing and support in multilingual couples, and therefore does not attempt to extend into socio-political issues of language policy or practice concerning intercultural marriage and transnational migration. There is an additional deliberate attempt to not go into issues of gender relations and power dynamics of language within couplehood. Although these issues are understandably relevant areas of inquiry, they will not be considered in depth for the sake of prioritising the specific foci of the research query at hand. Some existing studies

that have been devoted to these areas of inquiry will, however, be discussed in Chapter 2 as part of the literature review to contextualise the general research area of intercultural relationships, and multilingual couplehood within it.

As a prelude to the main body of the thesis, there are some key concepts that are worth considering here, many of which will be discussed in greater detail throughout the chapters. First of all, in regards to the varied terms of *multilingual couple / couplehood / relationship*, a *multilingual couple* refers to a dyad of individuals with different first languages involved in an intimate and meaningful *multilingual relationship*, which retains or performs aspects of *multilingual couplehood*, both as individuals and as a couple. In the current study, these terms will be used instead of “marriage”, despite the fact that all couples who have participated in the study happen to be married. This is to place more emphasis on the meaningful and intimate nature of the relationship which has been self-identified on personal, rather than institutional, levels of the individuals involved. I am not attempting to discuss the moral and ethical obligations of multilingual spousehood, but potential language support and development as part of a committed and loving relationship in which mutual needs and wants are to be met.

In the context of this study in relation to its participants, a *first language* refers to the language that the participant first used and is most familiar with, which is generally also the language associated with the individual’s nation of origin. While alternative terms used by myself as well as the participants include *home language*, *native language*, *mother language*, *mother tongue*, and *language of origin*, the term *first language* has been designated as the preferred term for the sake of convenience and coherence. In this thread, *second languages* refer to all other languages learnt and used by the individuals apart from their *first*

language, and for most part of the discussion involves mainly (if not exclusively) the first language of the relational partner or spouse.

After much deliberation, it was decided that rather than the common phrase *second language learning and teaching*, the more comprehensive term of *second language development and support* was to be used in the current study to acknowledge the different types of educational language phenomena that could potentially occur in multilingual couplehood. Thus, *second language development* is meant to include all aspects of intentional or unintentional second language *learning* (the acquisition of language knowledge or skills), *maintenance* (the act of maintaining language knowledge or skills that have been previously acquired), and *improvement* (the act of improving language knowledge or skills that have been previously acquired), while *second language support* includes all aspects of informal or formal second language teaching, mediation, facilitation and translation identified in the multilingual relationship.

1.3 Potential significance of the study

As will be demonstrated throughout the thesis, there are a number of perspectives that may be taken to investigate issues found at the interface of intercultural relationships and language. Although much has already been done in the areas of second language education, relationship psychology, and intercultural communication in regards to theoretical and practical scholarship, I am also aware of the gaps in the current literature to which my research could potentially make significant contributions.

Firstly, in the field of second language education, we have been witnessing a gradual shift of focus from positivistic theories of second language acquisition to more interpretive and constructivist concerns of how and why second languages are learnt and taught, and more significantly *who* is doing the learning and the teaching *for whom* (Atkinson, 2011; Mitchell et al. 2013). Discussions of language performance, identity and power have become mainstream, encouraging research interests to expand towards more relational and affectual understandings of second language learning and teaching rather than purely cognitive perspectives of second language acquisition (Gabryś-Barker & Bielska, 2013). While this movement towards a wider view of the different factors influencing language learning is commendable, it is my contention that many of the existing theories and models prioritise a focus on language learner selves as individual and independent, rather than beings in relation (Gergen, 2009). Considering how significant interpersonal relationships are in all aspects of human life, there appears to be a need for a theorisation of second language education which sees the language learner, teacher, and

content not as separate entities, but intricately connected. By adopting relational theory as a lens to investigate the nature of second language development and support and related issues of language identity in the context of multilingual couplehood, it is my intention that relational perspectives will be highlighted as a more holistic and appropriate framework to approach the relational dynamics involved in second language learning and teaching, as well as learner and teacher identities that are negotiated and characterised in the process.

This is particularly relevant in the current research climate, where it is increasingly acknowledged that the negotiation and acquisition of second languages are not confined within the walls of a language classroom, but are experienced in the daily life of any individual having to deal with an increasingly intercultural and multilingual environment, whether that may be related to work, study, or recreation. Isolated discussions of language learner, language teacher, and aspects of language itself as the subject of study somehow seem unsatisfying and ill-equipped in dealing with more informal and organic learning contexts. Again, relational theory has the potential to provide a better basis for understanding these natural learning environments in recognition of how learner selves, teacher selves, and languages dynamically interact with each other and with the context in which the learning is taking place. As such, the study can further provide a much needed addition to current endeavours which seek to promote more informal and naturalistic methods of second language development, not only in their own right, but also as an alternative perspective to inform formal contexts of second language education.

Along with these movements in second language education, other related disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and communication studies have witnessed a growing interest in intercultural relationships as fertile ground for

social research. While the vast anthology of literature on the subject demonstrates that this is no longer a new or novel area of research, a particular focus on the language and communication of intercultural couples has been a relatively recent development. The foci of investigation are varied, and include matters of language choice, negotiation, use and maintenance which also extend to related questions of identity, gender, and power. While some studies allude to second language development and support within the couplehood (as will be identified in the literature review), we have yet to see studies that explicitly focus on this topic. By adopting an exploratory stance in looking at the issue of language sharing in multilingual couplehood, the current study can contribute to the further understanding of language-related issues that manifest in contexts of intercultural communication and relationships. On a more practical level, it is my intention that the findings would be able to inform the many multilingual couples who are constantly faced with the difficulties of language learning in their everyday lives by providing not specific strategies or methods, but a deeper insight into the complexities of this second language learning environment, thereby enabling them to think more constructively and cooperatively throughout the process for the benefit of the individuals as well as the couple and extended family. An understanding of the various issues that relate to the development and support of second languages can facilitate a broader comprehension of the possibilities and limitations of such practices in an intimate context, and would provide an appropriate framework for a more conscious practice that could alleviate possible tensions. This, in turn, could facilitate a better understanding of interpersonal dynamics in the wider educational context by emphasising the centrality and complexity of relationships that can significantly impact the educational process.

A third potential contribution can be made towards research methodologies in the social sciences, of which some speak of the *narrative turn* (Witherell & Noddings, 1991; Denzin, 2000; Czarniawska, 2004; Clandinin & Caine, 2008; Barkhuizen et al. 2014), which is an understanding that all our experiences, including those of academic research and theory, are parts of "storied, or narrative, representation[s]" (Denzin, 2000:xi). This follows on from a long tradition of using narratives as a fundamental way of understanding how beings relate to other beings and everything else in the world, thus constituting narratives as inherently relational. In a similar but to some extent distinct thread, narrative inquiry as a research method has been gaining credibility in many areas of the social sciences (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000:159; Barkhuizen et al. 2014:1). The current study brings together the theories of narrative identity in regards to self- and other-identification, and the use of narrative methods of data collection and analysis to present narrative inquiry as a potentially powerful methodological approach in studies of relational selves and second languages, which can further open possibilities for its utility in other holistic educational research contexts.

Thus, the thesis is presented with the aim of making significant theoretical, practical, and methodological contributions in regards to promoting a relational theory of second language development and support; providing a practical reference point for other intercultural/multilingual couples; and demonstrating the application of narrative inquiry in investigating relational identities.

1.4 Overview of thesis

The remainder of the thesis is presented as Chapters 2 to 10. In contextualising the study in view of what has been done in the literature, Chapter 2 begins with a discussion of the varying terminology in the field of intercultural relationships, which predicates a review of the literature of the wider context. In this process, studies perceived to be relevant to multilingual couplehood are discussed to gain a better understanding of what issues are identified as salient in these relationships. This leads to a discussion regarding the conceptualisation of multilingual couplehood, which generates an additional research question to be considered in the study.

Chapter 3 then presents the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of my research, with the introduction of relational theory as an appropriate and potentially powerful framework for the study of second language development in intimate relational contexts. On this basis, the constructs of relationship, couple, and couplehood are further refined. Theories of narrative identity as compatible with relational understandings of being are also discussed, linking the theoretical framework to the methodological approach of narrative inquiry to follow in Chapter 4. The potential for relational understandings of identity and knowledge as an alternative to existing theories in second language education practice, theory and research are further considered. The chapter culminates in a refined conceptual framework and a set of research questions which reflect the relational theoretical perspectives discussed.

Chapter 4, the methodology chapter, begins with an explanation of relational theory in ontological and epistemological terms, which foregrounds the

methodological approach of narrative inquiry that has been adopted in the current study. The suitability of narrative methods in researching second language development and support in multilingual couplehood is further justified and supported by an explication of the research design and procedures, followed by a discussion of related methodological issues pertaining to the design of the study.

The findings are then presented as narrative reconstructions for each of the couples in Chapters 5 to 8, which are accompanied by a case-based analysis recognising the salient features of their unique relational contexts. Additional findings in respect to all four cases are presented and discussed in depth in Chapter 9, highlighting the idiosyncrasies and commonalities that have emerged from the couple narratives in regards to the main research questions of the study. The potential significance of the findings is considered as way of summarising the discussion.

Chapter 10 concludes the thesis, with a summary of the study in what it has sought to do, what has been achieved, and what needs to be done further in regards to practice and research. As the thesis began with my narrative beginnings, a final narrative piece in reflection of my experiences of the research process in the form of concluding remarks is presented to end it.

2 CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

This chapter is devoted to building an understanding of the context of study, multilingual relationships, and to present a review of the literature seen as relevant to issues of second language education in these contexts.

As the specific topic of inquiry is not an established field of study in itself, my intention was to find and discuss studies that I considered relevant, regardless of academic discipline. I thus begin with a consideration of research which has been conducted on the topic of intercultural relationships, preceded by a critical discussion of the terminology used in the field to justify the scope of the review to follow. Past and present trends in intercultural relationship research will be identified, with a review of works that have highlighted the significance of language and communication to these relationships. This leads on to an acknowledgment of studies and theories that explicitly focus on linguistic and communicational issues in intimate multilingual relationships, including those which allude to cases of language learning and teaching which occur in these contexts. The chapter is concluded with a comprehensive summary of the review, which informs a preliminary conceptualisation of what constitutes a multilingual relationship. In light of this discussion, an additional research question is deemed necessary, and is presented to end the chapter.

It is additionally worth mentioning that restrictions regarding my linguistic repertoire have meant that the literary resources utilised in this study are limited to those in the English language, thus primarily of European, North American and Australian foundations. There is no doubt a much wider community of people who study the issue of second language exchange in close

relationships, and further access to these studies would facilitate a more informed and balanced understanding of the topic area.

2.1 Background of literature review

2.1.1 Identification of literature on multilingual couplehood

Based on a preliminary survey of the literature, it appeared that the use of the specific term ‘multilingual couple’ was uncommon, which made it difficult to immediately identify relevant sources of literature in contextualising the study. Apart from my own unpublished dissertations (Yim, 2009; Yim, 2010) only four works have been found to use the exact term (Seward, 2008; Gundacker, 2010; Takahashi, 2010; Piller, 2011). Of these four, Seward (2008:103) uses the phrase ‘bilingual and multiliingual couples’ once in her conclusion without provision of a definition, while Takahashi (2010) uses the terms ‘multilingual couple’ and ‘multilingual couplehood’ multiple times, but again, without clarifying how the concept is to be understood. Gundacker (2010) mentions “two people with different first languages” (13) and “couples with different first languages” (14) in reference to the terminology, which is similar to Piller’s (2001; 2002; 2009) coinage of ‘bilingual couple’ defined as those “in which the spouses have different first languages” (230). Alternatively, Yoon (2008) chooses to use the term ‘interlingual couple’ in referring to “[a couple] where two partners come from different ethnic groups and speak different languages” (ii). Not wanting to restrict the linguistic repertoire of the couples to two, as the prefix ‘bi’ could be seen to indicate, and not aiming to limit the composition of the couples to those from differing ethnic backgrounds, I have chosen to use the term ‘multilingual’ in reference to couples and relationships, of which a more detailed discussion and preliminary conceptualisation is presented in Section 2.4.3.

What was also considered problematic was the usage of a wide range of “inconsistent and overlapping” (Rohrlich, 1988:36) terminology in the existing literature on what could be perceived as being relevant to the current topic of study. There were studies that investigated couples with differing linguistic backgrounds, but without the researcher necessarily using the specific term *multilingual couple*. Or, as in most cases, there were discussions not meant to be specifically referring to multilingual couples *per se*, but findings of which alluded to multilingual couplehood, i.e., those which related to issues around linguistic difference within the individuals of the couple.

Even a perfunctory survey of the literature in the disciplines of sociology, psychology, education, and communications shows a range of terms used in referring to couples with differing national, racial, cultural, religious, or linguistic backgrounds, depending on what aspects of intermarriage are under investigation. Although by no means definitive, some of the more commonly used terminology and cited works are presented in the following table. It is additionally worth mentioning that often two or more of the terms are used within a single reference, sometimes meant to be used interchangeably depending on the context of research. This demonstrates the widespread interest in the study of couples with individuals from different backgrounds, as well as the possible need for a more systematic clarification of terms for more effective inter- and intra-disciplinary research in the future.

Table 1. Terminology used in references that potentially relate to multilingual couplehood

Terminology	References
Intermarriage	Castonguay, 1982; Stevens, 1985; Giladi-McKelvie, 1986; Ho, 1990; Perel, 1990; Joanides et al. 2002; Hoops, 2007
Cross-marriage	De Klerk, 2001
Mixed marriage	Rodríguez-Garcia, 2006
Intercultural (relationship/ couple/marriage)	Tseng et al. 1977; Giladi-McKelvie, 1986; Grearson & Smith, 1995; Crohn, 1998; Hsu, 2001; McFadden & Moore, 2001; Joanides et al. 2002; Donovan, 2004; Frame, 2004; Rubalcava & Waldman, 2004; Wilkins & Gareis, 2006; Crippen, 2007; Cools, 2009; Karis & Killian, 2009; Kim, 2009; Dervin & Gao, 2012
Cross-cultural	Falicov, 1995; Perel, 2000; Piller, 2002; Rosenblatt & Stewart, 2004; Piller, 2007; Karis & Killian, 2009; Kellner, 2009; Asante, 2010
Multicultural	Rastogi & Thomas, 2009
Cross-border	Chen, 2008; Yang & Lu, 2010
International	Piper, 1997; Lee, 2005; Jones & Shen, 2008; Lee, 2008; Zens, 2011
Transnational	Piper & Roces, 2003; Balzani, 2006; Cameron, 2006; Rodríguez-Garcia, 2006; Yea, 2006; Beck-Gernsheim, 2007; Thrapp, 2008
Bi-national	Rodríguez-Garcia, 2006
Cross-national	Piper, 1997
Interethnic	Rosenblatt & Stewart, 2004
Interracial	Giladi-McKelvie, 1986; Crohn, 1995; Frame, 2004; Harris & Ono, 2005; Bratter & King, 2008; Le, 2008; Seshadri, 2010
Interfaith	Crohn, 1995; Horowitz, 1999

2.1.2 A critique on terminology

Some observations can be made from this table. First of all, it appears common to use a prefix (inter-, trans-, cross-, and bi-) and adjective to identify the different rather than uniform characteristics between the individuals in the couple. This is seen as a way of acknowledging that there are issues worthy of discussion particular to individuals of different nations, regions, cultures, races, or ethnicities who are in meaningful relationships, and provides a linguistic cornerstone with which to further investigate these issues.

One may also observe that some terms attempt to delineate clearer or more specific boundaries than others. For example, the terms *intermarriage*, *cross-marriage*, *mixed marriage,* and others to do with *marriage* specify the legal or formal nature of the relationship in question, but not necessarily the nature of the discrepancy between the individuals in the couple. On the other hand, terms like *interethnic*, *interracial*, or *interfaith* are better in specifying the particular nature of the difference between the individuals as the focus of investigation, which is clearly neither on nationality nor linguistic background, but more on race, ethnicity, or religion, as well as the historical, societal, and cultural issues that may come with it. Terms to do with the difference in nationalities include *international*, *transnational*, *bi-national*, and *cross-national,* which are sometimes found to be used as synonyms. An example of where this is not the case can be seen in some uses of *transnational,* which applies it in reference to a marriage or relationship between individuals who are physically separated and living in different countries, but not necessarily being of differing national origins (Bacas, 2002; Piper & Roces, 2003; Balzani, 2006; Cameron, 2006; Beck-Gernsheim, 2007). *Cross-border* can also be distinguished from the others as evidence suggests that it is mainly used in contexts where

immigration between adjacent countries and related issues are the main focus of dissemination (Chen, 2008; Yang & Lu, 2010).

2.1.3 A discussion of 'culture'

Through the process of surveying the literature, it came to my attention that the most widespread terminology involved the use of the word *culture*, such as *intercultural, cross-cultural* and *multicultural.* This in itself was not surprising, as they have become common terms in general social scientific discourse. What I did find to be problematic was that, in many cases, a clear definition of the term 'culture' was absent, which seemed to imply an *a priori* definition of culture. For example, in her research on intercultural couples, Crippen (2007) adopts the common view of culture as "a frame of reference, and a set of symbols that provide meaning, guide behavior, and influence one's reality and worldview" (30) and cites Ting-Toomey (1999:10) in defining culture as a pattern of "traditions, beliefs, values, norms, symbols, and meanings that are shared to varying degrees by interacting members of a community". While this appears to be an adequate definition, it is important to be aware of its implications.

Viewing culture as "a frame of reference" implies the danger of appropriating an essentialist, or so-called "culturalist" viewpoint in studies of interculturality, and particularly those on intercultural relationships (Dervin & Gao, 2012), by which assumptions are made when an individual is seen as being from a particular cultural background, whether it involves aspects of national, regional, linguistic, racial, ethnic, sexual, or religious affiliation. This appears to have been the general attitude in earlier discussions of intercultural relationships when they were considered "cultural deviances" in largely homogeneous societies, and

culture could be thought of as "*a grammar or calculus* according to which married partners regulate their behavior toward each other" (Maretzki, 1977:3, emphasis added). However, without validation on the part of the individual in question, these can be grossly erroneous, as they are socially or politically constructed concepts "based on prevailing, but primarily incorrect, beliefs about underlying genetic differences" (Sevier & Yi, 2009:190).

This is what Dervin and Dirba (2006) refer to as a 'solid' view of culture and interculturality, and is a perspective which is increasingly being challenged in the more current literature (Dervin, 2007; Dervin 2011; Piller, 2011) with the acknowledgment of culture as not fixed or descriptive, but multi-layered, fluid and complex. In a foreword to a book on multicultural couple therapy, Sprenkle (2009) refers to this as the "diversity within diversity":

> "At the *macrolevel*, culture includes racial, ethnic, national, sexual preference, and religious differences; however, it also includes, at the *microlevel*, a range of cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions." (xii, emphasis added)

It is in this sense that culture may be viewed as a concept to be understood at the very basic level of the individual, hence the view that *all individuals* are intercultural (Dervin, 2007:2). This further implies that *all interpersonal encounters* are intercultural (Alred et al. 2002:2), which means that *all interpersonal communication* can be seen as being intercultural as well:

> "Given that each of us belongs to many cultures … and that all these combinations are slightly different, it is thus possible to argue that, in this sense, all communication is intercultural."
>
> Piller (2011:70)

Applied to couplehood, it may be further claimed that *all relationships* are intercultural, and indeed, some definitions of intercultural couple, relationship, or

marriage acknowledge this, albeit unintentionally. For example, Giladi-McKelvie (1986) formally defines intercultural marriage as one “which takes place between spouses of different cultural backgrounds” with the individuals bringing to the relationship “different values, beliefs, life-styles, and traditions” (5). If we take culture in this context as at the microlevel, based on this definition, virtually any marriage could be seen as being intercultural.

Having established the variety of ways in which culture can be understood, I reiterate my previous critique that in the discussion of intercultural, cross-cultural or multicultural relationships, efforts should be made to provide at least a marginal clarification of how the concept of culture is to be used, however contextually limited it may be. As Bustamante et al. (2011) state, “[a]n understanding of what is meant by *culture* is essential to the study of intercultural couples” (155, emphasis in original). In this regard, my own understanding seeks to incorporate “the complexity and internal plurality” (Dervin, 2007:8) of agentic beings in relation to other entities and beings in the world, of which culture is seen as “something people *do*”, rather than “something people *have*” (Piller, 2011:15). Thus, I find Fogel’s (1993:161) conceptualisation of culture illuminating:

> “[C]ulture is a system of meanings that mediate relationships between individuals and their environments. […] Culture is the active, interpretive process by which individuals create frames for meaningful relationships. […] [M]eaning in a culture is just the extent to which communicating communities co-regulate stable themes of information.”

By characterising culture in respect to relationships, this approach is also seen to be compatible with *relational perspectives of knowing and being* as introduced in Chapter 1, the idea that selves and identities are fundamentally

constituted in and through the infinite relationships we encounter and embody in the past, present, and future. As a key theoretical tenet of this study, this concept is to be further discussed at length in Chapter 3.

Provided that some definition of culture is established, there is the further issue of using the prefixes ‘inter’, ‘cross’, or ‘multi’. This, again, is problematic as it seems to be the case that in the literature of intercultural, cross-cultural, and multicultural relationships, the terms tend to be used interchangeably. For example, Grearson and Smith (1995) define *intercultural* in the context of relationships as “involving two people from different countries and cultures who may also, though not always, differ in religion or race” (xv). Similarly, Karis and Killian (2009) define *cross-cultural* couples as:

> “consisting of partners from different countries, nationalities, ethnicities, and religions who may possess quite divergent beliefs, assumptions, and values as a result of their socialization in different sociocultural spaces.” (xviii)

Notwithstanding the relative clarity of these definitions, there is no explanation as to why a particular prefix is being used over others, while clear distinctions are being made in other fields of study such as communications, sociology and education. For instance, in a comprehensive text on intercultural and cross-cultural communication, Gudykunst (2003) decidedly states that “*[c]ross-cultural* involves comparisons of communication across cultures” whereas “*intercultural* communication involves communication between people from different cultures” (1, emphasis added), which constitutes a common ground in the use of the two terms throughout the variety of discussions in the book. Piller’s (2011:8) distinction is somewhat similar to this when she cites Scollon & Scollon (2000, 2001) in distinguishing between the research areas of *cross-cultural*

communication (comparison between cultures), *intercultural* communication (interaction between cultures), with the added *inter-discourse* communication (discursively constructed cultural belonging) (2011:8). In the field of sociology, many distinguish between intercultural and multicultural (Cantle, 2013), *intercultural* highlighting the interactive sharing and communication between people of different cultural backgrounds, and *multicultural* indicating the plurality rather than singularity of cultures in a particular context, without necessarily any interaction between them. Attempts to make similar distinctions between *intercultural* and *multicultural* education have also been made, but without general consensus (Grant & Portera, 2011).

2.1.4 Conclusion

Although I am aware that universal agreement regarding semantics is perhaps less important than the actual discussion of the issues they indicate, there is nevertheless a place for it in academia insofar as it serves as a common ground for the sake of better intra- and interdisciplinary collaboration on any given topic. Thus, while the scope of the literature review encompasses studies that have chosen to use any of the terminology discussed above, my preference leans toward the term *intercultural* in regards to couples and relationships. Based on how it is being used in other disciplines, ‘inter’ would assume the relational connection *between* two individuals, with the further assumption of ongoing and active communicative interaction and sharing; and ‘culture’, although a difficult concept to define, has its merits in the generosity of its scope and meaning. As such, in the context of the current study, *intercultural* will be used in reference to couples, relationships, or marriages, denoting a *self-identified* (as opposed to

other-identified) difference in *agentic* cultural affiliation of the individuals involved, which may include emotional or other attachment to nationality, language, ethnicity, race, religion, or language, or any combination of these.

In the course of the following review, I make reference to the wider literature of intercultural relationships which I find has potential to illuminate preliminary discussions on multilingual couplehood before homing in on those which have particular relevance to the current topic. It is worth emphasising here that although the term *multilingual* is meant to be understood in the context of *intercultural* relationships, the term *intercultural* is not to be understood as synonymous with *multilingual.* As will be further explained in this chapter as well as the following, my study deems all multilingual couples as intercultural, but, needless to say, not all intercultural couples as multilingual.

2.2 Intercultural relationships: A literature review

The review of terminology has demonstrated that the study of intercultural relationships can no longer be considered as a new or novel area of research, with general and academic interest in relationships of this nature continuing to increase. In the various disciplines of history, literature, anthropology, politics, sociology, and psychology (in relation to counselling in particular), a wide range of perspectives, including those of culture, media, gender, family, and communication, have been taken into investigating intercultural couples and the issues they encounter. It also appears to be the case that inter-disciplinary approaches are becoming more common in investigating the phenomenon.

This, in itself, is not surprising, as virtually all research and discussion on intercultural relationships and related topics begin with a commentary on the phenomenon of intercultural marriages being continuously on the rise, perpetuated by trends of globalisation and technological development, particularly in the areas of international travel, communication, and cultural exchange (Piller, 2007: 341). More and more individuals are going abroad for travel, work, or studies (as is the case with myself), increasing opportunities to meet a potential significant other from a different national background (Kofman, 2003: ix). Advancements in communications technology mean people are able to create, maintain, and develop interpersonal and intercultural relationships online (Thorne, 2003), in some cases, for the specific objective of meeting a spouse with a certain cultural background in the form of Internet Marriage Agencies (Thrapp, 2008). A rise in opportunities for intercultural contact at the turn of the century has led to intercultural relationships becoming much more of

a common practice, with generally positive associations to mobility and change in the world we live in today, and with a range of ramifications on individual, couple, societal, national and international levels. This is not to say that intercultural relationships are recent phenomena; earlier literature on the topic makes it clear that it has been a part of human history for decades if not centuries. However, in the context of modern society, one may notice significant changes in social and research orientations towards intercultural couples across time since those held by earlier researchers, who, to put it gently, have not always been wholly positive towards relationships of this nature.

2.2.1 The study of intercultural relationships: Changes in attitudes

It has been observed by contemporary researchers of intercultural relationships that much of the earlier literature on the subject commonly discussed them in negative tones with claims that the differing cultural backgrounds between individuals were a serious cause of stress and even destruction in marriage (Piper, 1997:322; Piller, 2002:187; Frame, 2004:219-220; Asante, 2010:18). Individual motives for choosing to be in an intercultural relationship were questioned, as it was considered “unconventional”, thus warranting “separate treatment from marriage in general” (Tseng et al. 1977:1). For example, the following list was comprised based on theoretical and experiential observations of a clinical therapist living in the intercultural and interracial context of Hawaii in the late seventies:

Motivations of intercultural marriages (Char, 1977)

1. Love as a motive
2. Chance and availability
3. The need to be different
4. Practical reasons
5. Problems related to “Oedipus Complex”
6. Messages given by parents
7. Beliefs about other cultures
8. Feelings of superiority and inferiority
9. Act of aggression toward another race
10. “Idealistic” act
11. Sadomasochistic reasons

The list insinuates that individuals have particular motives in choosing to be in an intercultural relationship as opposed to a ‘normal’ one, and while it presents the first motive as ‘love’, some of the others – ‘act of aggression’ and ‘sadomasochistic reasons’ in particular – are clearly of a more hostile proclivity. This is further reflected in the author’s distinction of two extreme views regarding intercultural marriages: one as “an idealistic, progressive form of human relationships” of which the individuals are seen as “strong, courageous, and idealistic”, and the other as “basically unwholesome” of which those that are involved are “unwise or maladjusted” (Char, 1977:39). This may be seen as representing the stance of many intercultural relationship specialists and perhaps even the views of the general public at the time; if you were in an intercultural relationship, you were most likely to be either praised or condemned, but certainly not accepted or acknowledged as being ‘normal’, whatever that may have meant at the time.

Although much has changed since then, with significant efforts being made to demystify and deconstruct the potential challenges and difficulties of intercultural relationships (which will be dealt with more thoroughly in the sections to come), there remains a notion of novelty as well as scepticism in regards to unions of this nature "as an exception that needs to be justified and accounted for" (Piller, 2007: 354). For example, in her widely cited guidebook to intercultural marriages, Romano (2008) identifies nineteen problem areas common to these relationships, and seeks to offer practical advice on coping with these issues. While there is evidence of the understanding that intercultural relationships are, essentially, relationships, and that *all* relationships, intercultural or otherwise, have potential challenges and difficulties to overcome as a part of nurturing the significant bond, Romano also succeeds in highlighting the fact that those in intercultural relationships are contrary to the norm. One example can be seen in her suggested categorisation of 'types' of individuals who are more likely to prefer intercultural relationships, which include "nontraditionals", "romantics", "compensators", "rebels", and "internationals" (6-15), with similarities to Char's (1977) list above. It is interesting to note the very brief mention of the factor of "true love" after this discussion, and how the intercultural aspect of marriage is romanticised (similar to Char's observations of over 30 years before):

> "In many ways intercultural spouses are the last of the real romantics; they are people who marry against the accepted rules of good sense, who turn away from the easier road and take on the extra challenge of diversity in their intimate lives, often without the blessing of their families and friends, who risk the known for the unknown."
>
> (Romano, 2008:16)

It is implied that monocultural relationships are still seen as adhering to “the accepted rules of good sense”, which means that while intercultural relationships and marriages have become more accepted in recent times “as an expression of atypicality, rather than marginality” (Hoops, 2007:91), there still remain underlying assumptions which view such unions as problematic, presenting “distinct challenges and situations that require additional reflection, consideration, and negotiation by partners” (Karis & Killian, 2009: xviii) who have chosen to be in one.

While intercultural unions were observed as “a deviant form of marriage”, there were also indications that these perspectives had the potential to change:

> “Where it occurs, it has been and still is considered to be a deviant form of marriage. But as with other cultural deviances which have gradually become accepted because they are so common, this may some day be the case with intercultural marriage.”
>
> (Maretzki, 1977:7, emphasis added)

This will be demonstrated in the review to follow, as more recent endeavours in the study of intercultural couples have been much more varied in their approaches and attitudes. One instance of this can be seen in Giladi-McKelvie’s work (1986), in which a phenomenological approach was taken to investigate intercultural couples who defined themselves and their relationships as “successful” with the purpose of identifying factors that were perceived as facilitating the relationship. It is worth noting that at the time of the study, intercultural marriages were still widely regarded as negative, with areas such as styles of communication, concept of marriage, and ideas about child rearing considered particularly problematic (30). As such, studies like this one provided much needed insight into the positive aspects of intercultural couplehood by

starting with the assumption that “the relationships of the subjects were functioning”, and further demonstrating the “strengths rather than weaknesses” of this type of relationship (130).

Along with the diversification of research approaches and foci over the years, research into intercultural couples has generally maintained an awareness and sensitivity to the fact that there are particular issues that uniquely pertain to couples of this nature (Cools, 2006; Crippen, 2011), who may potentially face relational strains that are “more severe” (Maretzki, 1977: 8) or “exacerbated” (Frame, 2004:221) than those experienced in less divergent relationships. These have been referred to as *intercultural-intimate conflicts* (Ting-Toomey, 2009:31), defined as “any antagonistic friction or disagreement between two romantic partners due, in part, to cultural or ethnic group membership differences” (31). For example, uncompromising allegiance to respective national, cultural, and traditional backgrounds of the individuals in the couple have been found to create conflict that could hinder individual, couple, and family well-being (Joanides et al. 2002:380). This conflict is not only perpetuated by the individuals’ personal ties with their respective cultures, but also on a societal level where prevalent discourses outside of the actual relationship constitute barriers to a healthy and happy union:

> “The biggest threat to [the performance of a common couple identity] is the powerful discourse of national identity, and one of its “sub-discourses” which sees cross-cultural marriage as problematic.”
>
> (Piller, 2001:230)

It is in this sense that studies have increasingly acknowledged the fact that intercultural couplehood is not only a matter of the individuals involved in the relationship (Seshadri, 2010); it has wider implications on and influences from

the broader contexts of family, community, society and international relations as well.

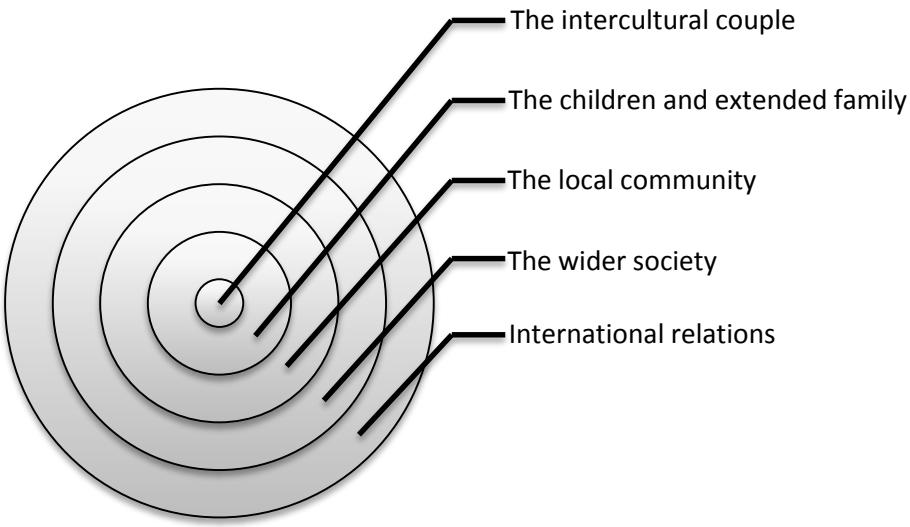


Figure 1 Contextualising intercultural relationships

There are no relationships which exist independently in their own separated bubbles of intimacy. Rather, they all comprise but a small part of a vast web of complex relations and discourses that are capable of both influencing and being influenced by the couplehood. Bronfenbrenner (1986) explains this in the form of an *Ecological Systems Theory*, which distinguishes these different levels into micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chrono-contexts (see Appendix 1). Rosenblatt (2009) also recognises this multi-layered framework in proposing a *Systems Theory Analysis* of intercultural relationships, which posits that:

> "[E]ach [intercultural] couple is embedded within a complex array of shoulds, limits, interactions, competing pressures, expectations, and models of how to be a couple." (4)

How individuals in an intercultural couple as well as the couple as a unit itself negotiate and position themselves within these contextual factors, which can be

either supportive or dehabilitating in nature (Biever et al. 1998), becomes a crucial matter. This is reflected in the growing literature on intercultural couple and family therapy and pastoral care (Horowitz, 1999; Perel, 2000; Frame, 2004; Rastogi & Thomas, 2009; Crippen, 2011), which deals with concerns of facilitating mutual awareness and understanding of both macrocultural (systemic) influences and microcultural (individual) differences (Bhugra & DeSilva, 2000, adapted by Greenman et al. 2009).

This is further supported by the wide range of inquiries which have dealt with the various issues regarding intercultural relationships at different levels of contextualisation. Some have looked at the implications of global migration and intercultural marriage on a national or international scale, providing recommendations for governmental policy and planning, while others have focused on the socio-psychological dimension of intercultural couplehood by considering the issues arising from the local and immediate context of the relationship. Some have taken a micro-perspective in investigating where, why and how tensions are created and suggesting possible ways for the individuals experiencing these difficulties to overcome them, while others have focused more on the macro-systems influencing the intercultural unions, such as those regarding power and gender, or economic and social mobility.

In one way or another, this diverse array of studies on intercultural couples contributes to our understanding of relationships characterised as such, which not only addresses long-existing questions but also produces more to explore further. I now begin an overview of these studies that represent key interests in intercultural couple research, beginning with those that are concerned with the issues on a wider scale before a discussion of research specific to the

immediate context of the couples themselves, further highlighting works that have shaped and informed my understanding in relation to the present research topic of multilingual relationships and second language development.

2.2.2 (Inter)National and governmental concerns

Within a variety of approaches taken in researching intercultural couplehood and marriage, some have taken a macrolevel perspective in investigating it and related issues. This mainly involves specific attention to national and international concerns, for example, those related to changes in population demographics, immigration activity and governmental policy.

The contexts of these studies are widely varied, but the general consensus is that cross-border marriage and migration is on the rise, generated by increased circumstantial demands for relationships of a transnational and/or intercultural nature. This is seen to have significant implications on regional, national and international levels, encouraging research initiatives to consider the causes and consequences of the phenomena. It appears that many studies of this nature have been carried out in the regions of South-East Asia and Europe, in particular, where the relatively high density of bordering countries along with increased population mobility have provided more opportunities for intercultural integration. These studies tend to concentrate more on *cross-border* migration and marriage, related policy changes on the part of governments, and their influence on a social level rather than a focus on *interculturality* as such. For example, in a book entitled *Asian Cross-Border Marriage Migration: Demographic Patterns and Social Issues* (Yang & Lu, 2010), matters of immigration and cross-border marriages in countries including Japan, Hong

Kong, Taiwan, Korea, and Thailand are discussed from a range of political and demographic perspectives. Jones and Shen (2008) also present a review of the recent trends of international marriage in East and Southeast Asia, including discussions on the reasons for this upward trend, its local and national consequences, and issues regarding individual rights and the sovereignty of the state. Other works based in this geographical region include Lee's analysis of the situation in South Korea (2008), which further examines how the government endeavours to deal with these new issues through altering existing laws and implementing new policies, Chen's observation of the case of Taiwan (2009), where cross-border marriage has increased rapidly since the late 1980s due to a changing economy and gender demographics, and Piper's study of international marriage in Japan (1997), particularly between Filipina women and Japanese men, which is explained as the result of labour migration and characterised by gender and racial stereotypes on a national rather than individual level.

Similar perspectives are taken in Piper and Roces' compilation of research (2003) focusing on international marriage, work, and migration, in which "the imbrication of woman as wife, worker, mother, and citizen in the context of migration" (18) is highlighted, with the general observation that for many of the women informants, weak proficiency of the local (their spouse's) language was a significant hindrance to their mental and psychological well-being as well as to their adjustment to the local culture and society, especially in regards to job opportunities. Issues of gender and agency in South Asian transnational marriages are also explored in a special issue of the journal *Global Networks* (2006), where a compilation of articles on the topic is presented, some of which

challenge existing ideas of the “passivity of women” (Charsley and Shaw, 2006:332), further demonstrating how:

> “[m]arriage emerges as an important means of producing and transforming transnational networks, while marriage practices and dynamics are themselves transformed in the process.” (331)

Thus, it appears that there are issues of intercultural marriage which stem from widely held cultural expectancies regarding the gendered nature of intercultural relationships where “discourses of love, romance, gender and sexuality have become enmeshed with cultural discourses” (Piller, 2011:113), with potentially negative consequences for one or both of the partners involved.

Changes on a national scale in marital practice and their implications have also been recognised in European contexts, but with the additional focus on transnational endogamy (marriage between individuals from the same culture of origin but residing in different countries) as well as intermarriage. For example, Beck-Gernsheim’s (2007) review of migrant communities in Europe observes general trends in transnational, but not necessarily intercultural, marriages. Studies looking at transnational marriage and migration in the UK include Cameron’s (2006) investigation of the demographic impact of Indian immigration and transnational marriage on British society, and Balzani’s (2006) study on transnational marriage practices among Ahmadi Muslims, which are seen as characterised more by shared religious identities rather than ethnic ones. Studies such as these strongly indicate how *transnational* is not to be used synonymously with *intercultural* in regards to relationships and marriage, and aids in the identification of relevant (or not so relevant) literature pertaining to multilingual couplehood. Other studies that do focus on partners of differing nationalities include attempts to clarify the political aspects of intercultural

partnership in terms of gaining legal residence or citizenship in the spouse's country, as is the case of Rodríguez-Garcia (2006), who investigates the case of African-Spanish couples in Catalonia. Intercultural marriage can also be investigated in terms of sociological statistics of migration and tourism (census data), as is the case of Bacas (2002) who exemplifies the case story of one German woman to highlight issues pertaining to German women married to Greek spouses living in Greece, and the language and communication-related tensions among them (10).

The studies presented here are but a small sample of the many that have looked at trends in cross-border, transnational, and international marriage and migration, reminding us that although interpersonal relationships and marriage are primarily the concern of the individuals involved, there are implications on a broader scale that also require attention. Furthermore, they provide an understanding that wider political and social circumstances can significantly influence individual decision-making in regards to intercultural and/or multilingual relationship and marriage.

2.2.3 Intermarriage and language shift

In considering the focus of the current study, it may be said that most of the aforementioned studies tend to deal with matters of internationality rather than interculturality or multilinguality *per se*, as political boundaries and geographical borders are highlighted over the cultural or linguistic discrepancies of intermarried populations. Of these, there were few which touched upon matters of language and communication (Bacas, 2002; Piper & Roces, 2003), acknowledging the role of language within the wider social context and

international perspectives. However, there are also studies which have specifically dealt with the issue of language shift on a national scale, mainly of a quantitative nature, that comes with the increasing phenomenon of intermarriage.

One is Castonguay's investigation of intermarriage and language shift in Canada (1982), in which national census data regarding marriage and linguistic practice were analysed, resulting in the indication of "a steady increase in exogamy and anglicisation rates among most French language groups" (263). This was attributed to the wider and general changes of Canadian society, as well as the fact that increased exogamy and anglicisation itself "generate conditions leading to their own acceleration" (274).

Another is Stevens' study of intergenerational language shift in the United States (1985), which focuses on the centrality of language in intra- and intergroup relations and concludes that "non-English languages are disappearing through mother-tongue shift in large part because of ethnic intermarriage" (81). Linguistic patterns were seen to manifest in different combinations of intermarriage according to language (linguistic homogamy and heterogamy) and ethnicity (ethnic endogamy and exogamy), explained and illustrated as follows:

> "*Linguistic homogamy* occurs when the [couple's] mother tongues match, *linguistic heterogamy* when they do not. *Ethnic endogamy* occurs when the [couple's] ethnicities match, *ethnic exogamy* when they do not. The cross-classification of linguistic and ethnic types of intermarriage yields four patterns." (76, emphasis added)

Table 2. Steven's (1985) four linguistic patterns

	ETHNIC ENDOGAMY	ETHNIC EXOGAMY
LINGUISTIC HOMOGAMY	Same mother tongues and same ethnicity	Same mother tongues and different ethnicity
LINGUISTIC HETEROGAMY	Different mother tongues and same ethnicity	Different mother tongues and different ethnicity

Stevens and Schoen also focus on linguistic intermarriage in the United States (1988), and used census data to investigate the relationship between educational attainment and preference for linguistic homogamy in six language groups: English, French, German, Italian, Polish, and Spanish. It was found that "preferences for linguistic homogamy decline with educational attainment", which was seen to imply an "assimilationist" rather than a "cultural pluralist" perspective (277), demonstrating the socially contextual aspects of intermarriage at the time.

Notwithstanding the inherent limitations of statistical data and analysis (insofar as they can only do so much in helping us understand the how's and why's of linguistic intermarriage), studies like these inform our understanding of the phenomenon of linguistic and cultural intermarriage as something which has wider implications than that of the couples or families themselves. In looking at issues of language choice, maintenance, and shift on a national scale, they have had to provide relatively solid definitions regarding the population under investigation.

In regards to my current topic of interest, these serve as a sound starting point in constructing a definition of *multilingual* in regards to relationships and/or marriage. For example, what Castonguay (1982:264) calls *linguistic exogamy*

as a sub-category of intermarriage corresponds to my initial conceptualisation of multilingual couplehood as referring to the unit of two “partners of differing mother tongues”, with *mother tongue* further defined as “language first spoken and still understood”. He further distinguishes this from *retrogamy*, which refers to a form of linguistically mixed marriage in which the ethnic origins of the individuals are homogeneous (274). Stevens (1985) also makes a similar distinction by presenting a typology of intercultural relationships according to language and ethnic origin (as shown in Table 2).

Thus, while the simple definition of ‘multilingual’ being ‘of two or more languages’ means that its use in most contexts may be seen as relatively self-explanatory, in the case of couples who are in a significant relationship, married or otherwise, the matter is not as simple. For example, multilingual individuals are those who are able to use more than one language, and multilingual societies are those in which multiple languages are used by their citizens. However, to simply say that a multilingual couple is a couple with two or more languages is not sufficient, especially if the term is to be used within the context of intercultural relationships. As a central facet of the current study, this issue of defining ‘multilingual’ in relation to couples and relationships will be discussed separately towards the end of the chapter.

2.2.4 Problematising language and communication in intercultural relationships

In a 1977 review on the problem areas of intercultural marriages, Markoff identified issues of communication and language as the most common, followed by other aspects including differences in values, negotiating the concept of

marriage, and prejudices of the surrounding family. More recently, Frame (2004) has also presented language and other communicational factors (tone of voice, eye contact, and body language) as having the potential to cause tensions in intercultural marital contexts.

In the course of reviewing the general literature on intercultural couples, I have found that this has been widely supported by empirical research. Studies investigating the challenges or stressors of intercultural marriages (Soncini, 1997; Bustamante et al. 2001; Nakamatsu, 2003; Donovan, 2004; Rosenblatt & Stewart, 2004; Nabeshima, 2005; Taweekuakulkit, 2005; Visson, 2009; Asante, 2010; Zens, 2011; Hirvonen, 2012), in particular, although varied in their research approach and foci, all have in common the acknowledgment of communicational issues pertaining to relationships between individuals of differing linguistic backgrounds. Collectively, these studies broaden our understanding of the many facets of language and communication that can cause tensions in intercultural relationships.

Language as a source of conflict in the relationship

One example is Soncini's (1997) study of cultural differences, styles of adjustment, and conflict resolution techniques of intercultural couples. It was found that for most of the twelve couples interviewed, problems with communication, including those to do with language itself, manifested as a major cause of misunderstandings and conflicts (229) within the relationship. Nakamatsu (2003) also identified the problem of language as a tool of communication, particularly in the earlier stages of intercultural relationships where prior communication between the individuals may have been limited to

correspondence through international marriage introduction agencies. This was seen as the cause of “intensified misunderstanding, isolation, and tension” (188), resulting in a sense of frustration for the spouses involved.

While these studies stop at identifying the issue of the language and communication barrier as potentially problematic, others have gone a bit further in explaining what specific language features could cause miscommunication and stress. In her Master’s thesis on stress and coping techniques in successful intercultural marriages, Donovan (2004) not only identified the language barrier as one of the many potential causes of stress in the relationships of six intercultural couples, but further highlighted specific aspects of language including accents, language proficiency and comprehension, and vocabulary as potentially problematic (41-42). Another study was done by Taweekuakulkit (2005) who investigated the issue of adjustment conflict in marriages between Thai women and their American husbands living in the United States. Although I found quite a few internal inconsistencies in the overall presentation of the research, as well as what may be perceived as questionable researcher bias and ethics (although the husbands did not directly take part in the study, consent forms were given to them asking for their permission to allow their wives to participate), this study is significant in that a distinction between ‘language barriers’ and ‘communicative style differences’ was made. The former refered to matters of linguistic competence involving knowledge of vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar (syntax), while the latter was more to do with wider issues of communication in general, mostly influenced by differences in communicative styles based on differing cultural backgrounds. Both were acknowledged by the six female participants as causing conflict in the relationships.

Language as a source of conflict with others outside of the relationship

There are also studies that acknowledge that issues of language and communication can affect not only the relationship of the two individuals involved (Visson, 2009), but also of the extended family and friends (Bustamante et al. 2011; Hirvonen, 2012) as well as the wider community and society in general (Zens, 2011).

Visson (2009), in her investigation of marriages between Russian women and American men, emphasises the issue of language difference in the relationships themselves in saying that "[a]n American man is taking a considerable risk when he decides to marry someone who does not speak English well" (154). Further tensions arose as the American husbands found themselves "thrust into a series of roles, including being an "all provider", tour guide, and language teacher, as well as a husband and often stepfather" (155), highlighting the increased responsibility of the spouse native to the host culture and language. While this potential burden is to be recognised and appreciated, one can not help but question why it was observed that the wives' "poor English led to misunderstandings" (157) without mention of linguistic compromise on the part of the husbands.

Bustamante et al. (2011) also presented the language issue as a primary stressor in their study of five intercultural couples, but additionally highlighted the potential conflicts in relation to communication with in-laws (159). Similar results were found in a study investigating Finnish male perspectives of intercultural couplehood (Hirvonen, 2012), in which four out of the five participants interviewed mentioned language and communication as a

challenge (28), not only in the context of the relationship, but also in relation to other important relationships, such as close friends and extended family (29).

Zens (2011) makes further links between the issue of language barriers in the context of not only the immediate couple and their loved ones, but the wider society as well. Seven intercultural couples were interviewed to gain insight into the foreign spouse's experience in a new country, in this case, the United States. The struggles with the language on the part of the spouses for whom English was a second language were identified as causing power differentials, which further led to inequality in the marriage and then possible conflict in all seven couples (78). This linguistic challenge was seen to not only create potential barriers within the couples, but also encroach upon the relationships between the couples and their respective extended families (81). Additionally, for 4 out of 7 non-American spouses, the learning of English as a second language was considered a prerequisite in his or her acculturation and adaptation to their spouse's country, which the researcher highlighted as interesting for the fact that these couples "did not report great difficulties or marital challenges related to language between each other, but only with the social environment" (83). Thus, we have seen how linguistic difficulties in multilingual relationships manifest in the context of not just the couple, but the wider context beyond the two individuals.

Language and power in relationships

It has further been hinted that linguistic differences may create or sustain issues of power differentials. This has been acknowledged in another study (Rosenblatt and Stewart, 2004) which looked into the challenges of Chinese

and Euro-American marriages. Difference in language skill was seen to “set off concerns for either partner about power imbalance and equity” (44), but in 10 of the 12 couples, the male partner had very little Chinese (not enough to sustain conversation), possibly “in part because they had the power not to do so” (55).

Another study mentioning the negative consequences of the imbalance of language in intercultural couplehood is Nabeshima’s (2005) study of intercultural couples’ adjustment to new parenthood. Twenty Japanese-American couples with children aged six or under were interviewed to present a wide range of aspects related to interculturality as influencing marital adjustment, particularly in the adjustment to bilingual/bicultural parenting, with communication highlighted as one of the major sources of tension within the couples. Incidentally, English was a second language for all the Japanese female participants of the study, and most had confided that they weren’t able to express themselves in their second language as fully as they would have liked. Nabeshima observes that “the women were at a disadvantage in terms of having to make an extra effort in verbal and auditory communication” and that “it bothered them that they could not reveal certain nuances of their thoughts and feelings in English” (111). The imbalance of language is apparent, as it was recognised by many of the participants that, ideally, both members of the couple would be able to speak their partner’s native language, but, realistically, this was unachievable. In many cases, the monolingual husbands viewed Japanese as a difficult language, and were unable to invest the time and effort required to learn it. It is unclear as to whether the Japanese wives were supportive or otherwise in their husbands’ endeavours. It is made evident that when children enter the picture, these points of tension are extended into matters of bilingual and bicultural childrearing and parenting, which is further analysed in depth.

The issue of power relations, in its many forms, is something which is salient in any relationship. However, it may be said that intercultural couples are faced with additional dimensions of imbalance in regards to circumstances of cultural and linguistic adjustment. How these issues are negotiated within the couple becomes an important aspect of achieving mutual satisfaction in the relationship.

Linguistic adjustment and attainment of equity, in particular, can be a complicated process in relationships. As Nabeshima (2005) observes, it is one thing that both partners of an intercultural and multilingual relationship idealistically want to learn the other's first language; the transition from this abstract want to practical behaviour is completely another. This is not to say that it is impossible. In a study of marital satisfaction among Filipino American wives and European American husbands (Asante, 2010), seven couples expressed difficulties in having different first languages. It was observed that "most of these couples indicated that their ability to understand each other, literally, had improved over the years" (102). However, what the couples actually did to support this was not specified. Based on the account that "[s]everal of the wives had attempted to teach their husbands Tagalog, but the husbands rejected the opportunity to learn it" (112), it was evidently not through the mutual learning of languages. And while it would be easy to make a hasty and accusatory judgment regarding the lack of effort on the part of the men, I think the greater question to be asked here concerns the contextual and personal circumstances which would have influenced that decision.

While all having different findings and therefore differing conclusions, studies such as these, although not aimed with a focus on linguistic issues in intercultural couplehood *per se*, demonstrate the significance of language in intercultural communication, especially in the context of intimate interpersonal

relationships. It may be further observed that the language barrier and other communication problems are identified mainly as stressors or causes of tension in the relationship, thus drawing attention to the negative aspects of multilingual relationships rather than the positive.

The studies presented here are commendable in the sense that problematising language issues is seen as a first step in potentially finding ways to overcome these difficulties. However, it is also important that we recognise that a difference in first languages between people in a romantic relationship may not necessarily be detrimental, as some have identified the positive aspects of linguistic barriers and the subsequent learning of the partner's language(s) in intercultural relationships. These and other studies which adopt a specific focus on language and communication in investigating intercultural and multilingual couples are presented in the following section.

2.3 The prioritisation of language and communication: From intercultural to multilingual relationships

> "Dyadic communication in marriage, a specialized kind of interpersonal relationship, is of prime concern in today's world where marriage as a social institution has lost ground, and is particularly crucial in marriage between partners from different cultural backgrounds."
>
> (Rohrlich, 1988:35)

As has been demonstrated in the previous section, much research on intercultural couples has highlighted language and communication as an important concern in relationships of this nature. This has encouraged further research initiatives to look closer at this particular facet of intercultural communication and intimacy, which extend beyond the identification of the pros and cons of linguistic difference in contexts of multilingual couplehood, and endeavour to further investigate the contextual and relational factors and consequences involved.

These include (but are not limited to) investigations which focus on communication and conflict resolution in intercultural relationships (Cools, 2006; Cools, 2009; Renalds, 2011), language choice and negotiation (de Klerk, 2001; Gundacker, 2010), linguistic power relations (Lee, 2005; Stanford, 2010; Takigawa, 2010), and language use and identity (Piller, 2002; Piller & Takahashi, 2006; Seward, 2008; Yoon, 2008) within these unions, which give insight into the experiences of intercultural couples and the various implications of their multilinguality. I now discuss each in turn, conscious of the fact that

there is a substantial degree of overlap in regards to the issues these studies touch upon.

2.3.1 Studies on communication in intercultural and multilingual relationships

While many studies on intercultural couplehood and marriage reviewed in the previous section have touched upon the potential pitfalls of language barriers and miscommunication in these relationships (Soncini, 1997; Rosenblatt & Stewart, 2004; Nabeshima, 2005; Taweekuakulkit, 2005; Asante, 2010), I present here three studies which have specifically focused on linguistic and communicational issues of intercultural couples which facilitate a better understanding of the context I specify as multilingual couplehood.

The first is a study done by Cools (2006) who investigated relational communication in intercultural couples in the context of Finland. On the premise that "[i]n most intercultural relationships, at least one partner speaks a different language from his/her native tongue" (262), she adopted Baxter and Montgomery's Relational Dialectics (1996) as a conceptual framework to study the communicational tensions in multilingual couplehood as "a fundamental feature, and not … as equal to conflict or problem" (as cited in Cools, 2006:264), establishing an alternative theoretical perspective which assumes linguistic tensions in these relationships as not necessarily a negative feature. Six Finnish–non-Finnish couples were interviewed jointly to reveal several issues regarding communication and more specifically language use in the relationships, including the presence of linguistic misunderstandings and difficulties in second language expression.

Related to my own research concerns in the learning and teaching of languages in multilingual couplehood, participants in Cools' study also expressed a fear of never fully learning the second language as well as the confusion and uncertainty related to those concerns. This was found to have potentially negative consequences in relation to others in the wider social context:

> "The one who is speaking the 'other' language may be put in a weaker position… as disadvantages in a relationship as well as in the interaction with people from the host-culture." (269)

In regards to the couples themselves, on the other hand, linguistic variability was often considered an asset to the relationship, with participants seeing the use of two or more languages as "richness" in the relationship and as an abundant source of humour. Most of the participants were found to actively engage in the sharing and exchange of first languages, as one of her participants stated that "[t]he more we learned the language, the more we learned about each other" (267).

The findings of this research were further explored in a subsequent study (Cools, 2009) to "gain a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to the specific dynamics involved in intercultural relationships" (430). Eighteen intercultural couples were interviewed to reveal additional aspects related to language use and language-related issues which included concerns on the part of the non-Finnish partner in regards to their linguistic proficiency in the host language (Finnish), loss of proficiency in their mother tongues which sometimes led to a sense of "deculturation" (438), and increased linguistic dependency on the Finnish partner (436), all of which are considered as significant potential concerns of the host language learner in multilingual relationships.

What is equally significant is a direct reference to second language support in couplehood, and one which alludes to the challenges on the part of the host language speaker (spouse) in actively mediating the language for their partner:

> "All of the Finnish spouses showed a remarkable sense of responsibility in supporting their partners from the very beginning and demonstrated obligation and dedication. However, providing such support was sometimes seen as inconvenient and challenging too." (440)

This support in the form of interpreting and translating for the non-Finnish spouse was presented as an example, in which it was found that in some cases, acts of supportive mediation "created a feeling of helplessness" and "was felt to be difficult at times for both spouses" (439).

While her previous study demonstrated the imbalance of language proficiency as mainly influencing social relationships and opportunities rather than the couple relationship itself, in this study, matters of linguistic identity and power within the couplehood are brought to the fore as second language use, development, and support are acknowledged as "very personal experience[s]" depending on a variety of factors (438). This would imply that second language development and support in multilingual relationships is not a simple matter of motivation on part of the learner and teacher; there is a much more complex web of contextual factors inherent in these relationships, some of which relate to linguistic identity, that also need consideration.

Another study looking at intra-couple communication has been done by Renalds (2011), in which "the unique internal and external elements that impact communication and conflict within intercultural marriages" (iv) were the foci of research. Eighteen participants of nine Asian-Caucasian couples were

interviewed individually, and similar to the results of numerous other studies discussed in Section 2.2, her findings demonstrated that the use of a second language in an intimate relationship was a burden for some of the Asian spouses. However, what is interesting and particularly relevant to my own research concerns is that the linguistic imbalance was also recognised as creating a unique couple dynamic in relation to acts of second language support and development in these marriages:

> "While dating, this lack of English proficiency encouraged couples to spend more time together as one spouse taught the other English or as they attempted to understand one another using broken English and dictionaries." (38)

Thus, in addition to the recognition of linguistic difference as a positive feature of intercultural relationships, the study makes an intriguing suggestion that language learning may provide a potentially positive experience in the context of couplehood.

While it is not difficult to appreciate the importance of fluent linguistic communication in intercultural relationships, findings such as these tentatively suggest that the absence of a common language in personal relationships can act as a positive catalyst, bringing two individuals together in a situation where they are encouraged to gradually explore the other's language, building mutual trust, respect, and patience in the process. It is in this sense that linguistic difference is not to be automatically considered as a barrier to a mutually satisfying romantic partnership. For many couples, the language difference, and for some, the consequential exchange of languages, are part and parcel of the relationship itself, as much as the linguistic and cultural identities of the individuals are the basis of the establishment of mutual attraction and the

sustenance of the couplehood. Thus, when it comes to intercultural relationships, and more specifically multilingual couplehood, it can only be said that "[l]anguage, communication, adapting spouse, and the couple, it all forms a whole" (Cools, 2006:270). It may be further assumed that the languages which are spoken and how these are negotiated within the relationships is an important matter, and at times potentially a difficult one. The studies I present now have sought to address these concerns.

2.3.2 Studies on language choice and negotiation in intercultural and multilingual relationships

In some ways, creating and maintaining an intimate and romantic relationship with another can be seen as fairly simplistic; one being meets another being, and if there is mutual respect and reciprocated affections they are a couple. However, from a different perspective, one could see it as a highly complex and complicated phenomenon as two individuals with two separate lives must work together in building their own "third reality" (Perel, 2000), which would require negotiation and compromise.

In contexts of intercultural and multilingual relationships, the matter of language inevitably becomes a point of discussion, with conscious and unconscious decisions to be made, and not without consequences. De Klerk (2001) calls this "the cross-marriage language dilemma" (199) on the premise that:

> "When two languages coexist within one family, on a micro-level, spouse, either consciously or unconsciously, work out their own 'language policy', and the patterns of language maintenance or language shift are set in motion…" (197)

In this study, she investigated how individuals in “cross-language marriages” (199) negotiated language use within the relationship, and how this further influenced the issue of language maintenance and shift in regards to the degree of bilingualism in their children. Interview data was collected from ten multilingual couples with children, of which one individual had English and their partner had Afrikaans as mother tongue.

While the study itself was more concerned with the children and their degree of bilingualism, there were some significant findings in regards to the multilinguality of the couples as well. For example, it was found that there was a clear imbalance regarding the use and development of languages in the couple relationship (as in Nabeshima, 2005) as eight of the ten couples reported only using English in the relationship, which, for some, was a matter of English having been the language of initial courtship (204). The other two couples used a mix of English and Afrikaans, with the less-dominant language (Afrikaans) being used in particular contexts, such as when they wanted to discuss something without their children understanding (204) or for the expression of intimacy and affection (205).

It may be said that language choice and use thus depend on a variety of factors particular to the contexts of each couple. The same is to be said of related matters of language support and development, as it was found that the “Afrikaans partners had made more of an effort to learn their spouse’s language than English partners had” (202) throughout the course of developing the relationship and in marriage, which implied that in the contexts of these participants, the symbolic capital of the English language was perceived as relatively higher than that of Afrikaans. Also related to second language development in couplehood, it was found that these Afrikaan speakers

“improved dramatically in their command of English”, despite the fact that there were “inner struggle[s]” related to feelings of linguistic and cultural loss (202). The English-speaking partners, on the other hand, had experienced very little change over the course of the relationships (203). What was interesting was the fact that the English-speaking partners reported some feelings of regret regarding this situation:

> “Despite genuine goodwill and willingness among English parents at the outset, and some improvement in the Afrikaans ability of some spouses, many blamed their lack of success on being lazy and wished they had made an effort to speak more Afrikaans.” (207)

Testaments such as these heavily indicate the presence of second language learning motivation when it comes to romantic partnerships between individuals with differing linguistic backgrounds, and how this is to be practically achieved becomes a matter of significance.

An additional finding indicated that for most of the couples, it was only when children were expected that discussions regarding language were made explicit (203; see also Lee, 2005), supporting the notion that linguistic discrepancy in relationships can become more of an issue in regards to the relational extensions of the couple rather than between the individuals themselves, children representing one of the more significant ones. That couples “reconsider their language choice … according to the needs of their children” (Gundacker, 2010:18) was also found to be the case where two individuals in an intimate relationship had chosen a *third* language as the dominant language in the relationship. Five such couples were the focus of Gundacker’s study (2010), which is somewhat different to the others in that it sought to investigate the motivations and limitations of using English as the *lingua franca* in intercultural

relationships where the individuals “[sought] to overcome their language barrier not by learning their mate’s language, but through switching to English” (34).

When asked to share the motivations of this decision, some participants reported that English was the natural choice, being the language they began the relationship in (which was also the case for some of the couples in de Klerk’s study above). For others, it was more of a conscious decision in awareness of linguistic power dynamics in the couplehood, in that they felt that the use of English made the relationship a more level playing field, as neither would be at a particular advantage or disadvantage owing to language use and proficiency (65). In linguistic terms, this hints at the prioritisation of the couple unit and its successful continuation rather than the distinct linguistic and cultural allegiances of the individuals. For these couples, it is not a question of linguistic dominance of one partner’s first language, and how this is accommodated by the other, as they reported developing English as a second language together as a couple.

However, while being perceived as the most “democratic” option, the use of a third language was not without its limitations. One involved a general lack of practical need and motivation to learn the other’s language (85). Despite the fact that four out of the five couples expressed a desire to develop a second language (the first language of their partners), the convenience of using the *lingua franca* for communication in the relationship meant that they were not motivated to do so. It was also the case that both individuals in the relationship were using English as a second language which they had limited proficiencies in. For four out of the five couples, this was seen to be a cause of “interferences and misconceptions in their relationship” (105). As such, this study provides an alternative perspective to the majority of studies so far discussed in regards to

the issue of language choice and negotiation in multilingual relationships, involving a rather different set of linguistic and relational dynamics.

In investigating language choice and negotiation in intercultural, or more specifically, multilingual couples, de Klerk (2001) and Gundacker (2010) acknowledge the salience of linguistic capital and power relations both influencing and being influenced by language-related practices. While I have foregrounded in the introduction chapter that the issue of *power* in itself is not a focus of the current study, there is a need to consider potential tensions and struggles in relation to the interplay between language and power in multilingual relationships, which the following studies have chosen to focus on.

2.3.3 Studies on language and power in intercultural and multilingual relationships

As we have so far seen, the negotiation of communication as well as language choice in intercultural and multilingual couplehood is seen to be highly complex processes involving a great deal of deliberation on the part of the two individuals in the relationship. This is not to say that they are necessarily difficult or antagonistic, as it has been found that for many couples, what can be perceived as linguistic deficiency or imbalance can act as a positive catalyst for the couple in regards to the enlightening experience of sharing each other's languages and cultures.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that some communicational and linguistic practices have the potential to become a site of tension and struggle, particularly in cases where there is one primary language of the relationship, which is the first language of one partner, but a second or otherwise language

of the other. It is not difficult to see how the more fluent speaker of the language can be considered as being in a more advantageous position when one looks at issues of power (and often gender) in these intimate couple contexts.

For example, Stanford (2010) studied the role of marriage in linguistic contact and variation by conducting ethnographic research into a Hmong community in Texas. Stanford and associates paid home visits to ten Hmong households, and recorded interviews with eighteen individuals through a method which involved gendered team-interviewing techniques which were seen to "[provide] much deeper perspectives … than would have been possible with only one interviewer" (97). Although the focus of his study was on variations of regional dialect in couplehood rather than the contact of completely different languages *per se*, significant findings indicate that the linguistic negotiations in the households are permeated by the dominant discourses in the community. To be more precise, "it is the wife who is traditionally expected to accommodate to the dialect of the husband's family" (107), and not the other way around, demonstrating the gendered nature of assimilation and language choice in some contexts. While this is a similar finding to that of Taweekuakulkit (2005) who found that her Thai female participants were greatly disadvantaged in being expected to learn the language of their American husbands, Stanford found that for some Hmong women, a proactive questioning of the existing norms and expectations of dialect accommodation was a way to challenge wider cultural gender roles in general (109), thus alluding to the sociolinguistic and sociocultural impact linguistic contact in marriage can potentially retain.

Returning to the topic of intercultural and multilingual couples, a study by Takigawa (2010) employs Conversation Analysis to investigate power struggles in the immediate context of multilingual relationships, namely, those to do with

dispute in ‘bilingual couple talk’. Sixteen hours of natural conversation in the Japanese language was collected from three intercultural couples, all consisting of Japanese wives and American husbands living in Japan. The study was carried out on the premise that verbal communication is an important facet in maintaining marital stability, and communication problems in intercultural marriages lead to a higher frequency of misunderstandings and disputes. Particular attention was paid to the concept of linguistic identities in relation to discursive, situated, and transportable identities (Zimmerman, 1998, cited in Takigawa, 2010:30) and how they were negotiated and at times positioned against each other in interaction leading to conversational dispute.

By analysing this aspect of communication in the conversations of multilingual couples, it was found that the dichotomous identities of “expert” and “novice” language speaker manifested in metalinguistic discussions on the Japanese language. However, these dynamics of linguistic power did not remain stable; they were prioritised or contested depending on the context of the conversation in question:

> “Through the analysis, it became clear that these language identities are accomplished locally and situated in the talk; they are not given a priori as predetermined or omni-relevant categories, but are rather manipulated, negotiated, and used strategically as they become consequential to the talk.” (148)

This study brings the tensions of situated linguistic identities and negotiations in multilingual couplehood to the fore, which foregrounds the possibility of similar issues around the perceptions of expert and novice users of language arising in contexts where individuals in the couple are more explicitly learning and teaching languages in the relationship.

Other interesting insights regarding linguistic power in multilingual relationships have been found by Lee (2005), who attempted to look into "how the asymmetry in linguistic proficiency is perceived and utilized in international marriages" (1328) between Korean-English bilinguals and their English monolingual spouses. Seven individuals were interviewed, of which only two participants were a couple. Based on the premise that "[c]omparative linguistic inadequacy contributes to the sociolinguistic power dynamics of couples in international marriage" (1330), Lee found that "[l]anguage and communication problems seem to be the main theme in the interviews…" (1333) with various accounts that demonstrated how linguistic proficiency was utilised in the exertion or loss of power in specific contexts. For example, error correction was identified as one way of provoking linguistic insecurities to an individual's advantage, in which the more capable language user would be able to demonstrate their relative linguistic and therefore general competence over the other. It was apparent that this was a cause of frustration for the less-fluent speaker of the language, highlighting the problematic nature of linguistic imbalance in some cases of multilingual couplehood. However, it was also found that in the case of one couple, the language barrier itself was seen as facilitating the maintenance of the intimate relationship:

> "When they engage in a heated argument, the very fact that she does not understand Korean, her husband's native language, seems to help her not pursue the argument, and as a consequence, the argument does not escalate to something more serious or hurtful." (1336)

It is clear that the perception of language and communication differences in multilingual relationships is a highly contextual issue, "play[ing] both positive and negative roles" in the creation, development, and maintenance of romantic

intercultural involvement. It may thus be safe to assume that communicational tension and linguistic gain (or linguistic tension and communicational gain) in multilingual relationships would be closely intertwined, the dynamics between the two changing minute by minute in private conversations and discourses of language expertise (Takigawa, 2010), but also having the potential to challenge wider cultural and societal discourses of language use, power and gender over time (Stanford, 2010).

In any case, it is the linguistic and otherwise identities which are performed, assumed and contested in these processes that become salient if one assumes that couplehood involves (to a certain extent) ‘two becoming one’. The final section is devoted to studies which have investigated this intersection of languages and identities, which provide a solid basis for some of the issues I seek to address in the current study.

2.3.4 Studies on language identity and language desire in intercultural and multilingual relationships

It has become increasingly apparent that there are multiple aspects of interculturality, and more specifically, multilinguality that can influence the potential development and support of second languages in the context of intimate relationships. In addition to the studies we have seen thus far, seminal works to date have pushed the linguistic concerns of intimate relationships beyond the purely instrumental use of language(s), and towards related matters of linguistic identities in the performance of couplehood.

One which stands out in regards to the quality and depth of research has been done by Ingrid Piller. In her 2002 study, thirty-six German-English *bilingual*

couples, defined as those “in which the spouses have different first languages” (Piller, 2001:230), were recruited in an attempt to reveal “what actually goes on in the lives of people involved in […] linguistically mixed marriages” (27) with a particular focus on how these individuals “perceive and perform their identities” (16).

Through the analysis of self-administered participant interviews (in which a list of questions was sent out to the couples, asking them to record their responses), six themes emerged, each pertaining to a particular aspect of linguistic relationship which was coupled with a quote from the interview data to further illustrate the nature of the issue involved: linguistic backgrounds (“I speak English very well.”); language choice (“We speak bilingually.”); identity and cross-cultural couplehood (“We are citizens of the world.”); doing couplehood (“Talk is essential.”); private language planning (“The doors of Europe will be open to them.”); and hybrid identities, multiple discourses (“I’m a hybrid.”).

In terms of my own research interests, the scope of these themes are an indication of the many aspects of multilingual couplehood which could be considered as relevant to the issue of second language development and support. In fact, much of her data demonstrates the prevalence of second language development occurring in the context of intimate relationship, as it was revealed that bilingual “couples’ life journeys are also linguistic journeys” (225), in which the trajectories of relationship and language progressed and evolved together. For example, under the theme of ‘linguistic background’, Piller found that for her German participants, there was an underlying belief that the years of English they were taught at school were useless, and that the naturalistic environment of the target language country as well as personal involvement with English-speaking partners were better ways to learn the

language (94). It thus seemed to be the case that for her participants, there was little expression of negativity towards linguistic difference in their relationships. Indeed, for some, it was found that the “hick-ups of language learning were fun for the couple, and initially drew them together” (226).

The practice of second language learning and teaching in multilingual couplehood, which had previously been alluded to but not discussed in any great detail, is thus acknowledged and appreciated substantially in this research, as she somewhat tentatively introduces the notion of “language desire” as “a crucial factor in the ways in which the participants approach their L2 learning and imagine their bilingualism” (269). By demonstrating this “link between language learning and sexual attraction” (270) from her participant accounts, Piller strongly promotes it as a promising direction for future research, upon which few have taken up the challenge.

Among them is Kimie Takahashi, a former student of Piller’s and thus greatly influenced by her research. In 2006, Piller and Takahashi sought to explore this notion of language desire in a study on five Japanese learners of English and their *akogare* (desire for English and Western men) in relation to how it was “played out in the lives of the participants – particularly their emotional lives and their love lives” (59) while they were temporarily living in Sydney, Australia.

Using a combination of a discourse-analytic approach to public data with a critical ethnography of private data (61), they first identified the popular discourse of English language learning in the media, particularly those targeted towards female language learners. These often involved the sexualisation of predominantly male English teachers, suggesting that “women will learn English faster with teachers such as these because they will be keen to return to the

teacher" (66). They were then able to see to what extent this propaganda filtered down into individual attitudes and beliefs regarding second language learning. Aspects of influence were identified in all five of their participants to differing degrees, but overall it was found that:

> "a native speaker partner is seen as good for ELL because romance creates a relaxed atmosphere for the use of English on a regular basis … the power dynamics of a relationship, where they knew themselves to be desired and loved could restore their self-confidence." (71)

This is not to say that romantic involvement with a native English speaker necessarily equalled improve linguistic proficiency, as it was the perceptions of the female participants rather than their actual language acquisition that was the focus. They acknowledge this by emphasising the fact that their "most fluent participant" was the one with the least amount of desire to pursue relationships with English-speakers in hopes of gaining language proficiency (81). Nevertheless, the study is valuable in raising the issue of language learning through romantic relationships, and the possible links between second language development (may it be perceived or actual) and romantic involvement with a linguistic other.

It is also interesting to note that while Piller (2002) observed that her participants' involvement with their second language came before the relationship (269), Piller and Takahashi (2006) found that in some cases the participants' romantic desire for Western men preceded and even created initial motivations to learn a language (69), which later on developed into the assumption that an Australian (or Western) boyfriend would be the ultimate 'method' in rapidly improving their English (70). While it is my view that any relationship largely based on an 'ulterior motive' would struggle to be

maintained for any significant period of time, the centrality of romantic relationships in the learning of a second language is made clear in both studies.

This particular aspect of multilingual relationships, namely, the dynamic construction of individual and couple identities through the negotiation and use of language, has been pursued by others as well. In her thesis on the significance of language and communication in relation to identity negotiations and third culture building in intercultural marriages, Seward (2008) conducted joint interviews with seventeen multilingual couples. As many preceding studies have confirmed, there were some cases where language and linguistic difference were a source of relational tension. For one of her participants, this difficulty was palpable in terms of the *cultural* difference manifested in language and language use, as the individual seemed “unable to separate cultural difficulty from communication problems brought on by having different native languages” (109).

However, the prioritisation of the couple relationship meant that for some couples, a reframing of linguistic difficulties enabled them to see “language differences as launching pads rather than hurdles for greater intimacy” (115). For instance, one couple reframed the lack of linguistic proficiency in the other’s language as an opportunity for deeper communication (114). Another couple saw their miscommunications owing to one’s mispronunciation and the other’s mishearing as part of their couple identity, in which the maintenance of a dual cultural identity took priority over linguistic fluency in the relationship (115). The complex nature of couple identity formation is clearly demonstrated as something which is neither wholly deliberate nor unintentional.

The study further highlights the interrelatedness and fluidity of languages and identities in multilingual relationships, and how they are constantly prone to change with the development of the couple relationship and the establishment of particular linguistic behaviours and patterns. While these processes are inevitably different from couple to couple, Seward claims that "[m]ost intercultural couples are aware of how language proficiency, or lack of it, impacts their identity as a couple" (119), which suggests that multilingual couplehood is a potentially fertile site for motivations to learn and teach languages to emerge, especially if one takes the view that:

> "The social construction of identity is derived from language; the syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of every family is culturally determined. […] If linguistic non-proficiency can be perceived as a barrier in some cases, language proficiency provides and entrée into both culture and acceptance in others." (128)

Language is thus closely linked to both individual and couple identities in regards to self- and other-perception, as well as to the performance and negotiation of identities both within the relationship and with others in extension of the immediate couplehood.

These notions are further explored in another study on language use and multiple identities in multilingual relationships. In an investigation on Canadian-Japanese *interlingual couples* defined as "couples where two partners come from different ethnic groups and speak different languages" (ii), Yoon (2008) employed a three-stage interview process to collect data from four couples: individual interviews, joint couple interviews, and then group interviews of four, each of either the English-speaking or Japanese-speaking group. Although it was not emphasised in the general presentation of the study, I find it worth noting that three of the four couples had begun the relationship as language

teacher and student, adding (for me) a rather interesting dimension to the couple dynamics.

It was found that the couples' language use was influenced by factors such as language proficiency, location, power relations, gender, commitment and motivation, and anxieties of adaptation and bilingual children raising. Regarding proficiency and location, it was found that convenience (proficiency) trumped the linguistic environment in which they were residing, as all the couples continued to use mainly English in the relationship whether they were living in Canada or Japan (44). It was also found that language could be used strategically in "negotiating power for the speakers" (47). In one case, weak proficiency in the non-dominant language was targeted as an opportunity for the Japanese wife to express a want for her partner to learn her language:

> "I wish I had more time to learn Japanese but my work is very demanding and when I don't have to work I haven't been able to teach myself or learn Japanese. So sometimes when my wife and I get in an argument she says "well maybe you should learn Japanese."" (48, excerpt from interview transcript)

Other couples showed similar patterns, particularly in regards to language planning for their children, where conclusions were drawn that "the females' commitment to maintaining and preserving the language in the home is greater than the males'" (53), suggesting gender differences in attitudes towards language maintenance in couplehood and marriage. This was further linked to how identities were constructed in the use of languages, where the use of either English or Japanese represented different aspects of identity (61) which were ultimately seen as all "woven together to form an integrated 'self'" (62). Thus, the focus here is more on individual identity, and the notion of distinct linguistic

identities in multilingual contexts, which can be seen as fluid, yet to some extent unified within individual selves.

These individual identities are also seen to be prioritised in practices of language sharing, with observations of the couples actively supporting each other in the sharing of languages. However, what was perhaps a more thought-provoking finding involved a case where the multilinguality of the relationship in itself did not motivate the individuals to learn about their spouse's culture or language (67-68). This is significant in that it serves as a challenge to the idea that multilingual relationships in themselves are automatically ideal contexts for second language support and development. Couple and individual identities need to be carefully balanced and negotiated for mutually satisfying outcomes, and while it is not always easy nor necessary to achieve, Yoon recommends that:

> "interlingual couples [should] not only maintain their first languages, but also learn the language of their partners so that they can better understand each other culturally and emotionally. By learning their partners' languages they will have a better understanding of the difficulties that exist when learning a second language and assimilating into in [sic] a new culture." (69)

The realities of how this task is to be negotiated and carried out both individually and as a couple has been left for further research. It is my intention that the current study can address some of these issues.

2.4 Summary, discussion and conclusion

2.4.1 Summary of literature review

In relation to the topic of my inquiry, this chapter has provided a preliminary understanding of what has already been done in the field of multilingual relationships. With a very limited scope of research using the exact term *multilingual* in reference to intimate couplings, I began with a critique of the terminology used in the research of relationships between individuals with differing backgrounds, and justified my own use of the term *intercultural couple* in denoting a self-identified (as opposed to other-identified) difference in agentic cultural affiliation of the individuals involved, which may include emotional or other attachment to nationality, language, ethnicity, race, religion, or language, or any combination of these. The use of 'multilingual couple' can be thus justified as a more definitive and specific term to refer to couples in this particular configuration of relationship.

In reviewing the general trends and research foci regarding intercultural couples, it is clear that there has been much interest in the nature of intercultural couplehood, with researchers taking a variety of perspectives in investigating particular aspects of these relationships. It was demonstrated that academic and general views towards relationships and marriages of an intercultural nature were less positive in the past, with more recent efforts from a variety of perspectives in numerous disciplines taking on less biased attitudes in their investigation. The issues of language and communication have been presented as significant in many studies dealing with intercultural couples, with some specifically focusing on these matters by studying multilingual couples in depth. By reviewing the many efforts in demystifying issues of language and

communication which occur in intercultural couple contexts, the current study may be contexualised in relation to studies which have found both positive and negative aspects of linguistic difference. Furthermore, studies mentioning the specific issue of teaching and learning the partner's language within the relationship have been seen to justify research endeavours in this direction.

2.4.2 Discussion of literature review

We can observe that much of the research that has been carried out is generally of a qualitative nature with a small number of participants, but collectively alluding to common phenomena experienced by intercultural and/or multilingual couples. Some have taken a more focused approach in regards to the configuration of intercultural couplehood in respect to particular research contexts and foci, for example, American-Japanese (Nabeshima, 2005; Takigawa, 2010), Russian-American (Visson, 2009), African-Spanish (Rodríguez-Garcia, 2006), Turkish-British (Baltas & Steptoe, 2000), or Greek-German (Bacas, 2002). On the other hand, research without specification of particular couple demographics has also been carried out (Giladi-McKelvie, 1986; Seward, 2008; Hinson, 2010; Zens, 2011) with findings, discussions, and conclusions being presented with reference to intercultural couples in general. The current study falls into this latter category, as the aim of the study is not to provide insight into a specific configuration of languages in intercultural relationships, but to explore the salient issues of multilingual couplehood and language sharing in a broader sense.

From the review, it is apparent that language and communication issues in intercultural couples are being widely discussed and attracting multidisciplinary

interest. Along with the recent acknowledgment of the more positive aspects of linguistic difference in relationships, cultural, dialectical, and sociolinguistic approaches have been taken to examine the challenges of language negotiations and use in intercultural relationships. It is worth highlighting that while the learning and teaching of second languages in this context have been mentioned in these studies (some examples may be found in Piller, 2002; Thorne, 2003; Visson, 2009; Takigawa, 2010; Renalds, 2011), as of yet, none have explicitly discussed the potential for language support and development in the relationship as a possible way of relieving linguistic tensions in couplehood. Similarly, none have focused specifically on how one-way or mutual sharing of languages (or refusal to share languages) occurs in intercultural couples, which is what I aim to do with my research.

In addressing my own research interests, I have been able to identify studies that have looked at issues of language and communication in intercultural couples, and by doing this have managed to gradually construct a sense of what it means to be in a multilingual relationship. It was observed that more recent discussions show a strong indication that language-related issues are highly prevalent in particular contexts of intercultural couplehood, which may further justify the use of a more precise term to characterise these couples as not only intercultural, but *multilingual*. By attracting attention to aspects of intercultural couplehood which are related to the individuals' differing linguistic and socio-linguistic backgrounds, steps have already been taken in establishing *multilingual relationships* as a prominent topic of research in the multiple fields of sociolinguistics, communications, sociology, and human relations. This study intends to contribute further to this movement not only by merit of topic of inquiry, but also by presenting a detailed and more rounded conceptualisation

of *multilingual* in the context of intercultural couples, couplehood, and relationships, bringing together previous understandings in the literature and actual participant accounts of what it means to be a part of one.

2.4.3 Conceptualising 'multilingual' relationships and research questions

When I first became interested in multilingual couples as a context of second language learning research, there seemed to be no question as to the use of the term 'multilingual couple' itself. I deemed it as self-explanatory; multilingual couples were couples in which the individuals could speak different languages. However, under closer scrutiny, it became apparent that additional considerations were necessary in defining the term.

As a preliminary attempt to clarify what it means to be in a *multilingual relationship*, we may consider the following cases and their adequacy as an example of a multilingual couple. In all cases, the premise is that A and B are two individuals in an intimate and committed relationship, and thus a couple. It is further assumed that all individuals are fluent in the native language(s) associated with their nationality.

Case 1: A is English and speaks English and fluent French.
B is English and speaks English, fluent German, and a little French.
A and B use English in the relationship, with the occasional French or German word or phrase.

Case 2: A is English and speaks English and a little French.
B is French and speaks French and a little English.
A and B use both English and French in the relationship, but mostly French as they are currently living in France.

Case 3: A is Swiss and speaks German and French.
B is Swiss and speaks German and French.
A and B use both German and French in the relationship equally.

Case 4: A is Korean and speaks Korean and English.
B is English and speaks English.
A and B use only English in the relationship.

Based on a literal definition, all of the couples above may be identified as being 'multilingual', with either one or both individuals, or the couple as a unit having access to two or more languages. However, it is not simply the issue of the individuals being able to use multiple languages (as in Case 1), nor is it enough to say that it is a case of the couple using multiple languages in the relationship (as in Case 3). If one is attempting to investigate multilingual couplehood in the context of intercultural relationships, the difference in nationalities insomuch as the difference in first languages of the individuals (Cases 2 and 4) is the key issue, whether the specific problem for couples may lie in lack of knowledge in a second language (the partner's first language), unfamiliarity with certain expressions, differences in communicational styles, or any other language-related issues, as we have seen in the literature review. Thus, we return to defining a multilingual couple as one where the individuals have differing first languages, rather than simply the existence of more than one language in the relationship, or in Steven's (1985) terms, couples in which *linguistic heterogamy* and *ethnic* (or rather national) *exogamy* are present.

This being said, in regards to the research question specific to the present study, it should not be assumed that second language development and support take place in all contexts of intercultural relationships where the individuals have differing linguistic backgrounds. It may be the case that if one individual is highly

fluent in the other's first language, there would be no need for them to learn an additional language to maintain the couplehood, as is the case of my own relationship (see Case 4 above).

Equally relevant, it also should not be assumed that second language development and support only takes place in contexts of intercultural relationships. For example, in the case of an English-English couple where one individual is highly fluent in another language, they may act as language mediator for their partner in support of their second language learning (as in Case 1, where A could support B in their learning of French, or B could support A in their learning of German).

With this preliminary understanding of what is meant by a *multilingual couple*, and in recognition of the need for a better understanding of what characterises these contexts, I am inclined to establish an additional research question to foreground the original:

> **1. What are the characterising features of multilingual couplehood, and what does it mean to be in one?**
>
> 2. How does the development and support of second languages occur in the context of multilingual couplehood?

The conceptual and theoretical bases on which I approach these questions are the foci of the following chapter, whereby a more refined set of research questions are expected to emerge.

3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In the previous chapter, a comprehensive review of the literature related to multilingual couples was presented as a way of contextualising my study within existing research. Although much seminal work has been done on intercultural couplehood and marriage which foregrounds the significance of language and communication in these relationships, an investigation into the language sharing processes of multilingual couples is yet to be done.

Existing research on couples with differing linguistic backgrounds and my own experience of conducting research on multilingual relationships and language learning (Yim, 2009) allude to the significance of interpersonal relational dynamics in many (if not all) aspects of language and communication. As such, there was a need to find an appropriate theoretical basis which gave prominence to the relationship itself in gaining a holistic understanding of individual and couple identities in relation, and second language learning and teaching practices that potentially occurred within them.

Thus, it is with this chapter that I propose relational theory and related narrative theories as the conceptual bases with which I approach the topic of inquiry. I begin with an introduction of *relational theory* as the overarching philosophical stance taken in the study, followed by a discussion of its main tenets and how it enhances our understanding of identities as being in relationships. As a way of understanding and accessing these relations, theories of *narrative identity* are additionally presented as commensurate with relational perspectives.

Having established an understanding of what *multilingual* means in the context of relationships in the previous chapter, I further discuss the terms *relationship*, *couple*, and *couplehood* under the proposed relational and narrative framework. This is followed by a discussion of relational education and second language development, highlighting the inherent relationality involved in the use, negotiation, learning, and teaching of second languages, particularly in reference to theories of affect, motivation, language desire and language identities. By critically identifying the merits of their core theses, I argue for the potential utility of relational perspectives in second language education. The chapter then concludes with a summary discussion, leading to a visual representation of the conceptual framework and a refined set of research questions to be addressed in the current study.

3.1 Relational theory

In the literature review of the previous chapter, much of the discussion inevitably revolved around relationships mainly in the context of couplehood, in other words, as significant and meaningful bonds and connections between people. In addition, the relations one has with other significant entities such as nations, cultures, and languages became salient in discussions of intercultural and multilingual relationships as having the potential to influence matters of language and communication, among many others.

It may be said that collectively, these multitude of interpersonal relationships with significant others as well as intrapersonal relationships with one's own national, cultural, linguistic or other backgrounds are ultimately what constitute individual entities. Furthermore, it can be argued that the very state of being in relationship is a matter of agency and self-identification, in the sense that how one chooses to characterise (or narrativise) her or himself in affiliation with significant others is a major aspect of understanding and defining the self. These ideas are but a few which are developed throughout the forthcoming discussion of *Relational Theory*, a distinctive orientation to the world and being in which "the relations between entities are ontologically more fundamental than the entities themselves" (Wildman, 2006:1).

3.1.1 Relational philosophy: An introduction

Although much of the basis for a relational ontology may be identified in religious philosophy as a way of theorising God as the Trinity (Gunton, 1993),

its utility has also been argued for in the hard sciences, including biology and physics, in which nature itself, as well as the distinctive components that comprise it, are seen as intrinsically connected and in relation to one another (Polkinghorne, 2010). Relational ontology has also been seen as being particularly pertinent to areas of social science, including sociological studies of social structure and culture (Emirbayer, 1997) as well as in the study of psychology in regards to individual identity and cognition (Thayer-Bacon, 1997).

Now relatively well-established as a mainstream theory in a number of disciplines, relational ontology has been considered as rather awkward in regard to its positioning amongst more traditional branches of philosophy, such as realism and idealism, as it appears to have an inherent dilemma in prioritising relations over entities. On the one hand, in its most extreme form, it is the idea that entities would not exist but for their connections with other entities in the world. On the other hand, any discussion of relations between entities must also presume the existence of separated entities. This is one of the major quandaries of relational ontology - the issue of theorising the distinction of separate entities while maintaining the position that relationships precede those entities. For example, as a proponent of relational ontology, Gergen (2009) maintains that the notion of a relational being seeks to "ultimately [erase] the traditional boundaries of separation" (5). However, this appears to be an impossible aim if we are to speak of relations at all. Scientific relationalists have identified this contradiction by recognising the fact that "it is only to the extent that one can recognize a distinction between two entities that one can also speak of their being in mutual relationship" (Polkinghorne, 2010:13). Ware (2010) supports this claim in stating that "relationship implies both connection and distinction", and that "where there is total fusion there is no

relationship" (108). The relational philosopher Buber, in his discussion of the widely cited "I-thou" relation (1966, as cited in Witherell, 1991:86), puts it eloquently:

> "This bond, paradoxically, presupposes an initial distancing. Distance provides the human situation; relation provides one's becoming in that situation."

In an attempt to overcome this dilemma, Wildman (2006) proposes a mode of relational theory which supports neither a relational nor a substantivist ontology, but assumes both individual entities and their relations as fully real. I find this perspective particularly useful in regards to the present study, as it involves a relational understanding of the world from a more epistemological perspective that attempts to explain how we understand 'beings' and a sense of being (identity) rather than addressing the ontological argument of what 'beings' are and how they exist *per se*.

It is this relational understanding of entities which can provide a holistic framework for investigating multilingual relationships, and how individual and couple identities in relation to first and second languages influence second language development and support. To demonstrate its potential efficacy, I now present a discussion of relational being and identity by positioning it within both traditional and contemporary discourses of identity and agency.

3.1.2 Individual selves as relational beings

Changes in understanding 'identity'

When one speaks of 'identity', it is most commonly in reference to the epistemology (rather than ontology) of being as a sense of self and a form of "self-definition and self-interpretation" (Sedikides & Brewer, 2001:1). As one of the most widely altercated terms in modern social science discourse, *identity* has gone through repeated processes of construction and deconstruction. This is not to say that the concept itself has lost its significance. Rather, the accumulation of various discussions of identity has brought with it valuable perspectives that potentially inform one of the most fundamental questions of humankind: "Who/what am I?"

Needless to say, identity is by no means a simple construct. It has been used in describing very personal and distinct characteristics, but at the same time has been used in reference to the conditions which are common and shared among groups of people. It has been perceived as something which is static and innate, but also something which is flexible and ever-changing. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) acknowledge this "identity crisis" in the social sciences and identify the tension between constructivist and foundationalist (essentialist) notions of identity. They observe that past discussions of 'identity' had a tendency to gear towards essentialist views which defined it as something quite fixed and stable, but more current perspectives of constructivism and post-modernism have pulled apart the very 'essence' of identity, and have deemed it as fragmented and changeable, at times even multiple. While the juxtaposition of these distinct approaches has been a popular discussion point, I am of the view that they

need not necessarily be contradictory, but reconcilable by adopting a relational stance in understanding identity, in other words, by acknowledging the self and other selves as *relational beings*.

A relational view of identity

In his 2009 book *Relational Being: Beyond self and community*, Gergen presents a vision of *relational being* as one which aims to understand the world within the relationships between persons rather than the persons themselves. He begins with a discussion of *bounded beings*, the prevalent idea in most "Western" philosophical traditions that prioritise the individuality and thus isolation of human beings. This is seen as the primary cause of unrelenting evaluation, both in terms of self-evaluation and how others as well as the society as a whole evaluate individuals, further explained as "not an inherent dimension of social life" but "an outcome of presuming a world of bounded beings" (10). This has numerous implications, one of which is the tendency to view *cultures* as bounded, as is demonstrated in the following critique of using the terms *intercultural* or *crosscultural*:

> "Because we experience ourselves as bounded entities with an inside and an outside, we project these qualities onto other physical objects, as well as onto more abstract concepts. … We impose boundedness even when there are no physical boundaries. … While the modifiers of *inter* and *cross* claim the possibility of relationship, connection, or movement between the different categories, they presume distinct boundaries between one group and another, between one self and another."
>
> (Karis, 2009:90-92)

A relational framework seeks to overcome the limitations of this framework of boundaries by emphasising the interconnectedness rather than separation of beings, providing a more holistic and comprehensive approach to understanding human thought, action, and self-identification. While it may be argued that socioconstructivist and post-structural perspectives have already achieved this by recognising the social in the self, the acknowledgment of all manner of relationship and a particular emphasis on relationality itself are what set relational theory apart. For example, Sedikides and Brewer (2001) view the relational self as but one of the three fundamental ways in which humans seek to characterise their identities: *individual self*, *relational self*, and *collective self*. *The individual self* involves the definition of self in terms of traits which are unique to the individual. *The relational self* involves the interpretation of self as being in significant relationships with others, which, in many cases, takes the form of dyadic relationships "based on personalized bonds of attachment" (1). *The collective self*, or what Gupta (2002) recognises as a 'cultural self', is how one understands the self as a member of a group and "requires that a distinction be made, either implicitly or explicitly, from the values, characteristics and ways of life of others" (Gupta, 2002:165). It may be said that this type of three-way categorisation, which seems to be a common way of understanding identity in the current literature, is based on the premise of bounded beings living in clusters of bounded cultures, with relational and collective selves an important, but nevertheless partial aspect of individual identity. Perpectives such as these assume the ontological virtue of the self as independent, as the premise of their identity theory lies in an orientation towards the individual rather than the relationships that make the concept of individuality possible.

In this thread, relational identity theory embraces the idea that "in the beginning is the relationship" (29), not the individual being, as Gergen (2009) argues:

> "[i]ndependent persons do not come together to form a relationship; from relationships the very possibility of independent persons emerges." (38)

Relational cognition

In his book on the origins of communication, self and culture, Fogel (1993) takes a similar perspective in positioning meaningful relations as foundational in the understanding of individual beings. Referring to the early cognitive development processes, he argues that:

> "The human mind and sense of self must … be understood as evolving out of the historical process of personal relationship formation between the self and other individuals." (4)

It follows on from this that cognition is "embodied and relational" (120), similar to Gergen's view that:

> "[R]ational thought, intentions, experience, memory, and creativity are not prior to relational life … but embodied actions that are fashioned and sustained within relationship." (2009:95)

This, in itself, is by no means a radically new perspective. Similar arguments for the prioritisation of relations have been made in regards to self-identification and cognition, which from more traditional perspectives have been widely considered as individualistic endeavours. For example, in their discussion of self-concept maintenance and change, Onorato and Turner (2001) claim that "a private, personal sense of self is made possible because of the psychological reality of the social group" (147), predicating the personal on the influences of

the social and relational. Similarly, Ehrman and Dörnyei (1998) state that “our self perceptions and some of our behaviors are influenced by the social relationships in which we are embedded, even when others are not present” (57), emphasising interrelational and interpersonal influences on the self even in isolation. In their discussion of individual self-regulatory functions, Higgins and May (2001) further argue that “even when self-regulation involves “I” and “me”, it still takes other people into account and, thus, remains social” (64). The relevance of interpersonal relationships to what are seemingly individual identity and cognitive traits has thus been widely acknowledged, but it is relational theory which further argues for the *fundamentality* of relationships in forming the individual.

This relational take on psychological functioning and cognitive development is shared by others, including Tice and Baumeister (2001), who acknowledge interpersonal identity as preceding self-awareness and self identity (72), and Thayer-Bacon (1997), who, in advocating a relational epistemology in the context of educational theory, considers relationships as the starting point of the realisation and acknowledgement of the self as being separate from others:

> “[N]ot only do we develop a sense of self due to the relationships we have, but we all become aware of that sense of self and how our social context has affected the way we view the world through our relationships with others. *Other people help us become aware of our own embeddedness*.” (245, emphasis in original)

This centrality of relations may also be understood in regards to the *intrapersonal* relationships within the self. For example, Fogel’s concept of *the dialogical self*, in rejecting the idea of a fixed core identity, posits that self-identification is “a dialogical process between multiple cognitive positions” (1993:140). According to this argument, there can never be a completed

definition or narrative of self, as it is constantly being created and recreated through both inner dialogue with self and dialogue with others (141). Thus, we are beings that are “always in process”:

> “The self can only exist in relationship to some other, whether that other be another person, other parts of the self, or the individual’s society, or her or his culture.”
>
> (Josselson, 1995:36)

Contemporary identity theories echo this view of a constantly changing and multi-faceted self, for example, Deaux and Perkins (2001) who speak of a “kaleidoscopic self” in highlighting “the multiplicity of self-aspects … the dynamic, ever-changing nature of self-definition” (299). Zimmerman (1998) takes a contextual view of multiple identities in the individual, making a three-way distinction between discourse, situated, and transportable identities (90) based on the idea that different identities come to the fore in particular physical and emotional contexts.

While acknowledging the ever-changing nature of the self as “fundamentally disorderly and inconsistent … socially embedded, fully engaged in the flow of relationship” (Gergen, 2009:137), it is my contention that identity theories such as these fail to provide a comprehensive explanation in accounting for a self which is constantly in development, but not without some sense of purposive or relative continuity. In other words, how are we to speak of identities and selves at all if we see them as continuously morphing haphazardly among this multitude of contexts and dialogues within selves and with others? Is there not some sense of stability, however temporal, in self-identification? It is here where the relational concepts of *co-action* and *confluence* can provide an answer by

positioning beings within their infinite web of meaningful relationships, some of which are relatively less or more constant.

3.1.3 From relational beings to beings in relation(ship)

Agency within co-action

As beings embedded within the world, we consciously (and unconsciously) take part in a multitude of relationships that characterise us as individuals, in the sense that no two beings possess an identical mix of relational identities. Thus, we are creating distinctions as well as connections between entities according to their particular relational dynamics. Furthermore, as these dynamics change, the identities change along with them, which further influence other relations, which in turn alter the identities of other involved individuals, and so on and so forth. Collectively, these constitute an expansive chain of *co-action*, a way of looking at human agency and behaviour as part of a wider picture of intertwining relations.

> "Through co-action we come into being as individual identities, but the process remains forever incomplete. At any moment there are multiple options, and self-identity remains in motion. … Relationships move on, carrying with them the identities of the participants. An infinite unfolding over which no *one* has control."
>
> (Gergen, 2009:44-45)

It is this concept of co-action which, in a sense, constrains our relational behaviours and interactions "by having to prepare them in such a way that they may be ratified as meaningful" (Gergen, 2009:41) to others. Agency, rather than

seen in terms of the free will of autonomous individual action (Ahearn, 2001:115), is thus redefined as a performance of intentions (Gergen, 2009:80-82) in which the actions of individuals are no longer discrete behaviours, but a social performance of identity within and informed by a particular spatial, temporal, and cultural context. However, this is not to say that the concept of the autonomous individual is altogether discarded. Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986, cited in Fishbane, 2001) use the concept of "relational autonomy" in viewing individuals as autonomous in their willingness and social (moral) responsibility to influence and be influenced within contexts of co-action:

> "The individual's goal of autonomy is inextricably linked to his [sic] capacity for relational accountability. In fact, responsibility for the consequences of one's actions on his [sic] relational partners may be the true test of autonomy." (62, as cited in Fishbane, 2001:276)

It is in this way that relational theory seeks to explain the apparent predicament of how objects or beings in the world can be seen as constantly changing while maintaining an identity (Balazs, 2004:230), or as Welker (2010) puts it "the paradox of development and unfolding in order to grant relative stability" (164).

Meaning within confluence

In the context of understanding our selves in this continuous flux of relationships and being within them, we may further identify some relations as more significant or meaningful than others. The existentialist philosopher Buber (1923) makes this distinction between "I-It" and "I-Thou" relations based on the notion that relation itself (that which exists between self and other) is most fundamental in understanding the human condition. Freeman (2007:13) explains this further:

> "Whereas the former attitude is problematically objectifying, such that the Other is dealt with in a predominantly instrumental way, the latter attitude is rooted in respect and reciprocity and therefore embodies a much more authentically relational mode of being in the world."

This highlights that it is not enough to simply say that relations are fundamental; what is pivotal is the *affirmation* and *valuation* of the meaningful relationships that exist between the different entities in the world. This authentically relational mode of being involves what Gergen (2009) calls the "enchantment of we":

> "Building local realities and recognizing them as "ours" are important steps toward bonding. But a critical ingredient must be added: enchantment. By this I mean *the injection of value into the bonding unit*. The unit of partnership, the team, the club, or organization – has no value in itself. Means must be found of co-creating its worth, or injecting into its existence *a sense of transcendent importance*. Such enchantment goes beyond the single entities making up the relationship. … It is the *confluence* that counts." (180, emphasis added)

In contexts of intimate and close personal relationships, Fishbane (2001) refers to the individual attitudes towards this confluence as "a readiness for the relational", explained as:

> "a willingness to be moved by the other, to see and be seen, to stay connected even through conflict, to hear the other's narrative even while articulating one's own, and to negotiate differences without resorting to "power over" tactics." (276)

Within this confluence, the relationship is constantly developed and changed, with the individuals changing with it, which in turn has the potential to alter the nature of the relationship in a dynamic relational system with its own 'identity' which is:

> "created out of repeated interactions between the same two individuals, [developing] stable and consensual frames over time,

> [changing] via creativity and variability."
>
> (Fogel, 1993:89)

It is thus the case that as relational beings, we are part of a multitude of relationships that shape who we are, and that some relationships are considered more valuable and meaningful as those which are "mine", or more precisely "ours". If the majority of these relationships are maintained as relatively stable for any period of time, the degree of flux in our relational identities would be minimal, thus manifesting in a relatively solid and secure sense of self. By extension, the creation or termination of these relationships have the potential to bring about greater degrees of change, some of which can lead to an extremely unstable and volatile sense of being-in-relation. Or rather, it is how we understand our selves and others within this context of fluid relationality and constant change that is the crux of the matter.

3.1.4 Narrative identity as a means of understanding relational selves

As part of his theory of relational beings, Gergen (2009) highlights the centrality of narrative as a way of understanding beings in relation, and quotes Hardy's (1968:5) embellishment on narrative as such:

> "We dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative." (176)

In other words, narrative may be seen as the main way in which we structure our past, present and future selves, our real and imagined selves, and both the cognitive and affective aspects of understanding our being in relation to other beings around us (Andrews, 2000:77).

On premises compatible with the conceptualisation of individual identity as being found in relations with others, others have also identified the narrativity of the self and relationships, or a *narrative identity*, defined as “the stories people construct and tell about themselves to define who they are for themselves and for others” (McAdams et al. 2006:4). It is an approach to the identification of selves embedded within the rich tapestry of interpersonal relations, with narrative playing “the central role … in the formation of the self” (Witherell & Noddings, 1991:3). Needless to say, narratives of the self are not wholly constant and stable. As relational selves retain a sense of identity within an ever-changing dynamic of relationships, identity narratives may also maintain some degree of continuity, but at times also be multiple and conflicting, “more like a conversation of narrators” (Raggatt, 2006:16) of which the dominant story is susceptible to change depending on the temporal and situational context of the intrapersonal. It is also a way of understanding our selves within the context of the wider society and culture:

> “It is through our own narratives that we principally construct a version of ourselves in the world, and it is through its narrative that a culture provides models of identity and agency to its members.”
>
> (Bruner, 1996:xiv)

In culturally homogeneous contexts, few of which remain in the modern world, one may imagine personal and social narratives intertwining peacefully, with relatively set “models of identity and agency” recognised and accepted by the members of that community. However, it is also possible that social narratives are constructed in a way that problematize particular modes of being, potentially having an impact on the relational narratives of the individuals. As has been noted in the previous chapter, for example, a social narrative that characterises

intercultural or multilingual relationships as problematic can inevitably make self-narrativisation more challenging for those who consider the relationship as a significant part of their relational selves. Thus, the suspense between social and personal narratives can manifest as the internal identity struggle of an individual trapped within the unyielding and dominant narrative of familial, social and cultural discourses (Bermúdez et al. 2009:322), which is potentially detrimental in the case of intercultural couples as:

> "external stress may affect relationship satisfaction by giving rise to negative perceptions within the relationship and, independently, by limiting spouses' ability to process and organize those perceptions in a relationship-enhancing manner."
>
> (Neff & Karney, 2004)

For intercultural couples for whom this is the case, some have suggested the act of telling narratives as a potentially powerful tool in managing the various personal and social positionings they identify in understanding their selves and the relationship (Biever et al. 1998; Perel, 2000; Fishbane, 2001; Killian, 2001; Molina et al. 2004; Berg, 2009). This is the basis of *narrative therapy* (Freedman & Combs, 1996) which is increasingly being recommended by intercultural couple counselling professionals with the assumption that:

> "[W]e understand ourselves through the stories that we tell about ourselves. These stories are our realities, based as they are on our reflections on our experiences in the contexts of our families, communities, and cultures."
>
> (Berg, 2009:378)

By encouraging a "both/and" stance rather than an "either/or" one through "the postmodern idea of multiple, socially constructed realities and the valuing of diversity" (Biever et al. 1998:185), narratives offer couples possibilities to

“create new stories in response to systemic challenges” (Molina et al. 2004:144) in a narrative representation of their own “third reality” (Perel, 2000) by being encouraged “to identify their own narrative of self and others, and to take responsibility for that narrative” (Fishbane, 2001:280).

Narrative understandings of relational identity thus support the notion of couplehood as something which is created by the individuals themselves, and as more than a simple sum of what characterises their respective national, cultural, historical identities. It is in these contexts where individuals come together in relationship that:

> “social actors as active subjects, rather than cultures as whole hardened fixed entities, are the main protagonists in processes of socio-cultural transmission and adaptation.”
>
> (Rodríguez-Garcia, 2006:426)

The relationship itself may thus be considered as a *socio-cultural hybrid space* (419) which is complex and constantly active, justifying the hesitancy one should adopt in making generalizations in regards to intercultural couples, or in fact *any* relationship, as this hybrid space created between two beings can take any shape or form that would be impossible to pin down, let alone predict. The couplehood that any two individuals in an intercultural relationship choose to adopt stems from not only who the individuals *are* in terms of national, cultural, racial, ethnic background or in terms of what social or familial norms expect them to be, but, more importantly, who they *desire* to be as a couple.

3.2 Revisiting the concepts of *relationship*, *couple* and *couplehood*

When two individuals with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds come together in an intimate and significant *relationship*, as a *couple*, they cooperatively construct a relatively stable state of confluence, or a form of intercultural and multilingual *couplehood*. Having established relational theory as the conceptual basis of the study, I now present a discussion of how these concepts (relationship, couple, and couplehood) are to be understood within the current study.

3.2.1 Relationship

A *relationship*, in its broadest sense, may be understood as a connection, association, or involvement between any two things, human or non-human, material or abstract, that falls within the cognitive boundaries of beings that are able to perceive that connection. It is commonly used in reference to people in the form of *interpersonal* relationships, but also one-to-group associations, or group-to-group connections as well. In psychology, it may even be used in reference to how one perceives one's self or identity – the *intrapersonal* relationship with self. While the term *multilingual relationship* in the context of this study refers to the connection between two individuals with differing first languages, it is to be acknowledged that relationships also exist between humans and abstract entities, a befitting example being the relation one may have with a particular nation, culture, or language, areas of inquiry that have

been pursued in intercultural couple research. Furthermore, we may consider the relationships between two non-human entities or abstract phenomena, for instance, the socio-historical relationship between two nations, or the relationship between a language and a culture, or even language and culture in general. It is in this sense that we may understand our very existence as a complex web of relationships. In turn, it may be argued that we only exist as beings insofar as we are influenced by the world and all its entities, and reciprocate through our thoughts and actions as agentic organisms, hence the idea of humans as *relational beings,* which has previously been discussed in depth in the current chapter.

3.2.2. Couple

Two relational beings in a close relationship

It was my intention that the participants of the current study would be individuals who were part of a *couple,* meaning they were invested in a long-term (Vangelisti & Daley, 1997) and *close relationship* (Aron et al. 1992) characterised as having a certain degree of *relational intimacy* (Prager & Roberts, 2004) which informed their *couplehood*. These concepts are explained in more detail below.

Kelley et al. (1983) define a *close relationship* as one that is based on “mutual influence, interdependence, and degree of interconnectedness of activities” (cited in Aron et al. 1991:241). This type of relationship may also be said to have a “communal character”, in which the individuals are constantly self-

motivated to “act for the needs of the other” without the expectation of reciprocity for the self (Clark & Mills, 1979, cited in Aron et al. 1991:241). According to this definition, many different types of relationships could be characterised as *close*, for example, parent-child relationships or platonic friendships, in which there is generally an element of ‘selflessness’ in regards to the other.

These characteristics of a close relationship may also manifest in contexts of romantic involvement, in which the two individuals can be seen to form a *couple,* which is defined as “two partners who live in a long-term committed relationship” (Piller, 2002:4), or more precisely, “two people involved in a committed romantic relationship who share a household, a history and a planned future” (Biever et al. 1998:182). A list of common standards that characterise long-term couple relationships is provided by Vangelisti and Daley (1997:207) (see Appendix 2), and while individual preference and circumstance may not deem everything on the list as a prerequisite of a mutually satisfactory relationship, the list in itself is considered to be fairly comprehensive in its scope. In general, individuals who are part of a *couple* may be assumed to have a certain degree of knowledge of the other, share a sense of interdependence, and perceive an inability to replace the relational partner (Canary et al. 1995:xi). As is the case with close relationships, couples may also be characterised by a “mutual desire to promote the other’s interests” which should be “reciprocal and voluntary” (LaFollette, 1996: 10-11). In addition to this, there is a sense of *intimate relating*, which Prager and Roberts (2004) explain in simple terms as “two selves knowing each other” (46). They further posit that:

> “[A]ny committed couple relationship [is] an *intimate relationship*, by definition, while [there is] … tremendous variability in the degree to

> which a particular couple's relationship is characterized by *relational intimacy*." (47, emphasis added)

In my understanding of this statement, this implies that most (if not all) couple relationships are based on the premise of intimacy, both emotional and physical. However, the deeper level of *relational intimacy*, which appears to be a more fundamental and philosophical construct, would not necessarily be achieved by all couples in meaningful relationships. Indeed, in regards to the conventional institution of *marriage*, which is generally understood as the legalised and formal union of two committed individuals, Prager and Roberts (2004) argue that it does not guarantee the achievement of a "deep and abiding relational intimacy", which is something that requires not only relational commitment, but "the self that is shared with the other" (44). In the context of all significant relationships, but particularly in intimate ones, Fishbane (2001) terms this as "relational autonomy", which "includes both clarity about one's own needs and desires, and a *readiness for the relational*" (276, emphasis in original).

Taken a step further, the degree of this type of reciprocity between the identity of the individual and the identity of the other individuals in close couple relationships can be seen as not only having the "willingness to be moved" by the other (276), but further weakening the boundaries between self and other to a state where *the other is included in the self* (Aron et al. 1991; Aron et al. 1992; Aron & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2001; Aron et al. 2004).

<u>Inclusion of other in self</u>

This concept has been explained as:

> "a general increase of *fusion of self and other* … to the extent *a partner is perceived as part of one's self*, allocation of resources is communal (because *benefiting other is benefiting self*), actor/observer perspective differences are lessened, and *other's characteristics become one's own*."
>
> (Aron et al. 1991:242, emphasis added)

Aron and McLaughlin-Volpe (2001) have expanded on this idea in suggesting that this inclusion of other in the self manifests when "the cognitive processing of each operates to some extent as if the partner's resources, perspectives, and identities, along with one's own, are accessed and are affected by the outcomes of any action one might take" (89), which results in an extension of the self to include the various traits of the other, or an "expansion of the self" (93). A detailed explanation of the three aspects (resources, perspective, and identities) of the other included in self is presented in Aron et al. (2004), and may be summarised as follows:

> - **Resources**: An individual may reasonably expect the significant other to make his or her tangible (i.e. money, household possessions) and intangible (i.e. knowledge and skills in language, music) resources available to self.
> - **Perceptions**: An individual may consciously or unconsciously experience the world to some extent from the other's perspective.
> - **Identity**: An individual may easily confuse their own traits, dispositions, characteristics, ideas or memories with those of a close other.

Their thesis posits that there are various degrees of other-inclusion in self, which further impacts the degree to which a benefit to other is a benefit to self (91). These varying degrees may be visualised through a series of overlapping circles in the Inclusion of Other in Self (IOS) Scale (Aron et al. 1992:597) shown

below, which they validate as “correspond[ing] to the reality of how people spontaneously experience relationships” (Aron & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2001:90).

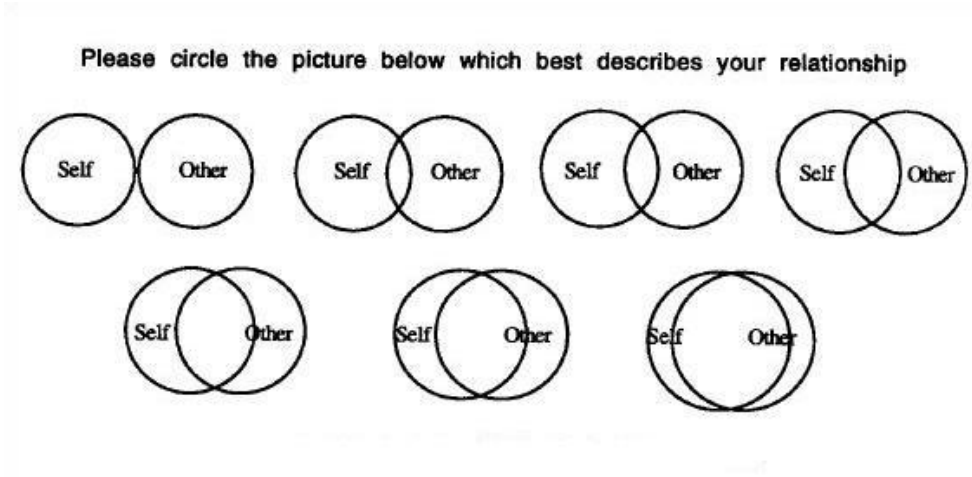


Figure 2 The Inclusion of Other in Self (IOS) scale

While this is a commendable attempt to visualise the construct of IOS, there are some features of these diagrams that seem problematic in depicting the nature of close relationships between self and other. Some of these issues have been acknowledged by Aron et al. (1992), when they asked the subjects in their study to comment on the appropriateness of the models. One of the common responses that I find to be particularly relevant had to do with the fact that the circles representing self and other are of the same size (608). If an individual felt that his or her identity, or their partner’s identity, was relatively ‘bigger’ in terms of the two circles, an asymmetrical figure may be a more accurate way to illustrate how the relationship was perceived.

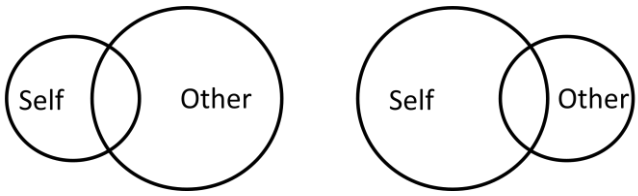


Figure 3 Imbalance between sense of self and other

Indeed, in extreme cases where individuals felt that either their own or their partner's identity encompassed the other, this may be illustrated by a circle within a circle.

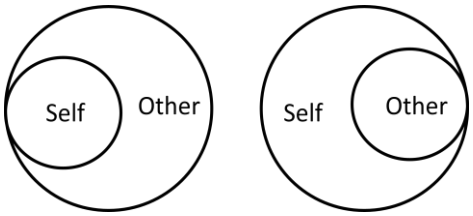


Figure 4 Sense of self as within other, or other as within self

Furthermore, bearing in mind that the same relationship can be defined in different ways based on the individual perspectives of the participants (Fogel, 1993:90), if two individuals in a couple choose different models within the scale as to how they each perceive the relationship, a visual depiction of the relationship as a whole would be seemingly impossible.

Despite these limitations, the IOS Scale is nevertheless significant in acknowledging the fact that two individuals in a close and intimate relationship inevitably share different aspects of themselves with the significant other, thus creating a bond that is both sustained by and influential to the individuals in the couple. These relational bonds may also be understood as what Fogel (1993) calls "consensual frames" created through mutual co-regulation between the two people as "symptoms of information creation" (104) rather than fixed rules or the manifestation of one partner exuding their power or control over the other. It also demonstrates the possibility of understanding identities in relationships as primarily threefold: individual identity of self, individual identity of other, and

the joint identity of the couple as its own unit of being. It is this joint identity I refer to when speaking of *couplehood*.

3.2.3 Couplehood

Understood as a concept that may be distinguished from individual relational identities, the term *couplehood* has been used in the literature to represent the identity of the unit of relationship itself rather than the individuals involved in it. One way of understanding this may be found in a discussion on the ontology of relations by Balazs (2004:246):

> "[T]he conclusion that the relationship is not (exclusively) grounded in any of [the individuals in a relationship] does not amount to saying that it is not the two persons who constitute the loving relation. The point is rather that each of them stress their commonality, their togetherness, which singles out them from the rest of human beings both as individuals and as a community."

What he refers to as a couple's "commonality, their togetherness" is perhaps an adequate way of understanding couplehood. In narrative terms, this involves a transformation from the "I" as the focus of the story to be gradually replaced by "we" (Gergen, 2009:177), especially if we are to think of relational identities as being the premise of individual understanding of self.

While a survey of the literature reveals a fairly limited use of the exact term, there are some sources that discuss it and related concepts. One example may be found in Lohmann et al. (2003), where they demonstrate how the placement of jointly acquired home objects to show a couple's "couplehood" to others (438) can be seen as a manifestation of "relationship closeness, dyadic functioning, and relationship commitment" (437). They argue that:

> "Objects that couple members acquire together reflect *couplehood* more than objects that they acquire individually. As such, joint acquired objects that are placed for visitors to notice are couple displays that symbolize to other the couple member's strong sense of *couple identity*." (440, emphasis added)

As can be seen, couplehood may be understood as another term to refer to *couple identity*. For example, in a study on 'swinging' heterosexual couples and their management of jealousy issues, de Visser and McDonald (2007) conclude that "individual identities and desires were played down in order to privilege *couple identity*, couple activity and relationship" and that "[a] *couple identity* and a sense of togetherness provided a unique sense of joint security" (466, emphasis added). In a similar thread, Canary et al. (1995) use the term "relational culture" to represent "an increasingly shared symbolic world that reflects *the identity of the relationship* and its partners" that is developed within the couple over time (114, emphasis added). This couplehood, couple identity, or relationship identity, regardless of how one chooses to call it, is ultimately something that is present in any intimate and meaningful relationship on the premise that individual or couple "[b]eing is not static, and beings are not self-explicable but *emerge* from a constant movement of relationality" (Zizioulas, 2010:150, emphasis in original).

It is in this sense that relational identity emphasises relationships as "not a state of being, but an act of doing" (Piller, 2002:2), by viewing individual agency as "relational action" (Gergen, 2009:79) through which relational ties are created, sustained, and terminated. This further implies that relational identities are performed identities, for instance in cases where couplehood manifests in jointly acquired objects as discussed above. It paints a picture of identity as something which is neither individualist nor collectivist, but both. It also provides a way of

explaining how the discrepancy between the identities that we are “given” by others and those we “accept” as ours is negotiated to characterise individual self-concept and identity. In other words, it is a way in which we naturally attempt to understand and define our selves as individuals or as part of a couple or group, often through an ongoing negotiation between “‘achieved’ or ‘inhabited’ identity – the identity people themselves articulate or claim – and ‘ascribed’ or ‘attributed’ identity – the identity given to someone by someone else” (Blomaert, 2006, as cited in Block, 2007:26), which in itself is part of the relational process. How these relational dynamics are revealed in the context of *multilingual* relationships, particularly in regard to the support and development of second languages within the couplehood, is a main concern of the current study.

3.3 Relational perspectives in second language education

Based on the previous discussion of relational perspectives on individual being and relationships, I now turn to a discussion of their implications in second language educational theory, research and practice. I begin with a preliminary commentary on the inherently relational nature of language and communication, followed by a discussion of recent ideological shifts in second language teaching theory and practice, which increasingly acknowledge the relationality of the constituents and processes involved. Contemporary theories of affect, motivation, desire, and second language identities are discussed and critiqued in light of relational perspectives to inform how they may be considered in second language development and support in multilingual couplehood contexts.

3.3.1 Language and communication as relational

According to the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (2007), language is defined as:

> "[a] system of human communication using words, written and spoken, and particular ways of combining them; any such system employed by a community, a nation, etc."

At this rudimentary level, languages may be seen as codes, or "systems", each with its own relatively reliable lexicon and grammar, and shared by a particular group of people. It is in this sense that a language can be seen as having its own aesthetic and practical qualities, possibly representing certain characteristics of its speakers. Many theories suggest the inextricable bond

between language and culture (Nunan & Choi, 2010; Piller, 2011), and how they both influence and are influenced by the processes of thought and behaviour of the language user (Ahearn, 2001) in regards to “how we view the world, and how we make sense of the experiences we have” (Thayer-Bacon, 1997:244).

Language may also be seen as capital, or a resource that may be drawn upon for economic, intellectual and relational gain (Bourdieu, 1992; Norton, 2006). Others have considered language as an important aspect of self in the form of performed linguistic identities (Piller, 2002; Pavlenko, 2006). In Gergen’s discussion of relational beings, this understanding of language as a “relational performance” is emphasised (2009:73), as language can only occur within a “confluence that gives it legitimacy” (75). Like other relational entities, language is not something which is created and used in a vacuum, but exists in relation to a particular context and by virtue of particular speakers and listeners. This view is echoed in linguistic anthropology, where many view “language, whether spoken or written, to be inextricably embedded in networks of sociocultural relations” through which “meanings are co-constructed by participants, emergent from particular social interactions” (Ahearn, 2001:110-111). Thus, it may be said that communication, and the languages used for communicative purposes, are inherently relational.

To learn a language, first, second or otherwise, is therefore not only to accurately memorise a fixed set of rules and symbols. A relational perspective of being makes it imperative to emphasise language more as a flexible mode of communication rather than a rigid system, and in the context of second or foreign language education, this is widely referred to as *communicative competence* (Canale & Swain, 1980) which is further distinguished into four components of grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic

competences. While there is no denying that grammatical accuracy is an important aspect of interpersonal and intercultural communication, it is certainly not the only one, as we have seen cases in the literature where other aspects of language and communication were considered equally if not more important. For example, in a qualitative study of primary care consultations in multilingual settings, Roberts et al. (2005, cited in Piller, 2011:152-155) found that the main cause of misunderstandings did not pertain to the difference of cultural backgrounds, but to language difficulties (pronunciation, grammar, and semantics) and lack of shared contextual knowledge. However, more importantly, it was observed that:

> "[I]nteractants sometimes simply do not want to understand each other … [M]isunderstandings arise not only because of linguistic or cultural differences, but also because people fight and argue. … Intercultural communication research often creates the impression that if we just knew how to overcome our linguistic and cultural differences, we would get on just fine with each other…"
>
> (Piller, 2011:155)

Thus, language as a mode of communication does rely on a common knowledge of the grammatical systems of the language used, but it is ultimately the contextual relationship between the speakers that will determine the success or failure of the linguistic exchange.

It may also be the case that language itself is overrated as the main mode of interpersonal communication, as it is undoubtedly the case that two individuals without a common language can form a close relational bond (Rosenblatt, 2009:13), despite the prevalence of the idea that a shared language between individuals is crucial for the facilitation of intimate relationship (Ting-Toomey, 2009:39). Once the relationship is formed, the individuals may be further

motivated to learn the other's language, which may or may not be reciprocated with the willingness to support the other in that language. Alternatively, the couple may decide to develop their linguistic skills in a third language together (Gundacker, 2010). Whatever form this takes, one could expect with some confidence that the creation of a significant relational connection with each other would predicate the need for linguistic communication in the development of the relationship as:

> "a generative process that creates understandings between people, defines relationships and partners' identities, composes rules for interaction, and establishes the overall climate of intimacy."
>
> (Wood, 2000:xxi)

This may be supported by the widespread belief that the emotional or affectual is closely related to the motivational, and further to the developmental in regards to learning second languages, an area of significance which is now firmly established within the second language learning and teaching literature and referred to as the "social turn" in second language acquisition (Block, 2003). However, this has not always been the case, as the landscape of second language educational theory and practice has gone through a number of changes to arrive at this point.

3.3.2 Changing trends in second language learning theory and practice

Pavlenko (2013) identifies four major 'turns' in the field of second language acquisition: the cognitive turn of the 60s and 70s, the narrative turn of the 80s and 90s, the social turn of the late 90s and 2000s, and finally the affective turn (or what I would coin as *the relational turn*) which is currently underway.

Following the ontological and epistemological orientations of the time, earlier theories and studies in second language development were rooted in a post-positivist paradigm, largely based on structuralist or behaviouralist frameworks in dealing with cognitive aspects of second language acquisition, instruction and usage (Mitchell et al. 2013:28). Many of these theories characterised the language learner as a receiver of knowledge under the premise that learning occurs through the one-way transmission of knowledge from teacher to learner, constituting the basis for teacher or curriculum centred language education (Sfard, 1998). Investigations into the cognitive processes of language learning were coupled with a variety of language learning and teaching methodologies meant to guide every learner to successful acquisition of the target language.

While these theories were highly significant in developing our understanding of the various processes in learning a second language, their limitations became clear as the paradigmatic pendulum began to swing towards a more socio-constructivist view of second language learning and cognition (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 1995; Firth & Wagner, 1997; Kozulin, 1999). This movement brought to the fore an entirely new set of issues as the traditional acquisition metaphor for learning a second language moved on to one of participation (Sfard, 1998), thus highlighting the agentic and motivational characteristics of individual language learners. More humanistic and student-centred second language learning theories emphasising the role of affect began to emerge (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004), led by an increasing recognition of second language learning as a co-constructed human activity within a wider socio-political and socio-economic environment (Lantolf, 2000). Research in second language education was no longer about finding the “right” methodology from which all language learners would benefit, mainly due to the fact that the “standard” language

learner profile became largely diversified, or, to be precise, the inherent and individual characteristics of language learners were to be acknowledged. Accordingly, studies and theories aiming to understand these diverse language learner identities and the social, political, and economic negotiation of those identities in contexts both inside and out of the formal classroom setting have joined the mainstream of second language research (Block, 2003; Swain & Ping, 2007; Atkinson, 2011).

There appears to be a need for a different approach in understanding these diversified second language learner identities, one which could both explain and inform a wider range of language learning contexts in these times of changing perspectives regarding second language education. It is in this thread that I propose a relational approach to second language learners and their learning trajectories to be applied to gain a more holistic understanding of the relationships and processes involved. This would subsume an approach to second language educational theory and practice with a focus on the relationships between the different agents (i.e. institutions, teachers, students, language subject material, etc.) involved, and an acknowledgment of the interconnectedness of those entities. It would also acknowledge a relational epistemology, namely, that the processes involved in learning, teaching and knowing are relational in nature. A discussion of these perspectives in the context of existing second language theories is the focus of the following section.

3.3.3 Relational perspectives in second language education

> *Teaching cannot be separated from learning; without one the other fails to exist.*
>
> *(Gergen, 2009: 247)*

In the field of education, the application of relational theory has been peripheral at best, with a few strong proponents emphasising the need for a more relational understanding of education (Witherell & Noddings, 1991; Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004). While it is difficult to find a definitive clarification of the term 'relational education' in the literature, discussions of relational epistemology, relational educational processes, and the learner and teacher as relational beings provide us with a sense of what it may entail.

When we think of education in the traditional sense, it is easy to picture a classroom where the teacher stands in front of a number of learners and delivers knowledge, skills and information for the learners to acquire. Both teacher and learner are seen as bounded beings, as 'learning' takes place when what the teacher 'has' is 'given' and then 'taken' by the students. A relational understanding of education, on the other hand, views it not as a means of "producing independent, autonomous thinkers", but as a "process for enhancing participation in relational processes – from the local to the global" (Gergen, 2009:243). These relational processes not only include those of an interpersonal nature (as in the relational dynamics between teacher and learner, or among learners), but also subsume those which occur in the production of knowledge as "a communal creation" (241), or what some have called a *relational epistemology* in education.

As a proponent of this perspective, Thayer-Bacon (1997) argues that knowledge itself is “value-laden or interest-laden” (242) owing to its creation “as something that is socially constructed by embodied people who are in relation with each other” (245), and thus constituted and disseminated within relational contexts of individual and social entities. The role of others and the relationships with them are central to being and knowing in the sense that:

> “[o]ur lives begin in and are lived in relationships with others. The quality of these relationships directly affects our abilities to become knowers. This is because *we develop a sense of “self” through our relationships with others, and we need a sense of self in order to become potential knowers*.” (Thayer-Bacon, 1997:241, emphasis in original)

Moore (2005) also argues for a relational understanding of knowledge and being by proposing an epistemology which supposes that:

> “[K]nowing is relational by nature… One cannot know anything if one is not alert to the subjectivity of oneself and one’s communities, and the inter-subjectivity of the learning process.” (29)

On this philosophical basis, she identifies five mainly intra-personal relations to be promoted through education: relating with self, relating with culture and community, relating with difference, relating with the earth, and relating with social structures. Thus, her focus is more on the educational objectives of facilitating a heightened awareness of relational constructs for the learning individuals, similar to postmodern constructivist perspectives that “[reject] the view that the locus of knowledge is in the individual” (Palinscar, 2005:286).

We have thus far identified relational epistemology as primarily concerned with the relationship between the learner (knower) and the nature of what there is to be learnt (known), and on this premise we may now consider the processes of

learning in relation to teaching, and more importantly the relational dynamics between learner and teacher.

Gergen (2009), in line with his emphasis on relational being, stresses the importance of interpersonal relationships in educational settings and how the nature of these relationships, the most obvious but not exclusive one being that of a teacher and learner, becomes a crucial factor in creating opportunities for emotional, intellectual, and cognitive development (259). Those who are familiar with the theories of mediation by Lev Vygotsky, which have become increasingly common in their application within the field of second language learning and teaching in a variety of forms, would identify ideological similarities in this aspect of student and teacher relationship, as a sociocultural view of learning emphasises:

> "the part played by other significant people in the learner's lives, who enhance their learning by selecting and shaping the learning experiences presented to them."
>
> (Williams & Burden, 1997:40)

Indeed, it is not surprising to find that Gergen identifies the Russian social philosopher as one of his 'textual companions' (2009:xviii), as much of his relational philosophy and related concepts seem to be compatible with a sociocultural take on being, language, and cognition, from which "cognition is not analyzed as separate from social, motivational, emotional, and identity processes" (Palinscar, 2005:293). It is particularly significant that Vygotsky's analysis of psychological development extended beyond cognitive processes and dove deep into the realms of motivation and affect (Minick, 2005:42), which Van der Veer and Valsiner (1994:1) claim to observe in Vygotsky's writing. As Davydov (1997:xxiii) postulates:

> "according to Vygotsky, the teacher may educate students in deliberate fashion only by constantly collaborating with them, with their environment, with their desires and with their willingness to themselves work with their teacher."

The centrality of meaningful relationship is thus highlighted, not only as a means for cognitive development, but as an affective and emotionally collaborative endeavour.

Similar thoughts have been echoed in humanistic perspectives on education which give priority to caring relationships through interpersonal dialogue based on the idea of "a relational, or connective, notion of the self, one that holds that the self is formed and given meaning in the context of its relations with other" (Witherell & Noddings, 1991:5). In this sense, both relational and humanistic perspectives in education share the common cause of promoting an interactive community of agentic thinkers and feelers "actively participat[ing] in a mutual process of teaching/learning" (Thayer-Bacon, 1997:245), and further co-creating relationships between them. These relationships, as a significant part of the learner's and teacher's being, are, in themselves, the crux of what relational education means as they "may prove more significant than the subject matter under study" by "fostering processes that indefinitely extend the potentials of relationship" (Gergen, 2009:243).

Related to the sociocultural and humanistic perspectives discussed above is what van Lier (1997; 2000) has coined an "ecological approach" to language learning. Identifying this perspective as related to several other relational and social theorists including Vygotsky, Bakhtin, Peirce, Mead, and Dewey, van Lier's theory of second language education shifts the emphasis from scientific reductionism to the notion of emergence with a focus on the perceptual and

social activity of the learner through educational interaction and interpersonal relationship (van Lier, 2000:246). The language learning context is thus seen as a “complex adaptive system” (van Lier, 1997:783) in which the learner, the context, and meaningful others create connections from which learning and development emerge. While this view of “language and learning as relationships among learners and between learners and the environment” (258) acknowledges the significance of the social and interpersonal aspect of linguistic and cognitive practices, there seems to be less elaboration on the nature of relationships more or less conducive to learning processes.

As Ehrman & Dörnyei (1998) have said, “[N]o matter how astute the teacher, a key to make learning work is, to a great extent, the relation between knower and learner” (ix). Relational theory additionally recognises that this teacher-learner relation is of a complex nature, as the boundaries between “knower” and “learner” become less certain, and as knowledge and meaning-making is considered a product of the relationship itself. As a break away from purely cognitive perspectives of education, which characterise the teacher as a transmitter and the student as receptor of knowledge, relational education provides an alternative where both teacher and student are equal participants in the process of knowledge construction. This mode of thinking opens the possibility for a more integrative and perhaps beneficial way of approaching second language education, as it acknowledges both teacher and learner equally as relational beings, and furthers a relational orientation which seeks to consider student and teacher together.

In the way it is adopted in the current study, relational theory can provide a way of approaching these relationships that does not shy away from or obscure this complexity, but fully acknowledges and appreciates it. By investigating the

significance of relations in the intimate context of multilingual couplehood, we may be able to further our understandings of the nature of relationships in a wider range of contexts we refer to as “educational”, all in which, regardless of the form or setting of the learning, the relational worlds of two or more individuals come together to form various relationships, which are not to be considered solely as “contextual factors” but to be seen as central to the educational processes and outcomes.

3.3.4 Relational affect, motivation and desire in second language education

As a core facet of human thought, emotion, and behaviour, relational identities play a major role in the all aspects of learning a second language, from the matter of choosing a language to learn (if one is in a position to do so), how and what is to be learnt, from whom, and for what purposes. Other relational aspects of this process closely involved with identity include the affectual and motivational characteristics of the language learner, which are both acknowledged as important considerations in contemporary second language learning theory.

Affect, or the personal and emotional aspect of relation, has long been regarded the ‘philosopher’s stone’ of second language education, an ancient quest that is still continuing to this day (Stevick, 1999). Brown (1980, cited in Block, 2007:58) was one of the first to acknowledge the salience of affective factors in second language acquisition, along with Stern (1983, cited in Arnold, 1999:26) who believes that “the affective component contributes at least as much and often more to language learning than the cognitive skills”, and more recently Stevick

(1999:55) who links affect to memory, and argues for its important role in learning. This is further expanded to links between relational self and memory and “how each depends on, and helps make possible, the experience of the other” (Klein, 2001:25).

In the preface of a book purely devoted to the role of affect in language learning (Arnold, 1999), it is stated that “[a]ffective language learning fits within what appears to be an emerging paradigm that stretches far beyond language teaching” (xii). In other words, it is not about the emotional attributes or states of the individual learner, nor those of the language teacher in the limited context of the classroom. It goes far beyond the scope of formal language instruction, and into the daily lives of any individual having to cope with learning or teaching a second language, as would potentially be the case for multilingual couples. As stated previously, the very nature of language is relational and, as such, emotional, as Riley (2005:1) artfully puts it: “There is a forcible affect of language which courses like blood through its speakers.”

In making a distinction between individual and relational affectual factors, Arnold and Brown (1999:1-27) maintain the idea of the bounded individual being in characterising the nature of affect and its influence on language learning. Individual factors are seen as internal factors of the learner, and include issues of anxiety, inhibition, extroversion-introversion, self-esteem, motivation (both extrinsic and intrinsic), and learner styles (8-17). Relational factors include empathy, classroom transactions (including teacher-student relations and group dynamics), and cross-cultural processes (18-23). While this division is appropriate for the sake of taxonomic clarity, I find that, from a relational perspective, the individual factors are in no way purely internal or innate of the language learner, but an extension of the various relations that constitute the

learner's experiential and relational identity. Distinctions between 'purely' individual and relational affect may no longer be adequate in understanding the emotional attitudes of language learners.

In related theories of second language learning motivation, now a prominent area in the wider field of second language acquisition, it seems to be the case that from relatively early on the social dimensions of individual learning motivation were recognised as significant. For example, Gardner and Lambert (1972, as cited in Baker, 1988:154) made (what was at the time) a ground-breaking distinction between instrumental motivation ("a desire to gain social recognition or economic advantages through knowledge of a foreign language") and integrative motivation ("a desire to be like representative members of the 'other language community'"), focusing on the relationships between individual learners and their wider social contexts in understanding what made them want to learn a second language. As such, this was thought-provoking in looking at language learning from a motivational perspective, putting to the fore what was once thought to be less important in considerations of the processes of second language acquisition (Dörnyei, 2003). It also constituted a significant step in merging the intellectual gap in second language acquisition research between the social and the individual in that it

> "endeavor[ed] to attend to, explicate, and explore, in more equal measures and, where possible, in integrated ways, both the social and cognitive dimensions of S/FL use and acquisition."
>
> (Firth & Wagner, 1997:286)

Although these theories have since been contested, reshaped, and further developed over the decades, they are significant in that they have laid the groundwork for perspectives which take into account both macro- and micro-

contexts and factors of motivation (Gardner, 2010). It is clear that the immediate context of learning has a significant influence on motivation, on top of the broader contextual factors pertaining to the individual's perceptions and relationships with his or her surrounding community or society.

Out of these factors, there have been much focus on the role of the teacher, their potential (great) influence on learning motivation, and, from a more relational perspective, what would be an ideal relationship between them and their students. For example, in their discussion of the interpersonal dynamics of the intercultural second language classroom, Ehrman and Dörnyei (1998) posit that meaningful relationships characterised by "unconditional positive regard" are central to the educational process. They explain that this:

> "does not mean an uncritical acceptance of everything another person does (or that culture sanctions) ... It does mean, however, an attempt to understand the other in his or her own terms, not through the filters of one's own constructs." (47)

Perspectives such as this consider learning processes as interpersonal, but also highlight the substantial influence of the educators (mediators). To embellish on this point, if we are to make the reasonable assumption that all relational theories of second language education assume the importance of interpersonal relationships and their fundamental influence on how the individual learner relates to a particular language, the relational identities and affective roles of the language mediator (teacher) and other facilitators may be considered paramount to effective language development (Oxford, 1995:592). Arnold and Brown (1999:4) take up this point by maintaining that:

> "From the point of view of affective language learning, being is just as important as doing; a good language teacher knows and does but most essentially is." (emphasis in original)

From this perspective, personality clashes or style conflicts between teachers and students are not trifling nuisances that hinder learning, but become part of the relational dynamics which are influential enough to determine the outcomes in the language classroom (Oxford, et al. 1991, cited in Oxford, 1999:66).

There is no shortage of claims in the field of second language education that imply that the initiative lies with the language teacher to create a relationally and affectually positive learning environment, even in theories where the teaching-learning process is seen as a mutual dialogue and not one-way transmission (Arnold & Brown, 1999:20). However, what a relational understanding highlights is that effective learning is not the sole responsibility of the teacher or the learner alone, but dependent on the relational context that brings the two together, whether it be a second language classroom, or multilingual couplehood. It is then the actual relationships that are created, sustained, and developed in these contexts that play a significant role, which, from a relational perspective, potentially involve an expansion of being through relationship.

It is only recently that learner and teacher (relational) identities have become significant, and have been added to mainstream discussions of motivation as a major movement in the current field of second language education, as Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) observe that:

> "there have been a number of parallel developments pushing for change in how we theorise L2 motivation, and pushing for contemporary notions of self and identity to be brought to the core of this re-theorising." (5)

I now present and discuss the theories of four scholars who are at the forefront of these developments which are deemed (in my view) particularly influential in the field and relevant to the study at hand; Zoltan Dörnyei (2003; Csizér &

Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei, 2009), Ema Ushioda (2009), Bonnie Norton (Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000; 2013), and finally Ingrid Piller (2002; Piller & Takahashi, 2006; Piller, 2011) whose empirical studies have already been extensively reviewed in the previous chapter.

In relation to the aforementioned discussions of language learning motivation by Gardner and Lambert (1972), Dörnyei (2003) was able to find in their theorisation an aspect which heavily suggested the prevalence of emotion and social identity as central to understanding motivation:

> "In broad terms, an ''integrative'' motivational orientation concerns a positive interpersonal/affective disposition toward the L2 group and the desire to interact with and even become similar to valued members of that community. […] Thus, a core aspect of the integrative disposition is some sort of a psychological and emotional identification." (5)

It is apparent that this was an ongoing concern for the Hungarian scholar, which culminated in, among other things, an empirical study in 2005, in which a theoretical model concerning the internal structure of the second language (L2) motivation complex and its impact on motivated behaviour was presented (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005). This was significant in that existing concepts in the field were adopted and further refined, for example, the term 'milieu' which resonates deeply with the interpersonal and relational aspects of a learning environment:

> "Milieu has been used in L2 motivation research to refer to the social influences stemming from the immediate environment as opposed to the macrocontext … and it is usually operationalized as *the perceived influence of significant others, such as parent, family, and friends*."
>
> (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005:22, emphasis added)

The social and interpersonal was thus recognised as highly influential on the individual learner. An additional important consideration involved the *internal* relationship that a learner had with their self, in other words, their self-identification as a language learner, and further as a language user in regards to what they perceived to be their language ability (actual) and what they hoped to achieve in the future (ideal). Second language motivation was thus redefined as “the desire to achieve one’s ideal language self by reducing the discrepancy between one’s actual and ideal selves” (30), introducing a framework which fundamentally incorporated the notion of self, and indeed, multiple ‘selves’, mainly in relation to each other but also to external others.

These ideas provided fertile ground for further theorisation of learning motivation, for example, Dörnyei’s (2009) L2 [Second Language] Motivational Self System, which represents a more integrated approach towards motivation in its attempt to bridge the gap between personality, motivational psychology and identity. Based on Markus and Nurius’ (1986) concept of ‘possible selves’, an individual’s imagination of their future learning trajectories in respect to “what they *might* become, what they *would like* to become, and what they are *afraid of* becoming” (Dörnyei, 2009:11) is considered key to motivation, as the intrapersonal relation within the self and its past, present and future selves are considered significant to motivational processes as well as outcomes in the learning of a second language. In this sense, his insights into motivation have provided a way of acknowledging a more socially, contextually, and therefore *relationally* integrated language learner in dealing with questions of how and why individuals are and can be motivated to acquire a second language.

This understanding of language learner as a whole person with particular desires and motivations and who is learning languages in a specific context with

particular social and interpersonal dynamics has been well-developed by Ushioda (2009). Like Dörnyei, her theory of motivation presents a much more integrated view of language learner identity and learning motivation, but takes a slightly different perspective with the added consideration of the relational context in what she calls a “person-in-context relational view”, which she describes as “a view of motivation as emergent from *relations* between real persons, with particular social identities, and the unfolding cultural context of activity” (215, emphasis added). In doing this, she presents a critical argument against research approaches which attempt to characterise language learner identities as simply those which are boxed within the boundaries of the language learning context. By explaining the varied relationships between persons and contexts as “dynamic, complex and non-linear” (218), she rightfully assumes:

> “a focus on real persons, rather than on learners as theoretical abstractions; a focus on the agency of the individual person as a thinking, feeling human being […] with goals, motives and intentions; a focus on the interaction between this self-reflective intentional agent, and the fluid and complex system of social relations, activities, experiences and multiple micro- and macro- contexts in which the person is embedded, moves, and is inherently part of.” (220)

Ultimately, it is a plea for teachers, researchers, and other invested parties to consider the language learner within the wider context of their being, a being which is social and thus a part of a complex system which is historical and cultural in nature. And whilst her conceptualisation of motivation and identity does not directly refer to relational theory as a textual ally, her theories implicitly consider beings as more relational and connected than bounded and isolated as previous perspectives have tended to follow. Indeed, in her support for approaches which take into account “interaction[al] processes and relational

contextual phenomena" (225), research endeavours that are framed by more relational views of being, context, and learning, such as the current study, may be encouraged.

Another proponent of situating language learners and their motivations to learn and use second languages within wider cultural and social contexts may be found in Bonny Norton, whose ground-breaking work has contributed substantially to our understanding of the relationships between the individual and the social context, as well as the situated relationships involving the prioritisation of particular social identities. Her widely cited study (Peirce, 1995) on female immigrants living in Canada raised many important questions regarding the socially and contextually-bound nature of second language motivation, and identified the increasing need for perspectives which view:

> "the language learner as having a complex social identity that must be understood with reference to larger, and frequently inequitable social structures which are reproduced in day-to-day social interaction." (13)

On this premise, Norton introduced the concept of "investment" as a way of clarifying her understanding of motivation as "the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language, and their often ambivalent desire to learn and practice it" (Norton, 2000:10). This is further connected closely to identity, in that investing in a language additionally means "an investment in a learner's own social identity" (Norton, 1995:18) as the learner acquires "a wider range of symbolic and material resources" through a second language, which is expected to manifest as an increase in "the value of their cultural capital" (17).

There is no doubt that her work is commendable on many different levels, and

her continued focus on what seems to me as distinctively “economic” metaphors may be seen to represent her acute awareness of socially constructed aspects of identity. Related discussions of power in regards to how it is used, how it is recognized, and how it may be challenged through linguistic practices (1995; 2010) are thus prominent and justified. However, I also feel that it is in this way that her theories, in many ways, depart from relational concerns that others have addressed, and which I hope to explore in this thesis. As an illustration of this point, we may consider a more recent clarification of her earlier concepts of the ‘symbolic’ and ‘material’ resources learners would hope to access with their newly acquired linguistic capital:

> “By symbolic resources, I refer to such resources as language, education, and friendship, while material resources refer to such resources as capital goods, real estate and money.”
>
> (Norton, 2013:105)

In identifying “friendship” as a symbolic resource, Norton appears to adhere to traditional notions of the “bounded” individual, from which social relations can be analysed and interpreted as microcontextual manifestations of dominant macro structures. From this perspective, interpersonal relationships are less ‘relationships’ than they are ‘relations’, primarily seen as an asset that requires specific resources to attain, or a resource in itself that is further expected to lead to increased social and cultural “capital”.

Indeed, in her aforementioned study of immigrants in Canada, she does not hesitate in constantly positioning her female participants against wider and dominant social structures (e.g. legitimate and illegitimate speakers of a language) in acknowledging distinctions between “multiple sites of … identity formation” (21). Based on differing emotions, attitudes, and behaviours in

regards to using and learning English as a second language, she observes one of her participants as being variably “an immigrant, a mother, a language learner, a worker, a wife” (21). A relational perspective would seek to delve deeper into the interpersonal and otherwise relationships that constitute her relational being, not as an isolated individual within a particular socially or culturally dominant context, but as a being within which various relational identities are dynamically woven together in the construction of a self in (at some times minimally influential, at others highly meaningful and significant) relationship with others.

In this sense, I feel that relational perspectives can add to existing theories of motivation by viewing individual identities in relationships with others from a perspective which challenges the “I” versus “them” models of identity by recognising that it is these relationships that constitute the very being which is engaged in or invested in learning a languages. As we have seen, contemporary theories of identity and motivation in the second language literature such have increasingly recognised the significance of the other or others. Some have even identified this as perhaps one of the strongest motivations a language learner can have, claiming that “[i]nterpersonal motivations probably are more fundamental and powerful than any of the self’s other motives” (Tice & Baumeister, 2001:72). However, in my view, they seem to fall short of looking closely at the actual *relationships* individuals are engaged and ‘invested’ in – relationships of which the individual is not only socially positioned within and through, but relationships that potentially constitute a part of the individual’s being and identity.

A very promising step in this direction, and perhaps most relevant to the research at hand, can be identified predominantly in the works of Ingrid Piller

and her former student, Kimie Takahashi. In their conceptualisation of what has been coined “language desire” (Piller, 2001; Piller & Takahashi, 2006; Takahashi, 2013), the construct of motivation is replaced with “a liking, love, and desire for the L2 [second language]” or “a strong desire for and emotional attachment to [the] L2 [second language]” (Piller, 2002:102). In the context of intercultural relationships, this has been further linked to “intercultural desires”, or “desires and dreams of emotional and sexual fulfilment with the cultural other” (Piller, 2011:115), which, in some cases, may precede the actual relationship with another from a different cultural and linguistic background, but nevertheless act as a powerful source of second language learning motivation (164). Takahashi (2013) explores this language desire of Japanese women as shaped by media discourses and subjective agencies as they experience studying abroad in Australia, and acknowledges its relational nature as dependent on sociocultural context and the interpersonal relationships (both real and imagined) experienced within them:

> “[L]anguage desire needs to be understood as something that is continually shaped and reshaped in relation to experiences of negotiation of identity in the communities in which language users are located.” (146)

Thus, what I am arguing for with the application of relational theory in second language learning and teaching attempts to go beyond a simple recognition of the interactions between an individual and their interpersonal, social, and cultural contexts as salient to their motives and behaviours related to second language learning. My task does not end at identifying different relational factors potentially impacting a language learner; a relational framework would allow me to explore further into how different desires are relationally weaved together as

a unified whole, painting a complex yet more complete picture of learners and what motivates them to learn.

The role of affect and motivation in second language learning has been, and continues to be, an important area of study, with an increased focus on the intrapersonal and interpersonal relational dynamics of second language learning and teaching. In viewing the language learner and teacher as relational beings who bring with them a multitude of relational selves when they meet in the context of the language classroom, relational theory makes more salient the interwoven nature of identities, relationships, and languages in second language education. The investigation of these processes in multilingual couplehood, a relational context which may provide a natural impetus for language learning, can provide further insight into the intersection of affect, motivation, and desire as important facets of the second language learner and user identity.

3.3.5 Relational language identities

Language understood as a relational performance and as something that forms a part of our relational identities has great implications on how we approach the learning, teaching, and use of second languages. Already in the field of second language education there has been a growing concern and interest in identity issues that relate specifically to the choice and usage of second languages in various interactional settings, illustrating how identities are dependent and influenced by relational contexts:

> “The languages we speak or refuse to speak have a lot to do with who we are, what subject positions we claim or contest, and what

futures we invest in."

(Pavlenko, 2005:223)

Thus, the concept of *language identity*, also referred to as *ethnolinguistic identity*, has become common in the discourse of the field, defined as "the assumed and/or attributed relationship between one's sense of self and a means of communication" (Block 2007:46-47). This involves an understanding of the language speaker as agentic, but prone to the influences of the relational contexts in which the language is spoken. In other words, language identities are relational, as it is predicated by an acknowledgment of the multidimensional characteristics of identities as "socially constructed, self-conscious, ongoing narratives that individuals perform, interpret and project in dress, bodily movements, actions and language" (Block, 2007:32).

The relationality of language identities are made more salient when they are explored in regards to what Leung et al. (1997) differentiate as *language expertise, language affiliation, and language inheritance* (cited in Block, 2007:47), three different types of relationship one may have with a language. *Language expertise* concerns an individual's proficiency in their use of a language, or rather, their *perceived* communicative competency (including grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competencies as proposed by Canale and Swain, 1980) as accepted by others in that language community. Thus, it is more common that individuals are seen to have language expertise in relation to their first language(s) or mother tongue(s) compared to other languages learnt later on in life. Language expertise also concerns the inherently relational and social nature of language itself as a tool for interpersonal communication, which means that it is something shared by members of a linguistic community who constantly negotiate the boundaries

and limits of what is considered “proper” use of a language. Thus, the relational dynamics of the language itself is in perpetual motion, and not easily defined or validated as a fixed set of rules.

Language affiliation, in contrast, is not about linguistic competency (actual or perceived), but about the individual’s emotional and personal connection to a language. Language affiliation to a first language can manifest in the form of feeling the most comfortable or most like oneself in using that language compared to others, as well as a strong sense of cultural and national affiliation by extension. Concerning second or other languages, it is closely related to the aforementioned concept of language desire as an ambivalent want to acquire a language. A strong affiliation to a second language could also develop out of prolonged exposure to that language and culture, or, perhaps in the case of multilingual couples, the romantic involvement with a significant other of whom that language is an important part.

Finally, *language inheritance* involves being born into a certain language community, and is something which is more or less “given” to an individual without choice. Like language expertise, it would be common for individuals to relate to their first language(s) and/or mother tongue(s) as inherited from their parents, or from the social environment they were born into. This being said, while it is clear that all three perspectives may potentially have significant influences on the other, this is not to say that having a strong identity in one aspect would necessarily be a determiner of the others. Various combinations of these three aspects of language identity can manifest in any individual; someone who inherits a language by virtue of where they were born may have a low level of competency or weak sense of affiliation with that language. My own experience of being born in Korea, but only fully acquiring the Korean

language and developing a personal bond with it in my mid- to late-teens, would be a prime example. On the other hand, some may have a strong sense of linguistic affiliation with a language they have neither competency in nor inherent ties with. For instance, in the case of some of Takahashi's (2013) Japanese participants, special feelings and attitudes towards the English language had developed prior to any extended exposure to it in relation to emotional ties with American celebrities.

Inconsistencies within these three aspects of a language identity have the further potential for tension and struggle between self- and other- identification. Notwithstanding my previous critique on Norton's view of positioned identities, she succeeds in illustrating these complexities in second language learning in a study which aims to "explore the practices of learning themselves, and the social and personal conditions under which this learning is done by learners, however variably and partially" (2010: xiv). The research premise lends itself to a relational view of language, additionally informed by feminist postculturalist perspectives (125), in which identity is discussed as a nonunitary subject, as a site of struggle, and as changing over time (125-129). The links between intercultural experience, language use, and identity are discussed in detail, bringing to the fore the relational dynamics of context, language, and being.

Second language identities are also discussed in the literature of multilingual individuals as having the potential to provide alternative frameworks through which individual experiences and identities can be enriched by altering the positioning of the self as a different 'character' with "alternative narratives" (Burck, 2005:79). In these contexts, choices regarding language use inform the performance of subjectivities, presenting new insights into links between experience, identity, and language. For example, individuals may feel different

when using various languages in their repertoire, consequently allocating differing “emotional weight” to specific phrases in their different languages (Dewaele, 2008).

In the case of second language learners, it has been found that “multilingual language play may function as a textual indication of changes in learner self-conceptualizations” (Bell, 2005, as cited in Block, 2007:120), further demonstrating how learners can feel different and even ‘special’ in using a new language (122). Going beyond the context of the language classroom, student travellers abroad have also been found to utilise their additional languages in the performance of their identities:

> “[G]aining a new linguistic territory may induce an expanded identity, a feeling of self-elation described as ‘jubilant’ by those who can play with different linguistic identities.” (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002:104)

In multilingual relationship contexts, aspects of this ‘linguistic identity play’ would potentially manifest not only in regards to multilingual individuals, but as part of the multilingual relationship as a way of performing the couplehood. As the identities of two individuals, linguistic and otherwise, intimately interact in the relationship, one may be able to observe “the ways in which linguistic and national border-crossers through [couplehood] perceive and perform their identities” (Piller, 2000:16). How these identities further influence the potential development and support of second languages in couple contexts may thus be considered a major facet of the current study, with various aspects of language learning and teaching understandably expected to be more *informal* rather than formal in nature.

3.3.6 Informal second language learning

With the general increase in the number of multilingual speakers and a steady rise in opportunities for intercultural communication, it is becoming apparent that a wide range of issues regarding second language development and use is no longer an area of interest for educational practitioners and researchers alone; that community has expanded to include everyone and anyone in intercultural or multilingual settings, which is growing as we speak. This implies a need to consider more informal contexts of second language learning outside of the language classroom and in more natural settings, which are becoming more prevalent. As the current study endeavours to investigate one of these informal contexts, namely, multilingual couplehood, it is worth considering what we already know in regards to learning and teaching second languages outside of the classroom.

It may be observed that much of the literature on second language learning, teaching, motivation and identity has a tendency to discuss these and related issues in reference to formal contexts of second language education, such as schools and other language teaching institutions. However, the great potential of the informal learning of second languages was recognised since the very early days of second language learning theorisation. For example, as early as in 1959, Edith Kern acknowledged the great potential for public television in facilitating the acquisition of cultural knowledge as well as to aid the teaching of pronunciation as an informal addition to more formal learning in second language classrooms (264). By the mid-seventies, when purely cognitive models of learning had become mainstream, studies investigating the significance of more informal linguistic environments in language acquisition and learning began to emerge, as Krashen (1976) hypothesised the influence of

both formal and informal learning environments in different aspects of second language development, and found that:

> "An intensive intake informal environment can provide both the adult and child with the necessary input for the operation of the language acquisition device. The classroom can contribute in two ways: As a formal linguistic environment, providing rule isolation and feedback for the development of the monitor, and, to the extent language use is emphasized, simultaneously as a source of primary linguistic data for language acquisition." (167)

Thus, the developmental merits of informal environments and out-of-school educational practices have been acknowledged as supplementary to more structured and formal teaching and learning practices in the language classroom.

Since then, much has been done to investigate where, when, and how informal learning occurs, and what is being learned in these processes. One context that has received some attention from researchers involves situations where language learners travel abroad to study a second language with hopes that:

> "simply residing in the host country means they will be totally immersed in the target language and that immersion, in turn, will necessarily result in improvements in language proficiency."
>
> (Cohen & Shively, 2007:193)

For many second language learners, natural and frequent exchanges with native speakers of the target language in authentic contexts of language use is thus considered a great advantage of studying abroad (Pellegrino, 1997). For some, staying with a host family rather than residing in an environment with other foreigners further increased informal learning opportunities, thus leading to better proficiency in the second language, particularly in regards to speaking (Hashimoto, 1994, cited in Dewey, 2007; Hernandez, 2010). However, the

extent to which informal learning in study abroad contexts facilitates a development in second language proficiency is a matter of ongoing debate (Cohen & Shively, 2007), as some claim that “there is still insufficient evidence to draw any firm conclusions about the impact of study abroad in terms of linguistic or sociocultural competence” (Dewey, 2007:245). Whether the influence of these experiences are positive or negative in terms of actual language acquisition, it is made clear that language learners are willing to travel and invest time, money and effort into studying abroad with firm beliefs that there would be ample opportunity for second language development of an informal nature which would be less available in their home settings.

Another context which has been recently gaining interest from second language scholars is that of chatrooms, blogs, and other forms of online environments. Drawing upon findings that study abroad contexts provide more frequent and authentic contact with native speakers which enhances one’s language abilities (Kinginger, 2008, cited in Hernandez, 2010), some have claimed that online interaction in the form of native speaker chat rooms can provide a similar experience with the added convenience of not having to physically travel to another country (Tudini, 2007). Others have found that the use of mobile blogs can assist language learning as an optional and informal additional to a main curriculum (Kukulsa-Hulme & Shield, 2008; Comas-Quinn et al. 2009). The potential for existing social networking tools such as Facebook (Madge et al. 2009) and fit-for-purpose virtual learning platforms in educational institutions (Sockett & Toffoli, 2012) have also been recognised, as they have been seen to provide more opportunities for multilingual and international contact which may further develop into meaningful interpersonal relationships with cultural others in addition to particular learning goals (Bikowski, 2007).

This aspect of socialisation and interpersonal relationship has been considered key in discussions of adult immigrant students' learning (Lee & Sheared, 2002) and learning in workplace contexts (Boud & Middleton, 2003; Boreham & Morgan, 2004) within the wider field of informal education. One study in particular (Sandwall, 2010) deals with both perspectives on the topic of language learning. In this study, Sandwall (2010) focuses on a migrant and her informal second language learning in the workplace by adopting a critical perspective on "the situated character of language practices" (543), supporting the view that a learner does not automatically learn just for the fact that they are working in a second language speaking environment:

> "opportunities for learning at work placements are contingent on the kind of interactions in which the student is allowed to engage. Also crucial is the recognition of the student as a legitimate learner, not primarily as a legitimate pair of hands constantly engaged in workplace assignments. The school therefore needs to support the student in finding the space and time to focus on learning and to direct the mentor's or colleagues' attention to the environment's possible affordances for interaction and language learning and to the social dimensions of language learning." (562)

Her claims that second language facilitators should have a heightened awareness of "possible affordances for interaction and language learning" for the learner are fully justified. However, it also raises the interesting and perhaps important question as to what can be considered as "informal" learning. In other words, while I am in agreement with Sandwall in her recommendation for further structuring and planning for the benefit of the language learner, would that not make this language learning experience to be characterised to some extent as more "formal" than "informal"?

This brings us to a deeper consideration of what “informal” learning entails. Some insight may be found in discussions around the nature learning in the workplace, as an environment in which “the traditional view of learning [is seen as] informal, incidental and natural” ((Eraut et al., 1998, as cited in Boreham & Morgan, 2004:308). Boud and Middleton (2003) also observe that “there have been frequent suggestions that formal systematic learning is of lesser importance than informal learning” (194) in the field, but how “informal” learning is to be characterised seems to be less straightforward. In a study on learning in the workplace, Eraut (2007) concedes how a “binary distinction between informal and formal learning” can be problematic:

> “We anticipated that formal learning or formally supported learning would be more significant for early career professionals, and that a binary distinction between informal and formal learning might be a useful start. However, we found that this distinction was difficult to sustain when most new recruits were clearly recognised as 'learners', as in formal settings, but more likely to be given advice and feedback informally by those around them than by those designated as their mentors.” (408)

According to his observations, the identification of an individual as a ‘learner’ (whatever that may mean) presumes a more formal mode of learning, while “advice and feedback” given without specific structure or through formal procedures constitute the learning experience as “informal”. In a school context, this type of distinction can become somewhat obsolete if we presume all students are ‘learners’ who constantly receive feedback from their ‘teachers’ and peers, which means there is much ‘informal’ learning that occurs in formal learning contexts. The issue has become more complex, and requires further deliberation.

In the field of children's science learning and education, Eshach (2007) considers Gerber et al.'s (2001:570) definition of informal learning "as the sum of activities that comprise the time individuals are not in the formal classroom in the presence of a teacher" (172). However, he goes on to claim that "such sharp distinctions between formal and informal learning" as solely based on the physical location of where the learning activities are taking place "are inappropriate" (173), taking the example of all the semi-structured and potentially planned learning which occurs on school field trips to museums, planetariums, or zoos, and which, in most cases, are mediated and facilitated by teachers, albeit outside of the formal classroom context. He thus establishes a useful distinction between "in-school" and "out-of-school" learning, which is based on whether the learning is occurring within a formal institutional setting, or away from it. 'Non-formal' and 'informal' learning are then further distinguished, but not based on where the learning is taking place but the nature of the learning activity or task.

Table 3 Differences between Formal, Non-formal, and Informal Learning (Eshach, 2007:174)

Formal	Non-formal	Informal
Usually at school	At institution out of school	Everywhere
May be repressive	Usually supportive	Supportive
Structured	Structured	Unstructured
Usually prearranged	Usually prearranged	Spontaneous
Motivation is typically more extrinsic	Motivation may be extrinsic but it is typically more intrinsic	Motivation is mainly intrinsic
Compulsory	Usually voluntary	Voluntary
Teacher-led	May be guide or teacher-led	Usually learner-led
Learning is evaluated	Learning is usually not evaluated	Learning is not evaluated
Sequential	Typically non-sequential	Non-sequential

Based on these distinctions, informal learning "applies to situations in life that come about spontaneously" (173) and is "more likely to occur in places within our day-to-day routine" (174). Other expressions which refer to similar types of learning include "incidental", "unintentional" and "unplanned" which Milton

(2008:228-229) explains should not be understood as necessarily interchangeable:

> "Unplanned learning may involve the deliberate intention to learn even if the activity involved is not part of a formal syllabus or curriculum; listening to a song and trying to memorise the words, for example. Unintentional learning implies that something can be learned without really trying and without effort, presumably while the learner is busy doing something else."

Rather than a focus on the *where* the learning is taking place (i.e. classroom v home), the nature of the learning practice itself is emphasised in his discussion on the efficacy of "informal or incidental learning tasks" regarding second language vocabulary acquisition, which include "watching DVDs, listening to songs and reading comics" (228). Based on Eshach's (2007) categorisation, all three can potentially occur in any context, whether in class or out. Other definitions have also acknowledged "informal" to refer to the method rather than the physical context of learning as either "intentional, self-directed learning" or learning "which is accidental and unpredictable" (Comas-Quinn, 2009:13). To conclude, it is apparent that a strict demarcation between "informal" and "formal" in regards to learning can be difficult. However, for the purposes of the current study, it may be said that all descriptions of "informal" learning discussed above have the potential to be useful and applicable.

On the basis of what we know about second language learning and teaching in intimate intercultural relationships (Chapter 2) together with understandings of informal learning presented here, it may be surmised that second language learning in the relational context of multilingual couplehood can be categorised as an "out-of-school" context, as that which occurs outside of the second language classroom (formal instruction) context and thus not part of a wider

curriculum or goal-oriented syllabus. This can include both unintentional isolated incidents in the day-to-day of being a couple, as well as intentional and planned learning practices and activities. Learning may occur with or without the conscious support of a mediator or facilitator, in this case, the relationship partner. It must be acknowledged that more formal learning practices may also take place in cases where the couples may arrange certain times, set specific learning goals, or utilise specific second language learning material or content.

As a particular and unexplored site for learning, the context of multilingual couplehood may thus add to existing understandings of informal learning by shedding light on what sort of learning and teaching is taking place, and what factors are involved that influence second language learning perceptions and practices. Furthermore, the application of relational theory in considered a step beyond current theories of social organisational or situated practice, in that it seeks to understand relationships as they are and what possibilities they can provide to facilitate learning, and not primarily concerned with the potential efficacy of interpersonal and social relations as part of the learning process.

3.4 Summary and conclusion

I have thus presented a rationale in adopting a relational stance in the investigation of multilingual couples with a focus on their relationships, their relational identities, and potential for second language development as a dynamic relational process.

In summary, the idea of relational beings facilitates our understanding of individual identities as constituted by the significant relationships that individual is involved in, and how the identities are in a constant state of flux as numerous relationships are created, developed, maintained, and terminated throughout the course of one's life. It views the couple as having its own couple identity, which continues to evolve in and with the individuals who are part of it.

Secondly, it is a framework in which the relational dynamics of the interpersonal and intrapersonal are foregrounded in understanding how individuals relate to second languages and language learning. From this perspective, traditional educational aims are challenged, with an emphasis on the culturing of relational awareness taking their place. In relation to second language education, this is seen to have much potential in providing a new perspective in understanding the relational complexities of language learners, teachers, and educational processes, one in which the agentic efforts of the language learner and teacher are considered equally influential, with the relational, affectual, and motivational dynamics between them impacting in equal degrees to create a potentially conducive or debilitating learning environment in both formal and informal learning contexts.

Thirdly, it facilitates our understanding of linguistic identities as emerging from complex negotiations within self and between self and others as a relational process. This is also significant in the understanding of second language identities and the performance of identity in a second language as potentially restricting or expanding the expression of self in relation to the context of language use. In a relational framework, how these language identities manifest and are negotiated in intimate multilingual relationships are considered as a key aspect in understanding second language development and support that can potentially occur in them.

Based on the discussions of this chapter, it may be said that it is the different configurations of relationships that take particular significance in this study. To be more precise, the study can be seen as an attempt to investigate the following:

1. The *interpersonal relationships* between two individuals who form a couple

2. The *linguistic and cultural relationships* individuals have in relation to their own language(s) and culture(s)

3. The *linguistic and cultural relationships* individuals have in relation to their partner's language(s) and culture(s) (particularly in regards to language development and support)

This may be visually depicted as below:

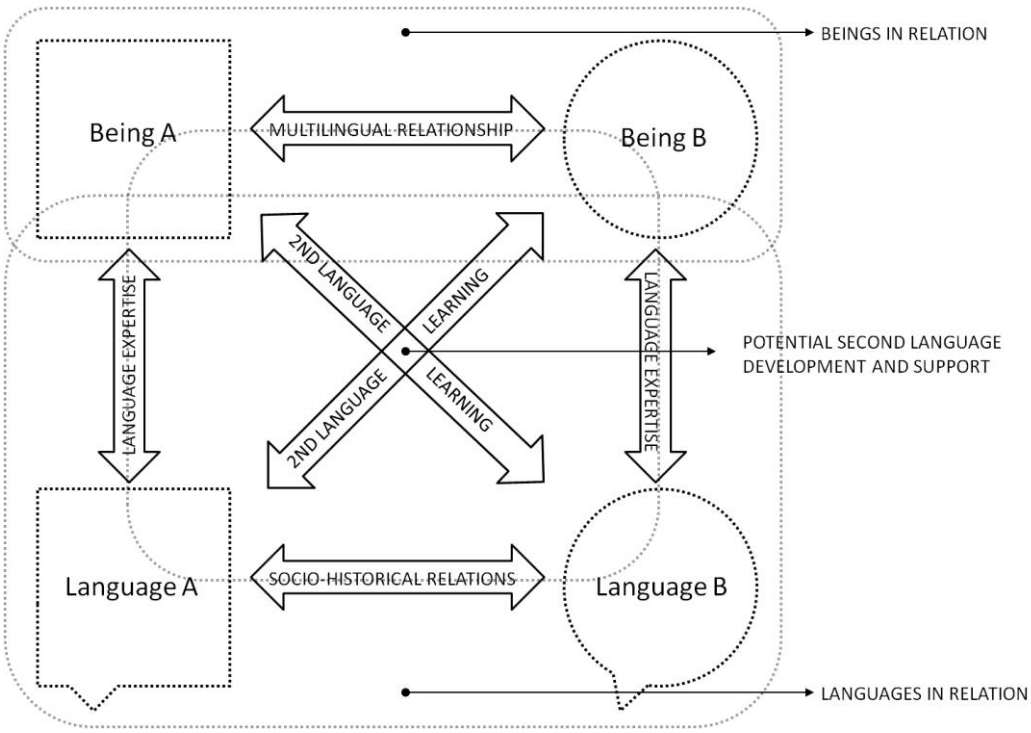


Figure 5 The relational dynamics of languages in multilingual couplehood

Notwithstanding that language, nationality, and romantic partners are but three of the endless dimensions that are part of an individual's relational identity, they are generally considered as three of the more significant ones (Byram, 2002:59). Additionally, this distinction and line-drawing of entities and their relationships does not presume each entity or relationship as independent of the rest; it is merely an exposition meant to highlight the different relationships on which the study has a particular focus. On the basis of a relational framework, the identities of the individual beings may be seen to lie fluidly within these various relationships, and thus not meant to be depicted in the above figure as contained within the square (Being A) or circle (Being B), which are dotted as opposed to solid in illustrating their malleable and relational nature.

In conclusion, the research questions may now be refined in reflection of the theoretical framework discussed:

1. What are the characterising features of multilingual couplehood, and what does it mean to be in one?

2. What are the salient relational factors (relationships) in the development and support of second languages in the context of multilingual couplehood?

3. How are relational identities negotiated and changed in processes of second language development and support in the context of multilingual couplehood?

The ways in which I have addressed these questions in the form of an empirical study is presented in the chapter to follow.

4 METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Having established the research questions of the study under a relational framework in matters of identity, relationship, language learning, and the negotiation of these in the context of multilingual couplehood in the previous chapters, the purpose of this chapter is to consider the methodological underpinnings, procedures and implications in addressing these questions.

Under the methodological approach of narrative inquiry, the current study sought to gain insight into how multilingual couples experience and make sense of the linguistic realities they encountered. This was done through the analysis of participant accounts regarding the couples' relationships and related issues of language development and support, which involved the collection of both narrative and non-narrative qualitative data from four self-identified heterosexual multilingual couples (eight individuals) through individual and joint interviews. In explaining processes of data collection, presentation, and analysis, I begin with a comprehensive discussion of narrative inquiry as a research approach, which includes a consideration of the ontological and epistemological perspectives underpinning the research, a discussion of how I use the concept of narrative, and a justification of narrative inquiry as an appropriate methodological approach for the study. This is followed by an explication of my research design, which includes information on my participants and the procedures involved in the collection, analysis, and presentation of the data. Related methodological concerns of ethics, researcher reflexivity, and quality in narrative research are acknowledged, followed by a summary and discussion to conclude this chapter.

4.1 Narrative inquiry: Ontology, epistemology, and methodology

The sharing of narratives and story-telling has been a part of the human tradition since the beginning of history, but it has only been in the last few decades that we have witnessed the “narrative turn” in social sciences (Witherell & Noddings, 1991; Denzin, 2000; Czarniawska, 2004; Clandinin & Caine, 2008; Barkhuizen et al. 2014) where narratives have become validated “as legitimate and rich data sources for a variety of investigations” (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000:159) in many areas of the social sciences, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, and education.

Closely related to the discussion of narrative and relational understandings of identity presented in the previous chapter, the current section entails a justification for adopting a narrative approach in addressing the particular research questions of the study. Based on ontological and epistemological underpinnings of relational realism in my use of a narrative approach, I present a three-way characterisation of narrative and a discussion of what narrative inquiry involves by reviewing existing theories and their applications in intercultural relationship and second language education research, which foregrounds my own research design.

4.1.1 Ontological and epistemological considerations

It may be said that all forms of research and inquiry are based on particular philosophical assumptions, which inform and to some extent limit how we view

the world and attempt to explain various aspects of it. As is shown in the copious amount of literature dedicated to the discussion of these and related issues, there is no single, uniform way of distinguishing and categorising the differing ontological and epistemological paradigms, and there are no criteria on which to posit a particular perspective as better than another. With the risk of being accused of undermining the previous statement by presenting an overarching meta-theory, it is my contention that this plurality of philosophical paradigms in itself may be justified with a relational narrative view of theory and knowledge construction, which deems any given paradigm or 'truth' as by no means definitive but as "a story that gives you new insights and broadens your understanding of a phenomenon" (Anfara & Mertz, 2006:xvii). Anything and everything we research, and how we produce a piece of written work about that research, is inevitably temporal, constituting an informed but nevertheless individual narrative within a much wider socio-historical narrative at a specific intersection of time and space. Therefore, we may say that all paradigms of being and knowing can not go beyond "[representing] simply the most informed and sophisticated view that its proponents have been able to devise" (Guba & Lincoln, 2004:22) in a pragmatic sense.

As has been discussed in previous chapters, the theoretical perspective taken in this study adopts a relational ontology, which is a distinctive orientation to the world and being in which "the relations between entities are ontologically more fundamental than the entities themselves" (Wildman, 2006:1). In its most extreme terms, it is the idea that entities would not exist but for their connections with other entities in the world; "Sociatus sum, ergo sum (I relate, therefore I exist)" (Nicolaidis, 2010:106).

With this in mind, I may tentatively describe my ontological stance as one of *relational realism,* which, in the field of historical sociology, Tilly (1998) identifies as “the doctrine that transactions, interactions, social ties, and conversations constitute the central stuff of social life” (41). It is suggested as an alternative to individualist and holistic paradigms, albeit, “neither den[ying] nor solv[ing] the characteristically different micro-macro problems that result from the adoption of one ontology or another” (42).

My stance is one of *realism* in that I acknowledge the existence of a physical world apart from individual beings, and also the ontological reality of individual beings themselves, which I have previously discussed in Chapter 3 as fundamental in relational philosophy:

> “In order to speak of a “relation” in a meaningful way, a constellation of two or more actual entities in the midst of complex patterns of perception, imagination, and memory has to be actualized in such a way that the perception is accompanied by *a certainty of identity and continuity*.”
>
> (Welker, 2010:161, emphasis in original)

The belief that it is *relational* means that everything we are able to perceive can only be accessed through the spaces or relations *between* these entities, so what we perceive to be ‘true’ or ‘real’ comes from a process of relational consensus within whatever context (confluence) we are investigating, or what Gergen (2009) describes as “a form of life … that is constituted by an array of mutually defining ‘entities’” (54). So on the one hand, I believe there is one reality (the ultimate confluence), and as agentic beings, we are all part of it, but our perceptions and understandings of it are diversified through the differences in how we relate to it as a whole as well as how we relate and are related to particular entities within it.

As a way of perceiving this reality of relations in terms of epistemology, I align myself with the many proponents who believe that narratives are central to making sense of our being and the reality our being is part of (Bruner, 1987; Josselson & Lieblich, 1995; Gergen, 2009; Meretoja, 2014). This involves the consideration of narratives and narrative structuring as the stuff of life itself:

> "[T]he narrative interpretation of experience is not a process of falsifying something true and real, but is instead constitutive of our very being."
>
> (Meretoja, 2014:96-97)

In relation to relational realism, it is a distancing from the idea that narratives are partial, selective, and imperfect representations of reality (Riessman, 1993:15), but a recognition that they constitute the reality of individuals in the sense that "life is not 'how it was' but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold" (Bruner, 1987:31). On a wider scale, it is these narratives that dynamically interact in contexts of relational *co-action* and *confluence,* which represent entities "constantly in motion" and "forever incomplete" (Gergen, 2009:44), but collectively make up the world that we experience.

Thus, in my attempt to elicit and study narratives as a methodological approach, it is not with the intention of seeking out a complete, objective and universal "reality" in its purest form, but with a view to gain insight into the relational and narrative realities of selves embedded within the wider confluence of relational existence.

4.1.2 Narratives in research: Product, process and analytical approach

> *Narrative imitates life, life imitates narrative. 'Life' in this sense is the same kind of construction of the human imagination as 'a narrative' is … It is a selective achievement of memory recall; beyond that, recounting one's life is an interpretive feat.*
>
> *(Bruner, 1987:100)*

On the basis of understanding narrative as a product and process of epistemological identification, I now consider the issue of adopting a narrative approach in the study of multilingual couples and language development, beginning with a conceptualisation of 'narrative' and its practical application in the current study.

In the most common use of the word, narrative can be used synonymously with 'story' (Polkinghorne, 1995:6), which, in the context of social scientific research, may include that of a research participant, the interpretive account of the researcher as they write up the narrative data, and even that constructed by the reader of the writing (Riessman, 2008b:539). In her discussion of narrative analysis, Pavlenko (2008:311) acknowledges this common definition and cites Mistry (1993) in detailing narratives as:

> "all types of discourse in which event structured material is shared with readers or listeners, including fictional stories, personal narratives, account and recounts of events real or imagined."

In adopting this definition for my study, two points of interest are highlighted. The first is the identification of narrative as a form of "event structured material", which implies that narratives are seldom a random list of disconnected experiences. Chronological sequencing is common, and sometimes, but not necessarily, meant to insinuate direct cause and effect, or a linear, logical

progression of events, as this sequencing may change in other tellings or accounts (Andrews et al. 2000:6). This characteristic has been acknowledged in reference to the concept of *narrative temporality*, as in Polkinghorne's (1995) definition of narrative, where it is seen as "a discourse form in which events and happenings are configured into a temporal unity by means of a plot" (5), and thus subject to change and restructuring according to the specific personal or contextual factors of subsequent tellings.

The second point to note (which is also closely related to the first) is the acknowledgement of narrative as something which may be either factual or fictitious. This relates to the common view of narrative as a *subjective* account of individuals in making sense of their own experiences (Barkhuizen et al. 2014:2) in the process of self-identification, or *individual histories* as Andrews et al. (2000:7) explain:

> "[T]he histories that human beings write are not the 'objective' accounts of events occurring across time that they seem to be; rather they are, like fictions, creative means of exploring and describing realities."

To clarify, from my own understanding of narrative, this does not demote the value or "credibility" of narratives. It simply means that when an individual tells a narrative in the context of representing their experience or perspective, it is perhaps less important that what actually happened is validated as "fact" or "truth" (Riessman, 1993:64). Its value lies in how the individual experienced it, which is perhaps why Peacock and Holland (1993) further suggest the use of the word 'story' instead of 'history' in relation to narrative tellings as "it does not connote that the narration is true, that the events narrated necessarily happened, or that it matters whether they did or not" (368).

To gain insight into the relational dynamics of multilingual couples and events specific to the support and development of second languages, a major facet of the current study involved the collection of *life stories*, which Angrosino (1989, cited in Brettell, 1997) refers to as narratives highlighting a few key events or focusing on a select few significant relationships, which is distinguished from a *life history* approach, which seeks narratives that record the entire span of a life (224). Furthermore, within these life stories, aspects of individual and couple *linguistic autobiographies* were of particular interest, which are seen as a type of narrative with particular focus on the languages of the individuals, involving the discussion of not only the acquisition and usage trajectories of particular languages, but also their abandonment (Pavlenko, 2008:319). These are not necessarily "stories" in the conventional sense, but alternative genres of narratives which include habitual narratives (when events happen over and over and consequently there is no peak in the action), hypothetical narratives (which depict events that did not happen), or topic-centered narratives (snapshots of past events that are linked thematically) (Riessman, 1993:18), all of which were of interest for the objectives of my research.

This directs us to a third aspect of narrative, namely, as a *process* of meaning making. This is related, firstly, to the understanding that we constantly construct narratives for our own sake to make meaning of who we are and what we do, and also to make sense of the world and others around us. On an intrapersonal level of meaning making, this relates to "the reflexive nature of human consciousness" (Frosh, 2007:641) in that "putting something into language changes it; as we speak, so something shifts" (642). Secondly, it relates to the idea that the very act of sharing a story with others is an integral part of its construction, in the sense that there is an audience of readers or listeners (real

or imagined), and the teller (or writer) of the narrative takes this into consideration. Interpersonal meaning making is achieved as the audience are not passively accepting the story without opinion or judgment, but act as agentic beings who are constantly reconstructing and interpreting the story based on their own personal narratives, which, again, is inevitably context-dependent.

Thus, the idea of narrative adopted in this study highlights the inherently dynamic and relational nature of narratives, as both a temporal *product* and ongoing *process* (Richmond, 2002) of understanding relational selves, as I seek insight into the relational and linguistic dynamics of my participants by eliciting stories and perceptions of their past, present, and future, which consist of the subjective descriptions of life events related to the development of the multilingual relationship, language-related episodes, and situations of second language development and support that have been experienced and remembered individually or jointly by the participants. With an understanding that these narratives in themselves are temporal and spatial, subject to change with time and contextual factors of the telling, I now turn to the additional ways in which I use narratives and narrative theory in the form of what has been established in the literature as a *narrative inquiry*.

4.1.3 Narrative inquiry: Methodology

Narrative inquiry, or narrative research in a more general sense, can be broadly defined as “a subset of qualitative research designs in which stories are used to describe human action” (Polkinghorne, 1995:5). It may simply refer to “any study that uses or analyses narrative materials” (Lieblich et al. 1998:2). In addition, narrative may also be used in relation to the organisation of a research

project, or as a means of presenting the findings (Gray, 1998:1, quoted in Bell, 1999:16) as “both the method and phenomena of study” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007:5, also see Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Caine, 2008). Polkinghorne (1995) coins the former approach as the “analysis of narratives”, and the latter as “narrative analysis”, which I find a useful distinction, although the terms appear to be used interchangeably in much of the literature. It may be seen, for example, in Riessman (2008b), where narrative analysis “refers to a family of analytic methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form” (539)”, which, for Polkinghorne, would be considered as “analysis of narratives” rather than “narrative analysis”. Polkinghorne’s distinction is used throughout the remainder of the thesis.

The analysis of narratives is commonly conducted on the premise that the collected data constitute narratives in themselves, whether it is a single narrative or many narratives of one individual (as in a biography or autobiography using a life history approach), or multiple narratives of several individuals, which may be analysed separately or collectively in addressing the particular concerns of a research question. In analysing these narratives, distinctions can be made based on what aspects of the narratives are of primary concern to the researcher. Riessman (2008b:539-540) suggests a way of categorising the analysis of narratives into four distinct typologies: thematic, structural, dialogic-performative, and visual. The first two of the four, thematic and structural, are widely considered “the building blocks of all narrative analysis” (539) (or rather what Polkinghorne would distinguish as “analysis of narratives”), with many other analytical approaches coming under one or the other (e.g. values analysis, plot analysis, significance analysis, character mapping and time analysis (Dauite, 2014)).

Thematic analysis is an approach with a focus on the content of the narratives, or “what narratives tell us either about the people who tell them, or about the situations and events they narrate” (Barkhuizen et al. 2014:5). Much insight into the lives and perspectives of individuals can be gained from this approach, which has been widely utilised in educational research (Witherell & Noddings, 1991; Verity, 2000; Richmond 2002; Trejo-Guzmán, 2010; Barkhuizen et al. 2014) as “well suited to addressing the complexities and subtleties of human experience in teaching and learning” (Webster & Mertova, 2007:1). Its particular efficacy in second language learning and teaching research has also been acknowledged (Pavelenko, 2002; Barkhuizen et al. 2014), coinciding with the rise of relational perspectives being adopted in the field, in its contribution to “a richer and more rounded understanding of language teaching and learning as lived experience” (Barkhuizen et al. 2014:6).

Structural analysis, like thematic analysis, is also concerned with content, but with additional focus on narrative composition, or “the language, discourse, structure, and sociolinguistics of narratives” (Barkhuizen et al. 2014:4-5), which can “add insights beyond what can be learned from referential meanings alone” (Riessman, 2008a:77). The strength of this type of analysis has long been acknowledged in the fields of history, psychology, and sociolinguistics by encouraging additional consideration of the sociohistorical, sociocultural, and rhetorical contexts in which narratives are constructed (Pavlenko, 2002) in the critical consideration of the reasons or motives, both external and internal, of the narrator in constructing their narrative in a specific way (Atkinson, 2010).

In the study of narratives, it is not necessary that these two types of analyses be considered mutually exclusive. Indeed, with sufficient deliberation, both can be applied in a piece of research in meaningful ways, but it is more common that

one approach take a more central role over the other. This is the case with the current study, in which I have adopted a primarily *thematic approach* in analysing the narrative data of the participants, but with additional consideration of the situational, contextual, and sociocultural factors which influenced my presentation and interpretation of the data.

Regardless of the specific type of analysis being applied, Daiute and Lightfoot (2004:xi – xiii) identify four distinctive advantages of using a narrative approach in social scientific research, which justify my use of narrative inquiry in investigating potential second language development and support in multilingual couplehood:

> 1. *Holistic examination of complex issues* including identity, knowledge, and social relations
>
> 2. Contextualised examination of social histories in regards to *identity and development*.
>
> 3. Providing insight into *the relationality of multiple, intersecting forces*, in particular, the relations between self and society
>
> 4. Allowing *the inclusion of value and evaluation* in the research process.

Firstly, narrative inquiry can be seen as a way of investigating individual attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions in a holistic way that other forms of qualitative research may fail to do. For example, one aspect of my research was gaining individual and couple perceptions of what it meant to be in a multilingual relationship. While this type of data could be approached as part of a qualitative framework with the use of in-depth interviews in its collection, the adoption of a narrative framework meant that participant responses to the question “How would you define multilingual couplehood in identifying yourself as being part of one?” could be understood within the broader and more holistic context of their

narratives regarding the relationship and language rather than isolated bits subject to non-narrative thematic analysis. If the purpose of inquiry was purely to seek a robust definition of the concept “multilingual couplehood”, a narrative framework may not be necessary, as I may be able to gather sufficient data by asking the first part of the question “How would you define multilingual couplehood?” to any number of multilingual couples, or perhaps even informed specialists in the field of sociolinguistics and relationship studies without the need to contextualise their responses within their personal life narratives.

Secondly, if one takes the view that an understanding of the self and its development is primarily constructed and accessed through narratives (i.e., narrative identity), it is only reasonable that narrative approaches are used in the study of identity and development, as some have done in investigating issues of language, culture and identity (Nunan & Choi, 2010). In focusing on how individuals identify themselves as individuals as well as being part of a multilingual couple, what relational processes manifest with the difference of first languages, and how these are salient in the potential support and development of second languages which further influence the development of linguistic identities, narratives provide a way of accessing these different aspects of relational selves and relationships.

This leads on to the third point, namely that “[t]he study of narrative is not of cultures of individual subjects, but of their relations” (Andrews et al. 2000:9). In investigating the context of multilingual couplehood, an intimate relationship where the presence of two or more languages provides potential for second language support and development, I was primarily interested in what Josselson et al. (2007) call the “interpenetrating flux of experience[s]” (3) rather than segmented accounts of language use, support and development. It is

narrative approaches that have “made possible the empirical investigation of relational experiences that are inaccessible to psychometric scales or experimentation” (Josselson et al. 2007:5).

The final point highlights the reflexive nature of narrative research, which is in itself a relational process, as it is commonly acknowledged that narrative approaches:

> “recognize the centrality of relationships, the relationships among participants and researchers, and the relationships of experiences studied through and over time and in unique places and multilayered contexts.”
>
> (Clandinin & Caine, 2008:542)

This is not to say that the idea of value and evaluation in research is exclusive to narrative inquiry; most if not all forms of research are value-laden in some respect, despite some positivist frameworks attempting to be value-free (Krauss, 2005). However, it should be recognised that narrative inquiry is particularly accommodating of *all* subjectivities in the process of research, including those of the researchers themselves. Thus, the “voice” of the researcher may be heard more prominently than in other forms of inquiry, as a major strength of this methodological approach:

> “[T]he construction and performance of identities [are] central to narrative inquiry [which] treat[s] identities as dynamically constituted in relationships and performed with/for audiences. […] The research relationship is an unfolding dialogue that includes the voice of the investigator who speculates openly about the meaning of a participant’s utterance.”
>
> (Riessman, 2008a:137)

Intersubjectivity is a main facet of narrative inquiry, not only during the process of data collection involving face-to-face narrative interviews, but also throughout

the stages of planning, execution, transcription, analysis, and dissemination of research, as the researcher's own narrative will inevitably influence how his or her ideas of others' narratives are shaped. A more thorough discussion of these issues in the context of the current study will be discussed in the section to come.

Based on these strengths, narratives have been utilised in the study of intercultural couples (Fulton, 2000; Killian, 2001; Rosenblatt & Stewart, 2004; Lee, 2005; Takahashi, 2010). Although these studies comprise but a small sample, they all vary in their ways of using narratives in researching relationships and interculturality and/or multilinguality – as part of the data set (Lee, 2005), as theoretical framework (Killian, 2001), as an analytical approach (Fulton, 2001), as a methodological approach (Rosenblatt & Stewart, 2004), or as the presentation of research (Takahashi, 2010) – demonstrating the breadth and flexibility of narrative approaches.

To conclude, narrative inquiry is considered an appropriate methodology in terms of its compatibility with relational understandings of being and with investigating topics of research of which a relational perspective is key. In particular, it is considered as suitable for the research of relational identities and language learning experiences of multilingual couples, based on the premise that narrative constitutes a very fundamental part of making sense of these identities and experiences. Thus, I may characterise the current study as one of narrative inquiry in that:

1. It is based on ontological and epistemological concerns with relational narratives.
2. It involves the collection of narrative data.

3. It uses narrative as an analytical tool in presenting a holistic understanding of participant accounts.

It is in this way that my use of a narrative approach seeks to address the research questions in a way that would otherwise not have been possible with a simply qualitative or interpretive framework which often isolate bits of data to analyse under the organisation of themes rather than aim to understand them within the wider context of the participant's experiences, narratives, and relational identities. Thus, the thematic aspect of the data analysis in the current study is always considered within the context of the narratives, which is to be further explained in greater detail in the following section.

4.2 Research design: A narrative case study approach

As with any methodological approach, the process of narrative inquiry is laden with complexities and potential difficulties for researchers in varying stages of methodological decision-making (Andrews et al. 2000:5), and the need to be explicit in the presentation and justification of a research design “to get it out in the open where its strengths, limitations, and implications can be clearly understood” (Maxwell, 1996:3-4), is crucial. Having justified my choice of narrative inquiry as a methodological framework, the current section presents the research design of the study in addressing the three main questions presented to conclude Chapter 3.

On the basis of Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) characterisation of narrative inquiry as “a relational inquiry as we work in the field, move from field to field text, and from field text to research text” (60), the methodological procedures of the study involved the collection of data through interviews (the field), then the transcriptions of the interviews (the field text) which, for the purposes of narrative analysis, were coded and analysed to present the reconstructed narratives (the research text) for further thematic analysis and discussion.

4.2.1 Setting and participants

With a relatively solid understanding of the direction I wanted to take in investigating the topic of research, the search for potential participants began in 2011. This was in a somewhat casual manner as part of a convenience sampling, speaking to personal contacts and inquiring whether they or someone

they knew may be interested in participating in a study on multilingual couples and language development. A list of potential participants was gradually put together, and in the summer of 2012, an e-mail was sent out to the people on the list asking for their participation, as well as encouraging them to send on the e-mail to other multilingual couples as part of a non-purposive chain or snowball sampling process (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005:48). Four couples agreed to share their relationship and linguistic journeys as part of a three-stage interview process.

The eight participants of the study identified themselves as being in a multilingual relationship according to the criteria presented in the ‘call for participants’ information e-mail (see Appendix 3). It was my intention that, for the general purposes of the research, the criteria for participation was non-specific, and as a result the profiles of the four couples are notably diverse. It was not surprising, given the fact that the study was conducted in a smallish city in England, that all four couples consisted of one English spouse and a partner of a differing cultural and linguistic background. The demographics of the participants are shown on the following page, and were collected by means of a detail form (see Appendix 4) completed by the participants prior to the individual interviews, much of which was confirmed through the interview process as well.

Table 4 Participant demographics

	Relationship History	Name	Nationality	Languages (first / additional)
Couple A	Met in 1995 with two children	Alexa	Greek	Greek / English, British Sign Language
		Adam	English	English / French, Greek
Couple B	Met in 1986 with three children	Brook	English	English / German
		Ben	German	German / English
Couple C	Met in 2000 with one child	Celina	Polish	Polish / English, German, French
		Cedric	English	English / Polish
Couple D	Met in 1998 with one child	Dora	Greek	Greek / English, Spanish
		David	English	English / Greek, French

All the information presented here was accurate at the time of data collection, which was between November 2012 and January 2013. Although participants were given the option of choosing a pseudonym, all but one (David) left it to the discretion of the researcher, and for the purposes of convenience and clarity, first name pseudonyms were given by incorporating the letter of the alphabet denoting the couples A, B, C and D. All other people mentioned in the interviews, including family members, friends, and acquaintances have also been given pseudonyms at my discretion.

In regards to the sample size, it has been said that “the correct sample size depends on the purpose of the study and the nature of the population under scrutiny” (Cohen et al. 2007:101), meaning that for some types of research, more does not necessarily mean better. Indeed, Cohen et al. (2007) go on to

agree that sample sizes of qualitative studies in which “the goals of the research emphasize an in-depth and highly contexualized understanding of specific phenomena” (Morgan, 2008:798) are likely to be smaller (102). This is well-demonstrated in the range of studies done on intercultural relationships discussed in Chapter 2, where the number of participants were ten or less (Fulton, 1999; Lee, 2005; Taweekuakulkit, 2005; Piller & Takahashi, 2006; Yoon, 2008; Gundacker, 2010; Takigawa, 2010; Bustamante et al. 2011; Hirvonen, 2012).

In regards to narrative research in particular, Goodson and Sikes (2001) state that it is often the case that sample size “is dependent not upon quantity but upon the richness of the data and the nature of the aspect of life being investigated” (Goodson & Sikes, 2001: 23). While a larger number of participants would have potentially provided additional insights and understandings not obtained from the current data set, the number of participants was deemed adequate in regards to the exploratory nature of the study and its aims of “capturing the detailed stories or life experiences” (Creswell, 2013:55) to gain insight into multilingual relationships as a potential context of second language development and not of making generalisations as to the extent to which it occurs.

4.2.2 Data collection method: Interview

As a way of gathering qualitative and subjective information which may not be otherwise gained from observation and without the aim of “establish[ing] some sort of inherent ‘truth’” (Wellington, 2000:71), interviews are often employed as the main method of data collection in narrative inquiries (Clandinin & Caine,

2008:542). In the case of my study, interviews were adopted as a method through which I would be able to address the individual sub questions separately, while still maintaining the view that the wider narratives of the individuals and couples would be central to accessing their relational dynamics, which was the primary objective of the research. This involved face-to-face semi-structured interviews to gain qualitative data, both narrative (asking for stories) and non-narrative (asking for understandings and perceptions), from the participants.

To gain insight into individual as well as couple perceptions of the multilingual relationship and aspects of linguistic negotiation and development within it, it was considered important that the interviews for each of the four couples were carried out in three parts: individual interviews of each member of the couple and a joint interview with both partners present. Recent studies in intercultural relationships have demonstrated the utility of both types of interview, dependent on a variety of factors including the focus of research, the specific strengths of one method over the other, or simple pragmatics. For example, in the case of Taweekuakulkit's 2005 study of Thai women married to American men, the focus of the study was primarily on the wives' perspectives and on presenting an opportunity for "their voices to be heard" that had previously been absent in the literature. Therefore, individual interviewing was seen as the preferred method of data collection, with the view that the participants would be able to give more honest and real responses without their spouses present (see also Nabeshima, 2005; Renalds, 2011). Studies focusing on the ongoing co-construction and negotiation of relationships, on the other hand, tend to prefer the joint interview method, as in Zen's study (2011) on international couples and

the cultural adjustment of the foreign spouse in the new country (see also Fulton, 2000; de Klerk, 2001; Cools, 2006; Seward, 2008).

In consideration of the potential strengths of each approach and in keeping with the relational framework of the current study, I chose to incorporate both. It was my intention that by conducting the individual interviews first, participants would be given the opportunity to discuss issues that they personally believed to be significant without being conscious of their partners being present, or as Crippen (2007) describes it, with “less censorship” (37). This gave me a chance to identify potential matters of significance for the individuals to be revisited in the joint interview, which was scheduled for a later date to leave some time for reflection, a format which has been previously used by other researchers (Giladi-McKelvie, 1986; Yoon, 2008; Hinson, 2012) for similar reasons. The joint interview would then provide a space where the individual perspectives could be further explored through a “synergy effect between the couple” (Crippen, 2007:36) in which the relational dynamics of the couple could add another dimension to the data not accessible through means of individual interviews alone.

Bjørnholt and Farstad (2012) make a strong case for the use of joint interviews against widespread implicit assumptions of the superior “purity” of individual interviewing, on the basis that all interview data are “constructions, narratives or stories produced in the specific context of the research interview” (2) and that beings are inherently relational, not individualistic:

> “Taking a fully relational self as a starting point, one could argue that when co-production takes place between an interviewer and an interviewee in a real-life context, which involves significant others from the informant’s lifeworld, the stories presented are just as ‘true’

> as the ones produced between interviewer and interviewee in an individual research context." (2)

It has also been argued that in joint interview settings, "interdependencies between the partners may become more visible, which adds up to the quality and information of the interviews" (Cools, 2009:434). In the current study, joint interviewing was seen as a way of validating what had been said in the individual interviews, as well as providing a better and fuller understanding of how the couple, as individuals and as a duo, perceived certain aspects of their relationship and their experiences of it (Horowitz, 1999:308). Most importantly, it was a way of observing the relational dynamics of the multilingual couplehood in action, which made possible a more nuanced interpretation and analysis of the interview data and a more enriched view of the couple and their narrative as a whole (Bjørnholt & Farstad, 2012:11).

With this in mind, convenient times and locations for the individual interviews and the subsequent joint interviews were scheduled with participants, with the majority of the interviews held in the morning, either at my home or the participant's, with the exception of one interviewee (David) for whom it was more convenient that his individual interview be held in his office.

4.2.3 Interview procedure

When I met my participants for the first interview, it was important that sufficient time was taken to exchange introductions to give the interviewees and myself a chance to get acquainted with each other. Efforts were made in creating a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere to set the context for the interview and to mutually build a sense of trust and rapport (Crippen, 2007:38; Codó, 2008:163).

While it would be researcher bias to definitively claim that this was successfully achieved in all cases, informal feedback from the participants regarding the interview experience as well as my own observations of the interview process suggests little evidence to the contrary. It was common that these casual pre-interview conversations were accompanied with some form of light refreshment, and often involved the friendly sharing of personal backgrounds and perspectives regarding the topic of the study. The participants were also thanked for agreeing to take part in my research.

Once we were acquainted and it was agreed that we were ready to begin the interview procedure, the participants were presented with a consent form (Appendix 5), which they were asked to read through carefully. This provided additional information about myself as the researcher, the purpose of the study and its procedures, as well as an explanation of potential risks and discomforts:

> Although all measures will be taken to ensure that the questions are not overly personal or sensitive, you may experience some discomfort or hesitation in answering some questions as they will pertain to issues of your identity, your couple identity, and your multilingual relationship. You may refuse to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable answering and still remain a participant in the study.

The form also informed participants of the researcher's responsibilities to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. They were encouraged to ask further questions if necessary, and then sign the document if they felt comfortable with the outlined terms. Once this was completed, participants were asked to complete the participant details form (Appendix 4) which requested some relevant background information (e.g. languages learnt, languages used, etc.) in conducting the interview.

The digital audio recording device was then switched on with the permission of the participant, signalling the start of the individual interview. When I opened the interviews with a “Hello” and “Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed”, a common response was laughter at the sudden formality of the situation, which provided a relaxed lead into the interviews. In guiding the interview, I had prepared a short list of mainly open questions (Appendix 6) which were formulated to introduce the topic, encourage responses relevant to the research concerns, and begin or maintain dialogue between the research participant(s) and I. Structured by the three research questions of the study and a relational framework, these “set” questions were asked to all participants to elicit their experiences, perceptions and attitudes regarding their multilingual couplehood, past, present and future second language learning practices, and relevant matters of self- and other- identification. While the order of the questions was meant to be loosely chronological, the casual nature of the interviews meant that it was often the case this was not strictly adhered to. Also typical of an open interview format, the majority of the actual questions asked in the interviews comprised of impromptu follow-up questions asking for further explanation, clarification, or illustration based on what the participants had said (see Appendix 6 for some examples).

Some questions explicitly encouraged narrative responses (i.e. Could you please share the story of how your met your wife? / Could you think of specific instances or episodes as you helped his language development?), while others meant to elicit their perceptions and understandings of concepts related to their multilingual relationship (i.e. How would you define ‘multilingual couple’, and how would you identify yourself as being a part of a ‘multilingual couple’? / What does the Greek language and culture mean to you, and how do you identify

yourself in relation to it?). Although the interviews were semi-structured in this sense, it was equally important to encourage perspectives and narratives that were meaningful to the participants themselves, granted they were reasonably within the boundaries of my research interests “in the interest of giving greater control to respondents” (Riessman, 1993:55). In this regard, I did ask questions for further clarification or for more information on certain topics I found relevant for my study, but for the most part kept the interviews as open as possible, so that it more resembled a casual conversation rather than a formal interview. This is common practice in exploratory qualitative research, as Mason (2002b:231) states:

> “A structure or sequence of questions which is rigid … lacks the flexibility and sensitivity to context and particularity if we are to listen to our interviewees’ ways of interpreting and experiencing the social world.”

This additionally meant that I was open to potential digression into issues they felt were important and therefore worthy of discussion. In this thread, I also made it a point that the final part of the interview encouraged the individual participant to add anything else they wished to discuss (Horowitz, 1999) without restricting themselves to the remits (or what they understood as the remits) of the study, through which additional significant data emerged. It was also the case in some interviews that conversations after the recorder was switched off proved to be revealing (Bjørnholt & Farstad, 2012:10), in which case, with the consent of the participant, the recording device was switched back on to record the exchange.

The joint interviews took place a few days after the individual interviews. These were less structured in format, and involved the joint discussion of points

brought up in the individual interviews (e.g. You both mentioned the children as important aspect of language use. Could you please explain that a bit further?) as well as additional questions that were specifically meant for the couples to answer together (e.g. How do you think that the learning of each other's languages influenced your relationship?) (see Appendix 7). It was often the case that after being presented with a question or a prompt, the couples would discuss the issues between themselves with minimum interruption or interference from me as the interviewer.

Similar to the individual interviews, the couple interviews ended with an invitation to conduct their own "interviews", in which they could ask each other questions or further comment on issues discussed during the interview. This meant to encourage the active co-construction of responses, which, in some cases, involved rather heated conversation between the couples as points of disagreement and tension (both ongoing and spontaneous) became apparent, a phenomena recognised in the literature of joint couple interviews (Bjørnholt & Farstad, 2012). As with the individual interviews, it was important that the participants had sufficient opportunities to raise issues they believed were significant, and during these highly invested exchanges between participants, I tried to remain impartial, and let their discussion run its course without intervention. The data collected from these segments of the interview proved to be highly revealing.

4.2.4 Data analysis 1: Narrative analysis (Reconstruction of couple narratives)

After the collection of the data, the first stage of analysis involved a case-based reconstruction of couple narratives (presented in Chapters 5 through 8). This is a way of presenting the findings of the study as well as creating research texts (the narratives) for further thematic analysis and discussion across the four couples (Chapter 9).

Once all the interviews were conducted, they needed to be transcribed for further analysis. In most forms of qualitative research involving interviews, the methodological decisions to be made in interview transcription are rarely straightforward. This is particularly the case of narrative research, in which:

> "[d]ifferent transcription conventions lead to and support different interpretations and theoretical positions, and they ultimately create different narratives."
>
> (Riessman, 2008a:50)

It is in this sense that the process of transcription in itself was also considered as part of the analytical process as a way of immersing myself in the interview data and thus directly reflecting upon the types of narrative analysis I chose to adopt.

The aim of the study was to gain insight into individual and couple experiences and perceptions of relationships, languages, and their emergent relational selves and, as such, it was established that the analysis would be *thematic*, in the sense that attention was paid on what was being said "rather than "how", "to whom", or "for what purposes"" (Riessman, 2008a: 53-54). This meant that while some transcription conventions are minutely detailed, as those used in

discourse analysis for example, mine were made to be relatively simplistic (Appendix 8) for the spoken content itself to be accessed as clearly as possible, but with additional consideration of discursive and performative aspects in the analysis of the data, based on my observations. This also meant that idiosyncrasies or (potential) inaccuracies in language use were not modified but preserved in the form that they were spoken.

The case-based narrative analysis involved the reconstruction of couple narratives in which discrepancies and consistencies across the three narrative texts (two individual and one joint) of the couple were acknowledged in making sense of the relationship between the couplehood and languages from the different perspectives at play. In the first stage of this procedure, transcriptions from the individual interviews were coded *chronologically* (e.g. before the relationship, beginning of relationship, the multilingual couplehood) and *thematically* (e.g. linguistic misunderstandings, use of languages, relational changes) to be reconstructed as the individual narratives of each partner. This is a common approach in the analysis of linguistic autobiographies (Pavlenko, 2008:321), in which the narrative data are coded by the researcher, with common themes and categories emerging from that data. One advantage of this would be the identification and recognition of similar motifs that weave through the individualities of participant narratives, which is one important aspect of the current study. However, it was considered equally important to take precautions in not actively seeking out recurrent themes for the purpose of generating conclusions that may support further generalisation, but “embrace the power of the particular for understanding experience” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007:24). In the context of this study, thematic analysis was utilised as a way of highlighting and bringing attention to potential factors which are salient in the

participants' narratives, and not for the purpose of producing generalisations regarding multilingual couples.

These eight individual narrative reconstructions and analyses are provided in the appendices (see Appendices 9 through 12 on CD), and constitute the "broad strokes" of the linguistic and relational journeys experienced by the participants. These may be seen as the closest in form and content to the field texts, but reorganised as thematic narratives with added commentary by the researcher in view of making sense of the individual interview data, foregrounding what the interviewees themselves considered significant and meaningful. Direct quotes from the interviews are liberally included to give the reader a better idea of what was actually said by the interviewees.

With this preliminary understanding of the data set, I was then able to begin the reconstruction of the couple narratives with the incorporation of the joint interview data. This was achieved by a similar method of chronological and thematic coding, in which the transcribed data from the three interviews of each couple (two individual and one joint) were printed out in three different colours of paper, and then cut and collated into chronological and thematical "chunks" of their relational and linguistic journeys (Appendix 13). In this way I was able to see how the individual narratives "fit" (or not) together in gaining a nuanced and holistic understanding of the particulars in regards to the respective multilingual couples.

These reconstructions serve to highlight and recognise the relational aspects of the development of the couplehood as well as relationships with other entities of significance that were experienced in the past, are salient in the present, or to be expected in the future. They also allow us to see the individual narratives of

language learning before and throughout the relationship, and subsequent changes influencing and influenced by the co-constructed reality of the multilingual couplehood they are a part of. The four reconstructed narratives are each presented in individual chapters (5 – 8) with added commentary as footnotes so as not to hinder the “flow” in the reading of the narratives themselves. These concern matters of researcher reflexivity in acknowledgment of my being part of the data collection context. Each reconstruction begins with a brief introduction of the couple and some contextual information to provide the reader with an idea of the setting in which their interviews were conducted. Direct quotes from the participants, as “a common feature of qualitative research reports” (Sandelowski, 1994:479), have been selected for their illustrative qualities, and are used when appropriate to give the reader an impression of what was actually said in the interviews in highlighting the themes discussed under the headings and sub-headings. Each chapter is concluded with a summary and relational analysis of the findings in highlighting the interconnected dynamics and relational changes involving interpersonal relationships, individual and couple language identities, and second language development and support that were particularly salient for each couple.

4.2.5 Data analysis 2: Cross-couple thematic analysis and discussion

The second stage of analysis is what is typically referred to as a thematic analysis, in that the data of all four couples were reviewed to identify salient similarities or differences across cases for organising a general discussion of findings in addressing the specific research concerns (questions) of the study.

The first step in this stage of analysis involved an open coding of the individual and joint interview data (Cohen et al. 2007; Benaquisto, 2008) from which 86 distinct codes were identified (Appendix 14). These included specific linguistic behaviours (e.g. C05 Less dominant language used as private language, C45 English as primary language of relationship), experiences (e.g. C11 Learning English at school, C40 Complete familial integration as facilitating second language development), and attitudes (e.g. C30 Difference of first languages and cultures as strengthening communication, C71 Difficulty of the second language as a deterrent) which were seen as relevant to matters of language development and identities.

It is often the case that these initial stages of coding are “confusing, with a mass of apparently unrelated material” (Ezzy 2002:94, cited in Cohen et al. 2007:493). These seemingly random (yet related) codes were thus further refined, merged, and organised under broader themes in a process of axial coding, in which “concepts and categories that begin to stand out are refined and relationships among them are pursued systematically” (Benaquisto, 2008:51), as is shown in Appendix 15.

Braun and Clarke (2006:12) distinguish two distinct ways of coding the data and further establishing themes in this type of analysis, inductive and theoretical. Inductive analysis refers to a “data driven” approach, in which the researcher takes to the coding process with an open mind as possible with little concern for trying to “fit” the data into existing frameworks. Theoretical thematic analysis, on the other hand, is said to be “explicitly analyst-driven”, as the researcher actively searches for items in the data to be coded under a preconceived and specific framework.

Based on this distinction, it may be said that in the initial stages of open coding, a primarily deductive approach was taken in identifying the issues which were discussed by participants. This allowed me to consider the data in its “rawest form”, with the majority of codes created to reflect the views and concerns of the participants rather than according to my own research agenda. However, in the latter stages of axial coding and thematic grouping, the theoretical framework and the research concerns of the study were explicitly considered. A distribution of these axial codes in reference to the four couples may be additionally found in Appendix 16. While this table is useful for seeing at a glance what issues or aspects were salient for which couple, and which issues were relevant for all, some, or one, I would reiterate that the variability between the couples (as shown in their narrative reconstructions) regarding these codes should not be overlooked. As I have stated before, the isolation and quantification of participant accounts would not be suitable for the narrative approach adopted here, and keeping in line with this perspective, the thematic analysis employed was less a “search for certain themes or patterns across an (entire) data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006:8) and more a practical way of organising the issues under themes to aid a systematic and relevant discussion.

It was deemed important that these cross-couple findings were considered in the context of the individual narratives as well as the couple narratives in that the codes derived from the data and the consequential themes structured by the research questions at my discretion were to be treated as integrated parts of a comprehensive whole. It is this relational consideration that sets narrative analysis apart from many other forms of qualitative analysis that traditionally involve coded thematic analysis, as a relational approach would see everything as interconnected, requiring a narrative to be seen as a whole, not just the sum

of thematic isolated “bits”. As complicated as the procedures may seem, there was a need for an “eclectic” and “cyclic” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004:415) narrative analysis and analysis of narratives which incorporated “lateral thinking and creativity, yet still […] faithful to the data and the people who provided it” (Wellington, 2000:148).

Furthermore, with the view that presenting these findings as a chapter on its own would constitute much overlap with the data presented in the couple narrative reconstructions, they are accompanied by a discussion of their wider relevance and significance in relation to the literature and theoretical framework that have contextualised the study. Thus, Chapter 9 presents additional findings of the study as part of a cross-case analysis, but also serves as the discussion chapter in addressing the research questions of the study and considering how the findings related to the wider literature in the field of intercultural relationships, linguistic identities, and language learning.

Although the participant couple narratives demonstrate a range of the different dynamics prevalent in multilingual relationships, it remains a fact that they are but four, thus constituting a very small sample of a much wider population. In this respect, the objective of this chapter is not to make generalisations based on similarities identified in all four cases. Themes have been constructed in consideration of what could be learnt from the couple narratives individually, which involves a discussion inclusive of apparent commonalities and, perhaps more importantly, idiosyncrasies of the couples. Collectively, they can give us some idea of the various issues around second language support and development experienced in multilingual relationships in relation to each of their unique contexts.

4.3 Addressing methodological concerns

In this section of the chapter, the methodological concerns pertaining to narrative inquiry in general as well as those specific to the current study will be discussed in regards to four key aspects: research ethics, researcher reflexivity, the issue of quality in narrative research, and methodological limitations.

4.3.1 Ethical considerations

While there is little doubt that with any form of research "ethical concerns should be involved in *every* aspect of [research] design" (Maxwell, 1996:7, emphasis in original), it seems to be the case that, owing to its inherently relational nature, ethical issues are of primary importance in the case of narrative inquiry in particular (Clandinin & Caine, 2008:543) as "not a matter of abstractly correct behaviour but of responsibility in human relationship" (Josselson, 2007:537). On the part of the researcher, this implies the need to go beyond the broadly conceived ethical considerations of informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004:137) in developing "a relational understanding of the roles and interactions of the researcher and the researched" (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007:15) which involves an understanding that the researcher and the participant are in a relationship through which both will inevitably learn and change throughout the data collection process. This is not something that can be achieved by following a standardised list of ethical criteria; it is more a case of being mindful and reflexive in adopting an "ethical attitude" in doing narrative research (Josselson, 2007:538) and demonstrating "a clear recognition of the inherent dilemmas" (539).

In grappling with the complexity of these issues, I have found Josselson's (2007) comprehensive discussion of the principals and practicalities of the ethical attitude in narrative research compelling and helpful. While it is impossible to address the entirety of those concerns here in depth, I provide an account of some of the ethical issues which were particularly salient in the context of conducting the study.

The first of these involves the ethics of the relationship between myself and my participants in conducting interviews as part of the data collection process, which, according to Josselson, "involves both an implicit and explicit contract" (539). The explicit contract makes transparent the aims of the study, my role as researcher, and the rights of the participant in taking part. The implicit contract, on the other hand, is not as clearly defined, and largely contingent on imperceptible factors salient in all interpersonal relationships, such as levels of trust and rapport between individuals involved in the research process. In most forms of narrative research, this takes the form of an interpersonal and relational understanding of what is to be achieved:

> "The greater the degree of rapport and trust, the greater the degree of self-revealing and, with this, the greater degree of trust that the researcher will treat the material thus obtained with respect and compassion." (Josselson, 2007:539)

For me, this implies giving more credit to the participants themselves, and trusting their integrity in sharing with me their narratives, with the understanding that these are a small but significant aspect of their relational identities and narrative lives which they have chosen (for whatever reason) to provide as data for a specific piece of research, and will inevitably change with the course of time.

Some narrative researchers, particularly those who promote the analysis of narratives from more discursive or structural perspectives, tend to maintain a degree of wariness in the collection of “trustworthy” participant accounts, suggesting that one should be mindful of the fact that when an interviewee gives an account of a past or present experience, he or she has a reason, or motive, of constructing the narrative in a specific way (Atkinson, 2010) depending on the context of when, where, how, to whom, and why the story is being told. While I acknowledge this idea of *reactivity*, or “the influence of the researcher on the setting or individuals studied” (Maxwell, 1996:91), I am also sceptical as to what extent this occurs in all research settings. For example, in contexts where there are obvious power differentials between the researcher and participant (e.g. if a teacher conducting action research is interviewing her students with the object of gaining their attitudes towards the efficacy of her lessons), it is natural that the interviewee may have reservations about speaking “truthfully” and are more conscious of how their responses could have particular repercussions. However, this may not necessarily be the case of all research interviews. In my own experience of being a participant of social scientific research, I would hope that if I had decided to take part in the study and felt comfortable enough in being interviewed, the researcher would acknowledge me as an agentic being who made a conscious and informed decision in doing so. I am not saying that as researchers, we should ignore the situational and sociocultural contexts in which the participant narratives are being shared. What I am saying is that not all forms of narrative inquiry need to be a critical or psychoanalytical investigation of deconstructing the “actual” meaning behind what is said, why it is said in a particular way, or the “ulterior motives” behind it.

These views of reactivity notwithstanding, it was considered important that the participants felt they were sharing their stories with a receptive, interested and responsive listener, a process in which “speaker and listener/questioner render events and experiences meaningful – collaboratively” (Riessman, 2008a:23; Mason, 2002b), which is how my own reflection and positioning as a researcher and as an individual in conversation becomes salient.

4.3.2 Researcher reflexivity

The second aspect of ethics highlighted by Josselson (2007) involves maintaining an ethical attitude in relation to the analysis, interpretation and reporting of the data, or the issue of *researcher reflexivity*, which is an important consideration in the context of the research interview as well. This is based on the notion that:

> “In narrative inquiry, it is impossible (or if not impossible, then deliberately self-deceptive) as researcher to stay silent or to present a kind of perfect, idealized, inquiring, moralizing self.”
>
> Clandinin and Connelly (2000:62)

Thus, the researcher self, “with its fantasies, biases, and horizons of understanding” becomes an integral part of the data and the research itself as the questioner and prompter, the not-so-silent listener, the transcriber and narrative interpreter of participant accounts.

As a vital component to any narrative inquiry, *reflexivity* is ultimately about being “honest about the role of the researcher in the project” (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005:46), underscoring the assumption that in all inquiries, there is the relational involvement of the researcher, which suggests the need for

continuous reflection (Clandinin & Caine, 2008:542) and critical thinking (Mason, 2002a:5) throughout the research process, and explication of these subjective perspectives as much as possible in the dissemination of research "so that readers can make their own judgements about the extent to which it has influenced the text" (Seale, 1999:25-26). It is this regard that I presented my "narrative beginnings" (Chapter 0) to provide the reader with aspects of my narrative and relational self that could be seen to have potentially influenced different stages of the research process. The methods I used in constructing this reflexive piece may be found in Appendix 17.

4.3.3 Issues of quality in narrative research

> *While methodological ideals should certainly be tempered with practial realism, we must not simply give in to expediency, treating what we currently do as all that can be done or as automatically satisfactory.*
>
> *– Martyn Hammersley, 1998:145*

Another methodological concern involves the evaluation of quality in narrative research. Many academics have contributed to the ongoing debate regarding the need for standards in assessing the quality of qualitative research in general (Hammersley, 2007), and it seems as though the majority are in general agreement that there are no ultimate criteria that can definitively evaluate a particular piece of qualitative research as "good" or "bad" (Flick, 2006:384; Flick, 2007:3), and that "orthodox" views such as validity, reliability, and transferability, while remaining significant considerations, are no longer readily applicable to all the different types of qualitative research (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995; Seale, 1999; Webster & Mertova, 2007; Gergen, 2014).

In regards to narrative research, some have suggested alternative criteria, not as ultimate rules to adhere to, but as guiding maxims in reference to the data that is collected, and its dissemination in the context of a research study. Riessman (1993:65-68), for example, suggests the four criteria of *persuasiveness* (plausibility), *correspondence* (member-checking), *coherence*, and *pragmatic use* (transparency) in validating narrative research. Lieblich et al. (1998:173) also present a similar criteria for narrative analysis: *width* (the comprehensiveness of evidence), *coherence* (the way different parts of the interpretation create a complete and meaningful picture), *insightfulness* (the sense of innovation or originality in the presentation of the story and its analysis), and *parsimony* (the ability to provide an analysis based on a small number of concepts, and elegance or aesthetic appeal). Webster and Mertova (2007) suggest a rethinking of validity and reliability through the concepts of *versimilitude* (truthfulness), *plausibility*, *authenticity*, *narrative coherence*, *familiarity*, *transferability*, and *economy* (91-101) in evaluating the quality of the narrative analysis and presentation. Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss each and every one of these in great detail, some are deemed worthy of further consideration in the context of the current study.

Validity, or what may be called *coherence*, of participant narratives, and their representation as well as interpretation, is an aspect of narrative inquiry which is often scrutinised. Riessman (2008a) identifies two levels of validity, the first being “the story told by a research participant”, which further relates to versimilitude and authenticity, and the second regarding the “analysis, or the story told by the researcher” (184), which is also called the validity of interpretation by Mason (2002a:191), considered as dependent on “the quality and rigour with which you have interpreted and analysed your data in relation to

your intellectual puzzle". These two levels are also widely referred to as the *trustworthiness* of participant accounts and their analysis as part of a narrative inquiry (Riessman, 1993:65).

My approach in addressing the first aspect of these criteria in the current study may be justified in reference to my use of participant narratives as temporal products of their relational selves, giving more credit to them in trusting their motives as agentic participants in the stories and perspectives they have chosen to share with me as part of my research. There can be no inherent "truth" in a narrative, insofar as it is a subjective account of an understanding of self at that particular moment in time. These told narratives of past, present, and future are thus inherently changeable, and are, in themselves, not subject to the question of validity. It is in this sense that the question of validity becomes more a question of *fidelity*, defined by Blumenfeld-Jones (1995) as:

> "an obligation towards preserving the bonds between the teller and receiver by honoring the self-report of the teller and the obligation of the original teller to be as honest as possible in the telling." (28)

In regards to the criteria of interpretive validity, it may be said that once a narrative is 'given', it is no longer in possession of the narrator. As both an "account" and a "performance" (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006: xxxiv), any given narrative is ultimately "a single, frozen, still photograph of the dynamically changing identity" (Lieblich et al. 1998:8), a snapshot of how the narrator has chosen to identify her or himself in relation to their experiences. As it is within the capacity of a reader of a narrative to interpret the text, it is considered within the remits of a narrative researcher, and not the narrators themselves, in making sense of the interview data as part of an empirical inquiry. This is not to say that this should be undertaken with an "anything goes" attitude. An

important aspect of narrative research is in demonstrating the accountability of the researcher. This may be achieved by adhering to the criteria of transparency, which involves:

> "(1) making explicit how methodological decisions were made; (2) describing how interpretations were produced, including alternative interpretations considered; and (3) making primary data available to other investigators where appropriate." (Riessman, 2008a:195-196)

The principle of transparency is also closely related to other critical concepts such as persuasiveness, plausibility, transferability, and interpretive validity as it is the case that "[i]n order to convince others, you must provide some sort of account of exactly how you achieved the degree of accuracy you claim to be providing" (Mason, 2002a:188). Notwithstanding the inherent shortcomings of the current study, I can state that all measures have been taken to be constantly reflective and self-critical in following these guidelines throughout the research process.

4.3.4 Methodological limitations

As is the case with most forms of narrative inquiry, there has been an inherent dilemma and struggle in conducting research of this nature, largely in respect to appropriating a narrative researcher self, albeit with its own relational experiences, expectations, and biases, which is constantly subject to critical scrutiny as "the primary tool of inquiry" (Josselson, 2007:545). Having presented a brief account of my personal background that may have influenced aspects of the study as a whole (Chapter 0), here I attempt to address some of the more specific issues I encountered in the collection, analysis, and representation of the data.

The first involves the selection of participants. The primary method of finding suitable participants for the study involved me sending out e-mails to potentially interested acquaintances, who were further encouraged to forward the call for participants to people they may think would like to take part. In the end, the scope of the volunteering couples was regionally limited to a small area in Devon, with three out of the four couples closely involved in the academic community of the university. It also turned out to be the case that the constitutions of couples were all heterosexual, and further limited to those speaking European languages. More diversity in the participating couples regarding nationalities, gender, socioeconomic background, and education would have potentially unearthed a wider range of issues relevant to the study. Further studies with a wider focus to include considerations of gender and power would need to include a more varied base of informants to further investigate the complexities that can be identified in these different relationships.

Regarding the collection of data, face to face interviews were employed to provide maximum opportunities for the participants in sharing and discussing their perceptions and experiences related to the topic of second language development and support in their multilingual couple contexts. While the open-ended interview technique was indeed appropriate for these purposes, it remains a fact that some aspects of how this was structured and carried out would inevitably have a substantial influence on what they chose to share and how. For example, as my role as researcher, it was established from the beginning that the research design would incorporate three stages of data collection, in which individual interviews with both spouses would be followed with a joint interview. In the stage of the individual interviews, the participants would have been aware that their partners were also being asked similar

questions, of which the responses would potentially be shared and discussed in the joint interview with both present. This, to some extent, could have prevented individuals to relay aspects of their relationship and language practices which they found troubling or potentially critical of their respective partners.

It may have also been the case that my being a woman would have enabled more in-depth conversations with the female participants as opposed to their male counterparts. While all conscious efforts were made to minimise these effects, what some would identify as the inevitably gendered nature of discourse (Wood, 1997; 2000) would need to be acknowledged. My past and current experiences of being in a multilingual relationship, and sharing some of these with my participants during the interview process, would also have had an influence in that I may have been sympathetic in greater or lesser degrees to certain accounts or observations. In the joint interview, these biases mean that there may have been instances (which I was not aware of) where I could be perceived as ‘siding with’ one partner over the other. Notwithstanding the general idea that narrative data collection is very much a relational, subjective, and personal endeavour, perhaps further considerations would be needed in the future in regards to the acknowledgment of this type of researcher influence.

An additional limitation of the study concerns a personal linguistic limitation in that I was only able to conduct the interviews in English and, as such, the participants were not able to use their language of choice. Even in cases where there is a common language between interviewer and interviewee, inaccurate assumptions may be made in the reading of transcribed data (Riessman, 2008a:42). This situation can only be exacerbated when the language is not a first language for the speakers, as the interpretation of language and referential meaning is happening both ways, and constantly throughout the interview

process. This being said, I do not believe that this limitation had any serious consequences in regards to the data I was able to collect, as all participants were highly fluent speakers of English and seemed comfortable in doing so, regardless of whether it was their second language or their mother tongue. However, I admit that if the participants had been given the opportunity to choose the language for the interviews, there is a great possibility that the nature and depth of their accounts would have differed to some extent.

Not so much a limitation, but an additional consideration in data collection involved the personal circumstances of one of the participants. As well as being fully bilingual in English and Greek, Alexa is deaf, which required some additional consideration in regards to the face-to-face interview. For example, I needed to be clear in enunciating the words when asking questions and remain mindful of looking directly towards her when speaking. These conditions being met, no significant influence on the interview was perceived, Alexa being a highly skilled lip-reader.

A final limitation involves a possibility that was not explored in the current study. I have discussed previously my stance on narrative validity, emphasising the temporal nature of all “given” narratives and the fact that the current study was looking more for subjective perspectives on personal experiences rather than the “true realities” of the participants. This would render the re-thinking or re-evaluation of narratives as not necessarily useful. I still feel that as the researcher, it was primarily my responsibility in trying to make sense of the interview data in the form of reconstructed narratives. However, greater subject involvement in this process, even at the level of allowing them to read through their narratives and commenting on my understanding of their stories, may have added to the study, not in the view of “respondent validation”, but in the view of

incorporating another dimension of researcher-participant relationship where the boundaries between the two are less strict and rigid. Additionally, it would have provided more opportunities for myself and my participants to reflect on the interview content, as many participants commented that they had gained much understanding and insight from the interviews in regards to their own and their partner's perspectives on the multilingual nature of their relationship which would not have otherwise been discussed explicitly. Thus, it is the case that much has been learnt in terms of methodological planning and decision-making, which would undoubtedly inform further research projects in the future.

4.4 Summary and conclusion

Based on ontological and epistemological frameworks of relational realism and narrative theory, the design of my study represents one of narrative inquiry in its purpose to collect and analyse individual and joint accounts regarding the multilingual relationship, language development and support, and associated relational changes.

Individual and joint interviews were conducted in collecting the data, which was then transcribed before being coded for analysis. A two-stage analytical process was employed, the first being a narrative analysis in the chronological and thematical reconstruction of narratives for each of the four couples. These are presented in the following four chapters as findings with the view of providing a holistic account of each of the four couples in regards to the development of their relationships, and the relational changes regarding their perceptions and use of languages. Each is accompanied by a summary and analysis of the particular relational factors that appeared to be significant for the couple in question.

5 ALEXA AND ADAM'S COUPLE NARRATIVE

Alexa and Adam are a Greek-English couple who have been in a relationship for eighteen years and have two sons under the age of ten.

All three interviews were held in their home. Alexa's and the joint interview were held in their lounge. Alexa seemed enthusiastic during the interviews and was a natural speaker, eager and willing to share her experiences with me. Her interview lasted just under an hour. Adam's interview was held in his study. Lasting just under half an hour, his was the shortest of all twelve interviews. I was given the impression that he was not overly keen to talk about himself and his experiences, but was more focused on giving appropriate and concise answers to the questions being asked. He seemed visibly more relaxed in the couple interview, where their collective sense of humour was evident in much of the conversation as they negotiated their responses to my questions. Furthermore, they did not hesitate in asking each other questions, or discussing certain issues amongst themselves, but were the only couple of the four who did not offer any additional comments or questions when given the opportunity at the end of their joint interview.

5.1 Before the relationship

Alexa began her learning of English as a second language at primary school in Greece. Owing to her deafness, it was a particularly difficult subject for her, especially when it came to speaking it. Despite these hardships in learning the language, she was motivated enough to do a summer English course in the UK, which she thoroughly enjoyed.

> Alexa (individual interview): I came here because I had real difficulty to learn the language. I came here when I was fourteen to learn at a school of English, in the summer course, but, again, I didn't learn English. I learned everybody else's languages. Yes, one of those things, you go to learn English and you end up learning all lovely swear words from Italy and Germany and Japanese, so, yeah, all sorts of… French, yes, it was quite fun.

This initial positive experience of meeting people from different cultural backgrounds motivated her to continue improving her English language skills, for which she attended an American college. Her enthusiasm for meeting cultural and linguistic others carried on in later years when she moved to the UK at the age of twenty-five to begin a Masters degree.

Adam also began learning languages at primary school, where French was taught as part of the curriculum. This continued on to secondary school, and by the time he left school he was fairly proficient in French, although he had no particular motivation to learn foreign languages at the time. He had no prior associations with the Greek language or culture before meeting Alexa.

5.2 Beginnings of the relationship

5.2.1 Meeting on the dance floor

Alexa and Adam first met when they were both starting their postgraduate degrees at a UK university. They were at a disco in the student union hall within a month of Alexa arriving in the country. Their first encounter was on the dance floor, where, despite the crowded and noisy surroundings, they were able to communicate well, Alexa being a highly skilled lip-reader.

> Adam (individual interview): And being in a disco, non-verbal communication is at a premium, and so I was impressed with how well I could communicate with this woman, non-verbally. And it turns out that's because she can't hear anything anyway.

They soon became friends, and it turned out that their halls of residence happened to be quite close as well, leading to a situation where they were seeing each other every day. At the time Alexa had a boyfriend in Greece, but she found her new English friend particularly intriguing.

> Alexa (individual interview): And Adam was quite a new thing for me. A sort of an interesting case! [omission] I mean there were a *lot* of people there that could say, 'Okay, Adam, a bit boring guy…' It wasn't… but, he… he was just interesting. He… he looked to me *very*, *far* too English and um… (pause) It was just too different!

It was Adam's "Englishness" and the contrast with her Greek background, among other qualities, that Alexa found attractive. Alexa's high level of English proficiency meant that initial issues in communication came not from linguistic barriers, but from Adam having to get used to Alexa's needs for him to speak to

her clearly and directly facing her. Adam having had no knowledge of Greek meant that English was established as the primary language of the relationship.

5.2.2 Learning British English from an English boyfriend

Although already highly fluent in English at the time of first meeting Adam, Alexa was able to improve her British English through spending time with him, having learnt most of her English when she had attended an American college. This was a significant aspect of the multilingual relationship, as Adam was able to support her in the cultural and colloquial aspects of British English, including the use of irony and black humour, by answering her queries about British history, culture and related linguistic behaviours. Thus, her learning of British English coincided with efforts to understand the culture behind the use of language (for example, its indirectness in contrast with American English), demonstrating her belief of the close relationship between language and culture, which they both find salient of the Greek language and culture as well.

> Adam: Well, they're bound very closely together in Greek, aren't they? Culture and language.
>
> Alexa: Yes, we both agree about a lot, and it's… you can't divide the language and the culture.

She was thus able to further develop her use of British English vocabulary, idioms, and expressions through her close relationship with Adam.

5.2.3 No need to learn Greek

Adam's learning of Greek, on the other hand, was virtually non-existent in these early stages of the relationship, mainly owing to the fact that Alexa's high proficiency in English negated the need for Adam to learn her native language. It was also the case that Alexa did not actively pursue her own linguistic or cultural ties with her Greek background at the time, being more concerned with other priorities of settling in England, and then finding a job after graduation.

On the few occasions where he did try to learn Greek in a more structured manner, there were difficulties in regards to the complexity of the Greek language, with its distinct alphabet and complicated grammatical structures. There was very little if any formal language support from Alexa, who found herself lacking in the patience or knowledge to teach him such a complex language in any systematic manner.

With no practical need to learn Greek on the part of Adam, and no explicit expectations on the part of Alexa, Adam's learning of Greek remained somewhat limited.

5.3 Multilingual couplehood

5.3.1 Intercultural compromise

After finishing their graduate studies, Alexa and Adam got married in a Greek Orthodox church and settled in England. This involved much discussion and negotiation in that Adam was (and still remains) an atheist, and had to compromise some of his own beliefs in respect of Alexa's cultural and religious affiliations. The fact that they decided to settle in England meant some sacrifice and compromise on Alexa's part[1], who saw this process of transition a way of moving forward as a couple.

> Alexa (individual interview): I think I make *more* compromises because I moved to *this* country. [omission] but on the other hand, it's more responsibility of my partner to make sure that things are okay with *me*, because he's… we are in *his* country. So it's a different level of sort of *compromises* in order to *match*, um… to agree so we can move on to the *next* step… [omission] [I]t's a bit strong word, 'sacrifice', um… compromise, agreeing…[2]

On the other hand, in relation to others outside of the couple relationship, including Adam's extended family, Alexa has felt defensive of her Greek background, as something she is *not* willing to compromise.

> Alexa (individual interview): I find that, um… when it comes to the extended family, the definition of the Greek-English is strong.

[1] Alexa also identified issues of nationality and gender in the negotiation of compromise in the relationship when she stated in her individual interview, "Adam is very English… Not sure if he has compromised his behaviour. Maybe because men are not expected to compromise, generally speaking."

[2] This was in response to my interest in her choice of the word 'sacrifice', and is an example of how her use of the language reflected her personal understanding of it, which, in this case, was not entirely commensurate with my own connotations of the word.

> [omission] I think the… when you've got your husband, or your partner, he's able to understand you. And he's willing and… it's fine. But when it comes to extended family, you find people *not* prepared to… not willing… to… understand you, or under… *respect* some of your values because they feel that… it feels *threatened* that *their* values are compromised.
>
> * * *
>
> Alexa: I find the external environment less willing to have this… fluent multibilingual around. Less accepting.
>
> Soo: Would you (Adam) agree with that?
>
> Adam: Well, I… On principle I'd agree with my wife, of course… But I don't think I see it, and I think that's not because it's not there, it's because I just don't interact with other people, around the school, particularly, in… with anything like the frequency that Alexa does. I'm assuming you're thinking of the school…
>
> Alexa: No, I'm talking about your family.
>
> Adam: Oh, my mother, we'll forget her. Yes, my mother is strictly mono-glottal, isn't she? But there's nothing personal with you (Alexa), it's just… other languages in general are something that had passed her by entirely[3].

Alexa's strong affiliation with her Greek heritage meant that there have been moments of struggle when she has felt she has had to defend her Greek identity in situations with cultural others.

[3] This is one example of a few instances during the couple interview where I could not help but think there was some degree of discord in their verbal exchange. Rather than expanding on the matter of Alexa feeling she was not being fully accepted by his family, Adam commented that his mother's inherent biases were general and not directed specifically at her. Alexa did not pursue the issue any further, but it felt as though a potential avenue of discussion was left unexplored.

5.3.2 Learning Greek by osmosis

Throughout their relationship, frequent visits to Greece provided opportunities for Adam to be immersed in the Greek language, and some motivation to learn it.

> Adam (individual interview): The motivation for Greek, yes, that has… Well, um, the motivation's there when you go to Greece. [omission] But then it's not something that I've… I mean, the desire is there, but the actual willingness to put the effort in is… lacking.

He thus attributes his learning of the Greek language to "osmosis" during their regular trips to the country. Adam's self-perceived proficiency of Greek is rudimentary in the sense that he feels he has a relatively good vocabulary, but lacking in structure. Alexa concurs.

> Alexa (individual interview): Adam is speaking in terrible Greek again[4]. I tease him with his grammar. Because he makes beautiful mistakes. [omission] Greek has been very difficult for him. Once we get to the grammar, it's gone difficult.
>
> Soo: So Adam's effort to learn Greek has…
>
> Alexa: Failed. Massively. Massively.

Despite this, the Greek that Adam has acquired naturally over the years is adequate enough for him to communicate with Alexa's Greek family and friends. In fact, he is relatively satisfied with the limited levels of communication between himself and Alexa's family, particularly her mother, feeling it has preserved the relationship between them rather than harming it. Alexa is aware that he feels this way.

[4] This comment was made in specific reference to a brief phone conversation between herself and Adam when he phoned her during her individual interview.

Adam (individual interview): I'm not sure I want to talk to my mother-in-law, but… it might be helpful to be able to communicate with her at a different level, on occasion, but then she speaks passable French so we can move to that form occasionally, if it's required.

* * *

Adam: One of my colleagues said he and his ex-girlfriend, where they had no common language. No common language, and it took them two years before they could adequately communicate. Then they split up. I'm not sure whether that's cause and effect or not!

Alexa: Anyway… I think it's very difficult to have a relationship with no common language. It's nearly impossible… But, it can be possible. Clearly, it is possible.

Adam: I think that's preserved my relationship with your mother.

* * *

Alexa: How do you (Adam) find yourself with my family? What do you find the… Do they accept the British part?

Adam: Well, I don't know if your mother accepts the British part or not, because she doesn't speak English…

Alexa: But you like it that way…

Adam: That's fine.

Alexa: Because the less communication, the better.

Neither Alexa nor Adam has any major expectations for his further improvement in the language, as he does not perceive any major difficulties in communicating in Greek to the extent he wishes, only asking for Alexa's help when he has trouble understanding Greek media reports, in which he has a keen interest. Thus, they have come to terms with the reality of the difficulties involved in teaching and learning a language for which there is no real need.

> Alexa: Learning further Greek, it's not important. No…Maybe because even if he goes to Greece on his own, he will be able to communicate. He's been on his own, by himself, when we went to visit your friends, and you still seemed to cope, so I don't feel worried if he's left… He would still be able to make it. Pretty much that.
>
> Adam: For me, I suppose the same applies, although it hadn't occurred to me, but for us as a couple, for our own communications, the fact that we are both fluent in English to a high degree to some extent negates the need to… for me to be proficient in Greek as well. [omission] it would be very difficult for me to justify the time required, I think, to do that. But as a… on a purely conceptual basis, it's something that I would like to do.

While it is highly unlikely that he will invest further effort and time in explicitly learning Greek, the everyday use of the language in the family helps maintain as well as develop his Greek language skills in achieving its purpose within the couplehood. It is thus not necessarily his most proficient language, but certainly the one which he has the closest personal affiliation with.

5.3.3 Greek as an additional couple/family language

The use of Greek in the relationship began with the births of their sons since Alexa began using a mixture of Greek and English with them.

> Alexa: In fact, the Greek language came with the children. Before it could have been weeks and weeks without speaking Greek. [omission]
>
> Adam: Greek has taken more of a front seat since the children were born, but that's also partly due to the fact that you've (Alexa) had many more Greek friends. You've sought out many more Greek friends than you had in the years before you had children.

The addition of children to their couplehood made salient the issue of their being brought up familiar with both their Greek and English backgrounds, and thus prompted Alexa to more actively seek out acquaintances who shared her Greek cultural and linguistic heritage.

The multilinguality of the couplehood as well as the family is considered as an advantage, in that they are able to use Greek, a less commonly known language, as a private language amongst themselves, and also with their children if they are out in public and do not want others to understand their conversation.

> Adam (individual interview): Sometimes it's easier… in social situations there are occasions when it's polite to make your enquiries in a different language, and get your replies in a different language.

> Adam: I certainly find that when I'm disciplining the children in public, I will do it in Greek. So that other people won't understand what I'm saying to them.
>
> Alexa: The kids are uncomfortable when they are disciplined in public. They'd rather be disciplined at home, rather than everybody knows that they are the naughty ones. Yes, using Greek is an escape with the language from here.

In addition to aspects of privacy that a second language provides, the use of Greek in the couplehood as well as in the context of the family provides a differentiation of meaning. It is not necessarily what is said in the language, but the choice of language itself that is used to express a particular disposition of the speaker in a specific situational context, for example, with swearing (in the couplehood) and disciplining the children (in the family).

> Adam: I also know that my wife's swearing changes, because if she's, she's swearing in Greek at me, it's fine. It's normal. I'm not in much trouble. If she's swearing in English, I know I'm in big trouble.

> Alexa: The same happens with the kids. [omission] when I found Damien doing something naughty, and I say his name in English, he knows he's in big trouble, where I normally speak to him in Greek.

> Adam: Interesting, because it works the other way around for me. The children pay more attention if I shout at them in Greek.

A predominantly English-speaking multilingual couple has thus become a multilingual family with the more constant use of both languages in the relationship with the addition of the children.

5.3.4 Becoming more English, but Greece is home

For Alexa, being bilingual has always meant that she has options to behave or express herself in different ways, which she enjoys as part of her bilingual identity. However, she has also noticed that throughout the years of living away from home and in England, there have been several aspects of change in her identity, particularly those regarding attitudes and behaviours related, but not limited, to language use. This is particularly salient when she visits Greece, and friends and family comment on these subtle changes. Although she is less than happy about this, she understands that these changes are inevitable through the prolonged residence in a place with a different language and culture.

> Alexa (individual interview): People change, the culture changes… language is changing, ways of behaving is changing.

Living in England means she sometimes gets tired of having to constantly "be English" when she communicates, in that she feels she has to control her

expression or behaviour to meet the expectations of others. This is why she feels more relaxed when she is in Greece with her family and friends.

> Alexa (individual interview): Sometimes I'm getting tired controlling myself. So when I go to… laid-back culture, it is a much more laid-back country, I feel more comfortable. [omission] because I've grown up in that environment and I need a bit of a dose of that.

Greece is thus Alexa's country of origin, and her place of emotional solace.

5.3.5 The Greek way v. the English way

Alexa and Adam are very much aware of their cultural and linguistic differences as a salient aspect of their family, couple and individual lives. For example, the contrast and comparison of their respective historical, cultural and linguistic backgrounds have always been enjoyable topics of much discussion and debate between them. It is also the case that Greek ways and English ways of living come into play in the most mundane and ordinary aspects of everyday life.

> Adam (individual interview): We tend to live English-ish here, because that's where we are, but you'll notice, for example, it's now 7 o'clock, and we haven't had dinner, which is a rather Greek approach, and the children will be running around screaming until sometime later, in a Greek fashion, rather than an English one.

The Greek-English contrast also emerges in verbal arguments between Alexa and Adam, as various dimensions of their interactional dynamics manifest in emotionally charged discussions.

> Alexa (individual interview): I find that when we're angry, and we're having an argument, a serious argument, we're totally behaving in a

> very British and Greek… We are very… it just comes out. And it's not just the Greek and English, it's man and woman[5], it's daytime night time, the dynamics…

Her Greek background means that for Alexa, verbal argument is a natural part of being in a close relationship. It took a while for Adam to get accustomed to this form of interaction, but now it is something they enjoy doing together.

> Alexa (individual interview): We like arguing a lot. We like to be loud. So we enjoy arguing. That's a cultural thing. And Adam did not understand that at the beginning, because he was very reserved. Once I put up my voice, he would just go to his cave. When he's learned through the years that… I had to be a little bit more funny, humouristic, I had to pause it, because we just enjoy humour, and once you're trusting with humour, you need to argue, and sit down at the same level, and discuss.

Alexa is able to make a distinction between their individual and couple identities, in that she feels different when she is on her own.

> Alexa (individual interview): Oh, yes, I definitely feel different when, for example, Mark's gone away for a while on business trips. [omission] I'm more relaxed when Mark's not around here… [omission] I feel more… less expressive, less of what is expected of me, less Greek, I've been more relaxed, a bit more… introvert.

Aspects of her perceived couple identity also come to the fore when she finds herself without Adam with her family and friends in Greece, and she becomes slightly more English "to replace the gap". She notices that Adam does it as well, particularly when he interacts with people from other backgrounds.

> Alexa (individual interview): [H]e is quickly switching a bit to the Greek point of view. He becomes more expressive, a bit more… less

[5] Their different nationalities (cultural backgrounds) as well as the issue of gender are highlighted here again by Alexa.

> reserved, more expressive, making jokes in a Greek way… it is expected to fill the gap…

Although Adam does not identify himself in any way as being Greek, nor does he see his individual identity as something that can be separated from their Greek-English couplehood, Alexa observes aspects of his "Greekness" when they are in Greece with her family and friends.

> Alexa (individual interview): [H]e's doing very well with the non-verbal [aspects of Greek culture]. He would be more compassionate, more patient, more friendly, more hand shaking… holding you, eating all the food his mother-in-law gives to him, otherwise he's not going to be nice for his mother-in-law. [omission] So effectively he knows all the cultural practices of behaving, all of it. And he's enjoying it when he's there.

This recognition of a clear distinction between Greek and English ways of being also extends to their children.

5.3.6 Raising the children as both Greek and English

When it comes to the couple's two sons, their learning of Greek not only in terms of the language, but also in regard to their Greek heritage, is of significant importance to both Alexa and Adam. For Alexa, it is important that her children know not only both languages, but both styles of communication, especially in relation to their developing identities.

> Alexa (individual interview): I find it's important for the children now that they're half Greek, half English. They have to know both of their identities and themselves, they choose which one they want. But before they choose they need to know exactly what they are talking about.

Adam also identifies the merits of the children being multilingual in relation to the expansion of employment, mobility, and relationship opportunities in the boys' futures, and wants them to be able to explore their identities without any stigma being attached to them.

> Adam (individual interview): I see it as quite rewarding seeing them growing up this way, and to my mind for them to learn the language which is the basis of many other European languages, can only be an asset to them when they go on to learn other languages. [omission] If you've got such an asset available to you in terms of having multilingual parents, you should exploit that to the full.

The couple is thus fully dedicated to the children developing their own multilingual and intercultural assets in regards to both Greek and English.

5.4 Summary and analysis

5.4.1 Summary

Despite having a serious hearing difficulty, Alexa was able to develop a high proficiency of English from primary school onwards, and enjoyed using it to develop intercultural friendships. She was later able to study for a Masters degree in the UK, where she and Adam met at a university disco within the first month of the start of term. Her advanced lip-reading skills enabled them to carry on a conversation amongst the noise and the crowd. This chance encounter on the dance floor developed into friendship, and then later, couplehood. Having a British boyfriend meant that Alexa was able to improve her British English, particularly in its cultural nuances and expressions, whilst the fact that they used English as the language of the relationship negated any practical need for Adam to learn Greek.

The relationship deepened, culminating in marriage and their settling in the UK. This required some compromise and negotiation from both, but particularly from Alexa in that they were in Adam's and not her home country. The transition was at times difficult, as she felt she had to sometimes defend her Greek identity in dealing with others outside of the immediate couplehood, including Adam's extended family. Thus, Greece remains a place of comfort, and frequent visits have encouraged Adam to acquire some of the language. His learning of Greek was further perpetuated by the birth of their sons as Alexa began using her mother tongue with them. Greek is thus established as an additional language of the couple and the family, also functioning as a private language in public

situations. Adam’s proficiency in the Greek language, although limited, is sufficient enough for the purposes of communicating in Greece, and also within the family.

Over the years of living in England, Alexa has felt aspects of change in her identity. She is also able to distinguish between expressions of her individual identity, and how she performs her identity as part of the couplehood. Adam has also adopted some Greek characteristics over the years, which manifest in certain social situations. The distinction between Greek and English ways of speech and behaviour is made very clearly, manifesting in various ways within their relationship, and also being an engaging topic of discussion for the couple. Both Adam and Alexa find it very important that their two sons are brought up with both languages and cultures, and so it is the case that the multilinguality and interculturality of the couplehood has become more prominent as an integral part of their family life in England.

5.4.2 Relational analysis

Point 1. Alexa's positive relationship with English was a significant relational factor in the development of the multilingual couplehood.

The first relation that can be highlighted as significant is one which came before the couplehood – that between Alexa and the English language.

As can be seen in her second language learning trajectory, despite her hearing difficulty, Alexa was able to sustain an interest in learning English as a second language since primary school, which continued throughout her teenage years. This gave her the opportunity to experience other cultures and develop interpersonal relationships with people from different backgrounds, which she found enjoyable and exciting. She has always considered English as a positive aspect of her self and her life, eventually enabling her to pursue a degree in England, which is where she met Adam. The fact that he was an Englishman, and so different from her Greek self, was part of the initial attraction. It was also the case that she was in the process of acculturation in the English environment, which meant that she was less concerned with maintaining her Greek ties, including those with her Greek boyfriend, and more keen to meet others with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Meeting Adam, who was in her view 'very English', would have been a part of that.

Point 2. The multilingual relationship has been a positive relational factor in Alexa's familiarisation with the linguistic and cultural features of (British) English.

Having moved to the UK to study for her Masters degree, Alexa was not only immersed in the British language and culture like any other international student studying in England, but had the additional benefit of having Adam to support her. He was particularly helpful in answering her questions about British history and its linguistic idiosyncrasies such as irony and black humour. As part of the romantic relationship, this facilitated her understanding of British English, particularly in the nuanced use of colloquial expressions and vocabulary. She still continues in her learning of the language with Adam as her husband and her linguistic mediator.

Point 3. The multilingual relationship has provided circumstances in which Adam has been able to naturally develop some proficiency in Greek.

As for Adam, being in an intimate relationship with Alexa meant that there were opportunities for him to be naturally exposed to the Greek culture and language, which he had not previously encountered in any meaningful way. There was some initial motivation to learn the language, and for a brief period Alexa was able to assist Adam in the basics of the Greek alphabet and grammar. However, it proved difficult for them to sustain the motivation to improve his Greek.

Many relational factors can be seen to have contributed to this, the most significant one being the fact that their relationship developed at a university in

the UK, and Alexa being a highly proficient user of English all but negated the need for Adam to invest in learning Greek in regards to interpersonal communication in the relationship. The inherent complexities of Greek grammar, as well as Alexa's lack of confidence and technical knowledge in teaching it, were also identified as obstacles to Adam's learning of the language.

A second relational factor may be identified in regards to Alexa's contextual situation at the time. As has been noted previously, it was the case that when they first met, Alexa's relational ties with her Greek background were not prioritised, as she was more focused on her acculturation in the English environment. When it was just the two of them, there was no great impetus to use Greek in the couplehood at all. The active use of Greek in the UK context only came years later with the children, as both she and Adam were invested in raising their sons as bilingual and intercultural. Since Alexa has been using her native tongue with their boys, Adam has been able to naturally improve his use of Greek as an additional family and couple language. He uses Greek with Alexa as their own "private language", which is a performance of their multilingual couplehood when they are together in public. He also uses Greek with their two sons both at home and in public, as a manifestation of the multilingual family as an extension of the couplehood.

Another factor that has emerged through the development of their relationship over the years concerns Adam's ability to have picked up enough Greek to get by just through naturalistic and informal contact with the language. Although it is difficult to determine Adam's actual level of proficiency, his Greek is good enough to communicate with friends and family in Greece. He is satisfied with

this linguistically restricted level of communication between himself and members of Alexa's family who do not speak English, as he feels this has somehow preserved rather than harmed his relationships with them. Therefore, while both Alexa and Adam prioritise the children's development of their Greek heritage in respect to the language and the culture, Adam's further improvement of Greek is not a pressing issue for either of them.

The Greek language and culture are clearly an important aspect of Adam's relationship with Alexa and their two sons. However, his self-identification with the language and culture itself is based on its pragmatic function rather than emotional affiliation. More precisely, although he uses Greek in the context of his relationship with Alexa, spending time with her friends and family in Greece, and communicating with his children in some situations, there is no self-perceived identification with or affiliation to the Greek culture and language.

Point 4. Alexa's and Adam's relational identities are subject to change depending on the context of interaction and communication.

As a fully multilingual individual in Greek, English, and British Sign Language, Alexa acknowledges the changes in her behaviour and performance of her identity depending on which language is used in what context. For her, language is an inevitable part of the culture it is spoken in, and she enjoys having the option of different languages and behaviours. However, she also admits that she feels a sense of comfort and relief in Greece, being away from the constant expectations of her English speaking self in England, which implies that she is less comfortable in performing her English self with others outside of

the immediate relationship. It also indicates Alexa’s strong ties with her Greek heritage.

This overt affiliation with her home language and culture may have been developed with the compromise and negotiation that came with marriage, and the realisation that she would be more or less permanently living in England. The children also constitued an important factor, in that without conscious efforts on her part, they would not grow up with both languages and cultures. She makes it clear that her Greekness is something which she is not willing to compromise, but something she struggles with particularly in the context of interacting with Adam’s extended family. It is unclear on the basis of the interview data where the core of the issue lies. It could be the fact that some people, including Adam’s extended family, are indeed less accepting or ignorant of her foreign background, which she could feel unhappy about. Additionally, living in England and the constant use of the English language have brought about changes in her which are linked to a gradual loss of her Greek self, creating the urge for more efforts to sustain it. This may cause her to react with increased sensitivity or defensiveness in matters where her Greek identity could be compromised. Whatever the case, based on her account, it is evident that Alexa has felt a sense of struggle in performing certain aspects of her identity with Adam’s family, which, from his perspective, is not considered a serious matter as he briefly explains it away as the monolingual ignorance of his mother.

The juxtapositional dynamics of Alexa's Greek and English identities seem to further change according to what Alexa explains as the difference between her individual and her couple identity; when she is alone and without Adam, she

claims to feel more relaxed and “less Greek”. When interacting with others and without Adam, she feels that she becomes “more English” in his absence, to, in her words, “fill the gap”. She observes these types of relational changes in Adam as well, saying that he becomes “more Greek” in his behaviours and mannerisms when he is in Greece, or in situations in England where he is speaking with people from other cultures. Based on Alexa's accounts, they have a tendency to exhibit more of their partner’s cultural traits to fill the other’s absence. This can be seen as an example of the performance of the Greek-English couple identity when the individuals are on their own in certain social contexts.

Point 5. The distinction between Greek and English is a fundamental factor in the relational dynamics of the multilingual couplehood.

Related to Point 4 above, there is much evidence of “othering”, or clear distinctions being made between English ways and Greek ways of being in their individual accounts and their couple narrative. This has been a constant and continuing aspect of their couplehood, from when they first met, past the process of negotiation in marriage, to the parenting of their two sons, and further towards the continuing development of their multilingual and intercultural relationship. As such, their case thus demonstrates one in which cultural and linguistic differences remain highly salient in the couplehood.

6 BROOK AND BEN'S COUPLE NARRATIVE

Brook and Ben are an English-German couple who have been in a relationship for twenty-seven years and have three children – two daughters and a son.

All three interviews were held in my home. Brook seemed at ease with the interview situation, open and willing to talk of her experiences, at times taking significant pauses to contemplate on responses to my questions. Ben was similar in many respects, very relaxed, open, and mindful in responding to my questions. Their joint interview took place a few days after their separate interviews, and again, they seemed animated and very engaged in the interview process. When given the opportunity to ask each other questions or offer comments at the end of the couple interview, they were autonomous in conducting their own interview and in-depth discussion. It was apparent that there were some issues they found important and wanted to discuss, as they made the most of the interviews as an opportunity to share their thoughts on their relationship, identities, and language.

6.1 Before the relationship

Ben's English education began in Year Five at school in Germany, and continued for eight years. It was an important subject in the school curriculum, but one which Ben particularly disliked and struggled with, to the point where his parents hired a private tutor to support his learning. In hindsight, he admits that the lessons did help him learn the basic structure and grammar of the language, as it was with these basic English skills that he was able to communicate with Brook in the initial stages of their relationship. However, at the time, it was simply a subject he had to pass in order to progress.

Brook had no prior exposure to German before meeting Ben, having had no interest in that particular culture or language.

> Brook (individual interview): I had always dreamed of meeting an Italian boy or a Romanian boy or something, and… a German boy had never really kind of figured in my romantic associations at all…

Needless to say, this all changed when she met Ben by chance on a family holiday.

6.2 Beginnings of the relationship

6.2.1 Love in the Sahara desert

Brook was seventeen and Ben was twenty-one when they met at a campsite in the middle of the Sahara Desert. Brook was travelling with her family just having finished her GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) exams, while Ben was travelling with a fellow German friend from school. Despite their verbal communication being severely limited as Brook did not know any German and Ben had very little English, there was an almost immediate attraction between the two.

> Brook (individual interview): I fell for him, he fell for me and… [omission] [W]e only spent two weeks travelling together, when we got back home he kept coming to visit, and that was it, really. Never kind of fell out of it.

* * *

> Ben (individual interview): So that was the first time we saw each other… And… I just remember her blue eyes and smile and… [omission] We then travelled together for about two weeks, and then went separate ways, which was very difficult, cos we sort of… we fell in love, obviously.

They had external support in these initial stages of the relationship in the form of Ben's travel companion, who acted as a helpful translator, and Brook's family, who encouraged the relationship by warmly and wholeheartedly embracing her new German friend. However, it was ultimately how they felt about each other that enabled them to overcome their language barrier. Ben's school-level English as well as non-verbal methods of communication proved invaluable.

> Brook (individual interview): [W]e obviously had times when we were on our own, and we had to muddle together what language or whatever we could summon up to communicate. [omission] [W]hen we were on our own, we would like sit around the fire or we'd sneak off together for a walk or something, it was… always English.

It was in these beginnings of the relationship when English was established as the preferred language of use in the couplehood.

6.2.2 Developing languages through correspondence

After spending two weeks of their travels together, Brook and Ben went their separate ways in Africa, then eventually returned to their respective countries. At this point, communication was maintained through means of long letters and occasional telephone conversations in their own hybrid mixture of English and German.

> Brook: [I]t was… I would say for the first few years, we were kind of bumbling about, finding… ways of describing things, rather than using its word, cos we didn't know the word. And we still do it now…
>
> Ben: And it started off with words, rather than whole sentences, didn't it, cos you learned individual German words, that you then plugged into your English grammar.
>
> Brook: Yes!

During this period there was active mutual support in the learning of the other's language through which Ben's English, as well as Brook's German, began to develop.

> Ben (individual interview): I mean, in the meantime we had written letters[6]. In English. [omission] Brook obviously tried to learn German as well, and pick up German and… it started off with individual words, and her letters then were English writing with whatever words she remembered in German, putting the German word for it, so… and that sort of increased over time…

For Brook and Ben, the situation of not having a common language acted as a catalyst rather than a complication in strengthening the budding relationship between them.

> Brook (individual interview): [F]rom the very beginning, our relationship has been about negotiating what we mean. And negotiating our communication skills, and I think that's stood us in good stead, because we didn't go into a relationship thinking we knew what the other person was talking about

In these early stages, linguistic misunderstandings were common as they were still in the process of learning each other's native language. These mainly involved the contextual misuse or miscomprehension of vocabulary or phrases. However, this was never a source of serious tension for Brook and Ben, more often having been resolved with discussions of language and a shared sense of humour.

6.2.3 Learning English in England

After Brook and Ben spent over a year in mutually enthusiastic correspondence, their relationship continued to develop to the point where Ben would hitchhike across the continent to see Brook. It was on these visits, and then when he

[6] Incidentally, Ben and Brook had the opportunity to look through these old letters in more detail before their final joint interview, and found that Ben's level of English at the time was actually better than either of them had remembered.

subsequently moved in with her and her family, that they began ‘teaching’ him English.

> Brook (individual interview): The sort of English that we needed him to be able to speak, so part of that is kind of romance, love stuff. That was me doing the teaching. Part of that is, if you’re going to be a constant part of our family, you need to learn [our] way of talking.

Ben’s experience of this ‘language education’ was wholly positive in that Brook and her family welcomed him into their lives and went out of their way to support him in his learning of English. He claims to have learnt ninety per cent of his English in this period, during which he did not attend any formal English language classes nor received any form of structured tutelage. It was purely through his developing relationships and cultural immersion that his English began to improve rapidly. There was much laughter and joking involved in these educational conversations, making the experience thoroughly enjoyable.

> Ben (individual interview): [T]here was a lot of input in terms of language. [omission] And also the slang and… the different idioms, and… phrases that you wouldn’t necessarily learn in an academic sort of way. And I learnt the culture at the same time… [omission] So, there was huge support, yeah. But it wasn’t done on a… sort of, “Now we’re teaching you.” It was more like… as you’re chatting, it would be just dropped in as a side remark.

* * *

> Brook: I’d see that whole period of… you were just like, absorbant, like a sponge, just like… absorbing English, and because your grammatical structure was already there, it kind of landed and had somewhere to go. So I think that’s why you learnt it very… fast and very colloquially.
>
> Ben: Yeah, and I was interested in most things, wasn’t I? I mean I watched the TV news and TV discussions, and… and read the papers, and… so you have the… the listening as well as the written

> word, and… And I still read a lot, you know, so… Not necessarily books, but mostly… internet and… But it's all reading, isn't it, it's all words…
>
> Brook: Yes, absolutely.

Ben was thus fully immersed not only in the English language, but in the English, or, more specifically, Brook's family's way of life.

These initial stages of the relationship were exciting for the both of them and hugely conducive to Ben's English development, but there were also some instances in which the linguistic gap, or rather the cultural difference in social etiquette had a slightly grating effect. This mainly involved Ben's lack of using phrases like "thank you" and "please", which he was not accustomed to using in his home culture.

> Brook (individual interview): Germans are kind of renowned for being rude and a bit arrogant and… I had to teach him to say 'please' and 'thank you'… enough. [omission] I needed Ben to… show that he was as lovely as he is. It needed to be very obvious, in order for him to be really accepted for who he was, rather than as, as a German. [omission] Yes, because it's important that people like your partner, isn't it?

For Brook, it was important that Ben, who, by this point, was considered as her significant other, adhered to the conventions of English society, and thus be more readily acceptable in the eyes of others in her home environment.

6.2.4 Learning German in Germany

After spending a year in England, Ben wished to return to Germany for his university studies. Brook made the decision to move to Germany to be with him

during this period, which presented her the opportunity to learn the German language and culture, which she took to with much enthusiasm and dedication.

Being a naturally communicative and extroverted person, Brook saw the issue of learning the local language of her new environment as imperative, and not so much a matter of choice.

> Brook (individual interview): I do need to be able to communicate with people, so… I was gonna learn German, whatever happened I wouldn't have been able to shut myself away and not be part of everything. So… therefore, I had to learn German…
>
> * * *
>
> Ben (individual interview): Brook obviously wanted to learn German as well, cos it was important… [omission] If you don't learn the language you would be excluded, really, wouldn't you? So in order to take part, you need to make an effort and… And there was never a question that she wouldn't do that.

As Ben's investment in learning English stemmed from his relationship with Brook and her close network of family and friends, it was her relationship with Ben and his family that was the primary motivation for Brook to learn his native language. Brook began practising German with Ben's mother, who was keen to communicate with her prospective daughter-in-law. To speed up the process of her language development, Brook enrolled herself on to three or four series of intensive German language classes, the first of which required her to attend four days a week for six weeks. Ben was fully supportive of this, helping her with assignments and explaining the more complex aspects of German grammar. However, there were difficulties in him acting as her German speaking partner, as English had already established itself as the language of the relationship.

> Brook (individual interview): [E]ven when we lived in Germany, and I was desperately trying to practise German, we'd have these half and half conversations, where I'd speak German to him, and he'd speak English back.

Despite this, her spoken German gradually reached a proficiency at which she was able to get a job, and then further progressed to the point where she would sometimes be mistaken for a local, which she was extremely pleased and proud of, in its validation of her achieving what she called the "pinnacle of German speaking".

Brook's developing knowledge of the German culture and language was also important in that it allowed her to gain a deeper understanding of Ben and his ways of thinking. However, Brook also had very strong feelings regarding her cultural self-identification and, as a naturally expressive individual, found limitations to using German in performing her English identity.

> Brook (individual interview): I noticed that part of my identity was never going to be obvious… in German. [omission] because it just… my type of humour didn't work in German, and… not being able to kind of… project myself in the way that I wanted to project myself. [omission] [A] big part of being homesick was knowing that part of me wasn't *available* in German.

There were also instances where her Englishness was highlighted in the form of Germans capitalising on her "outsider" identity, which put her in a more favourable light owing to the international recognition of the prestige of the English language.

> Brook (individual interview): It's interesting because, there's that whole cultural thing about… As an English person in Germany. Because school children learn English in school, an English person is… accepted in a way that, I'm sorry to say, a German person is not accepted in England…

Contrary to these beliefs, the extent to which she was able to feel comfortable living in German society was significantly less compared to Ben's seemingly painless and natural acculturation to England. This had a major role in their decision to move back to England, where they eventually settled, and subsequently raised three children.

6.3 Multilingual couplehood

6.3.1 Return to England

A variety of factors contributed to the couple's decision to return to England. The first had to do with Brook's strong sense of national and cultural affiliation, which manifested itself more acutely than Ben's.

> Brook: You were definitely more able to take on that whole… Englishness that goes with the language, than I was able to do that with German. Definitely.
>
> Ben: Yes, I think so. You're… You're quite stable in your family, in your surroundings. You know where you are… And you want to be there, whereas, okay, I knew where I was, but I didn't necessarily enjoy it as much as… finding something else. And that's probably what, you know, differentiates us, and… why I ended up here (England) rather than you in Germany.
>
> Brook: Yes. Yes.

It was also the case that she would have followed Ben anywhere to be with him, and it just so happened that this was Germany, a country with which she would never have thought to have personal ties. Ben, on the other hand, had always considered some aspects of his native environment less than satisfactory. Having gained some very positive experiences of living in England, he was happy to move to England with Brook after finishing his degree.

> Ben (individual interview): I liked England, I liked her family, I was obviously in love with Brook, so… I was very happy to move here. And I didn't like it so much in Germany for various reasons, and… I was quite happy, there are certain things in Germany that I get very annoyed about as well, and… And I always liked new experiences as

> well, so it was exciting, going to a new country, living there, finding out about everything, and… I like change in life.

He was also comfortable with his level of English proficiency, which he was able to further develop over the years. His first job in England was challenging and often required him to communicate with others as part of the job. He has since left the company to work for himself, which has again required much English communication in the management of his business. He also regularly participates in local sport events (football and badminton), all of which have been beneficial to his continuing improvement of English. There still remain some minor issues regarding his use of the language in the relationship and in the family, which he has learned to accept in good humour.

> Ben (individual interview): There are certain… like 'knives and forks' and 'forks and knives', (laughs) things like that, I mean, just silly little things and the way I pronounce some words in the family, the children start winding me up because of the way I pronounce, but, as a joke more than anything, and I suppose it's… Yeah, there are certain… phrases or terms that you just… That at least me I can't change. It's just the way I am …

Ben's distinctive use of English, as well as the language itself, has thus become a significant part of him.

6.3.2 "I'm just me."

Being in a multilingual and intercultural relationship and living in England has influenced Ben's character and behaviour. He has replaced some of his German traits for English ones, which his German family and friends have noticed. The English language has also become a major part of his personal

identity, although he maintains a certain level of ambivalence in terms of it being a fixed construct of who he is or who he wants to be identified as.

> Ben (individual interview): To a certain extent, it defines me, really. It's such a big part of my life… [omission] It's more important than German. It's… (pause) It's essential. It's such a major part of *me*. I couldn't… imagine it not being there. [omission] So I'm a mixture, so, I don't really want to define myself as being German or English, I'm just… me. [omission] People shouldn't be defined by their nationality, or by their language[7].

This is not always commensurate with how others may choose to identify Ben, as Brook made the observation that when they are out together locally, he could be identified as an outsider. This sometimes annoys him, as that is not how he sees himself, nor what he wants to be seen as. For example, when he travels to Africa on business and people ask where he is from, the short answer he gives is "England", as he identifies himself more as a person living in England rather than a German.

However, there are times when his German identity comes to the fore, for example, his feelings of discomfort or, in his words, "little niggles" with how Brook's father can sometimes speak about German politics and history[8]. Brook does not feel that her father is being particularly critical towards Germany, but is equally critical of foreign as well as domestic politics in general. There is some tension between what Brook observes as an honest but fair approach towards German culture on the part of her father, and what is perceived by Ben as

[7] This is a good example of the potential inconsistencies within conflicting aspects of the individual narrative or between individual and social narratives, and the complexities in understanding relational selves within them, as Ben begins his statement by saying that English "defines him" to a certain extent, but then ending with a comment against identifying individuals in terms of their nationality or language.

[8] Ben brought up the topic in the joint interview, to which Brook reacted with some surprise. The subsequent exchange between athe two was lengthy and illuminated their differing perspectives on the matter (see Appendix 18).

aspects of unintentional ignorance in the form of “casual, flippant comments”. It is in this sense that Ben’s German identity is still very much a part of him.

6.3.3 Deterioration of German

While Brook considers Ben as being fully bilingual, she is somewhat hesitant of her own bilingualism, as the language used in the couplehood is predominantly English, and over the years of living in England, her once near-native German has deteriorated somewhat.

> Brook (individual interview): [M]y German now has… it’s gotten much worse because we’ve lived here for 18 or 19 years. [omission] [S]ince we’ve come here, my German has been reduced to… holidays, and when Ben’s parents come to visit, and telephone calls, really. And it does deteriorate with not being used.

This is associated with feelings of guilt in that she has not been able to maintain her once strong command of the language, particularly in the context of maintaining relational ties with Ben’s mother. It is also the case that, despite her once native-like fluency in the language, her personal views of the German language itself are not entirely positive.

> Brook (individual interview): I don’t think that I actually *like* the German language very much. (laughs) [omission] When you hear German being spoken, it’s quite… forceful and sort of… I don’t know. [omission] guttural and harsh sounding. [omission] And I don’t really *like* that way of being, so I think if I, when I speak German, it makes me sound more forceful than I perhaps want to be.

Brook thus relates to German mainly in the context of it being a language she has succeeded in learning, and more significantly, an inseparable part of her relationship with Ben and his family.

> Brook (individual interview): I'm really proud of being able to speak another language. I really like surprising people, because it is *rare* to be English and speak another language fluently. [omission] But it is… it's… very much to do with Ben and my relationship with him, and… my relationship with his mum, particularly. [omission] I mean, it's part of Ben, and I love him, so, therefore, you know, I can't reject it.

It remains an important part of her life, and their relationship, which is also reflected in their occasional use of German as a private language, but no longer a priority in that she does not feel the need to invest the time and energy in maintaining or further improving it.

6.3.4 Integrated but individual identities

Brook and Ben both recognise the multilingual nature of the relationship as almost fundamental, in that their relational development as a couple has coincided with their development of second languages, English for Ben, and German for Brook.

> Brook (individual interview): I would say that the process of learning the language, for both of us, in each other's country, cos that wasn't contemporaneous, that was one after another, the process of learning the language went hand in hand with the process of building a relationship and understanding how to be with each other.

This may have to do with the substantial length of the relationship throughout which their language learning trajectories were largely navigated by the development and growth of the relationship itself, resulting in a strong sense of an integrated couplehood, but one comprised of equally strong relational but individual identities.

> Brook (individual interview): Well, I think because we were so young when we got together, obviously, most of our growing up and kind of *being* has been, involved the other one. Um… but we are *really* different, really really different, in our approach to life, in the way that we are.
>
> * * *
>
> Ben (individual interview): It's definitely very much integrated, yes. [omission] I don't feel she's English, I'm German. That might have been at the beginning, maybe, but… now I wouldn't even, no, that question wouldn't even come into my mind. It's just, you know, this is Brook and this is me. We are together and that's… that's how we are.

Through the learning of the other's language, and the constant mutual support and negotiation involved in the process, the multilingual character of Brook and Ben's couplehood is what brings them together as a couple, and what distinguishes their relationship from monolingual ones.

6.3.5 Lost opportunity for the children

Brook and Ben have mixed feelings of guilt and regret regarding their three children and their somewhat underdeveloped potential in becoming bilingual in English and German. When their two girls were very little, Brook had made an effort to speak German to them in the hope that they would be able to have equally strong relationships with their paternal and maternal grandparents. However, circumstances at the time meant that Ben was working long hours away from home, and not able to fully invest in the children's German. Brook, although understanding of Ben's situation, felt somewhat frustrated with his lack of effort as well as with her lack of persistance.

> Brook (individual interview): So the language of the family in the household was English, but I would speak German to the girls all the time, because… it was so important. And Ben would come in from work, and just as he had done at every stage since he met me, would switch to English, or would be in English mode, because he was talking to me. [omission] So I kind of… stopped at that stage. I just couldn't do it all, and… and I really regret it. Really.
>
> * * *
>
> Ben (individual interview): It felt all too much, it was probably the hardest time of my life, having… not being there enough for Brook and the children. Not being good enough to deal with work. I just felt totally… useless, really, cos… neither did I do properly. And so I spoke very little with the children. [omission] [I]t just didn't feel natural to speak German. And so I didn't, and… I have a very… guilty complex about the whole issue.

It is not that the children can not speak any German. They are fluent enough to communicate with Ben's parents, and he is confident that "that connection [is] still there", so if they choose to study in Germany, they would be able to pick it up very quickly. However, Brook notices negative responses from her children when, for example, she and Ben use German in public. It is in this sense she feels that for their children, "it's a lost opportunity, *definitely*."

6.4 Summary and analysis

6.4.1 Summary

It was by pure chance that Brook and Ben happened to be at the same campsite in the middle of the Sahara desert. When they first met, communication proved challenging as she had no German, and he had very little English. Their friends and family supported their friendship, and over two weeks their emotional connection deepened as they worked together to overcome the difficulties of not having a common language. In short, they were two teenagers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, who had happened to fall in love.

Their relationship continued long-distance, in which both English and German were used as a way of improving their communication through correspondence. This further led to Ben spending a year in England with Brook and her family, where he quickly learnt not only the language but the English way of life. It was then Brook's turn to live in Germany, where she attended intensive language classes to improve her German. With the support of Ben and his friends and family, her spoken German reached a native-like proficiency, an accomplishment which she was very proud of.

Despite this, at times Brook felt homesick and struggled to negotiate and express her full identity in the German language. This was the main reason for their decision to move to and settle in England, which worked well for both of them. Ben has since continued to improve his English, and now feels as if it has become a crucial part of his identity, which he does not want to pin down as

either English or German, but both and none. This sometimes involves some degree of negotiation with others, who may sometimes still consider him an “outsider”.

Since they have lived in the UK, Brook has inevitably lost some of her once fluent German, as there is no longer a great need to invest time and effort in maintaining it. Yet it still remains an important part of their relationship as an integral part of Ben’s being, and also as the language that connects her with Ben’s mother. For Brook and Ben, multilinguality has been a central aspect of their relationship that they have had to deal with from the beginning, but also a significant part of their couplehood that they are continuing to build on together. They regret not having worked hard enough to give their children a chance to become bilingual, but perhaps this is something that there may still be some hope for in the future.

6.4.2 Relational analysis

Point 1. A number of relational factors, including those of a non-linguistic nature, enabled the development of the multilingual relationship.

Brook and Ben's is an interesting case in that before their relationship, they each had a certain aversion to the other's native language. Ben strongly disliked English as a subject he struggled with throughout his formal education. Brook also had negative cultural and linguistic associations when it came to German. They clearly had never imagined that the languages would eventually become such an important part of their lives.

Although meeting in a third country with which neither had any particular affiliation meant that the language they used to communicate was not situationally dictated, Ben's school English proved useful, as it allowed them a starting point upon which they were able to build the communicational aspect of their relationship. Other relational factors that facilitated the development of their relationship include Ben's travel partner who was able to translate for them, and Brook's family who, although not able to support them linguistically, encouraged their intercultural friendship emotionally. Needless to say, the most dominant relational factor was simply their mutual attraction towards each other, and their multilingual relationship could be seen as one in which falling in love was indeed an optimal context for the development of second languages.

Point 2. The multilingual aspect of their relationship and the subsequent sharing of languages have been significant parts of their multilingual couplehood.

Without a common language, it is likely that Brook and Ben had to work harder in regards to the language barrier as well as the cultural differences compared to the other couples in this study, who were all able to communicate in the relationship through English. Rather than acting as a deterrent to the relational bond between them, their accounts demonstrate that the process of overcoming these barriers together through the mutual learning and teaching of second languages may have played a role in sustaining and further enhancing their intercultural romantic interest and in strengthening the bond between them. This is not to say that if Brook and Ben did have a common language, their relationship would not have developed (which is a non-issue in any case, as the languages and cultures they identified with were a relational part of who they were, that is, the individuals who fell in love with each other), or to imply any sort of causal relation between the two. I am simply highlighting the fact that in their case, second language development and interpersonal bonding occurred together and in relation to each other as part of the relationship dynamics of their couplehood.

From the earliest stages of friendship, Brook and Ben's communicative interactions involved the constant negotiation and co-construction of meaning. Their mutual effort to understand and to be understood would have been vital, laying the groundwork for their later efforts to learn the other's native language, and share their mother tongue. The relational attributes that were required of both Brook and Ben in the process such as patience, willingness to

communicate, and trust “held them in good stead”, as Brook explained in her interview. Thus, the development of second languages and the multilingual relationship are intricately interwoven, and central to their couple narrative.

Point 3.The multilingual relationship was the primary relational factor in the development of Ben's English and Brook's German to a very high proficiency.

It is particularly interesting to observe that they are the couple which seem to have equally developed very high levels of second language proficiency in the other's first language, despite the fact that they had very little or no exposure to the other’s language before the relationship. Indeed, according to their accounts, each had some degree of aversion to the second languages that have become an important part of them.

It is apparent that much language support and development occurred in the context of their relationship. Both had equally high degrees of motivation to learn languages and also support the language learning of the other. In addition to high motivation, a major aspect of their second language acquisition could be attributed to the fact that they were able to spend significant periods of time immersed in the other’s culture. This is also related to the various points in their account where it was not only the couple relationship, but the extended relationships, particularly with each other’s parents and close friends, that both motivated and facilitated their language learning.

While there are many similarities in their second language development trajectories, it is also worth noting some differences in their approach to learning

languages. For Ben, it was mainly through the everyday use of the language, as well as invested support from Brook and her family that he was able to acquire the language. Brook, on the other hand, chose to attend language classes in addition to the informal support from Ben and the people that were significant to him. In summary, it was their relationship, their individual motivation and initiatives to learn the partner's language, and constant support both within and in relation to their couplehood that they were able to achieve a high level of bilingual proficiency.

Point 4. Brook and Ben have a strong sense of a joint couplehood, but distinct perspectives in respect to their individual national and linguistic identities.

When asked about their perceptions regarding their identities, both Brook and Ben emphasised their relational closeness and self-perceived couplehood. Having met in their late teens, they acknowledge that much of their development as individuals happened in the context of the relationship. Thus, they see the couplehood as an inextricable part of their relational selves.

It was also made clear that while Brook and Ben had a strong sense of an integrated couple identity, their self-identification in relation to their respective cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as their sense of self with their second language (the language of their partner) and the performance of these identities, were rather distinct. For Brook, being English was an important part of her identity, and a central aspect of her self that she felt could not fully be expressed through the German language. The issue of the link between culture and language becomes salient here, as she admits that she has never had very

positive feelings towards the German language with what she perceives as its harsh sounds, and the fact that it makes her come across as harsh when she speaks it. Her attitude towards the German language, the culture, and her identity when using the language are thus all interrelated. This is a further testament to the centrality of her relationship with Ben in regards to her affiliation with the German language – if it had not been for the fact that the man she fell in love with was German, she would most likely not have learnt it. Thus, being English is a very important part of being Brook, and the German language, while important in relation to Ben and his family, is not in itself something Brook is able to comfortably identify as part of her being.

Ben's relationship with his German heritage, on the other hand, is slightly more complex. He admitted that there were certain things that he did not necessarily like about his home culture when he grew up there, which could be one of the factors that influenced his interest in travel and seeking out new and alternative experiences. For him, living with Brook and her family in England was a wholly positive experience, not only in terms of learning English in an exciting and supportive environment, but also as an opportunity to use the language living in a culture different from his own. Brook and Ben agree that their different linguistic and national affiliations were the main reason they eventually settled in England, as it would have been difficult for Brook had it been the other way around. Ben is now completely comfortable in his use of English, and considers it a part of his being to the extent that he identifies himself as being both English and German, without wanting to be pinned down as one or the other. It is clear that his is not a case where his German identity has been replaced with an English one, as the German in him is still very much salient as he admitted

feelings of discomfort when Brook's father critically discussed German politics or history.

Point 5. Socio-historical perceptions of "being German" and "being English" have been a relational factor in their multilingual relationship.

While Brook and Ben's multilingual relationship may be seen as one which fostered the successful development of second languages, some aspects of Brook's account demonstrate how the socio-historical narrative between their respective countries can also act as a relational factor. This is particularly noticeable in Brook's account of how Ben's learning of English phrases for social etiquette was a particularly important issue, as she wanted others to see him for the nice individual he was, rather than as "a German". This implies that she was aware of the English cultural bias against Germans, one which saw them as terse, abrupt and rude in manner. Perhaps she adhered to these views herself before meeting Ben. The acknowledgment of social perspectives may also be observed in her discussion of how being a German in England is not accepted in the same way an English person may be accepted in Germany. Brook credits this to the relative popularity and perceived linguistic power of the English language, again demonstrating the potential influence of social narratives in the experience and negotiation of languages in multilingual relationships.

7 CELINA AND CEDRIC'S COUPLE NARRATIVE

Celina and Cedric are a Polish-English couple who have been in a relationship for thirteen years and have one daughter.

The individual interviews were held at their home, while the couple interview took place at mine. Their preschool daughter was present during Celina's individual and the joint interview. A language teacher by profession, Celina was interested in my topic of research, and was eager to discuss matters of linguistics and communication in her multilingual relationship. Cedric, on the other hand, seemed slightly nervous and unsure at the beginning of his individual interview, but was visibly more relaxed over the course of the conversation as his responses became increasingly detailed as the interview progressed. The joint interview involved much active discussion between Celina and Cedric of the issues mentioned in their separate interviews.

7.1 Before the relationship

Growing up in Poland, Celina had always been interested in foreign languages and cultures. She began learning English in secondary school at the age of fifteen, and continued her study of English at university as an additional language with German linguistics as her main degree. When she met Cedric, she was a qualified language teacher in Polish, German, and English, in which she developed a high-level of proficiency through reading English books and watching English television in addition to her formal studies and training. She had always imagined herself potentially living abroad or marrying a foreigner.

Cedric, on the other hand, was required to take French for his O (Ordinary) Level exams, but had no invested interest or exposure to foreign languages or cultures at school. This changed when he developed an interest in cycling as a hobby. At the age of twenty-eight, he had the opportunity to travel abroad for the first time to Australia, which he thoroughly enjoyed. His passion for cycling continued to grow, and took him to international competitions in Poland, a country where the sport was more popular than in the UK.

> Cedric (individual interview): In one town in particular, where we were based most of the time, which is only a small town in the middle of Poland, I made some very good friends… [omission] I think because I was the one person within this English group that showed an interest in the language and learning the language, people gravitated towards me more, because they saw I was trying to learn the language…

With the help of his Polish friends and constant use of Polish phrase books, he reached a level of proficiency at which he was able to get by with in Poland, for example, holding a basic conversation, shopping, or ordering food in

restaurants. It was his familiarity with the culture and language that gave him an advantage in being chosen for a work placement in Poland, which created the opportunity to meet Celina and begin taking a more structured approach to learning the language.

7.2 Beginnings of the relationship

7.2.1 Meeting as student and teacher

Once relocated in Poland, Cedric was given the opportunity to learn Polish as part of the company's initiative to support its employees in adapting to the local business and living environment. It just so happened that the Polish teacher allocated to Cedric was Celina.

> Cedric (individual interview): So I feel like I fell in love with the teacher. [omission] So that's how we met, and it just got to the point that where… from those lessons… we dated and met and spent time out and about in [the city].

Celina remained professional in her role as language teacher during the brief period in which the formal tuition continued in parallel with their personal involvement, Cedric's learning of Polish benefitting from both the formal tuition as well as spending time with Celina outside the classroom and experiencing the culture. However, it soon became clear that it would be best for them to request a different tutor to work with him.

> Celina (individual interview): So yes, basically, he used to be my student. But after we got together we made it clear and we stopped… being in this student-teacher relationship, because it was uncomfortable for us to be a couple and then me to be his official teacher, and being paid for it.

This ended their relationship as student and teacher, which meant they were able to further develop their personal relationship without any qualms.

7.2.2 Continuation of learning Polish

When they first met, Cedric's grasp of Polish was relatively basic. However, his Polish significantly improved throughout his time living in Poland, as he continued with the one-to-one tutoring provided by his company and spent more time with Celina. Although the primary language of the couple was English, as Celina's English was far better than Cedric's Polish, conscious efforts were made by both Celina and Cedric to further his language development. The fact that Celina was a language teacher by profession meant that she was able to provide informal support as well as more formal explanations of the grammar and structure of her native language.

> Cedric (individual interview): There was a kind of… informal tuition that carried on at home. Because, it… so I'd ask questions, explanations, and sometimes Celina would say, "Let me sit there and show you through this," and we'd go through…

In addition, Cedric found other ways to improve his Polish language skills by listening to Polish music and watching Polish television, and asking Celina questions when there were difficulties in understanding. Error correction was also used as a way of language support and learning, but this was largely dependent on the nature of the error and situational context.

> Celina (individual interview): Right, if they were crucial errors that would stop… correct understanding, then I would. However, you can only discourage a person when you are fussy and picky and keep correcting. So, say if there was a slight error, however this error didn't… interrupt the correctness of the communication, I may have let it go.

While Cedric was, and still is, hugely appreciative of Celina for her continuous efforts in providing linguistic and mediational support for his learning of the

language, having such a skilled language teacher and translator as his girlfriend meant that at times he became too dependent on her, and was not actively engaging enough with the language himself.

> Cedric (individual interview): I became too dependent on Celina, so if we're out with friends, it's always, translate, translate, you know… I'll just look to her to translate for me all the time, where, prior to that, cos I had a lot of Polish friends, who I had met regularly, and I would have to sit there with them and learn and just… find ways of understanding myself.

Despite this, there were plenty of opportunities for Cedric to use his continuously improving Polish, which developed at a formidable pace until he reached the peak of his proficiency towards the end of the five-year period he lived and worked in Poland. When his contract came to an end, they made the decision to move to and settle in England, where they later got married and had a daughter.

7.3 Multilingual couplehood

7.3.1 Linguistic misunderstandings

Moving to England meant that there was less of an impetus for Celina and Cedric to use Polish. The transition into the constant use of English as the sole language of the relationship revealed significant differences in their language use, creating situations where linguistic misunderstandings escalated tensions between them. Certain phrases in English speech such as “You don’t listen,” “Stop arguing,” “It’s not my fault,” or “Don’t worry” have different connotations in Polish, and thus had the potential to offend the other when used in the earlier stages of the relationship.

> Celina (individual interview): [A]t the beginning, it caused unnecessary problems, really, because his perception was that… I was saying to him with not such nice intentions.
>
> * * *
>
> Cedric (individual interview): There are times when we could be having a discussion or debate about something and… one person will say something in a way which is normal and comfortable to them, within their language, but it’s totally misinterpreted by the other person because… in the other person’s language, it wouldn’t be said in that way, it wouldn’t be interpreted in that way.

A similar situation was experienced with Celina’s lack of use of the word “please”, which is not a natural feature in Polish speech convention. These linguistic and cultural differences had the potential to cause tensions between them, mainly due to the fact that Cedric often took Celina’s proficiency in English for granted, forgetting the fact that, for her, English was actually a

second language. It is somewhat ironic that Celina's native-like proficiency in English was what potentially caused misunderstandings, but this was to some extent inevitable, as the alternative, which would involve Cedric regarding Celina as a non-native English speaker, would bring about an entirely different set of issues.

> Celina: Because Cedric is talking to me the language he is using with family, with friends, that… English speakers, I think that helped me in brushing up my English and becoming more fluent.
>
> Cedric: I agree, and also I think that at times when you've not understood and I've had to adopt that approach, I think you find that quite condescending when I'm talking to you like…
>
> Celina: In simple language… Yeah, I think you are right. I would think like you are thinking of me like, "Oh, she is not clever enough to be talked to in more sophisticated language." If he was talking to me in very simple language, I would be thinking, 'Do you think I am stupid?'

Throughout their relationship, they have had to achieve a delicate balance between being aware of linguistic discrepancies and mindful of when and how linguistic support was needed.

Inaccuracies in pronunciation are also a potential cause of misunderstandings, and Celina and Cedric still make it a point to correct each other's pronunciation when distinctions need to be made.

> Cedric: Oh, I get corrected when I do things wrong in Polish… [omission] .
>
> Celina: So if he mispronounces something, I do correct him because then incorrect meaning is being conveyed. [omission] And now I was thinking how it is with you correcting me, and I think it's the same. [omission]

> Cedric: Well, sometimes it's because I don't understand. [omission] Like when you were leaving the house that time, and you were saying, "Where is the kiss?" "Where is the keys?" And so I'm saying, "The keys are over there," and she's asking for a kiss. "The keys are there, can't you see them?"

In the wider context of the relationship, misunderstandings are also a positive force as they cultivate a better understanding and appreciation for the other in regards to cultural and linguistic differences as a starting point for in-depth conversation. There has always been much discussion and debate about topics related to their differing cultural and linguistic backgrounds, which they enjoy as as aspect characteristic of multilingual couplehood.

> Celina (individual interview): Possibly, language side of it, and a bit different cultures just gave bit of spice to the relationship. We had more to talk about, more to explore.

They agree that openness and willingness to understand these linguistic differences, assuming the best intentions of the other, and sufficient discussion and clarification of issues were important in overcoming these types of difficulties which may be characteristic of multilingual relationships.

> Celina (individual interview): So it's just… how sensitive you are, the way you were brought up, but with multilingual couples, it's even more complicated, because it's how sensitive you are, which sort of character you have, which sort of personality, how you were brought up, *plus* the language and the meaning… the hidden meaning. Yes, it is more complicated, but it's interesting. But you have to be very open as not to let it… deteriorate your relationship sometimes.

Differences in linguistic understanding are thus seen as both a negative and a positive aspect of the relationship.

7.3.2 Improvement of colloquial English

Over the years of being together, certain aspects of Celina's English, particularly in regards to colloquial "day to day language" and cultural understandings of certain words (e.g. "tea" and "sandwich") have improved with Cedric's support.

> Celina (individual interview): [H]e helped me with this colloquial language, and phrases, and… yeah, how ordinary English person would say so, just ditching this literature English and start talking as English people do. [omission] So, yes, bilingual couple and mutual gain.

Other language support was given in regards to her English writing, as Cedric helped in editing and proofreading Celina's CVs and cover letters for job applications. Being able to support each other in the development of second languages has been a significant aspect of the relationship, which also includes the mediation of cultural subtleties and contextual features of linguistic behaviours, for example, humour and sarcasm.

> Cedric (individual interview): Well, for instance, humour, because humour is different between… in different cultures and different languages. [omission] [S]arcasm in English is an example, you know, and… she would often take things that people have said literally as it was said, rather than as it was meant. And so there's been many times where I've helped her understand people's intentions or meanings, rather than what she's heard as a just… language, if you like, or… statements.

Mutual language support and mediation have thus been prominent aspects of their multilingual relationship.

7.3.3 Special use of Polish in the relationship

Since they have been in England, Celina has experienced what she calls a major “linguistic shift”. There are fewer opportunities for her to use her native tongue, which has gradually led to a situation where she is now often “thinking and dreaming in English”. While Polish remains her mother tongue, she believes that English has become her first language.

> Celina (individual interview): I also realised that my Polish, unfortunately, deteriorates slightly. Say, when I go to Poland, I notice that people are looking at me a bit strange, and I ask my mom why is that when I’m talking and she said my accent is slightly different, even though I never wanted it to happen, and I was always aware that it may happen, I made every effort for this not to happen, it’s still naturally changed slightly.

Although there is a clear imbalance in the use of languages in that English is and has always been the main language of the relationship, Polish has its own special place and function as well.

> Celina (individual interview): [C]ertain phrases like ‘darling’ whatever, my husband thinks in English they sound a bit of… ‘You can call everybody, pretty much, darling’ and he says, “If I call you ‘darling’, it doesn’t have any meaning, so over-used.” That’s why we keep these phrases in Polish, because to us, it has more meaning.

* * *

> Cedric (joint interview): That’s habitual, the fact that when we’re in Poland, and when we first met, even, when I was learning Polish, I kind of made it my thing to… text in Polish as part of that learning process, and it’s something that’s carried on ever since… It’s almost like text language is Polish, for some reason.

This is considered as something that makes their relationship unique, as the meaningful use of an additional language carries with it particular sub-texts that may only be discerned within the context of the multilingual couplehood.

7.3.4 Motivation for further Polish development

As living away from home has had an adverse influence on Celina's use of her native language, Cedric's Polish has also gradually deteriorated with lack of use. At first, Celina made an effort to use Polish with him to maintain his proficiency, but this soon gave way to the practicality and convenience of using English.

> Celina (individual interview): In the beginning, yes, but we found out that, say, I was saying something in Polish, and he would misunderstand or didn't understand. It came to the point when he said, "Oh, just speak in English" or "Just say it in English." So, at first I possibly wanted to persevere, but naturally there was not such a need, really.

Cedric's once fairly intensive use of Polish had been reduced to a few times a year when he visited Poland, until recently when Celina began using Polish with their daughter. This seems to have perpetuated in Cedric a renewed interest to further develop the language.

> Celina (individual interview): He wants to understand what we both are talking about, and I would say that possibly he started making more effort right now. He is again showing more interest. [omission] So hopefully another shift is on the doorstep.

In addition to wanting to connect with and cultivate his daughter's Polish identity through the language, there are additional sources of motivation for Cedric to maintain and further improve his Polish. One involves his hope to enhance

communicational relationships with Celina's family and his Polish friends. He acknowledges that this is more easily said than done, as he understands it is not enough to just have the motivation to improve.

> Cedric (individual interview): And that's the motivation I've got to say, 'Well, maybe if I could just learn the language that moved on the next level, I can… have a relationship with those people where I can converse with them a lot better.' [omission] So again, like with all things in life, it's finding the time to actually follow through on that. But it's… the realisation comes during situations like that, I guess.

This is also related to his wish to lessen the burden of translation for Celina, who he suspects has good reason to want him to improve his Polish, as she is having to constantly translate for him with her family and friends, which involves much effort and concentration on her part.

> Cedric (individual interview): [T]here was always a certain amount of frustration for her when we were with, for instance, her parents, and… we'd sit around having conversations, and the deeper the conversation gets, the more translation that's needed… [omission] [S]o what should be, I guess, a relaxing family time, can actually be almost like a working situation.

It is in this sense that he jokingly admits that he looks forward to their daughter, who is already bilingual at the age of four, growing up to take on the role of translator. But perhaps his Polish is better than he realises, as he gained some confidence from a recent experience where he was able to communicate on his own with Celina's mum for the duration of a ninety minute car journey.

> Cedric (individual interview): I'm not saying my Polish was fluent and perfect, but I could communicate the whole way… [omission] It was just amazing, really, how that was possible, purely because you were forced into that situation, there was no… there was no support to actually translate.

Despite the lack of use and little conscious effort to maintain the language, it seems as though much of Cedric's Polish has stayed with him, which is encouraging in his further efforts to improve it. Celina feels very positively about his motivation to learn, but has some reservations about being his "teacher" again, as she understands that structured teaching and learning within intimate relationships are not straightforward processes.

> Cedric: [T]hat would have led me saying to Celina, "Could you give me some more lessons?" Again, when I say 'lessons', it would have been to actually, go through what we'd done before, to relearn, because I got to a point where I could actually say all the things that I wanted to be able to say, um, I'd just need to relearn, wouldn't I?
>
> Celina: The only difficulty within relationship or, not necessarily like husband and wife, but even like parent and child, if… your relative is going to teach you something, very often it doesn't happen, because, say… If you are tired, you would say, "Oh, we will just leave it for another day," whereas if you have a lesson where you have to go, you paid for it, you may be tired, but you do follow that routine. You just get up and you go. So…
>
> Cedric: So can we agree that my lack of progression in Polish is down to my teacher being lazy?
>
> Celina: So you are blaming me, now, you see!
>
> Cedric: So, yes, I still have the desire to learn more Polish, but I don't want to… go the whole way and become totally fluent, I don't have the motivation to put that much effort into it.

Regardless of whether he will be able to sustain the motivation to learn and seek out ways to follow through on it, he has a strong affection for the Polish language as part of his relationship with Celina, and other significant others (including his hobby of cycling) in his life.

> Cedric (individual interview): I guess it means… lots of… positive and nice things, it's got a good feel, cos it's all around good experiences and good memories, I suppose. Because Polish language, for me, is a language I use with family and friends, so… It's all about positive situations.

Whether this is motivation enough for him to continue his language development in the future remains to be seen.

7.3.5 A "Polglish" couple with a "Polglish" daughter

Celina identifies her and Cedric's couplehood as "Polglish" (Polish and English) in reference to the intercultural and multilingual nature of their relationship. This manifests not only in the use of both languages in the family, but also in other contexts, for example, when they are watching sporting events.

> Celina (individual interview): If we are watching sport, if we are watching Olympics, we tend to support, I may be perceived as not very patriotic, but we both support English people. I mean, if… [omission] [I]f there is a choice of Polish and English, we would possibly first support English competitors… [omission] [W]e want the English one to take the gold and Polish one to take the silver.

This also stems from her experience over the years of cheering for Cedric and the English team when they compete in cycling events. It feels only natural that she roots for him and his team rather than for Polish athletes she has no personal ties with.

The "Polglish" character of their relationship extends to Celina and Cedric's recognition of the importance of their daughter's intercultural roots and "bringing her up in two cultures", despite acknowledging that she will inevitably grow up

with more ties to English language and culture. There are additional benefits to her being bilingual as well.

> Celina (individual interview): I persevere talking Polish to her and bringing her up in two cultures, because half of her family are Polish, so she has to be able to communicate with my parents and my family, and understand… my culture, where I am from, although she's British citizen with British passport, by heart I do believe she is Polish and English, or English and Polish, put it like this.

* * *

> Cedric (individual interview): The first thing, most important, is the fact that she's got an English family, and a Polish family, and… it would be wrong that she can't communicate and be part of those two families, fully, in the sense of a language and communication… [omission] But then also, I think that the… a child of that age, the learning process and her brain develops in learning language will benefit her in the future in learning other languages. [omission] I think that she has a bigger world open to her, as regards her learning experiences, by the fact that she's learning in two different languages, and learning about two different cultures as well.

They are thus united in their dedication to their "Polglish" relationship, and to raising their daughter to be as "Polglish" as possible.

7.4 Summary and analysis

7.4.1 Summary

Ever since she was at school, Celina enjoyed languages and was interested in people with different languages and from other cultures. She eventually became a qualified teacher in English, German, and her native language, Polish. Cedric, on the other hand, had no interest in foreign languages or cultures until his passion for cycling took him to competitions in Poland, where he developed close friendships and a rudimentary knowledge of the Polish language. This enabled him to be chosen for a position in his company's temporary branch in Poland, which is where he met Celina as his one-to-one Polish language tutor.

It was not long before their student-teacher relationship gave way to a more romantic involvement. They requested another tutor for Cedric's continuing learning of Polish, but their relationship provided a context where much informal language development was achieved. Celina was his girlfriend, language teacher, and sometimes translator. Their relationship deepened, and towards the end of his five-year contract in Poland, they decided to move to England together.

Life in England meant that Polish naturally took a backseat to the predominant use of English. This intensive use of English created circumstances where the differences between Celina's and Cedric's understanding of language meaning and use caused serious tensions. Much debate ensued in the clarification of what was meant and what was understood, which also served as a positive force in their relationship as it encouraged interesting discussions around their

linguistic and cultural differences. Through these conversations as well as mediational support from Cedric, Celina was able to further improve her use of colloquial English. Being immersed in the English culture and language also meant that she lost some of her familiarity with her native language.

The use of Polish in the relationship was limited but significant, as an additional language for terms of endearment, or for specific contexts such as text messaging. Since the birth of their daughter, this usage has extended to Celina using Polish with their child, which has further generated a renewed interest in the language for Cedric. He hopes to continue in his learning of Polish to connect and communicate better with family and friends in Poland, and to lessen Celina's responsibilities as translator.

Their multilingual and intercultural relationship is summed up as being "Polglish", one in which Celina's relationship with Cedric takes priority over her Polish nationality. This "Polglish" identity is something that they hope their daughter will adopt as well in growing up familiar with both languages and cultures.

7.4.2 Relational analysis

Point 1. Both Celina and Cedric's prior interest in second languages were relational factors which led to their subsequent relationship.

Celina and Cedric's second language learning trajectories suggest that her interest in English (among other languages) and his interest in Polish had developed before they met. Celina had an invested interest in languages and linguistics, which was substantiated by her pursuing a degree in linguistics and obtaining qualifications to teach languages. Cedric's passion for cycling took him to Poland, where the formation of close intercultural friendships motivated him to begin learning the Polish language.

It was this proximity to English for Celina and Polish for Cedric that was, to some extent, what brought them together as teacher and learner of Polish, a relationship they maintained for a short period before becoming a couple.

Point 2. Cedric's learning of Polish follows a learning trajectory in which interpersonal relationships are significant.

While Celina has always had a natural, almost innate, interest in languages, Cedric's past, present, and future motivation to learn Polish may all be seen as coming from the want to communicate with others and further develop interpersonal relationships. The motivation for Cedric to learn a second language is thus not solely rooted in the couplehood; there are other relational

factors that make language learning important to him personally, in addition to those concerning his relationship with Celina.

His first exposure to a second language was in Poland, where the development of close friendships through his hobby of cycling was the main impetus to begin learning the Polish language. Without any formal language support, he was able to grasp the basics of the language through his Polish friends and his phrasebook.

This familiarity with the Polish language and culture gave him the opportunity to work in Poland, which is where he met Celina as his language teacher. The motivation to improve his Polish remained after they began their personal relationship and ceased being teacher and student, even though they used primarily English as the language of their relationship. He was able to sustain his motivation for learning, as he took the initiative in his language development with Celina fully supporting his efforts through her professional expertise and her own emotional investment and desire for him to learn Polish.

Moving to England was detrimental to his previously successful progression in his second language development, but the birth of their daughter brought about another change. Curious as to what is being shared between their daughter and Celina, who uses her mother tongue in speaking to their daugher, his interest in the language has been rekindled. Additionally, the want to further develop his interpersonal relationships with Celina’s family and Polish friends through better Polish communication is strong, although he is less sure of how much time and effort he would invest towards these language goals.

Point 3. Mutual second language support and mediation has been a prominent aspect of their multilingual couplehood.

As Celina observed second language development and support in their couplehood as “bilingual couple, mutual gain”, both Celina and Cedric agree that that their relationship has been a generally positive force in the improvement of their second languages – English for Celina, and Polish for Cedric. This is despite the fact that linguistic misunderstandings seemed to be an issue for them, particularly in the earlier stages of the relationship, when perhaps the level of relational trust between them would not have been as developed. Discord between intention (what one meant) and interpretation (what the other understood it to mean) had the potential to heighten tensions between them, but was often overcome through repeated discussions of language and cultural expression, which further aided their understanding of different perspectives in language use.

In addition, as part of the multilingual relationship, Celina and Cedric have been mutually facilitative of the other’s second language learning specific to their mediational needs. Being a language teacher by profession, Celina was able to help Cedric with the structural as well as practical aspects of Polish. She was also a willing translator and language mediator for him in situations with their Polish friends and family. For Celina, already having a solid structural grounding in the English language, it was more informal and colloquial English expressions as well as cultural aspects of language use (such as English humour and irony) that Cedric was able to help her with.

Point 4. Celina and Cedric's initial relationship as second language teacher and learner may have influenced aspects of their further second language development and support in their multilingual relationship.

The fact that Celina and Cedric first met in the capacity of second language teacher and learner brings up some interesting issues in regards to the less formal support and development of second languages in the relationship.

Throughout the continuing development of Cedric's Polish, it appears that Celina has maintained her role as his second language mediator by providing both formal and informal support, using error correction as a method to help his improvement, and taking on the responsibility of Polish-English translator when necessary. It is clear that certain aspects of this mediational support needed to be further negotiated in the context of the couplehood, for example, error correction was only done when absolutely necessary, and even then in a discretionary manner, depending on the social context the couple were in.

Celina's overt willingness to act as translator for Cedric is also an interesting situation where there is a potential clash of interests between different roles. As Cedric's supportive girlfriend and wife, Celina would actively translate in Polish-speaking contexts to aid in his understanding and facilitate in his participation in the conversation. Somewhat ironically, it is precisely this mediational support that may have acted as a deterrant to Cedric's improvement of Polish, as he became, in his words, "lazy" and too dependent on Celina. His recent experience with Celina's mother has made him realise his underlying Polish language proficiency, which has also acted as a motivator for him to continue in his learning. In this regard, he is tempted to ask Celina to teach him again. However, Celina sees this as somewhat unrealistic as she admits there may be

substantial challenges to her being his “language teacher” again as their relationship as a couple and family has become so firmly established.

Point 5. The interculturality and multilinguality of Celina and Cedric’s relationship manifest in a joint Polglish couple identity.

By characterising their relationship as Polglish, Celina emphasises the fusion of their two selves in constructing a couple identity in which both cultural and linguistic backgrounds are valued and acknowledged. This can be seen in their use of English as the primary language of the couplehood, but the additional and special use of Polish in the relationship. Close relational ties are maintained with their Polish friends and family, which serves as the motivation for Cedric to continue his improvement of Polish in the future. This is also demonstrated in their efforts to raise their daughter as both Polish and English, as it is important for them that the multilinguality and interculturality of their relationship is passed on to her.

In Celina’s case, moving to and living in England has changed aspects of her self in relation to her mother tongue, which she no longer views as her first language in the sense that English has become her dominant language of everyday thought and use, along with the inevitable deterioration of her Polish. The distinction between ‘mother tongue’ and ‘first language’ is thus an interesting and significant one.

Another way in which the multilingual couplehood is somewhat prioritised over her Polish identity involves her national allegiance when supporting teams in international sporting events. Although Celina is aware of the fact that she may

be seen as non-patriotic to others, which is a recognition of a wider social narrative which may encourage nationalistic values, it is clear that her relationship with Cedric, at least in this aspect, is more significant to her than her national affiliation, demonstrating her prioritisation of relationships that constitute her relational identity. Her relational association with her English husband as well as his family has influenced where she chooses to place her loyalty in these situations.

8 DORA AND DAVID'S COUPLE NARRATIVE

Dora and David are a Greek-English couple who have been in a relationship for fifteen years and have one son.

Dora's individual interview and the joint interview were held in their home. In the individual interview, she spoke in a very frank manner in response to my questions. The interview lasted just under an hour. David's individual interview was held in his office where he worked. He seemed eager to talk of his experiences regarding multilingual couplehood, but somewhat self-conscious of the internal consistency of his statements as well as how he was wording his responses. His interview lasted ninety minutes, which was the longest individual interview of the eight participants. Their joint interview was the longest of all the interviews lasting a bit under two hours. Much of it involved lengthy and detailed discussions and debate which were at times heated and emotionally charged.

8.1 Before the relationship

Dora's learning of secondary languages began at primary school in Greece, where English was part of the school curriculum. She additionally learned French and German in secondary school until the age of seventeen, but was most keen to improve her English for which she had out-of-school English tuition. By the time she began university, her English comprehension skills were formidable, as was her knowledge of grammar, and she invested in intensive private English classes to further improve her language proficiency. This motivation for learning English was based on an abstract desire to communicate and interact with the wider world, and to improve her career opportunities by obtaining English language qualifications, which is not uncommon in Greece.

She later decided to study in the UK, and moved to England to begin a Master's degree, during which she struggled with English in regards to academic writing and listening comprehension owing to the different accents. After some minor setbacks as she was required to resubmit some of her coursework, she was able to successfully complete the degree and further continue in her doctoral studies, at which point her level of English was much more advanced due to the amount of reading and writing that was required for the research and thesis.

Before David met Dora, he had some exposure to second languages at school where he took the French O-level exam. He also had some interest in foreign languages and cultures, as his brother was living in Spain working as a language teacher. Occasional visits to Spain sparked his interest and awareness of foreign linguistic and cultural differences. This interest was an aspect of his initial attraction to Dora.

8.2 Beginnings of the relationship

8.2.1 The new kids on the block

Dora and David first met in an academic setting, she as a PhD student and he as a junior lecturer in his first post-doctorate position. Dora's thesis supervisor was David's senior manager, so they had ample opportunity to get acquainted with each other in seminars, conferences and other professional as well as social gatherings. For David, meeting Dora was an eye-opening experience of meeting someone who challenged him and his ways of communicating with people, which was what sparked initial attraction.

> David (individual interview): We… I sort of adored her from the first… when I met her. She was angry, she was tough, she was difficult, she was stubborn, and... [omission] [S]o, it started in the context of meeting people with academic ambitions, with an interest in ideas and… she seemed very fascinating to me… [omission] I'd be lying if I didn't look at her and think, 'This is a fiery Greek person,' and I found that a little bit interesting, I suppose, to sort of win over.

The relationship developed gradually over the course of a year as they got to know each other better.

8.2.2 Overcoming communicational barriers

Although Dora had a solid command of English by the time she met David, the fact that English was her second language meant that there were some linguistic misunderstandings between them, particularly in the earlier stages of their relationship. Differences in linguistic expression, use of words, and

pronunciation had to be negotiated between them for better communication.

> Dora (individual interview): It's how the language, the difference of the language, not the vocabulary, but the difference of how the language is formed… [omission] Or my pronunciation was bad. And, yeah, he had something… He thought I said something different. Many times, this… you know. [omission] But the main thing is the difficult, as you say, is the different use of the two languages… They have a different way of working in the communication. You communicate in a different way.

These differences manifested in linguistic misunderstandings, but rarely escalated into any serious tensions. On the contrary, they were something that could be shared and enjoyed between them as part of the budding multilingual relationship.

> David (individual interview): If you asked me did language feature, yes, probably, in the grounds of playing with words, or things like that, but not in terms of really language… acquisition, exactly, more just the… the fun that comes from people who sort of use different words for things…
>
> * * *
>
> David: When we first met, there was a sort of delight in… sort of misunderstandings. I mean, I think there is a sort of novelty, which is dynamic in how you meet someone, and a sort of wonder in that. Isn't there, really? [omission]
>
> Dora: Errmmm… Well I don't remember any pleasure in terms of the language[9], you know… [omission] We were not in a relationship then, but it took me a while to get used to and what you were saying, and for a long time I couldn't understand well what you were saying.

It was also in these stages when they were developing a more intimate bond

[9] On the basis of their three interviews, I was given the impression that David was much more overtly enthused and positive of the intercultural and multilingual nature of the relationship than Dora.

that David supported Dora in her studies in regards to language, for example, helping Dora proofread her written work.

> David (individual interview): So I helped her on a few things, reading through… as one would, I suppose, you see how you can help someone. It's a way of demonstrating… love, isn't it, really? I assisted in just… crossing the i's and dotting the t's, in terms of how she was drafting ideas.

The intercultural and multilingual nature of their relationship, and the playful linguistic exchanges that were rooted in them, were thus a catalyst in bringing them closer as a couple.

8.2.3 Beginning to learn Greek

In the final stages of her doctorate, Dora was offered a permanent job at a prestigious university in Greece, which she accepted. She held the post for nearly a year, during which David lived in Greece with her, but they eventually returned to the UK once she finished her PhD. Her expectations of what she wanted to do career-wise had changed with her experience of working in Greece. Her established relationship with David was also a factor in making this decision, and her family's reaction to the move was not entirely positive.

> Dora (individual interview): Well, they were not very… happy. I mean, with the fact that I would be very far away… Not that David wouldn't be Greek. We didn't have a problem with that. [omission] But, of course, with the language, they did… have a problem. But, but they couldn't communicate with David, so how can we speak…

Perhaps this was the initial motivation for David's interest in the Greek language and culture, as it became important for him to learn Greek for the sake of

interacting and communicating with Dora's Greek friends and family. He was an enthusiastic learner in the beginning, taking the initiative to learn Greek. Dora was supportive of David's motivations, but remained somewhat detached in her methods of being a facilitator of his primarily autonomous learning. It was a case of what David calls "tough love" in that she expected him to do most of the learning himself, but with high expectations.

> David (individual interview): I remember sitting up in my flat, and going through, trying to draw the alphabet, and trying to memorise phrases. [omission] She's been very good in terms of if you ask her a question, she will answer it, in terms of that language thing… [omission] But Dora has very much been like, "You are on your own, really with that."
>
> * * *
>
> Dora (individual interview): I mean, in the beginning, when he started… the start of the relationship, I was showing him the letters, the alphabet, how you speak, you know, you were writing down… But not anymore.

As David's Greek began to develop further, Dora found it challenging to teach him Greek in any structured manner and as such, she was not actively involved in David's learning of Greek.

> Dora (individual interview): Oh, we used to do that! I was telling… I was saying, "Okay, David, these sentences, you will write them down and you will come and tell me!" But, well, it didn't last long.

Feeling that he needed more formal support in his language development, David enrolled in a "proper Greek school" run by the embassy, where he was able to successfully learn the basics of Greek grammar.

8.3 Multilingual couplehood

8.3.1 Being an intercultural and multilingual couple

David sees the intercultural and multilingual nature of the relationship as valuable in that it exposes one to various cultural assumptions, adding variety and depth to one's existing perspectives.

> David (individual interview): [I]t's the sheer… joy of being in a different culture… of being with someone in a completely different culture. Because nothing is… like there's no strong predetermining norms about anything. [omission] [I]t continues to challenge me about norms and expectations, what you should be doing, and how you should be thinking about things.

He has also developed a heightened awareness and sensitivity towards cultural differences through being in a close relationship with someone from a different linguistic and cultural background. There is also the aspect of distinctiveness, or uniqueness that comes from two cultures and languages coming together that makes their relationship one-of-a-kind. Dora also acknowledges the particularities of a multilingual couplehood environment in regards to language and communication.

> Dora (individual interview): Yes, of course, it gives another, a different, dimension. Yeah, one more element. That you're speaking about the language as well, how you say that or how you say that. [omission] Yes, difference, perhaps it does make life more interesting.

However, she is less convinced as to what extent the difference may be considered as a positive aspect of the relationship. Differences in ways of communication and cultural understandings are particularly salient in relation to their differing mother tongues, even though the main language of the

relationship is English, as linguistic misunderstandings owing to different use of expressions or pronunciation have been prevalent in the relationship.

> Dora (individual interview): And we still, you know, say something you don't understand, or you… say "Why do you say that?" or different things. I think that is the important, the more… I would say is different from other people. Not that the other people they don't have misunderstandings, but these are the misunderstandings because of the language.

* * *

> David (individual interview): The capacity for fundamental misunderstandings means the relationship is always… It always has a sort of tendency to be potentially… difficult. [omission] [C]onflict does have its benefits, because it reinforces why you're with someone, and it reinforces what grounds you have common, or where you disagree. So it… revealing conflict is something which is a sort of a natural byproduct of multilingual relationship. But that's not necessarily a bad thing, per se.

As a part of their multilingual relationship, Dora and David continue to negotiate their differences in cultural understandings of language.

8.3.2 A Greek speaker of English

As a competent bilingual speaker, Dora feels more Greek or more English depending on which language she is using, and since she has lived in England, Dora's constant use of her second language has brought about aspects of change.

> Dora (individual interview): The thing is that… what I have noticed is that I find it difficult to speak Greek now, when I go to Greece, not to speak Greek… I'm confused sometimes in the way I'm thinking, now I'm thinking in English. [omission] But, yes, as you say, you try… you

> get Anglicised, gradually, if you are here. You become different.

Over the years of being in a close relationship with David and living in England, she feels she is becoming “Anglicised”. In addition, some inaccuracies have developed in her use of Greek, and she finds that it takes a while to fluently use Greek when she is visiting home. This interlingual influence works the other way as well, as she often adopts Greek grammar in English speech, to the point where David’s use of English has also adopted some of her repetitive inaccuracies. He feels that Dora could benefit greatly in regards to her ‘credibility’ as an English speaker if she could resolve some of her grammatical idiosyncracies, but she sees it differently.

> Dora: Subconsciously I’m using my way of thinking, which is the Greek. That’s why. I make mistakes. I don’t speak perfectly English. [omission] You understand, I don’t acknowledge it as a problem. To acknowledge it, to correct it, I have to acknowledge myself, in my problem. And there are many.

What are seemingly simple mistakes are in a way part of Dora’s Greek identity, as she is content and accepting of some inaccuracies in her use of the English language with its Greek influences.

There are also differences in tone of voice in regards to cultural and social etiquette, for example, the use of the imperative (expression of command) in Greek, which used in the same way in English might be considered rude.

> Dora: In Greece, we use less words in a sentence. I observed how English people speak, and they say, “That is fine.” But I would not say, “That is fine,” I would say, “Fine,” and that to you would sound a little bit rude…
>
> David: [omission] And people would consider you, I would think… quite direct. And I would sometimes mediate that. [omission] I add caveats in conversation when you’re saying that.

> Dora: How many years we're together, and you learn, I suppose, how the other person… express…
>
> David: What their intentions are behind… Yeah.

It is in this sense that David occasionally acts as a linguistic mediator when Dora overlooks particular cultural nuances owing to Greek influences in her use of English.

8.3.3 Continued learning of Greek: Motivations and frustrations

It has been 5 years since David stopped attending Greek language lessons. He enjoyed the classes at the Greek embassy, which proved helpful in his learning of the basic grammar, but, due to work-related circumstances, they moved away and he was no longer able to attend. He later took up another Greek course where they moved to, but his attendance did not last for very long owing to the perceived incompetence and unpleasant demeanor of the Greek language teacher.

Nevertheless, David has continued in his efforts to improve his Greek, mainly for him to be better able to interact in Greece with Dora's family and friends rather than for Dora's sake, although he does sense some expectation from her as well. Every time they visit Greece, David makes an effort to brush up on his Greek.

> David (individual interview): [A]s I've gone on, you get sort of phlegmatic about it, and you think, 'Well, you are what you are,' and you adopt a sort of role in the family when you visit, and stuff like that, partly because of… Mainly because of your levels of language and… but I'm not quite sure how satisfactory that is.

External expectations for him to communicate with Dora's friends and family in Greece are also a motivating force in his continued learning. However, David has sometimes felt pressured by these expectations, resulting in feelings of frustration and negativity. For example, he has felt that Dora's mother, who he describes as "a kind, tough person… a bit like Dora" seemed to express what David can only call "embarrassment" at his lack of Greek.

> David (individual interview): I think embarrassed is the right word, 'Oh, this is my son-in-law, he doesn't speak Greek.' So, see that shows the expectation is quite low, which is translating into a sort of embarrassment, you know, nice embarrassment, but a little bit of embarrassment, whereas sort of the other bit is like, "Oh, David, you're always in the same class. Every day you come, you're always in the same class."[10]

There is also some "mickey-taking" at his expense, which he usually accepts as light-hearted banter, but there have also been episodes where he felt offended and demotivated in his continuing effort to learn the Greek language.

> David (individual interview): I was once in a group of people in Dora's family, and this rather gregarious uncle was speaking in Greek, and… he said, "Perhaps it might be better if you spoke in English, cos we'd all understand you a bit better." And this was with people who didn't speak English. It was a very offensive thing to say. Insensitive. [omission] I just thought, 'Bugger it. I'm not interested.'

What began as pure enthusiasm to interact and communicate with people in Dora's native country has become mixed with feelings of anxiety and wanting to demonstrate his progress to skeptical others.

Dora, although understanding of how important and difficult learning Greek is

[10] In the joint interview, Dora disagreed with this, saying that that was David's perspective, and not reflecting how her mother actually felt about the issue, which Dora claimed was much more favourable and positive towards David's continuous efforts to improve his Greek.

for David, is not confident in actively supporting his learning of Greek in regards to teaching him the language.

> Dora (individual interview): I mean, sometimes when he tries to speak I will correct him, or say something. But I don't… it's not any more support at the moment. [omission] I don't think if you're in relationship, other than teacher and student, you can learn. [omission] [I]f I have a lesson, to say this and this, and you have a different, a more personal relationship, it doesn't work. Well, I don't know if anybody manages, but me, I don't[11].

It is also the case that she views it as primarily his responsibility to improve his Greek if he wants to participate more in Greek conversations with her family and friends, much in the same way she took it upon herself to overcome the many linguistic difficulties she encountered with English during her postgraduate studies.

Despite having a rather "tough" mediator of the Greek language in Dora and a mix of low and high expectations from her family which has put pressure on him, in both positive and negative ways, his attitude towards language learning in general remains one of optimistic rationalism. He challenges the prevalant cultural narrative of how British people find it difficult to learn foreign languages.

> David (individual interview): [L]anguage is… not difficult, really. It's not… a difficult thing to acquire. It's a rule-governed thing, it's a question of time, it's a question of patience, and it's really a question of whether you want it or not.

Another critical factor in David's language development came with the birth of their son, and since Dora has taken to speaking with him in Greek. David's use of everyday Greek expressions and his overall comprehension of Greek have

[11] She also spoke of this difficulty in 'teaching' anything to intimate others in reference to teaching their son.

improved as the use of the language in the house has become more frequent.

> David (individual interview): [T]he arrival of [our son] in the world has been… Has put me on a low level Greek course in my house, for the last four years, so… [omission] So that really has improved my language on certain sorts of things, and it's certainly improved my listening skills. There is no doubt about that. [omission] So that is a very important part of my language journey.

It is also fortunate that there are positive role models that David is able to relate to in regards to what level he aspires to be in his Greek. One of Dora's Greek friends has an English husband, who acted as a guide in helping his integration into the Greek environment as a fellow Englishman who had experienced the process himself. Another colleague of David's is also married to a Greek woman, and has made significant advances in his learning of Greek. David is able to take some inspiration from him.

> David (individual interview): Eric was years ahead, and he also was a really can-do person, and he still is a can-do person. He learnt the language, very well, and he took an O-level in Greek, which I think is pretty impressive… [omission] [H]e's also more like me as a person, a bit more gregarious and… in that, I see what I would be able to be. I want to be able to speak like Eric, really.

This is an important issue in that he feels that his true self and personality is hugely limited and somewhat distorted in interactions with his Greek family without the language.

8.3.4 Ongoing negotiation of mediational support

For the time being, David has learned to cope with the language he has, and although he manages to get by on sheer enthusiasm and positivity, he

expresses a want for more explicit mediation from Dora. This is not necessarily in regards to her 'teaching' him more Greek *per se*, as he also understands the challenges of intimate teaching, describing it as a "to-be-taught-to-drive-by-someone-in-your-family issue". What he wants is more help in interpreting conversations that are going on around him when they are in Greece. The current lack of mediational support is a major cause of frustration.

> David (individual interview): You know, many times I've been in a sort of discussion where I do not understand a single word that's going on for… hours, as it seems, and there would be no attempt to bring me into that discussion. So, and I would, in that sense, I need a bit more translation, so I think it's in the act of… the very act of interacting in these situations where I could certainly do with a bit more assistance from Dora.

Dora understands how he is naturally a very communicative person, and senses his dissatisfaction with not being able to express himself in situations with her family. However, it is realistically impossible for her to constantly act as translator in all conversations, some of which do not seem important enough to translate for him[12].

> David: You don't accommodate that enough. That's what I'm saying. It's not about me learning, it's about me saying, "This is where I am, and probably will be." That's what I'm saying. [omission]
>
> Dora: Yes, but do you think this will help you learn?
>
> David: No, I'm talking about this is a recognition of the situation I'm in. It's not about *learning*. It's about saying how is that person participating in that *relationship* with his family. It's not about learning.
>
> Dora: Yeah, but here we speak about the language…
>
> David: Yes, but about relations. This is about multilingual relationships.

[12] She gives an example of when her family is discussing the matter of how much seasoning should be added to a stew.

> [omission] The point of the fact is that you're in a relationship, and that should be mediated… language is the key mediating thing. The question is how do you translate that, or how do you incorporate that so the person can participate in the relationship. This is the issue. [omission]
>
> Dora: Yes, this is the issue, but the issue with you in particular, because I have seen it in other people as well, is that… You are in this situation and as you say, you will be like that, but you are exposed enough that you can improve your situation.[13]

Drawing on her own experiences of the discomfort of not being able to fully comprehend or express herself in a second language, she feels that if he wants to participate, it is mainly his responsibility to improve himself in the speech and comprehension of the Greek language, and not hers to translate everything for him. This is a unresolved issue requiring further negotiation.

8.3.5 A Greek identity

Despite all the challenges he has faced in learning and using the language, David's affiliation to Greece and its culture and language as part of the multilingual and intercultural relationship is something that he greatly values.

> David (individual interview): I'm proud of… I'm proud that I've got a bit of this Greek culture in me. I love Greece. I think… it's improved me. I feel like I've evolved a lot. [omission] It is part of my identity. [omission] I'm not the sort of proud Britishman that maybe I might have been a little bit before, so I think it's… made me a little bit more humble in terms of national identity, it's been a hell of a lot of fun.

Through his relationship with Dora, David has developed a meaningful personal

[13] This is but a small excerpt from a much longer discussion which took place in the couple interview (see Appendix 19). The heated discussion eventually reached an impasse without resolution.

connection with the Greek language and culture which he could identify as his own in addition to his “British roots”. He feels a similar sense of pride and joy in watching their son grow up with both languages and cultures.

> David (individual interview): I’m delighted Evan’s half Greek. This little boy, such like a little English chap, you know, and there’s half Greek in there, and it just makes me… full of joy. Joyous, that’s how I would say in relation to Greek. It’s a joyous feeling.

Dora feels the same way, and is dedicated to supporting their son being able to speak the language and understand his Greek heritage.

> Dora (individual interview): I want him to learn and I want him to become comfortable… to go to Greece, and be able to survive there. [omission] I want him to know my family and to be… to know that he can communicate with them.

Dora, David, and Evan thus continue in their journey as a multilingual family, with all of its potential highs and lows, and with possibilities for productive negotiation and development, linguistic and otherwise.

8.4 Summary and analysis

8.4.1 Summary

Dora and David first met each other as newcomers in a professional academic environment. Their relationship developed naturally and gradually, as they had many opportunities to get to know each other, and familiarise themselves with the other's linguistic idiosyncrasies. Their cultural and linguistic differences constituted a part of their mutual attraction, which developed from collegial friendship into intimate couplehood. Visits to Greece became more frequent, which motivated David to start learning the language. Dora helped with what she could in regards to the alphabet and pronunciation, but they sought more structured support in the form of Greek lessons provided by the Greek embassy.

They lived in Greece for a year, but then decided to move to and settle in England. The intercultural and multilingual nature of their union was an eye-opening experience for David in breaking down previously held cultural assumptions and beliefs. Differences in their cultural backgrounds and perspectives have made the relationship unique and special, but also caused some linguistic misunderstandings, which they have learned to negotiate.

Since living in the UK, Dora has becoming "Anglicised" in many aspects, but her Greek influence in her use of English, which is the language of the relationship, remains prevalent. This is something she accepts as a part of her identity as a Greek speaker of English as a second language. David has continued working towards his learning of Greek as a second language, which has been hugely supported by Dora's use of Greek with their son, and positive role models in his

life. However, it has been a struggle for him as well, with limited resources and opportunities to learn Greek in a more structured way. The fact that he feels pressured rather than encouraged by Dora's family to improve his Greek does not help matters either.

Although he manages to get by, his limited proficiency in Greek can be a source of frustration, as he is not able to fully express himself and his personality through the Greek language. He also has difficulties with comprehension, and wants more mediational support from Dora in this regard, especially when they are in Greece with her family and he feels excluded from the conversations happening around him. While Dora is sympathetic towards his predicament, she feels it is realistically impossible to translate for him everything that is being said. She also feels strongly about it being primarily his responsibility to improve his Greek if he wants to participate more.

Nevertheless, David has a strong and positive sense of affiliation to the Greek language and culture by extension of his intercultural and multilingual relationship with Dora. This is further extended to their dedication to raise their son as intercultural and multilingual as well.

8.4.2 Relational analysis

Point 1. David's perception of the intercultural and multilingual nature of the relationship is very positive, whereas it is less of a salient issue for Dora.

Based on the interview data and on general observations made in the process of collecting the data, I was given the impression that David had a much more overtly positive attitude and perception towards the multilingual and intercultural nature of their relationship. Speaking of the difficulties in communication when they first met, for example, David sees that as the "joy" of misunderstanding and negotiating meaning, whereas Dora is less sure if this was a necessarily enjoyable experience that was conducive to their becoming a romantically involved couple. This is also reflected in David's lengthy discussion of what he perceives as the positive aspects of being in a multilingual relationship, which includes a broadened perspective of cultural and linguistic difference, which has ultimately led to his becoming what he perceives as a more empathetic individual in regards to cultural others, and more humble in regards to his own cultural background.

While Dora sees the intercultural factor as making things more "interesting" in the relationship, she identifies relatively little else to what she perceives as an advantage pertaining to multilingual couplehood. The fact that she attributes very little of her development of the English language to interpersonal relationships (including the one between herself and David) also reflects how the multilingual aspect of their relationship is less prominent for Dora than for David, whose learning of Greek and identification with the language and culture

has been an engaging and important issue.

Point 2. Dora's limited involvement in David's learning of Greek reflects her own experiences of learning a second language.

Dora's relationship with English may be seen as one of necessity, in that it enabled her to fulfil her personal academic and career-related goals. There has been a constant investment – time, effort, and money – in her learning of the language, which began in primary school, and continued into adulthood, which she feels is not unusual for a Greek.

When she began to study for her Master's in the UK, she had a relatively high level of English proficiency. However, she encountered major difficulties with the English language, as she found it difficult to comprehend different accents in conversations and in lectures. Academic writing was also a challenge, as she struggled to meet her course requirements in regards to the linguistic accuracy of her work.

By the time she first met David, her academic English was at a much higher level, but again, there were some initial difficulties in communication owing to his accent, her pronunciation, and their differences in ways of expression. For David, this was part of the attraction, but Dora is less convinced that their different backgrounds were what brought them together. Her narrative telling of how they met was based on a gradual development of collegial familiarity in an academic setting, with no particular reference to their interculturality. Furthermore, she does not explicitly identify her relationship with him as having been facilitative of her further improvement in English.

When David began to learn Greek motivated by their increasingly frequent trips to Greece and interactions with Dora's Greek family and friends, he recalls Dora being very supportive in aspects of answering his queries about the language, but not really actively participating in his language development, hence his use of the phrase "tough love". This reflects Dora's attitude towards his learning of Greek as something that was very much his responsibility, and wanting him to do well through his own effort and time invested in learning the language rather than from any active encouragement and support from her. Perhaps this was due to her own journey of learning and developing a second language, English, and the personal struggles that she experienced through which she was ultimately able to accomplish the level of English she currently has. This is perhaps further extended to her expectations for David to acquire the Greek language of his own accord, rather than through her support and mediation, which was a major issue of contention requiring further negotiation.

Point 3. David's relationship with Dora's extended family, rather than the multilingual relationship itself, has provided both motivation and frustration in regards to David's development of Greek.

Although it was through his relationship with Dora that David developed an initial interest in learning the Greek language, his actual motivation to improve his Greek appears to come from a want to communicate better with Dora's family, and to be able to express more of what he feels is his true personality through the Greek language.

Over the years, David says that he has come to adopt his role as Dora's English husband who does not speak Greek, but is not satisfied with this positioning.

This has acted as both a motivation for him to continue in his learning of Greek, and a source of frustration, as he has experienced some negativity towards his lack of fluency, and insensitivity rather than encouragement in his efforts to learn. The internal struggle between David's desire for a "Greek identity" and his performance of that identity in terms of the Greek language thus remains an issue, as does the relational struggle between his and Dora's expectations of his language learning.

Despite this, David feels a close relational affiliation with the Greek culture and language, all of which he has experienced through this relationship with Dora. This may have been a strong relational factor in his sustained motivation to continue in his efforts to learn Greek, and his distinct attitude towards learning the language, which is one of pragmatic optimism in that he deliberately distances his language learning attitudes from the stereoptypical British person as not being good at learning languages.

Point 4. There are ongoing tensions in regards to linguistic mediational support.

As has been identified in their reconstructed narrative, there are underlying tensions between David's expectations of mediational support from Dora and the practicalities of Dora being unable to constantly translate the ongoing conversations when they are in Greece with her family. It was in the joint interview where a heated discussion based on discord in regards to Dora's expectations of David's language development and his need for more mediational support continued for nearly an hour, eventually reaching a point where it was clear that the issue could not be resolved then and there. Their

emotional investment and distinct perspectives demonstrated the complexity and criticality of the issue, and it is my hope that the interview provided a starting point for further dialogue on these linguistic matters residing in the relationship.

9 CROSS-COUPLE FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

9.1 Introduction

The narrative reconstructions presented in the previous chapters have provided much insight into the linguistic behaviours, perceptions, and experiences of the four couples. In the case of Alexa and Adam, it was found that Alexa's sustained interest in the English language and the relational opportunities it provided was a factor in the development of their multilingual relationship, in which both Alexa's familiarity with British English and Adam's proficiency in Greek matured. As a key aspect of their relationship, the identification of similarities but perhaps more the differences between Greek and English was seen to influence the performance of their identities as individuals and also as a couple.

For Brook and Ben, the sharing of languages was a fundamental part of their relationship, in which both Brook and Ben were able to develop a high level of fluency in the other's language. While having a strong sense of a joint couple identity, it was shown that each had distinct perspectives in relation to their own and the other's language and culture which would change in different relational contexts.

Celina and Cedric's prior interest in second languages was what led to their meeting as language teacher and student, and subsequent personal involvement, in which mutual second language development and support continued to be a prominent feature. A strong sense of a joint identity was recognised in both Celina's perceptions of her linguistic and cultural identity, as

well as Cedric's desires to further invest in his Polish learning in the future.

Finally, Dora and David's relationship demonstrated one where the multilinguality and interculturality of the couplehood constituted a complex dynamics which greatly influenced modes of second language development and support. This was especially salient in David's journey of learning Greek, which appeared to show aspects of tension and struggle owing to constant negotiations within the couple as well as with the extended family, but which was also characterised as a deeply significant and positive part of his self-identification.

Through these narrative reconstructions of the couples' experiences related to their relationship and languages, I was able to identify the different factors that were recognised as influencing the multilingual couplehood and potential second language development and support in each of their very distinct relational contexts. However, in the process of analysis, there were also recurring relational factors which appeared to be salient across all four cases. Acknowledgment of these factors is deemed important, not with the view to construct an argument for the generalisability of the findings, but to highlight the complexity and salience of the relational dynamics involved in the processes of language sharing in intimate relationships through a better understanding of how these common factors work differently in different contexts.

With this in mind, the current chapter deals with findings based on the reconstructed narratives as well as a cross-case analysis of the interview data, as the focus here is directed more towards addressing the research questions. As such, it involves frequent referencing back to aspects of the narrative analysis as well as the presentation of data not previously dealt with in the

narrative reconstructions.

Along with this analysis, I further aim to address the research questions of the study in a thematic discussion of the multilingual couple context, potential second language development and support within that context, and associated relational changes in linguistic and cultural identities with reference to what has been done in the field (the literature review of Chapter 2) and the theoretical framework (Chapter 3) I have presented in foregrounding the study. A final discussion will summarise the key points of the chapter, highlighting the salience of relationality in second language development in the multilingual relationship context.

9.2 The relational context: Multilingual couplehood

As stated in the introduction, multilingual relationships constitute a novel area of research in terms of second language education. As such, there was a need to investigate the context of multilingual couplehood, not necessarily to define it, but to gain a better understanding of what it entails, what features are salient in its characterisation, and how individuals in the relationships perceive these features in relation to the potential for second language development and support in these contexts.

9.2.1 Conceptualisation of multilingual couplehood

From the outset of the study, it was established that although there are some indications of how the concept of *multilingual couplehood* or similar constructs are defined in the literature, a closer look at how individuals characterised their multilingual relationships was needed to gain a better understanding of this relational context. A preliminary discussion based on my own understanding of the term with reference to the literature was presented in Chapter 2, where it was established that ‘multilingual’ in the context of intimate couple relationships would be defined within the context of intercultural relationships, more specifically referring to those in which the two individuals had differing first language backgrounds (mother tongues). It is at this point where I can take into account how the participants understood the term in relation to their self-identification of being in a multilingual couple to add further depth and practical meaning to abstract and theory-based understandings.

The first question that was asked in the individual interviews prompted the participants to provide an explanation of how they would define multilingual couplehood. This included related discussions of the salient characteristics of their relationships (as distinct to monolingual ones) and how these manifested in their respective couple contexts. Their responses varied to some extent in detail and content, but all were seen to reflect what they felt were significant aspects of the multilingual relationships they were part of.

Multilinguality as interculturality

When asked about her understanding of multilingual couplehood in her individual interview, Alexa responded as follows:

> Alexa (individual interview): I understand you focus on… how can… couples with two different languages, two different cultures, two different backgrounds can get on together… [omission] how much they are, perhaps, able to share and explain, uh, about their behaviour. Um… how much of *communication* is going on and what *kind* of communication.

As we can see in her definition as well as in her account of their relationship, Alexa's understanding of multilingual couplehood is not limited to the issue of having different languages. Rather, her conceptualisation of multilinguality includes aspects of interculturality, with the relationship being a site where the individuals express and understand these differences through communication. Ben additionally sees a multilingual couple as two individuals with different first languages, but more significantly, different cultural backgrounds.

> Ben (individual interview): Well, I think a multilingual couple is a couple… that grew up with different first languages… but, even more

> importantly, two different cultures. (pause) Cos I think the language part is only the result of having lived in different cultures, and that's almost… more relevant, obviously, the language is the… the bit that comes across first, because you need to communicate… to have a relationship, so… I think the… cultural aspect comes through that, but obviously the language is the first one.

While any couple involves two individuals bringing their unique experiences and perceptions to the relationship, it is clear that in the case of multilingual couples, the additional discrepancies of having differing linguistic and culture backgrounds become salient (Cools, 2006; Crippen, 2011). This supports the preliminary notion of multilingual couplehood seen as a subset of intercultural relationship, as Dora and David also emphasised in their definitions of the concept:

> Dora (individual interview): I define it as when people they speak their mother language different. So I wouldn't define as multilingual if the couple they know a lot of languages, but the first language is the same. [omission] This is because the first language is the one you learn how to express yourself more, so when you come and you speak with someone with the first language is different, inevitably, you express things differently.

* * *

> David (individual interview): [A] multilingual relationship means a relationship which is primarily defined around… conducting that relationship through more than one language. So the… the normal conduct of a relationship is different from monolingual relationships, primarily. [omission] So the active expression of more than one language in a relationship situation rather than simply people just having two languages, who happen to be in a relationship together. [omission] It's the… it's a sort of relationship where the ebbs and flows of the language always define a situation, and always come into play. [omission] A use, a recognition of the importance of it and… a sort of… love of that.

As can be seen in the couple narratives of all four couples, it was not simply about the individuals in the relationship having different languages; it was the intercultural dimension in the use of the languages in the relationship context that characterised their multilingual couplehood. This further demonstrates the inseparable nature of language and culture (Seward, 2008; Nunan & Choi, 2010) in the negotiation of meaning at the intersection of differences in linguistic and cultural perception and behaviour in multilingual couple contexts, which, according to their accounts, would exclude those in which the individuals of the couple are multilingual, but there is no need for a particular recognition of these cultural differences in linguistic expression within the relationship itself. Furthermore, it is suggested that multilingual couplehood requires a sense of awareness and appreciation of different cultural backgrounds influencing ways of thought and expression, which were recognised as salient features of inter-couple communication.

Multilingual as the use of both languages

David's definition additionally implies the use of more than one language in the relationship. This view was echoed by other participants, in that the use of both first languages in the day-to-day conduct of the couple relationship was an aspect of what made it multilingual.

> Adam (individual interview): As to the definition of 'multilingual', I would go simply for where a couple is fluent in more than one language, and uses it in the daily use.

* * *

> Celina (individual interview): Multilingual couples, basically couples

> who are using at home, on a daily basis, while communicating, can be two, can be three, non-specified, but for sure, more than one.

It was further recognised that the languages may not be used equally in the relationship, but depending on the context of communication.

> Brook: Well, we're a bilingual couple. We both speak German and English. We… are probably both able to express ourselves in either language. If needed we can converse in either language, although… my German is not as good as Ben's English, and we tend to speak English here. We're both able to be part of each other's culture in terms of language, I would say.

* * *

> Cedric: Okay, well, I guess the key thing is, from my experience of being in a multilingual couple, there's a case of there being one dominant language, which in our case is English… [omission] For me, Polish was a language that I'd only used with Celina's family or friends who couldn't speak English. So it was a useful tool, rather than the prime language between us.

Both Brook and Cedric acknowledge the presence of more than one language in their relationships, but additionally highlight that English takes priority over German and Polish, respectively, which tends to be used more in communication with the extended family and friends of their spouses rather than for inter-couple exchanges. This was found to be the case for all four couples in that they identified English as the primary language of the relationship. In regards to how this became the case for my participants mainly depended on the fact that English was the initial language of communication in their relationships, meaning that the majority of their interpersonal communication was conducted through the medium of the English language, whether the geographical context of first meeting each other was in the UK (Alexa and Adam, Dora and David) or abroad (Africa for Brook and Ben, Poland for Cedric and

Celina). To some extent, this demonstrates the linguistic status of English as a *lingua franca* (Jenkins, 2007; Gundacker, 2010) as all of the non-English participants were required to learn English from a young age as part of the school curriculum. As such, English was the common language in which the couples initially interacted, which throughout the course of their relationships became further established as the primary language of the relationship. However, in relation to the first point above, this does not mean that there were no issues of miscommunication. As will be further discussed, culture-based assumptions in the expression and comprehension of language use needed to be constantly revisited in the course of building the relationships.

9.2.2 Features characterising multilingual couplehood

Based on participants' conceptualisations of their multilingual relationship and their accounts of language use in the couplehood and with others by extension, I now turn to a discussion of how these manifested and were perceived in their multilingual couple contexts, which may further our understanding of the salient features that characterise relationships of this nature. Four themes were identified: linguistic (cultural) difference as romantic attraction, linguistic (cultural) difference in development of relationship, idiosyncratic use of languages, and communicational difficulties as strengthening the relationship.

Linguistic (cultural) difference as romantic attraction

It was found that for three of the four couples, the difference of first languages and cultures played a significant role in the development of romantic attraction

in the earlier stages of the relationship. Alexa's initial attraction to Adam includes aspects of his Englishness and in that he was "too different". For Dora and David, much of their initial interactions were played around their differences in perspective and communication styles, which David found equally challenging and intriguing. Even Brook mentioned that she imagined falling in love with a cultural other, although a German never figured into this desire. Thus, we may be able to identify some aspects of what Piller (2009) has called 'linguistic desire', or "romantic desire for a partner from a different background than one's own native language" (53) in some of the participants.

However, apart from Celina who stated that "I always imagined myself… potentially living abroad, potentially married to a… a foreigner", it would be erroneous to say that the desire for a multilingual or intercultural relationship preceded the participants' interest in their respective partners. Unlike Takahashi's (2013) Japanese female informants whose language desire (the inherent attraction to a specific language) for English was further developed into the search for a romantic partner who was also a native English speaker (63-64), the participants in my study did not explicitly identify the want to improve their second language proficiency through romantic relationship as a factor in meeting their partners. It was more a case of physical, intellectual, and emotional attraction that brought the couples together, much like any other romantically motivated couple, but with the multilingual and intercultural aspect adding an extra dimension to these relationships.

The fact that Brook was almost immediately attracted to Ben and pursued a relationship with him despite her previous reservations towards meeting a German is a testament to how the immediate context of relational interaction

and involvement can trump abstract ideals based on prevalent notions of languages and cultures. This was also observed byTakahashi (2013) in that "racial and linguistic identity was only some of a wide range of qualities [which were] considered in a … romantic partner" (151). It may be said that rather than it being considered a major aspect of initial attraction, the couples viewed their linguistic and cultural differences as a salient feature throughout the development and day-to-day living of their relationships, where the multilinguality and interculturality manifested in both positive and negative ways.

Linguistic (cultural) difference in development of relationship

All couples spoke of their linguistic and cultural differences constantly being enjoyable and interesting topics of discussion as adding an additional dimension of "richness" to their relationships (Cools, 2006). For Alexa and Adam, the comparison and contrast of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds was a constant source of stimulating conversation. Brook was able to "understand Ben's brain a lot better" with the multilingual and intercultural exchange, and felt it provided her with a wider view of the world as "there are some things you can only say or think in a particular language". Celina perceived this as adding "spice" to her relationship with Cedric, through which they were able to experience and explore the other's languages and cultures in a way that only being in a couple relationship could make possible. Dora also found linguistic and cultural difference as making the relationship more interesting, as did David, who talked about the "sheer joy of being with someone from a different culture". He additionally mentioned how it challenged his pre-existing norms and expectations, which facilitated the development of an acute mindfulness

towards linguistic and cultural diversity. Chan and Wethington (1998, cited in Molina et al. 2004:139) coin this phenomenon as Resiliency Theory, claiming that:

> "the richness in intercultural unions is brought forth by the process of developing strength in marital relationships by emphasizing individual strengths and capacities, as well as the relationships that develop through … exposure to new ideas."

Thus, it was the uniqueness of different people, languages, and cultures coming together, informed by existing narratives, and more importantly the co-creation of new narratives through which the couples could "revisit and renegotiate their expectations, boundaries, and cultural lenses" (Molina et al. 2004:139) that were seen as a prominent feature of their multilingual couplehood. It is through this collaborative renegotiation that for all couples, the difference of first languages and cultures was seen to strengthen rather than weaken modes of communication within the multilingual relationship, adding support to recent attempts in intercultural couple research that have identified linguistic and cultural discrepancy as not a negative but positive force in romantic couple relationships (Cools, 2006; Seward, 2008; Renalds, 2011).

Idiosyncratic use of languages

It has been established that all four couples used English as the primary language in the relationships, but what is perhaps of more interest in respect to the current study was the fact that the less dominant (non-English) language was being used in the couple and family relationships in highly contextual and significant ways, which was identified as a fundamental characteristic of their multilingual relationships.

In the case of Brook and Ben, particularly in the earlier stages of their relationship and as they were actively learning each other's languages, a hybrid language of English and German was used in written and verbal correspondence. While over the course of their relationship English became increasingly dominant, Brook mentioned that they would occasionally use German as a secret or private language through which the couple could converse discreetly without sharing information with others. In the case of Alexa and Adam, this was extended to include conversations with their children where the additional language (Greek) was used to add contextual meaning or to imply the disposition of the speaker. For Celina and Cedric, using Polish had a special meaning for the couple, as they would use it for personal text messaging as well as for terms of endearment.

In the context of intimate relationships, this distinctive use of languages may be seen as a manifestation of the couples not only "being" but "doing" their multilingual couplehood (Piller, 2002:2) in their relational contexts. It may also be considered as one way in which multilingual couples can potentially create their own culture as an "active, interpretive process by which individuals create frames for meaningful relationships" (Fogel, 1993:161) in regards to language use.

Communicational difficulties as strengthening the relationship

All couples reported experience of communicational difficulties in the multilingual relationships, and for some, these had the potential to escalate tensions in the initial stages of the relationship, as was seen in the case of Celina and Cedric. At first glance, this could be seen as support for studies

which have identified communicational issues and the language barrier as a major stressor and therefore a negative aspect of multilingual (intercultural) relationships (Soncini, 1997; Nakamatsu, 2003; Donovan, 2004, Taweekuakulkit, 2005). However, a closer look at the creation and resolution of these misunderstandings can reveal how these linguistic difficulties were considered a natural and "fundamental feature" of the multilingual couplehood, and "not as equal to conflict or problem" (Cools, 2006:264).

This is illustrated in the case of Brook and Ben, the only couple in the study without a shared language at the time of first meeting each other, although this type of multilingual couple is not uncommon (Rosenblatt, 2009:13). They viewed the language gap and the consequential learning of the other's languages as circumstances which encouraged communication and negotiation in the relationship, as Brook stated, "[O]ur whole relationship has been based on that kind of… joint negotiation around language and action." This is contrary to claims that a common language, with a shared understanding of its colloquial usage is a prerequisite of a romantic relationship:

> "At a minimum, to reduce initial interaction anxiety, the two cultural strangers need to be proficient in a shared language and the use of everyday slang and idioms of a culture."
>
> (Ting-Toomey, 2009:39)

For Celina and Cedric, it was the gaps in their cultural understandings of language use that did cause tensions, despite the fact that they were both highly proficient in their use of the English language. This demonstrates the presence of additional linguistic and cultural factors that can influence communication (e.g. knowledge of connotations, colloquial expressions, or familiarity with particular accents), ultimately suggesting that successful

communication depends on how much the individuals are invested in bridging communicational gaps, linguistic or otherwise. For all couples of the study, a prioritisation of the couplehood meant they were able to negotiate their way around these issues in a process of building mutual trust and regard for the other's intentions, or what Prager and Roberts (2004:47) term "relational intimacy".

It may thus be said that in contexts where the individuals are mutually invested in the multilingual couplehood as a relational unit, potentially difficult issues of linguistic and/or cultural difference can be resolved through processes of cooperative negotiation and affirmation of the relationship. This means a change of perspective in regards to language and communication, which extend beyond matters of immediate expression and comprehension to the wider and more important entity of the couplehood. As Piller states:

> "Partners in an intimate relationship do not engage in intercultural communication by virtue of the fact that they come from different national and/or linguistic backgrounds, but by virtue of what they orient to. Intimate intercultural communication only takes place if partners orient to cultural difference, do culture and construct culture as a category." (2011:114)

Thus, it may be said that in cases where the multilinguality or interculturality of the two individuals is so integrated into the relationship to the extent that it is no longer a conscious consideration, communicational issues also become dissolved within the relational context as an integral feature of the relationship itself, as can be seen in the case of Brook and Ben. Additionally, multilingual couples may be more attuned to misunderstandings that can occur in the relationship, further cultivating a higher tolerance for miscommunication, linguistic or otherwise, and more patience in resolving issues of this nature,

resulting in the strengthening of relational bonds that may be unparalleled in monolingual/monocultural relationships.

9.1.3 Perceptions of multilingual couplehood as couple identity

Prior to the collection of data, the concept of couplehood, or a joint couple identity as opposed to individual identities, was acknowledged as a potentially salient aspect of intimate couple relationships. In the study, it was considered important to investigate how this couplehood was perceived and performed as it could add insight into related aspects of language use and potential language and support in the context of multilingual relationships.

While couplehood as an abstract construct was defined as “relationship closeness, dyadic functioning, and relationship commitment” (Lohmann et al. 2003:437), the extent to which the participants were able to recognise and articulate the constitution of a joint identity varied from couple to couple, and could be further differentiated at the level of the individuals. However, through the analysis of the couples’ language-related narratives, some aspect of a multilingual couple identity, whether through self-reported identification or implied through accounts of performance, could be found in all four accounts.

In some cases, participants were able to articulate a distinction between individual and joint identities in line with the Inclusion of Other in Self (IOS) Scale (as discussed in 3.2.2) which depicts individuals as concentric circles, the overlapping area representing the perceived couple identity. Alexa, for example, was able to explain a stark difference in how she felt when she was alone as compared to when they were together. As noted in the analysis of their reconstructed couple narrative, the juxtaposition of Greek and English appeared

to be a significant relational aspect of their relationship in regards to perspectives and behaviours of ‘Greekness’ and ‘Englishness’ becoming salient depending on the context of the inter-couple exchange. In Bronfenbrenner’s terms (1986, again see Appendix 1), this would be seen as the microsystem of the relationship, or the “[i]nfluences inside the couple dyad which shape the couple identity, strength, and meaning” (as cited in Seshadri, 2010:21). Their couplehood also manifested in situations where they were on their own in interaction with others (the “mesosystem”, according to Bronfenbrenner, 1986) where she would become more English and Adam more Greek to “fill the gap” of the other.

A sense of a strong joint identity can also be identified in the case of Brook and Ben, where twenty-seven years of relationship has meant that they have grown as both individuals and as a couple through the “togetherness” (Balazs, 2004:246) in the sharing of experiences, particularly those related to the mutual development and support of languages. Various aspects of their narrative demonstrate how an intimate relational other can become integrated into the relational self (Aron et al. 1991; Aron et al. 1992; Aron & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2001; Aron et al. 2004), thus blurring the distinction between a bounded self as which can be separated from that self’s relationship with the other in the context of couplehood. One example may be found in Brook’s accounts of how others’ impressions of Ben as her polite and lovely boyfriend were of critical importance to her. For him to be seen as a stereotypically abrupt and terse German could constitute a negative representation in extension of her identity as part of being in a relationship with him, demonstrating their relational closeness in what she explained as a process of amalgamation:

Brook (joint interview): I think it’s all a process, it’s an entire process

> of amalgamating two cultures, just as it is a process of amalgamating two languages, and coming up with some sort of rubbish that we spout at each other. And it's the process of amalgamating two different characters, and coming up with a relationship.

This co-creation of a couple identity was also observed David's accounts of his and Dora's multilingual couplehood as something which is "non-replicable" and "very special" with its own "peculiar identity" in the relational intersection of beings, languages and cultures. Celina characterises this uniqueness in her and Cedric's relationship with the term "Polglish", which refers to their linguistically and culturally integrated couplehood. It is through her relationship with Cedric that new affiliations to languages and cultures have been created as part of her relational self, or as "an expansion of [her] self" to include cultural identity traits of her significant other (Aron & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2001:93).

Couplehood in multilingual relationships may thus be seen as manifesting in various ways. It can be found in the creative use of languages that has been morphed into a shared linguistic culture unique to the individuals in the relationship, or what Fogel (1993) calls "consensual frames" created through mutual co-regulation between the two people as "symptoms of information creation" (104) and further going through constant change "via creativity and variability" (89). It can also be identified in perceptions and behaviours that demonstrate the simultaneous inclusion of other into self and the expansion of self to adopt identity traits of the other. This may manifest in interactions with others outside of the relationship as well, as individuals can perform the couplehood even without the physical presence of the spouse (e.g. Alexa and Adam "filling the [relational] gap" of the other). These perceptions and behaviours collectively illustrate Gergen's (2009) "enchantment of we" in

multilingual relationships as a joint creation of meaning and value in the couple unit which is of “transcendent importance” (180).

This is not to imply that a couple identity is a distinct entity to be clearly distinguished from individual identities. Some individuals may fail to recognise a distinction between the two, for example, Adam, who stated in his individual interview that “I don’t see any distinction between the two. I don’t see my identity as being anything other than what it is.” Rather than being the anti-thesis to the concept of a joint identity, this could be seen as a case where the relational identity of the couplehood has been completely integrated into the self, rendering a conscious distinction between the two neither possible nor necessary. However, as will be seen in further accounts of individual perceptions and experiences of the self, of the significant other, and of the relationship as a whole, the couple identity as part of the relational self can become more or less salient depending on the immediate context of interaction, whether within the relationship or in encounters with others. Individual linguistic and cultural identification were also significant aspects of the couple relationship and relational selves, which further influenced matters of second language development, support, and use.

9.3 Relational factors in second language development and support

Whether both languages were being used daily as part of the linguistic repertoire of the couplehood and the family, or it was more a case of being able to converse in each other's first languages in specific situations, there was a general recognition of both mother tongues being actively present in the relationship. This implies that all the individuals had some experience of learning their spouse's first language either before or during the course of the multilingual relationship.

I now present a discussion of these experiences by identifying pertinent relational factors and relationships which influenced second language development and support in regards to issues of language learning motivation, the content and methods of second language development and support, and relational difficulties encountered by the participants.

9.3.1 Second language support and development in the couple relationship: Motivations, content, and methods

Initial motivations to learn a second language

It was found that all participants in this study had the experience of learning second languages at school from an early age, but none had any invested interest in developing a second language until later on in their lives. It was the

experience of developing relational ties that created a real motivation to learn a second language, both prior to and within their multilingual relationships,

As can be seen in the couple narratives, Alexa, Celina and Dora had already attained a high proficiency in English before meeting their partners. This was a result of a persevering investment of time, money, and effort to improve their language skills throughout most of their lives. Motivations to learn English varied with each, but generally involved an acknowledgment of the English language as an asset and as a potential means to enhance intercultural, relational, economic, and intellectual opportunities for the individuals (Piller, 2011:88). While they all revealed how their subsequent romantic involvement with an English person, as well as the contextual factor of living in England, helped in their further understanding and improvement of the cultural nuances and colloquialisms in the use of British English, it may be said that there were initial motivations to learn English present prior to their multilingual relationships (Takahashi, 2013).

The motivational trajectory of Ben's language learning took a markedly different form.

> Ben (individual interview): I think the whole idea gets spoiled at school, having to have it as a subject that you need to learn. It's not fun, it should be done like Maths, and… once it's presented like that, it's a negative.

As was made clear in their narrative, Ben struggled with English as a subject he disliked at school, and had no real motivation to learn it other than to pass his exams, which may be further characterised as purely "instrumental" in that it was simply something he had to do as a means to an end. Of a similar token, Brook had never imagined falling in love with a German, as neither the

language nor culture had any appeal for her. These attitudes changed drastically when they met and fell in love with each other, where difficulties in communication, rather than discouraging them to pursue the relationship, acted as a catalyst for the mutual nurturing of a real motivation to learn the other's language as an integral part of the multilingual couplehood. While there is evidence in the literature for cultural differences as sparking mutual attraction and interest (Cools, 2006; Seward, 2008; Renalds, 2011), little has been explicitly discussed in regards to relationships being a strong motivational factor to learn a second language (although see Takahashi, 2010 for a first-person account of a similar situation).

For Adam and David, their initial exposure to and interest in learning Greek can be wholly credited to the fact that they became romantically involved with a Greek person. Cedric's initial motivation to learn Polish, on the other hand, came not with the relationship, but from his passion for cycling, as frequent visits to Poland for competitions and making Polish acquaintances encouraged his interest in the language and the culture. In their case, these motivations led to his meeting of Celina as his Polish language teacher, which is not uncommon as a context for the blossoming of intercultural relationships (Yoon, 2008) and of which the possibility is strongly suggested in some media cultures as a way of promoting certain language institutions (Takahashi, 2010).

It may thus be acknowledged that while some participants already had an invested interest in a second language with differing degrees of proficiency prior to the relationship, the findings demonstrate the significance of the multilingual relationship itself as having a positive impact on initial language learning motivation. How this was further developed and sustained throughout the relationship was complex, influenced by a variety of factors and relationships

pertaining to the multilingual couplehood.

Content of second language development and support

For all of the couples, regardless of whether or not there was an overt motivation to learn the spouse's language, the relationship was seen to provide a facilitative environment for the learning, development, and maintenance of second languages. This could be seen to be in some ways similar to the advantages identified in regards to informal language learning in study abroad contexts, where it has been recognised that:

> "students have access to appropriate pragmatic behavior and native speakers of the target language on a daily basis and, therefore, should be more likely to make gains than their peers who stay at home."
>
> (Cohen & Shively, 2007:190)

In regards to what aspects of language or language use this involved, some featured more prominently than others depending on the needs of the language learner as well as contextual factors of the multilingual relationship environment, which are discussed in terms of how these linguistic features were acquired.

As Hansen-Strain (1994:285) posits, "language learning is also about acquiring the discourse of the language and culture in question" (as cited in Niemi, 2006:99), which was illustrated in regards to the cultural aspects of the second language developed in the multilingual relationship. This is particularly applicable to the non-English participants, whose proficiencies in the English language were already very high by the time they had met their prospective partners. For example, Alexa, although completely fluent in English when she

met Adam, was further supported by him in regards to the cultural characteristics of British English, irony and black humour, in particular. Similarly, when Celina met Cedric, she was a qualified English language instructor with possibly more linguistic knowledge of the English language than Cedric himself. However, Cedric was able to mediate Celina's understanding of British humour, which she has now come to enjoy, and the illusive usage of language in the expression of sarcasm.

It was in this sense that individuals were facilitated by their partners in learning the context-dependent cultural subtleties and nuances of the second language. Colloquial use of the second language, as distinguished from the literal meanings of words or phrases, was also a prominent area of language that most participants learned or further developed through the multilingual relationship, and an aspect of language that had the potential to cause linguistic misunderstandings. While all couples had their own distinct challenges, particularly at the beginning of the relationships owing to differences in languages and cultures, this particular feature of the English language was markedly an issue for Celina and Cedric. Despite the fact that English was a common language they were able to communicate in, they were less aware that "the exact same English lexical terms [could] be false friends that hide cultural meaning embedded in English" (Berry, 2006:200). In the initial stages of the relationship, these hidden meanings in language use (or colloquialisms) had the potential to escalate relational tensions between them, as "the absence of a repertoire of shared ideas and experience [impeded] communication" (Markoff, 1977:53). However, these misunderstandings as part of a meaningful relationship meant that they were able to discuss and negotiate their way around these issues, which additionally provided them with a better

understanding and appreciation of their linguistic differences, as well as opportunities for the improvement of accuracy in the contextual use of language.

For all the couples, it was precisely these gaps in language knowledge which provided opportunities for learning and insightful discussion around language and culture. Dora and David, for example, mentioned linguistic misunderstandings owing to, among other things, issues of accent and pronunciation (Donovan, 2004), as potentially challenging in the couplehood. However, David highlighted the positive side to this as well, in that the overcoming of linguistic discrepancies brought a different level of intimacy between them (Seward, 2008:115), as it was the case that their relational context deemed these episodes as more of a cause for humour and increased awareness of linguistic features rather than tension (Cools, 2006).

In relation to cultural aspects of language use, the acknowledgment of differing cultural norms and linguistic etiquette was also an area of development that appeared to be effectively refined in multilingual relationships, as it has been said that:

> "When dealing with a foreign culture, it is often extremely difficult – even for people with a good knowledge of the language – to correctly understand verbal cues, cultural symbols, intonation, and body language. A wrong reading can lead to disaster."
>
> (Visson, 2009:161)

While I find *disaster* to be a rather strong choice of phrasing, some of the participants did speak of receiving and providing mediation related to both verbal and non-verbal etiquette in contexts of different languages and cultures. Brook recalled Ben's lack of using "please" and "thank you" in the early stages of the relationship as causing tension, and felt it important that he was able to

adapt to its frequent use in the British English culture. Celina also acquired the tendency to use “please”, it being of rarer use in the Polish context. This challenge in adopting English linguistic etiquette was experienced by Dora as well, as she would frequently use the imperative form (commands) in speech, which is common in Greek but in English could be perceived as rude. In this regard, during conversations with others, David found himself actively mediating Dora’s unintentionally brusque communications in English on the basis of his relational familiarity with her and her actual intentions. It was in this sense he supported Dora in developing an awareness of how differences in tone and vocabulary use could convey politeness or rudeness in the English language.

Other aspects of language, including but not limited to second language accents, vocabulary, grammar, expressions, phrases and idioms, were also identified as having been acquired in the context of the multilingual relationship. In particular, Adam observed the development of Alexa’s English vocabulary and use of idioms throughout the years they have been a couple. Celina learnt the cultural meanings in the English vocabulary (tea/sandwich) that differed from Polish, and more colloquial expressions of day-to-day language as well as regional accents, vocabulary and phrases. As a language teacher by profession, Celina was able to support Cedric in the more formal aspects of Polish grammar as well as provide informal support in his language use. David’s use of everyday Greek expressions and vocabulary has improved, especially with the birth of their son and the increased use of Greek in the house.

It was also the case that support in more formal aspects of second language writing was provided. More specifically, Celina spoke of receiving support from Cedric in writing CVs and statements for job applications. David also helped Dora in her academic writing by proofreading and correcting errors in her written

work.

While all of these are components of second language learning that would be available in more structured language education environments as well, the relational context of the multilingual couplehood was seen as facilitative in the development of a wide range of second language skills, especially those pertaining to everyday communication and practical use. Needless to say, the methods involved in learning and teaching differed to some extent, demonstrating the uniqueness of the learning contexts for each couple.

Methods of second language development and support

Unlike more formal learning contexts, second language development and support in multilingual relationships were generally seen to take a more naturalistic, flexible and relaxed approach, which involved creative and often unconscious ways of using or helping the other to use and develop their second language.

Such was the case of Brook and Ben, who used a hybrid language as a way of mutual support in encouraging second language development. In the earlier stages of their relationship, Brook and Ben used a mix of English and German in their letter and phone correspondence, filling the gaps of knowledge in each other's second languages. For Cedric and Celina, text messaging was a way for Cedric to improve his Polish, which has remained a habit in the present.

In line with findings from my previous study (Yim, 2009), some couples used error correction as a way of improving the second language. As a language teacher, it was almost natural for Celina to support Cedric's learning of Polish by

correcting his errors, although, as my previous study also demonstrated, this involved some negotiation in regards to the frequency and content of the corrections. They still occasionally correct each other's errors in pronunciation, especially if it is a significant one that impedes understanding. This is similar to the case of Dora and David, where, in the earlier stages of the relationship, Dora occasionally corrected David's errors in his use of Greek, and now, where David may correct Dora's errors in her use of English, again, only if they are significant ones. Contrary to Lee's (2005) contention that linguistic error correction in intimate relationships manifest as an exertion of power, linguistic insecurities, and frustration, used appropriately, it was potentially an effective way to support and mediate languages in the relationship context.

What was perhaps a notable aspect of all the couples in their ways of facilitating second languages involved cultural immersion, in other words, the provision of an environment where the learner was naturally exposed to the language and integrated into that culture for significant lengths of time.

> "There is literally a world of difference between language learning in the classroom and language learning by cultural immersion. The second of these appears to me to be the most effective." (Oxford, 1995:585)

As has been demonstrated in the narratives, all of the non-English participants related positive experiences of being in the UK with their partners, and how they were able to improve their already substantive language skills. For the English partners, there was more variation as to the extent to which they had the opportunity to integrate into their spouse's home culture and language. Brook and Cedric had more significant periods of time living in Germany and Poland, while both Adam and David have had more sporadic exposure to the Greek

language and culture, which have been limited to relatively short visits to see family and friends. However, in all cases, the immersion in the other's culture provided both motivation and opportunity in developing the second language, which is something not readily available in most second language learning classrooms. This had additional implications in relation to the fact that once the couple removed themselves from a particular linguistic and cultural context, the corresponding language had a tendency to gradually deteriorate with infrequent use.

9.3.2 Second language support and development in extension of the couple relationship: Extended families and children

The extended families as a relational factor in second language development

In the review of literature on intercultural relationships, relational factors of extended family, community, and society were seen to have both positive and negative implications on the couplehood context (Biever et al. 1998; Seshadri, 2010). In relation to issues of second language development and support in multilingual couplehood, it was found in all cases that the extended families indeed played a highly prominent role.

This was best illustrated in the case of Brook and Ben, where their families were hugely supportive of their relationship as well as their learning of German and English. For Ben, living with Brook and her family for an extended period of time in England had an immensely positive influence on all aspects of his language

learning, especially given the fact that he struggled to learn the language at school. The fact that he never felt the need to enrol in formal languages classes is a testament to how far and wide his learning of English was stretched, purely through informal everyday interactions and support from Brook and her family. This not only included the lexical and syntactical features of the English language itself, but also the cultural nuances of its use.

For some, it was in regards to communication with the spouse's extended family, rather than within the multilingual relationship itself, that created a strong motivation to learn, develop, and maintain the second language. This appeared to be the case for Brook, as by the time they were living in Germany, English had become established as the language of the couple to the point where Brook would speak to Ben in German to improve her language skills, but he would reflexively reply in English. Better communication to develop closer relationships with his German family (especially his mother) and friends was thus a stronger motivation for her language learning, of which she achieved great success. This is also the case for Cedric, for whom better communication with Polish family and friends provides an incentive to further his development of Polish in the future.

Considering how extended families can have such a positive influence in the learning of a second language, which one hopes is the situation for many multilingual couples, some of David's experiences with Dora's family represent the antithesis, in that there were instances where family attitudes towards his linguistic capabilities were greatly dehabilitating. The impact of the very negative situation with Dora's uncle seems to have been substantial, as he remembers having felt so demotivated that he wanted to quit his learning of the Greek language. Additionally, he mentioned his suspicions of Dora's mother

being “embarrassed” for his lack of Greek proficiency, which Dora insisted was not the case. However, as painful as they were, it seems that these episodes have not completely stifled David’s efforts to improve his Greek. He continues to strive for the self he would like to portray in more fluent Greek, although his linguistic ability to do so is a constant source of personal struggle (Piller, 2011:147). Thus, the influence of Dora’s extended Greek family is of a rather complicated nature, simultaneously acting as a strong motivator for him to continue in his improvement of the language, but at times hugely demotivating to the point where he feels he wants to give up.

It was a rather different relational dynamic in the case of Adam and his linguistic relationship in regards to Alexa’s family. As we have seen in their narrative, visits to Alexa’s family and friends in Greece provided Adam with opportunities to “learn” Greek purely through osmosis. His extent of learning Greek appears relatively pragmatic, and while the use of English in the relationship has negated a practical need for him to invest in the learning of the language, he admits “the motivation’s there when you go to Greece”. What was interesting was how he spoke of his contentment with the limited communication between himself and Alexa’s Greek family, her mother in particular. It is not that they have an adverse relationship; on the contrary, Adam believed that it was the lack of communication that has preserved the agreeable rapport between them.

In discussions of linguistic and communicational challenges regarding intercultural relationships, some studies have highlighted issues pertaining to extended families as constituting a major facet of those difficulties (Bustamante et al., 2011; Zens, 2011; Hirvonen, 2012), conveying in-laws in mixed marriages as obstacles to the couplehood, and further feeding the cultural stereotype of intercultural relationships as pursued “often without the blessing of … family and

friends" (Romano, 2008:16). On the contrary, the findings of my study have revealed that relatives of the multilingual couple can also play a significant and positive role in motivating and supporting second language development through the relationship, although it may not be the case that these processes are always straightforward.

The children as a relational factor in second language development

As can be seen in the couple narratives, matters regarding the children and their development of languages were important concerns for all the couples in the study. While this is considered a highly valuable and enlightening area of research, it was my impression that much had already been done in the field (Beardsmore, 1982; Arnberg, 1987; Alladina, 1995; Baker, 2000; Garcia & Baker, 2007), and so was deliberately excluded from the main concerns of the current study. However, when prompted to discuss any influences involved in the development and support of second languages in the multilingual relationship, most participants highlighted their children as a notably salient relational factor. Thus, the potential influence of the children on the parents' second language development is acknowledged and discussed here, adding a rather different perspective to most existing studies in that it considers how the language use of children (or with children) can affect the language development in the parents, rather than vice versa.

It was in three of the four participant couples of the study that the children were identified as playing a subtle yet substantial role in the second language development of the fathers. As was noted in the previous section, English was being used as the dominant language of all four couples since the beginning of

their relationships, with the use of the non-English language was limited to specific situations.

What was further discovered in the couple narratives was the fact that the addition of offspring to the multilingual couplehood increased the frequency of the less dominant language in the relationship. This was mainly due to the fact that the mothers (Alexa, Celina, and Dora) began using their mother tongues with their sons and daughters, a linguistic decision which was wholly supported and encouraged by the English fathers (Adam, Cedric, and David). This was especially the case for Adam and Alexa, who reported that before the children, Greek was rarely used in the context of the relationship. For them, the children are the main, if not only, reason why the Greek language has been sustained in the relationship. A similar pattern was identified in the case of Celina and Cedric, where after the couple had moved to England, Cedric's once relatively proficient use of Polish was drastically reduced and limited to twice a year when they visited Celina's family in Poland. In both of their accounts, they stated that the birth of their daughter brought about a renewed interest in Polish for Cedric, as Celina made it a point to ensure that she was brought up with both languages. Dora also found it natural to use Greek with their son, which David identifies as a critical factor in his Greek language development:

> David (individual interview): [F]rom purely a language perspective, [omission] [my son has] put me on a low level Greek course in my house, for the last four years, so… [omission] Around normal, everyday affairs, I've definitely improved.

Thus, in all three cases, the mutual interest to raise the children as bicultural and bilingual increased the use of the non-English language within the family, and provided naturalistic opportunities for language learning and use for the

fathers that would not otherwise have been available.

In this particular aspect of the multilingual relationship, Brook and Ben were the exception. As we have seen in their narrative, although Brook was keen to raise their children as bilingual, this was less of a concern for Ben owing to the immediate circumstances at the time which prioritised working long hours away from home. Speaking German with the children required too much effort on his part, and eventually Brook gave up in this endeavour.

It is clear how the extended family as well as the children can have a significant impact on individual motivations for second language learning, as well as what is being learned and how. As significant factors closely connected to the couple relationship itself, they should be acknowledged as important agents in the relational dynamics of the couplehood as well as matters of language development and support that can occur in this context.

9.3.3 Relational challenges in second language development and support

As we have seen, the multilingual couplehood as well as related significant relationships regarding extended families and children can provide conditions in which meaningful language learning can take place, demonstrating the great potential for intimate relationships to be conducive to the learning of second languages. However, the significance of the current study may equally be accredited to the illumination of particular relational challenges in multilingual relationships that can adversely influence individuals in their learning, maintenance, or development of a second language which is also the first language of their partners. This is discussed from three different perspectives: issues of practicality, issues of second language mediation, and limited linguistic

communication as a positive.

Issues of practicality

Some participants spoke frankly about practical restraints and general deterrents in learning and maintaining a second language in the relationship. For example, Alexa's high proficiency in English negated a practical need for Adam to learn Greek (perceived by both as a particularly difficult language to learn) in the couplehood, which made it difficult for them to justify the time and effort required to continue his learning, especially for the fact that he had enough Greek to get by when they visited her friends and family in Greece. His development thus stagnated, but as discussed previously, his use of Greek has increased in the family context brought on by the birth of their sons.

In some cases, it was the geographical context (where they live) that perpetuated a deterioration of the second language, as Brook somewhat wistfully conveyed that her once native-like German has deteriorated since they have been living in England. The maintenance and further improvement of her German is no longer a priority, as she feels she has enough German to communicate with her mother-in-law, which is the only practical use of the language, as German is rarely used in the nuclear family. When Celina and Cedric first moved to England, they tried using Polish between them for the sake of maintaining Cedric's fluency, but this soon gave way to the convenience of using English, his Polish having deteriorated drastically as a result. Although Cedric expresses a want to improve his Polish in the future, he has no desire to be completely fluent and he does not have the motivation to put that much effort into it.

These findings were similar to those of Nabeshima's study on intercultural parenting (2005), where it was identified that although ideally, both partners would be able to speak the other's language, in actuality, this was very difficult to achieve. This was the case for Adam and Cedric, who both expressed an abstract desire to learn more Greek and more Polish, but found practical challenges in transitioning this motivation to taking steps towards making it a reality. The fact that Alexa and Celina are content with their husbands' levels of second language proficiency may be another factor influencing these attitudes.

Thus, it may be said that even though multilingual couplehood can provide a very strong, initial motivation and an environment conducive to second language learning, there may be practical difficulties in sustaining these throughout the course of the relationship. In some aspects, if one has "enough" knowledge of their partner's language, development can stagnate, and over time, deteriorate as the need or motivation to improve gradually recedes. Indeed, it has been found that if the couples in a relationship share a common language, and the issue of interculturality is not something which is particularly recognised in the couplehood context, there may be little motivation for individuals to learn about each other's language or culture at all (Yoon, 2008). Thus, it is not to be assumed that all individuals in multilingual relationships have a natural desire to learn the language of their partner. It all depends on the relational dynamics of the couplehood in question.

Issues of second language mediation

It was found in my previous research (Yim, 2009) that in the multilingual couple contexts of my participants, "the language learner was mediated by the more

fluent language user, and mediation on a rather informal and personal level was preferred" (33). In the majority of instances, this mediation was considered unproblematic and an almost natural phenomena, as one (or both) spouse(s) would naturally take on the responsibilities of language teacher and interpreter (Visson, 2009). In the current study, however, the role of the spouse as linguistic mediator was found to be at times difficult and even dehabilitating of second language development.

The case of Celina and Cedric, for instance, illustrates a case where a spouse willingly acts as translator/interpreter for their partners to facilitate their inclusion in communicational interactions, but not in a way necessarily beneficial to their second language learning. While Cedric is wholly appreciative of Celina's support in taking on the role of translator in the company of Polish friends and family, he also admitted that in some ways this was a deterrent to his learning of the Polish language. This was through no fault of Celina's, but accounted for in his own shortcomings, in other words, allowing himself to be too dependent on her. An episode that involved a situation where he had to converse with his mother-in-law had brought on the realisation that his independent Polish language skills were not as rusty as he thought they were, and with more effort he would be able to communicate without burdening Celina with the responsibility of linguistic mediator. He expressed these as explicit motivations to continue in his learning of Polish.

This is interesting when compared to the case of David, who expressed a want for more translation support from Dora, as he often felt lost and excluded from conversations whenever they visited Greece. This was clearly a contentious issue for the couple, as Dora stated that it was effectively impossible for her to translate everything that was being said, and that essentially it would not

facilitate in his learning of the Greek language, which she saw as primarily his responsibility if he wished to engage more through the language. Clearly, the issue of interpretation and translation in multilingual couplehood is a potentially sensitive and complex one that would require careful negotiation and compromise in successfully addressing.

Another finding in line with that of my previous study involves the challenges of instigating more formal and structured forms of ‘learning’ (developing) and ‘teaching’ (supporting) a second language in the multilingual couple context. Put simply, ‘teaching’ a loved one, in the traditional sense of the word, is no simple matter. It may be the case that the more competent language user does not feel they have sufficient linguistic knowledge to facilitate more structural (as opposed to intuitive) language learning, as shown in the case of Alexa, who admitted that she does not feel comfortable in ‘teaching’ Adam Greek past the relatively simple features of the language such as the alphabet and basic vocabulary. This may be explained in terms of a discrepancy between language inheritance (the language you were born into and socialised in) and perceived language expertise (knowledge of the technical aspects of a language) (Leung et al. 1997, cited in Block, 2007:47). The fact that Alexa was not a qualified teacher of Greek may have been the cause for her uncertainties.

However, these doubts were also expressed by Celina, who was a language instructor by profession. Although she was able to support Cedric in all aspects of his learning of Polish in both semi-formal and informal ways, she was slightly hesitant when Cedric mentioned that she might be able to teach him more Polish in the future, and in her interview spoke of the challenges of teaching a close family member owing to the difficulty of being disciplined enough on the part of both teacher and learner. Dora also mentioned these difficulties of

‘teaching’ Greek to both their son and David. Informal and natural methods of support seemed to require little effort, but structuring language lessons in the context of intimate personal relationships was generally seen as more complex and challenging.

The other side of the story involves the attitudes of the ‘learners’ which, needless to say, is closely related with the concerns of the ‘teachers’ in the multilingual couple context. Adam jokingly commented on Alexa’s lack of patience in teaching him as well as the children, and that this meant their Greek education was outsourced. He pragmatically stated he would prefer to enrol in language classes if he chose to continue learning Greek in the future. David, although overt in his expression of a want for more mediational support from Dora, also had reservations about her being able to formally teach him the language, as it was evident in their narrative that her approach to his learning of Greek was of a rather stoic and hands-off nature. He also identified the common idea that teaching and learning in intimate relationships is a tricky balance, referring to it as a ‘to be taught to drive by someone in your family issue’.

Perhaps it was for these reasons that more formal forms of second language education were sought outside of the multilingual couplehood, particularly those related to grammar and literacy. Brook’s narrative shows how she was very pro-active in her learning of German, taking it upon herself to enrol in intensive German language classes to accelerate her language acquisition. This with the informal support from Ben (and family and friends) and immersion in the German culture proved to be an eminently successful combination. Cedric is a similar case in this regard, as he initially learnt Polish through phrase books and casual conversation, but much additional learning was achieved from formal

one-to-one language tutoring, first by Celina, then by another tutor. David was also motivated to enrol in a Greek language course at the embassy, which he found enjoyable and facilitative in his learning of the basics of the Greek language.

One cannot help but wonder why it is so often the case that 'learning' and 'teaching' in close relationships, whether it is a romantic relationship, friendship, parent-child relationship, or any other close relation, is considered (and experienced) as being difficult, particularly in light of theories that characterise these relationships by "a mutual desire to promote the other's interests" (LaFollette, 1996:10-11) as ultimately "benefiting other is benefiting self" (Aron et al. 1991:242). Perhaps it is the discrepancies between relating to an other in intimate personal relationship and relating to them as 'learner' or 'teacher' that can cause tensions, based on traditional notions of hierarchy that position students as being subordinate to the teacher. It is not difficult to see how this framework applied to romantic relationships where equality and relational balance between partners is valued may lead to negative consequences, which is a tentative explanation as to why "mediation on a rather informal and personal level was preferred" (Yim, 2009:33) for all participants of this and the previous study. This does not imply that more structured forms of language mediation is impossible; further research is needed to investigate what makes this possible for some couples, but not for others.

Limited linguistic communication as a positive

In contexts of intercultural marriage, it has been said that:

> "On first mention of communication, one tends to think of language,

> although this most obvious channel of communication is not the one which is most significant for marriage."
>
> (Markoff, 1977:51-52)

While this may be true to some extent, that a shared language is not essential for communication in intimate relationships (which was illustrated in the case of Brook and Ben), it remains a fact that among the many different ways beings interact and communicate, language is indeed significant, as:

> "a generative process that creates understandings between people, defines relationships and partners' identities, composes rules for interaction, and establishes the overall climate of intimacy."
>
> (Wood, 2000:xxi)

On the other hand, this does not necessarily mean that better linguistic communication inexorably makes for better relationships. The data of the current study has revealed a case in support of this notion in Adam and his perceptions of limited linguistic communication acting not as a barrier but as positive in maintaining his relationships with Alexa's extended family members. In support of this perspective, he additionally shared in his interview an anecdote about a colleague who was in a relationship with someone from a different linguistic and cultural background. They had no common language to begin with, but after two years when they had begun to communicate more freely with each other, they had split up.

Without drawing premature conclusions regarding cause and effect, some studies have identified cases where better linguistic communication did not necessarily mean a better relationship. For example, Taweekuakulkit (2005) found that for two of her six Thai female informants married to American men, increased communication that came with their development of English actually

increased tension and uncertainty in the relationship. Lee (2005) also found in one of seven cases that the language barrier itself was considered as working for rather than against the maintenance of the intercultural relationship, as it prevented discussions or arguments escalating into more serious and hurtful exchanges (1336). These may point to circumstances where:

> "Failures of communication can also be about insulation from power. If one cannot understand one's partner very well, one cannot be influenced by one's partner. … Once cannot be swayed by what one does not understand."
>
> (Rosenblatt, 2009:14-15)

While I have my own reservations as to how this could not inevitably have an adverse effect in the long term, it nevertheless suggests the thought-provoking possibility that communication need not be a crucial factor in improving the quality of intercultural relationships, making the learning of the spouse's languages in some contexts a negligible concern for the individuals involved.

9.4 Relational change in the multilingual couplehood

We have thus far established what it means to be in a multilingual couple relationship, and the complex dynamics between the various relational factors involved in the second language development and support that takes place within these relationships. In this final discussion, I provide a reintegrated account of how various aspects of interpersonal relationships, languages, and cultures played a part in the relational changes experienced by the individuals in addressing the third and final research question. This necessitates an understanding of the participants as relational beings, particularly in respect to changes in their personal identification with their first and second languages, and their home and host cultures by extension, as the multitude of their "[r]elationships move on, carrying with them the identities of the participants. An infinite unfolding over which no *one* has control" (Gergen, 2009:45, emphasis in original).

9.4.1 Relational negotiation of national and linguistic identities in the couplehood

<u>Prominence of linguistic and national allegiances</u>

On the premise of a relational understanding of being and identity, all meaningful interpersonal relationships represent a coming together of two beings, each with their own set of relational connections. In the context of multilingual relationships, it may be postulated that the discrepancy between

individual relational identities is more prominent in regards to languages and national heritage, of which some negotiation and/or compromise may be required in the consolidation of the couplehood.

It was found that processes of linguistic and cultural assimilation have been relatively smooth for some. For example, Celina's narrative illustrates an unproblematic acceptance of Cedric's Englishness as a part of herself as well as the couple and a high degree of assimilation with the English language and culture. Ben also spoke of embracing an English identity in regards to the language and culture, integrating it with his German background, which culminates in his perception of self which is neither German nor English, but "mixed" with both German and English traits. These participant experiences may be considered as instances of *acculturation*, which Baltas and Steptoe (2000) explain as:

> "the degree to which continuous first-hand contact with a different cultural leads to changes in the beliefs and behaviours of a group. … At the psychological level, acculturation involves learning a new behavioural repertoire and shedding some prior behaviours and attitudes." (174)

While aspects of acculturation have been found in all four cases, it was found that some experienced a degree of difficulty in the adjustment of differing languages and cultures within their relational selves, as national bonds can remain potent within individuals of the multilingual couplehood. It is evident in Alexa's narrative, for instance, that she has felt the need to "compromise" her Greek identity, in the sense that certain adjustments had to be made in prioritising the couplehood and the family, in which the boundaries between Greek and English generally remain strong. Greece remains a place of comfort and solace as her home country. Brook was also candid about her strong

national affiliation, and how she felt homesick when living in Germany. Part of this was due to the fact that despite her respectable proficiency in the German language, she felt unable to fully be herself in the language and culture, as being English was and remains an important part of her identity. This was one of the main factors which eventually led to their settling in England rather than Germany.

This allegiance to national identities was also seen in respect to individual perceptions of second language use, as the linguistic inaccuracies that remained were accepted as a part of their identity. Ben, while being a fluent speaker of English, accepts the inconsistencies in his language use as a part of him that he cannot change. Celina is aware of the gaps in her English and matter-of-factly states that she will always “be a foreigner in that respect”. Dora is also a highly competent user of English, but there remain repetitive inaccuracies in grammar, which are accredited to her innate Greek ways of thought. She does not see this as problematic; it is David that views it as a minor disadvantage in her credibility as an English speaker, but he is also accepting of the fact that the initiative ultimately lies with Dora. In fact, she also observed minor regressions in David’s English owing to his exposure to some of her repeated idiosyncrasies in English sentence structure, which additionally shows not only how linguistic change can influence relational change, but also vice versa.

These cases demonstrate how national, cultural, and linguistic ties to one’s origin are privy to how the individual in question chooses to construct them, and the renegotiation of these in a couple relationship can be of a delicate nature. In multilingual couplehood contexts where the two individuals also perceive a strong joint identity, the question remains as to how much of the other’s

language (culture) remains of “the other” and not of “self”. Put differently, it begs the question of how far one can feasibly embrace the identity traits of their significant other without being a threat to the loss of self.

For my participants, both in regards to their linguistic and cultural identities as well as matters of language use and negotiation, it was the case that some aspects were compromised or negotiated, but not all. Intimate relating with another does not mean the unconditional acceptance of *all* the other’s relational traits and preferences. It is just that there is always the potential that the individual would be influenced by their significant other and the relationship as they simultaneously change and develop. As acknowledged in previous chapters, Fishbane (2001) refers to this confluence as “a readiness for the relational”, which in Gergen’s (2009) terms is an acknowledgment and acceptance of confluence, which can also manifest in ways an individual is “moved” by the other and the context, of which they may not be entirely happy with or even consciously aware of.

Becoming Anglicised and deterioration of mother tongue

In part due to the circumstance of having settled in the UK, all of the non-English participants expressed aspects of change in self through the multilingual relationship. The notion of becoming more Anglicised was expressed by Alexa and Dora, as they felt their thoughts and feelings were becoming more English with the prolonged exposure to the language and culture. English as a language has become prioritised over German for Ben, who also feels he has replaced some of his German traits for English ones. Celina is similar in this respect, as she very often thinks and dreams in English

now, thus generating a novel distinction between her mother tongue being Polish (the language which is inherited), but her first language as English (the language most frequently in use).

For these four individuals, living away from their home countries meant the additional deterioration of their native languages, which was also noticed by their close friends and family. Alexa spoke of her consternation when her Greek friends and family commented on how she had become “less Greek and more English”. Changes in language use and general behaviour were also noticed by close relations of Ben and Celina, who made the self-observation that her Polish was deteriorating. Dora also noticed the frequency of mistakes in her Greek, as it was no longer the main language of use. While there was no evidence of strong animosity in regards to these self-identified changes for Ben, Celina, and Dora, Alexa’s account can allude to a case where “[a] loss of fluency in [her] first language [was] equated with a loss of the past, and a loss of identity” (Burck, 2005:174), representing one (of many) aspect of multilingual relationships which may require further consideration and negotiation, not only within the couple relationship, but with cultural others as well.

9.4.2 Negotiation of identities outside of the couplehood

<u>The relationships between individuals and the spouse’s extended family</u>

In some ways, the negotiation of identities within the couplehood, while by no means a simple process, is an imperative one, as it is fundamental in the mutually agreeable sustainment of the relationship itself. Matters concerning the

extended families of the individuals, on the other hand, may be considered as optional, but nevertheless important, as they have the potential to further enrich the experiences of couplehood, or, in some cases, detract from it.

> "When two persons enter into marriage, their relationship over an extended period of time will be very much influenced by communications between the two, and by the kind of identity each partner holds, and is able to merge harmoniously with that of the other. The involvement includes *children, parents and other people of importance to one or both partners*."
>
> (Tseng et al. 1977:2, emphasis added)

Having already discussed how extended families can be a positive or negative reinforcement for the couple in regards to the development and support of languages and cultures, it may be acknowledged that the extended family of the partner and their attitudes towards different languages and cultures can cause tensions as well. This was particularly the case for Alexa, who found the negotiation of her Greek identity in her relationship with Adam less problematic than situations where she was dealing with the external environment (Zens, 2011:83).

This negotiation of national identity with extended families can be a rather sensitive issue for all individuals involved, including the spouse who may find him or herself in a rather tricky position between their family and their relational partner. In Ben's case, it was established that he was fully accepted by Brook's extended family, and spending time with them as much as Brook herself positively influenced his perceptions of the English language as well as culture. However, he also admitted to the occasional "niggles" perpetuated by his father-in-law's comments regarding Germans. Although he fully understands that these came with good intentions, they nevertheless were the cause of some

discomfort, which came as a surprise to Brook who had not realised the implications of her father's remarks until Ben brought them up in their joint interview. While Ben considers Brook as a part of a relational 'we', which deems her derogatory comments of the German language and culture more acceptable, this cannot be said of his relationship with Brook's father, where he may view his father-in-law as a relational 'other'. This, together with Brook considering herself as being a part of a relational 'we' with her family as well as with Ben, may result in an internal struggle between the two, which manifested in her apparent surprise at Ben's statements, and what can be perceived as a subtle defence for her father's unintentionally glib observations.

The relationship between individuals and the society

To go a step further, this implies the wider socio-historical relations between different languages and cultures, and the potential risks pertaining to "the one-to-one mapping of culture onto nation onto language" (Piller, 2011:66) which may further position some languages and cultures as being superior to others (158) and influence matters of self- and other-identification. The discrepancy between how one may perceive the other's culture as 'theirs' and whether this is 'legitimised' by others can be an issue, manifesting in a continuous negotiation between inhabited and attributed linguistic and cultural identities (Block, 2007:26). Again in the case of Brook and Ben, despite Ben's strong personal affiliation with the English language and culture, Brook observed that he was still often perceived as an "outsider" when they were out locally. She compared this with her own experience of being an "outsider" in Germany, where she got the impression that there was an international prestige and currency attached to

being a native speaker of English.

Another aspect of social perception was seen in the narratives of Brook and David, who both recognised the stigma attached to the British being poor at learning second languages:

> "A prevalent idea in Britain is that only certain people have a 'natural' ability for learning languages, and to some extent this has been reinforced by the linguistics research on individual competence in language speaking."
>
> (Burck, 2005:170)

Brook and David were able to actively go against these societal biases and turn them into a source of personal satisfaction and pride in being able to fluently speak German (Brook) or developing close relational and emotional ties with Greek (David).

Thus, it remains the case that seemingly personal issues of language and culture can indeed be affected by the social discourses they are inevitably embedded in, but how individuals choose to relate to these is a matter of agentic identification. It is in this sense that a relational self is always prone to the influence of significant others, whether in the form of a spouse or close friends and family, and even in relation to society. But more importantly, it is a source for potential change in the wider narratives of these different contexts.

9.4.3 Relational identification with a second language

Taking the view that "[l]anguage is intimately connected to one's sense of identity and the experience of emotion," (Llerena-Quinn & Bacigalupe, 2009:183), I was able to observe in the participants' various modes of self-

identification in relation to their spouse's languages and cultures that had developed to differing degrees through the multilingual relationship as well as through the learning of a second language.

In some cases it was found that the second language became a fundamental part of the relational self, both through the multilingual relationship as well as through a personal sense of affiliation to the language. Ben expressed his strong relational ties with English and how it has come to "define him" as an essential part of his everyday being in all aspects of work, family, and leisure. This is not to say that he has severed all ties with his German heritage, as we have seen in instances of particular exchanges with his father-in-law. It may be said that both relational ties coexist in him, as he refused to be bound or defined by either. It is in this sense that a relational view of identity does not construct the different relational identities of the self as replacing a particular relationship with another; rather, it is an agentic choice of prioritising the relations that are considered more important than others in specific contexts.

As such, I feel that Piller (2011) is justified in claiming that:

> "[M]onolithic and essentialist views of the nation as the foundation of culture are not useful to understanding and appreciating difference and diversity, but are little more than instances of banal nationalism. … Theoretically, they are inadequate because there is no acknowledgement of the multiplicity of our identities…" (68)

It may be said that in the context of multilingual couplehood, the multiplicity of identities can manifest in ways different to those of a monolingual/monocultural nature, as linguistic and cultural identification is constantly exposed to change, as was further seen in David's narrative, where he spoke of the reconstruction of his relational identity through his relations with Greek and the Greek culture.

As most of the other participants, he has gained a wider perspective and understanding of different cultures.

> "Rather than a total personality change, this process [of being exposed to a new culture and language] takes on the shape of a personal expansion, an opening of one's potential universe."
>
> (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002:113)

In his case, this has resulted in a more self-critical and humble view of his British identity. Furthermore, he has also developed strong and meaningful relational ties with Dora's language and culture, to the extent that Greek has become the subject of a deep-rooted affection and affiliation as a part of his identity.

This is interesting in light of the fact that, unlike Ben, David's limited fluency in the Greek language is a source of ongoing frustration, as he yearns to express more of his self through Greek in meaningful conversation and discussion as part of performing his identity in the language of his partner. Thus, there is an intriguing discrepancy between how he emotionally relates to a second language, and his self-perceived proficiency in second language use. A similar discrepancy could also be found in Brook, whose proficiency in German reached that of a native speaker, which she was clearly very proud of. While German represents her relationship with Ben and continues to be an important part of her as a part of him, she viewed the language itself as "forceful", "guttural" and "harsh-sounding", and not reflective of who she is and who she wants to be seen as. While there is no doubt that the level of proficiency in the second language is an important factor in performance of identity, their two cases illustrate the salience of additional factors in how individuals personally associate themselves with the language and culture of their spouse. This is the

case for Cedric as well, whose interest in Polish originally developed out of his love of cycling, and was further strengthened through meeting Celina and developing a relationship with her. Polish for him is all about good and positive feelings based on his memories and experiences related to it, which was not shown to be the case for Adam with Greek, as he claimed to have no personal affiliation to the language nor the culture despite his constant use of the language in the family.

Collectively, these narratives have revealed the complexity involved in issues of self-identification with a second language, further highlighting its multifaceted, and at times, contradictory nature. We may say that interpersonal relationships can indeed have a great influence on the development of making personal connections with a second language in that "[l]anguages [gain] their meanings through relationships and the domains in which they [are] used" (Burck, 2008:93). On the other hand, simply being in a multilingual relationship does not constitute an automatic connection with a second language, nor does it actively work to sever one's connections with their first. It is in this sense that multilingual couple contexts can provide much insight into what actually happens when the relational worlds of two beings with differing languages and cultural backgrounds come together in an intimate connection to "all [form] a whole" (Cools, 2006:270).

9.5 Summary discussion and conclusion

Based on participant accounts of their experiences of being in a multilingual relationship, I was able to gain a fuller picture of what having different first languages actually entailed in a couple context by recognition of what participants identified as salient features characteristic of multilingual couplehood. This analysis was based on relational understandings of self and being (Gergen, 2009) coupled with a narrative approach, which made possible a detailed and contextualised understanding of how the couples perceived their relationships.

The main relationship that was examined was the multilingual couplehood itself, which was found to manifest as an intimate couple relationship characterised not just by the virtue of the individuals having multiple languages, but by the mutual recognition of the individuals having different linguistic backgrounds which influence the communication and interaction as well as other aspects of the relationship. This was demonstrated in the couples' use of the different languages in the relationship context, as they all identified the use of both languages in their own unique ways, although English was the dominant language of communication. Having a shared language did not mean there were no issues with communication, as it was found that despite a common language, the appreciation and recognition of not only different languages, but the cultures they embodied was additionally required. This highlights the inherently relational nature of language, not simply as a tool for interpersonal communication, but as a "relational performance" (Gergen, 2009:73) inevitably "embedded in networks of sociocultural relations" (Ahearn, 2001:111), and

particularly in the case of intimate relationships, further dependent on needs and desires to understand and to be understood (Piller, 2011:155).

For my participant couples, this interdependency between languages and cultures manifested in a variety of ways, furthering our understanding of the relational dynamics at play in these relationships. They were seen as variably a source of romantic attraction, as a catalyst to the relationship, and as a way of performing the multilingual couple identity, which some were able to recognise as its own unit of identity in the relationship. It was in this sense that while there was some evidence of clear distinctions being made between the self and the other, and between the couples' differing cultures and languages as an abstract imposition of "boundedness" (Karis, 2009:91), the prevalent recognition of unique couple identities and a recognition in changes of self through relationship demonstrated a move beyond this boundedness and towards confluence (Gergen, 2009:180), or what Fishbane (2001) refers to as "a readiness for the relational":

> "a willingness to be moved by the other, to see and be seen, to stay connected even through conflict, to hear the other's narrative even while articulating one's own, and to negotiate differences without resorting to "power over" tactics." (276)

Significant evidence of this was found in the observations that the difference of first languages and cultures strengthened rather than weakened modes of communication within the multilingual relationship, adding support to recent attempts in intercultural couple research that have identified linguistic and cultural discrepancy as not a negative but positive force in relationships (Cools, 2006; Seward, 2008; Renalds, 2011).

Based on this understanding of the context, I was able to further focus on the

dynamics at play within the multilingual relationship which potentially impacted which aspects of the second languages were being developed, and in what ways support was provided. Cultural aspects of language use, such as colloquialisms and linguistic etiquette, were identified as being developed largely through the relationship as well as cultural immersion in the context where the language was being used. This may be seen as comparable to situations where study abroad students reside with a host family, and develop linguistic and cultural understandings as a result (Dewey, 2007:258). What is seen as significant, however, was that the language or linguistic features acquired did not necessarily adhere to stereotypical mannerisms or what would be seen as, for instance, “typically British” or “typically Greek”. It was more about cultural language sharing and negotiation at the level of the individuals in the couple relationship, as an exemplar of how:

> “social actors as active subjects, rather than cultures as whole hardened fixed entities, are the main protagonists in processes of socio-cultural transmission and adaptation.”
>
> (Rodriguez-Garcia, 2006:426)

Other aspects of second language development in the couple relationships included pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax. It was not surprising that methods of language development and support were mainly informal and naturalistic (Eraut et al. 1998, cited in Boreham & Morgan, 2004:208), with some initial attempts to incorporate more formal teaching and learning, but many finding it challenging and unsustainable as had the participants in my previous study (Yim, 2009). Thus, it was the case for some to seek more formal second language learning opportunities outside of the immediate couple context, which, on the whole, were seen to be facilitative of language learning in tandem

with the more incidental and day-to-day development of second languages (Krashen, 1976; Milton, 2008) in the relationship.

In addition to the immediate couplehood context, both extended families and the children were shown to be highly significant factors in the potential development of second languages, as in all four cases, the non-English language was also used in communication with the extended family and friends. For the English participants, visits to their spouses' home countries and time spent with their families, although limited to a few times a year, enabled them to develop "more native-like knowledge about and performance of target language speech acts" (Cohen & Shively, 2007:194) through cultural and social immersion. In their everyday context of living in the U.K., with the exception of Brook and Ben, one partner would use the non-English language with the children. This meant that the prevalence of the less dominant language in their households drastically increased with the birth of offspring, providing additional opportunities for the English spouses to improve their second language skills.

While it was shown that in all four cases second languages were indeed being developed either within or by extension of the multilingual couplehood, there were related issues, some of which were rather contentious, that required further negotiation. Issues of practicality in the investment of time and effort in learning the second language needed to be justified, and proved challenging for some of the participants. Additionally, matters to do with mediation and interpretation, for example, were rarely straightforward for the couples (Cools, 2009), as each had their own issues that were raised depending on their relational contexts. These issues highlight the potential difficulties involved in cooperative and reciprocal second language support and learning in multilingual couple contexts, in which the couple is "actively participat[ing] in a mutual

process of teaching/learning" (Thayer-Bacon, 1997:245) as two relational selves come together.

It has been recognised that language and linguistic communication were important parts of these relational selves in regards to the performance of linguistic and cultural identities. The consideration of these in the context of multilingual couplehood has provided us with a better understanding of the complexities of relationships between people, between people and their first languages, and between people and their second languages. Processes of negotiating linguistic and cultural identities within self and between self and other were highlighted as being different from couple to couple and reliant on a variety of contextual relational factors, each in their own "complex adaptive system" (van Lier, 1997:783) in which the learner, the context, and meaningful others create connections from which learning and development emerge, but where these various connections, or relationships, were seen as directly reflected in the relational identities of the individuals, all of which were the main focus of inquiry. Societal narratives were further considered as influential in matters of self- or other- identification to languages and cultures as "providing models of identity and agency to its members" (Bruner, 19 96:xiv), but not always in positive ways for a second language user, at times limiting or marginalising identities (Peirce, 1995) by prioritising or valuing certain narratives over others. Microcontextual narratives, particularly in relation to the extended family, were also shown as having the potential to both expand and also limit identity expression in regards to the use of second languages. This showed great variance depending on the individual and how they related to a second language, and was not necessarily dependent on their level of proficiency.

As we have seen in the variations of multilingual couple contexts illuminating

past, present, and future language learning trajectories, the couple relationship itself as well as other significant relations collectively constitute the confluence (Gergen, 2009) of a multilingual couplehood, where the potential for second language development and support can be substantial. It is in these contexts that I was able to gain insight into how relational identities were dynamically constructed in multilingual relationships and in relation to the development of second languages. Furthermore, the data demonstrated that the relationship(s) one has with one's language(s), first, second, or otherwise, both influence and are influenced by meaningful interpersonal relationships, all of which have the constant potential to develop and change as relational narrative identities are continuously negotiated and reconstructed in the intersection of beings and languages. As Molina et al. (2004) have observed:

> "in the process of defining "themselves," couples experience the threefold challenge of "Who am I?" and "Who am I not?"; "Who are you?" and "Who are you not?"; and finally, "Who are we when we are together?"" (143)

It is through these processes that happen simultaneously in the moment-to-moment as well as throughout the course of a relationship that individuals in multilingual relationships can experience significant changes of self in relation to their home language and culture, and also in relation to their partner's, which collectively constitute and change the nature of the couplehood as having the potential to contribute to further relational changes in the wider linguistic and cultural narratives of society.

In conclusion, the data that have been obtained from the participants have revealed the complexity involved in issues of self-identification with a second language, further highlighting its multifaceted, and at times, contradictory nature.

We may say that interpersonal relationships can indeed have a great influence on the development of making personal connections with a second language in that “[l]anguages [gain] their meanings through relationships and the domains in which they [are] used” (Burck, 2008:93). There was additional evidence that strongly suggested language sharing and negotiation as having a positive influence on the development of the relationships as well, demonstrating an organic and integrated take on second language learning and support. It is in this sense that multilingual couple contexts can provide much insight into what actually happens when the relational worlds of two beings with differing languages and cultural backgrounds come together in an intimate connection to “all [form] a whole” (Cools, 2006:270).

10 IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, I provide an overview of the study, and revisit the main research questions in discussing the extent to which these have been addressed in light of the literature, the main theoretical assumptions, methodological approach, and findings generated from the research. I then consider the key contributions and implications of the study in regards to its theoretical, practical, and methodological insights. This is followed by a self-reflexive consideration of the limitations of the study, which foregrounds possible future directions and approaches for further research.

10.1 Overview of the study

The objective of the current study was to explore issues regarding the support and development of second languages in the context of multilingual couplehood, which was identified as a significant area of study in its potential contributions to a better understanding of the relational dynamics involved in the learning and teaching of second languages at the intersection of different cultures, and more specifically, different languages.

Through a critical review of the existing literature on intercultural relationships, it was found that while there are many studies which have looked at the various aspects of communication and issues of language in intimate intercultural relationships, some of which allude to the potential for second language

development and support in these contexts (Piller, 2002; Cools, 2006; Piller & Takahashi, 2006; Seward, 2008; Cools, 2009; Gundacker, 2010; Renalds, 2011) none have sought to specifically investigate this phenomenon, a gap which the current study has attempted to fill. It was also perceived that conceptualisations of what constituted a multilingual couplehood were under-developed, which further encouraged a closer investigation of the features that characterised these relationships.

Relational theory, an understanding of being and knowing that prioritises relationships between people and entities, was seen as an appropriate theoretical framework in investigating the topic of language learning in the highly relational context of intimate and romantic relationships, as it would provide a way of looking at learning processes not in themselves, but as part of the relational context and manifestation of the individual identities that construct it. This was additionally seen as having great implications on second language education practice and theory, which are moving towards a more affectual view of language learning with much consideration of learner and teacher identities. Relational perspectives were seen to add greater meaning and explanatory power to existing theories in viewing entities as not independent, but inherently relational, and how these constructed the language learning context as part of the interconnected relationship dynamics present in the second language contexts. The research questions were developed and refined throughout the discussions in Chapters 1, 2 and 3 as threefold:

1. What are the characterising features of multilingual couplehood, and what does it mean to be in one?

2. What are the salient relational factors (relationships) in the development and support of second languages in the context of multilingual couplehood?

3. How are relational identities regarding languages negotiated and changed in processes of second language development and support in the context of multilingual couplehood?

As a way of exploring these issues of languages in relation, a narrative approach was adopted based on its suitability with relational perspectives of being and knowing, which may be seen as one of the major strengths of the research in its substantial integration of theory and methodological approach. The study was designed to involve the collection of qualitative data from eight participants, both individually and in their units of couplehood, to be analysed and presented in a two-stage process, the first of which culminated in a narrative reconstruction and relational analysis for each of the four couples, the second involving a cross-couple analysis and discussion of the findings in light of my specific research concerns. The findings demonstrate that the eight individuals as part of four multilingual couples were highly diversified in their perceptions of the couplehood, how they negotiated their different languages and cultures in the relationship, and the issues they encountered with the support and development of second languages,.

In regards to this first research question (***What are the characterising features of multilingual couplehood, and what does it mean to be in one?***) which was generated as way of gaining a better understanding of the context under investigation, findings suggest that interculturality and the actual use of both languages are salient in the self-identification of being in multilingual

relationship. Their relationships were characterised in different ways, but involved the identification of how linguistic and cultural differences were perceived: as influencing initial attraction, sustaining mutual interest in the other, “doing” the couplehood through the use of languages unique to the couple, and viewing challenges in communication as strengthening relational bonds, whether it was in the positive sense of broadening horizons and a sharing of cultural and linguistic difference, or in the sense that it caused tensions that the prioritisation of the couple identity enabled them to overcome. This notion of a ‘couple identity’ was recognised by individuals in differing degrees, but could be found in all of their accounts in how they related to the couplehood, and how this further manifested in individual and couple behaviours.

Much insight was gained in regards to the second question (***What are the salient relational factors (relationships) in the development and support of second languages in the context of multilingual couplehood?***), which relates to what the couples actually did in developing and supporting second languages in the relationship, and more importantly, why and how these were negotiated and implemented. Motivations to learn the partner’s language were generally strong, not only influenced by the multilingual couplehood itself, but also in relation to other significant others that had become an important part of their lives, including in-laws and children. A variety of linguistic features were seen to be developed through the relationship, including the cultural or colloquial aspects of the language which were further enhanced by virtue of cultural immersion. More structural aspects of language were also supported, depending on the level of proficiency and practical need.

However, there were also some challenges in the learning and teaching of second languages in such an intimate context, some of which had to do with the absence of a real desire to learn the language beyond practical need. It was also found that it was not enough to have the motivation to learn; this needed to be reciprocated with a motivation to teach. Most were comfortable in supporting their partner's language learning through informal support and mediation, but some expressed the challenges of teaching a loved one in a relational context. Findings also raised the question of whether fluid linguistic communication was necessarily a prerequisite in the cultivation of mutually satisfying interpersonal relationships. While this was not a question which could be fully addressed in the current study, it remains a fact that many instances of language development and support could be identified, each couple having their own ways of approaching the task in their particular contexts.

The final question (***How are relational identities regarding languages negotiated and changed in processes of second language development and support in the context of multilingual couplehood?***) sought to tease out how relational negotiations of linguistic and national identities generated change in multilingual relationships. Through the highly diversified narratives of the four couples, it was found that linguistic and cultural allegiances could remain strong, but inevitably influencing and influenced by a variety of relational factors, which included where the couples lived and the extent to which individuals felt their new linguistic and cultural context had become a part of their relational selves. In cases where the divide between 'self' and 'other' remained salient, there was the potential for tensions in negotiating and renegotiating identities, both within and outside of the couple relationship. However, it was also found that individuals could develop a well-founded emotional bond with their partner's

language and culture, regardless of actual or perceived proficiency in the language, implying the significant and profound effect interpersonal relationships can have on language attitudes in general.

10.2 Implications

The current study has provided much insight into a context of second language learning previously not investigated, which is seen to have a number of significant implications on theory, practice, and research. I now discuss each in turn.

10.2.1 Theoretical

In recognition of recent trends and changes in second language educational theory and practice, Relational Theory (Gergen, 2009) and its related applications to knowledge and education (Thayer-Bacon, 1995) were seen as potentially powerful conceptual frameworks that have not been adequately recognised in investigating issues of affect, motivation, and identity in language learning and teaching contexts. It is in this sense that the current study has provided an detailed account of how relational understandings of being and knowledge, coupled with narrative theories of identity (Witherell & Noddings, 1991; Andrews, 2000; McAdams et al. 2006) could be effectively adopted as a way of approaching the complexity of human interaction and meaning-making, particularly in contexts of second language learning and teaching.

Based on a recognition of the fundamentality of interpersonal relationships in all facets of human activity, their significance in contexts of education have been acknowledged in the recognition of affective, humanistic, and sociocultural dimensions in what has been identified as the “social turn” (Block, 2003; Pavlenko, 2013) in the field of second language education. This has

encouraged substantial developments in our understanding of the situated language learner in their social context (van Lier, 1997; 2000; Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2010) and the centrality of learner identities and their interactions with the social contexts in consideration of issues of second language learning motivation (Dörnyei, 2009; Ushioda, 2009) and further language use (Piller, 2011). By focusing on the narratives of how and why individuals have succeeded to differing degrees in learning a second language, this study has demonstrated the critical influence, both positive and negative, interpersonal relationships can have in processes of second language development. It has also illustrated the true complexity of what a 'self-in-context' perspective entails, as matters of self- and other-identification in relationships become crucial factors in language learning motivation, not only in its initiation, but perhaps more importantly in its sustenance and further evolution into actual teaching and learning practices.

The strength of the current study, therefore, lies in going beyond the recognition of relationships embedded in social structures and their influence on learning and teaching, in attempting to identify the dynamics of these relationships in how they can potentially influence the negotiation and manifestation of second language support and development. There needs to be an increased awareness regarding the nature of relationships between peers and between teachers and learners, not simply with the view of finding out how they may or may not facilitate actual language acquisition, but on the premise that the one-to-one relationships themselves are what need to be nurtured in the facilitation of second language development, and further the performance of second language identities. The perspective taken here thus constitutes the next "turn"

in thinking about second language education and multilingual identities, which I would coin as the “relational”.

The current study has additionally added to our understanding of informal second language learning processes, demonstrating the importance of mutual engagement and reciprocity in intercultural communication as well as a recognition and valuing of difference, which can be applied in all “natural” learning contexts, whether in institutional or professional settings. In addition, it has highlighted second language learning in informal contexts as an inherently relational construct, not as merely a desire to learn a language but a desire to forge meaningful bonds with significant (and potentially significant) others. As to the specific context of multilingual couplehood, the study has raised a number of issues regarding informal teaching and learning, and rather than presenting a fixed “model” of what this entails, it has presented a range of potentially effective informal language support strategies to be further investigated.

As a comprehensive theory which at once acknowledges the individualities of relational beings as well as the multiple facets of relational identities, relational theory has much potential to add another dimension to existing theories that acknowledge the importance of others as a fundamental aspect of individual cognition, affect, and identity. The way in which it has been applied to understanding processes of language sharing in multilingual couples may be further applied in investigations of both formal and informal educational settings, for example, in identifying the salient relational dynamics present in second language classrooms, or in one-to-one settings where the relationship between teacher and learner become a highly salient issue.

10.2.2 Practical

In addition to the theoretical insights that have emerged from the application of relational and narrative understandings in relations processes of second language learning and teaching, the study has succeeded in providing a highly detailed account of the different relational aspects involved in the constitution of multilingual relationships, and issues regarding second language development and support that occur within them. As it was this complexity of relational factors which I sought to explore, and what has been demonstrated throughout the narrative reconstructions and discussion, it would be somewhat inappropriate to present definitive and suggestions for second language learning and teaching practice, in multilingual couple contexts or otherwise. However, it is my belief that the study has provided solid ground for the consideration of practical issues of second language learning and teaching in a way that recognises and further appreciates interpersonal relationships as a fundamental component.

Firstly, as an addition to the growing literature looking to provide guidance for intercultural families, findings from the study can help individuals in multilingual relationships who may be further invested in the learning and teaching of second language(s) in relation to their significant other. The four case studies can provide a better understanding of the complexities and challenges involved in this endeavour, which lead to an increased awareness of how particular relational factors (for example, extended family, children, and the social context) can potentially facilitate, or hinder, the development and support of second languages in the couplehood or family.

In making evident the significance of relationships to language acquisition, and the possibility for relationships to develop and strengthen through acts of

teaching and learning languages, the study can also contribute to better practice in formal second language learning contexts. On the premise that all individuals are relational beings, inevitably influencing and influenced by relational others, it promotes a need for language teachers to be aware of their students' relational narratives, to consider how a second language may potentially enhance existing bonds or create new ones. This is not to suggest that teachers should collect the life narratives of each individual to find ways to connect with them; identification of the salient relational factors regarding their attitudes and motivations in relation to the second language could provide a sound starting point for learners to develop second languages as part of their relational identities by finding ways that make language learning meaningful and significant to them in relation to other aspects of their selves, and not restricted to the specific learning content and context. This additionally involves helping students realise that teachers are relational beings as well, with hopes and dreams and fears and lives outside of the classroom. Relational approaches in the educational context can thus lead to more meaningful modes of interpersonal communication and the co-creation of relationships that can facilitate learner and teacher goals.

Relational education, or relational models of knowledge and learning, are complex, as has been demonstrated in participant accounts of learning *in* and *through* relationship. However, the significance and potential of this approach lies within its complexity, which manifests in the constant negotiations and the inevitable tensions as a fundamental feature of relationships between beings (Cools, 2006:264) as their relational worlds come together. It is thus not only the relationship that is facilitative of second language development; it is the support

and learning of second languages and the sometimes challenging processes involved which are facilitative of the relationship.

10.2.3 Methodological

As I have highlighted in the introduction and methodology chapters, narrative methods have been widely utilised in the study of intercultural and multilingual relationships, and are becoming increasingly common in the field of education. However, I find that much of the research in these fields neglects to fully take advantage of the exploratory capabilities of narrative by either presenting individual narratives as primarily self-explanatory and as illustrative of a particular argument, or analysing the narrative data in a way which isolates phenomena as being independent from the wider context. As such, I feel that the current study presents an alternative methodological framework in the investigation of identities, languages, and teaching and learning which has been absent in the literature, in that it has incorporated relational theory into the narrative approach which aim to reveal the complexities and idiosyncrasies of cases with a particular consideration of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships.

In illustration of the potential strength of this approach, we could consider the case of Dora, whose mediational support for David's learning of her mother tongue was lacking in some respects. Rather than categorising this under "unwillingness to help" based on prevalent methods of qualitative thematic analysis, a relational narrative approach using the accounts of both individuals in the relationship has provided further insight into the relational context in which this phenomenon has occurred, namely, how her own experiences of

learning and developing English and the difficulties in acting as constant interpreter has made linguistic mediation challenging for her. The same may be applied to the case of Ben, whose personal identification with his German heritage could be simplified as being “weak” if one only considers his accounts of not being completely satisfied with the German environment and wanting to seek new experiences, which he succeeded in adopting English as an integral part of developing an alternative mixed identity. However, the issue was seen to be much more complicated than this in respect to moments of discomfort with his father-in-law. His feelings of guilt associated with not having made more of an effort to sufficiently pass on his linguistic and cultural to his children are also a testament to his emotional ties with his home country.

In respect to research in any second language learning and teaching context, the study thus makes apparent the limitations of investigating teacher, student, learning content, and learning context as independent and isolated from each other. The methodological approach presented here, in which narratives are reconstructed and subject to a form of relational analysis both within each case and then more comprehensively across cases, and further in specific contexts of interaction as well as how they change and develop over time, could be utilised in recognising the key salient factors and how they dynamically interact in micro- or macro- contexts of interaction, not in the search for finding commonalities but in gaining a more comprehensive and insightful understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

10.3 Suggestions for further research

While the study has been significant in helping us better understand multilingual couple contexts and the potential for second language development within them, it has also raised some issues that can direct us towards other research endeavours to be pursued in the future.

The first recommendation may be made in regards to the scope of the study. Relational perspectives are inherently contextual, meaning there are limitations to what this study can say in regards to the widely varied multilingual couple contexts. While intercultural couple relationships have been a burgeoning area of study in a number of disciplines, multilingual couplehood is a relatively less investigated construct, which means there is little in the form of solid grounding in regards to terminology and theory for inter-disciplinary approaches to the topic, which the academic community would clearly benefit from. Further research into the specific features of multilingual couple contexts revealed in this study, for example, the use of languages in inter-couple or family conversation and communicational break-downs, may be able to provide more concrete guidelines and suggestions to help individuals enhance their relationships. Focus on specific aspects of second language development, for example, vocabulary and pronunciation, and the methods employed by multilingual couples, could also add to the accretion towards a more comprehensive understanding of what these processes involve, and how these insights could be applied in helping individuals in these relationships.

There is also the issue of teaching and learning in intimate relationships, which, to my knowledge, has not yet been theorised or investigated, despite the

prevalence of the idea that it is a challenging endeavour. Questions regarding the nature of the emotional and otherwise risks involved in the potentially conflicting roles of being a spouse as well as a learner/teacher remain, which requires further scrutiny into the relational dynamics of couples and families to suggest practical ways of addressing these issues and overcoming them.

Researchers interested in more cognitive approaches may also choose to approach the phenomenon of second language development in couplehood in respect to actual second language acquisition. While this was not a concern of the current study, one can see the relevance in investigating how much learning did take place in these relational contexts as opposed to individual perceptions of second language proficiency, for instance, the acquisition of grammatical structures or accuracy in the use of prepositions. As a pioneer in this increasingly common yet under-investigated learning context, the current study has unfolded endless and exciting possibilities for future research.

10.4 Concluding remarks

Having been borne out of my own relational understanding of second language development and intimate interpersonal relationship, the study is presented with the expectation of making a small but significant contribution in both fields of second language education and intercultural relationships. By adopting a relational perspective and narrative methodology in investigating a context of second language learning that has not been previously explored, it is my hope that the study will encourage further research into multilingual couples and the linguistic issues they encounter, as well as build a case for the application of more relational and narrative perspectives in second language educational theory, practice, and research in the future.

My experience of this preliminary attempt of combining relational theory with narrative methods in an empirical study has proved to be very rewarding, but also fraught with the difficulties of maintaining a holistic view of the narrative data while simultaneously identifying key relations and individual factors which influenced second language development and support in the multilingual couple context. I may have underestimated the challenges of researching relationality through narratives, and further steps would need to be taken in presenting a more robust and duplicable theoretical and methodological framework to be utilised by others. While it is my understanding that there is no one way of conducting narrative inquiry, I feel that approaches to researching relationality through narratives can be further developed, perhaps with the addition of more quantitative methods. In reflection of conducting interviews, it occurred to me that some participants may respond more frankly and freely to anonymous

methods of data collection, including surveys and questionnaires, which can leave space for individual perspectives of a more qualitative nature as well. This could also be useful in the collection of data from a larger population, which would be needed to further identify relational factors that are salient across multilingual couple contexts. These are venues of study I hope to pursue further.

Throughout the process of research, I have come to the understanding that a relational identity does not mean that I am defined by any one or the manifold relationships that I am invested in. It is every single one of the ever-changing relationships I have, significantly including those with nationality, culture, language, and relational others which are an integral part of me that ultimately make up who I am as an individual. I can now add to this my relational bond with this piece of research, in its creation, planning, execution, and dissemination, which has inevitably changed me in the most profound ways as a being, as I look forward to the multiple possibilities this particular relationship will create in the future.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Bronfenbrenner's *Ecological Systems Theory* (1986) as adapted by Seshadri (2010:21) in her study of intercultural relationships

Ecological Systems Theory

Microsystem: Creating the "we"	Influences inside the couple dyad which shape the couple identity, strength, and meaning. This includes each individual's perceived realities
Mesosystem: We and Us	Interactions in daily life which shape the couple identity outside the couple (friends and family)
Exosystem: We and Them	Interactions with community which shape the couple identity, strength, and meaning. This can include culture.
Macrosystem: We and the World	Interactions with society (i.e. media, government, culture, race, ethnicity and marriage) which shape the couple identity, strength, and meaning
Chronosystem: We and Life	Interactions with time and events which shape the couple identity, strength, and meaning

Appendix 2 Typology of standards for long-term relationships (Vangelisti & Daley, 1997:207)

Category	Description
Adaptability	Both people will be willing and able to adapt to the changing needs, demand, and desires of the other.
Privacy	Neither person will reveal personal data about the other to people not involved in the relationship.
Acquisition	The two people will acquire possessions together and will presume to jointly share and own them.
Freedom	Each person will respect the other's rights; neither will presume upon the other. Each will allow the other his or her "own space" when desired.
Relational centrality	For both people, the relationship will be more important than jobs, friends, others, etc. The relationship will be a very central part of their lives.
Fidelity	The two people will be emotionally and physically faithful to each other.
Impact	Each person in the relationship will significantly affect the other.
Contracts	Both people will abide by the various explicit and implicit contracts, rules, agreements, and arrangements the two have made with each other.
Presence	The two people will spend much time together.
Relaxation	Both people will feel comfortable and at ease with the other. There will be no need for pretensions or image consciousness. Both will be comfortable "letting their hair down" in the other's presence.
Acceptance	Both people will know and accept the other's faults and strengths; neither will take advantage of the other's weaknesses.

(continued)

Respect	Both people will respect each other, provide credit where due, not be condescending or demeaning toward each other, not "put each other down".
Affection demonstration	Both people will show one another that they like and love each other.
Goal sharing	The two people will share similar plans, goals, and aspirations for the relationship.
Uniqueness	The people will believe their relationship to be different from other relationships. It is a unique and special relationship – not like others.
Reliability	Both people will be able to rely on the other; each will offer security and dependability for the other.
Differentiation	Both people in the relationship will fill certain roles. He will do X; She'll do Y. The roles will complement each other.
Physical intimacy	The two people will be physically intimate with each other.
Openness	Both people will be willing to talk and comfortable talking with the other about wants and needs and things that are bothering them; each will be willing to self-disclose feelings and emotions.
Twosome	The two people will go and be together; neither will leave the other alone or behind.
Recognition	Others will recognize and know the two people as a couple.
Coping	Both people will be able to cope with problems, arguments, fights, discord, and disasters associated with the other and the relationship without sacrificing the relationship.
Predictability	Both people will know the other well enough to comfortably predict the other's likes, dislikes, and actions.
Frankness	Both people will be honest with the other. Neither person will lie to the other on important matters; each will be trustworthy.
Commitment	Both people will be committed to each other and their shard relationship.
Other-directedness	Each person will attempt to please and satisfy the other, make the other feel good, be helpful and unselfish.

(continued)

Emotional attachment	The two people will be emotionally tied to each other. Each will feel love for the other.
Network integration	Each person will help the other become accepted in his or her circle of friends and relatives and each will accept the other's friends and relatives.
Enjoyment	The relationship will be fun and enjoyable.
Synchrony	The two people will mesh; they won't strongly disagree on major values and issues and they'll complement each other's tastes and needs.

Appendix 3 Call for research participants e-mail

Call for Research Participants in a study on Multilingual Couples

Dear potential participant,

Hello. My name is Soo Yeon Yim, and I am a PhD candidate in the School of Education at the University of Exeter.

My thesis is on the language sharing (teaching/learning) practices and issues in the context of multilingual couples. Some main areas of interest include issues of motivation, linguistic identity, and how the relationship has influenced the development of a second (additional) language.

Please read and answer the following if you think you might be eligible for the study.

- Are you currently in a long-term relationship (this is a relative term, but I would loosely define this as around 3 years or more), regardless of marital status?

- Are you and your partner from differing linguistic/cultural backgrounds?
  OR
  Are you or your partner fluent in a language that the other is less fluent in?[14]

- Have you had experience in supporting your partner's second (additional) language learning (formally or informally)?
  OR
  Have you had experience in receiving support in second (additional) language learning (formally or informally) from your partner?
  OR
  Have you had experience in exchanging and supporting each other's second (additional) language development with your partner?

- Are you AND your partner comfortable with participating in audio-recorded interviews in English?

[14] Based on the discussion of what would constitute a 'multilingual couple' in Chapter 2, this second question should not have been included. However, this did not have any significant consequences on the research itself, as all couples were intercultural as well as multilingual.

- Would you AND your partner be willing to share your experiences through a series of 3 open interviews (face-to-face, phone, or skype)?

If you have answered 'Yes' to the questions above, you would be able to participate in the study. The 3 interviews would be 2 individual interviews (with each partner), and 1 couple interview. The duration of the interviews are completely flexible and to your discretion, however, I would tentatively expect each to last around an hour. I would prefer face-to-face interviews, and therefore would be willing to travel within the UK, time and transportation costs allowing. I further aim to complete the interviews before Christmas 2012, however, will consider further interviews if necessary up until the end of January, 2013 at the latest.

I would also like to add that if you agree to participate, you will be asked to read and agree to a consent form, which will further clarify issues of anonymity and security of interview data.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you are either interested in participating, or have any further questions or concerns.

I look forward to meeting you, and hearing about your journey as a multilingual couple!

Best wishes,

Soo Yeon Yim

MEd TESOL, MSc Educational Research
University of Exeter
E-mail: syy***@exeter.ac.uk
Mobile: 075*****182

Appendix 4 Participant detail form

Participant Details *Participant reference number:*

First name: _____ Surname: _____

Chosen pseudonym (optional): _____

Gender: M / F

Full name of partner: _____ Partner's gender: M / F

Your country of birth: _____

Countries of residence (countries in which you lived for approximately 6 months or more): _____

First language(s): _____

Second and additional language(s): _____

Language(s) spoken in the home – with partner: _____

– with children (if applicable): _____

Additional information (ex. Ages of children and the languages they speak…):

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

*Thank you for answering.

Appendix 5 Participant consent form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

A narrative inquiry into second language learning and teaching in multilingual couples

You and your partner are asked to volunteer as participants in a study conducted by Soo Yeon Yim, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education, College of Social Sciences and International Studies at the University of Exeter. Results will be presented and discussed in the form of a PhD thesis.

Purpose of the Study

This is an exploratory study of couples who define themselves as 'multilingual', and aims to investigate the language sharing (teaching/learning) practices and related issues within that context. Some main areas of interest include issues of motivation, linguistic identity, and how the relationship has influenced the development of a second (additional) language.

By participating in the study, you and your partner will have confirmed the following:

- My partner and I are currently in a long-term relationship (loosely defined as around 3 years or more), regardless of marital status.

- My partner and I come from differing linguistic/cultural backgrounds OR my partner or I are fluent in a language that the other is less fluent in.

- I have had experience in supporting my partner's second (additional) language learning (formally or informally) OR I have had experience in receiving support in second (additional) language learning (formally or informally) from my partner OR we have had experience in exchanging and supporting each other's second (additional) language development.

- My partner and I are comfortable with participating in audio-recorded interviews in English.

- My partner and I are willing to share our experiences through a series of 3 open interviews – 2 individual and 1 couple interview.

Procedures

1. Each participant will be interviewed individually at a time, date, and place agreed by both researcher and participant. The interviews will be recorded on a digital recording device, and observational notes will be taken by the researcher.

2. The couple will be interviewed togeter, preferably, but not necessarily on a subsequent date. The interview will be recorded on a digital recording device, and observational notes will be taken by the researcher.

Potential Risks and Discomforts

Although all measures will be taken to ensure that the questions are not overly personal or sensitive, you may experience some discomfort or hesitation in answering some questions as they will pertain to issues of your identity, your couple identity, and your multilingual

relationship. You may refuse to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable answering and still remain a participant in the study.

Participation Consent

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation

I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me

any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications

If applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form

all information I give will be treated as confidential

the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

.....……..
.....
(Signature of participant)
(Date)

……
(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s)

Contact phone number of researcher(s):07*******82

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

Soo Yeon Yim (s****2@exeter.ac.uk)

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.

Appendix 6 Protocol for individual interviews

The multilingual couplehood

- How would you define ‘multilingual couple’, and how would you identify yourself as being a part of a ‘multilingual couple’?

- Would there be any advantages or disadvantages of being in a multilingual relationship, compared to that of a monolingual one?

The relationship

- How long have you known your partner for?

- Could you please share the story of how you met?

Initial language (cultural) issues

- Were there any issues with communication, perhaps in the initial stages of the relationship or later on, or even now?

Second language development and support

- Could you think of specific instances or episodes as you helped her/his language development?

- How did you support her in her English language development?

Linguistic motivations and backgrounds before the relationship

- What languages did you learn? How were they learnt? What was the motivation for you to learn ***?

Initial expectations of prospective partner

- Had you ever thought that you might be married to an English person? Did you have any preconceptions of multilingual couplehood?

Language use in the couplehood

- What language(s) did/do you use in the relationship?

(continued)

Issues of the extended family

- How did your family take to the relationship?

- Did you feel a sense of support from the family regarding your language development?

Further linguistic expectations

- Do you hope to continue learning *** in the future?

Multilingual couplehood and (linguistic) identity

- What does the *** language and culture mean to you, and how do you identify yourself within that?

- Do you feel a sense of a couple identity and your individual identity? Can you distinguish between the two, in any way?

- Do you feel any difference in how you feel about yourself, in terms of how you perceive you identity, when you're using the different languages?

- Do you have any concerns with their (the children's) language development, or about their identity in terms of being from a multicultural family?

Open question (participant addendums)

- Is there anything else you would like to add that may be relevant to my research?

Examples of impromptu follow-up questions

- Can you remember any examples of linguistic misunderstandings?

- And was that one of the more important aspects of your relationship at the beginning?

- And what was the motivation for you to spend so much time and money and effort into learning English?

- And through what sort of medium or motivation did you learn French?

(continued)

- Can you tell me how that relationship changed from a student-teacher to something more personal?

- Would you say that that was an important part of your relationship or not?

- Did the language difference and helping each other with the languages affect the relationship?

- So he was getting both formal and informal language support. Was there any conscious effort on your or his part to maintain his Polish when you moved to England?

- So what do you suppose is the most difficult thing about learning Greek, or the challenges? Because you said you always had the motivation to communicate with the family, for example, and know what's going on? What would be the major factors in deterring your motivation to learn the language?

- So have you tried to help him learn Greek throughout the years, or not really…?

- So where do you see that journey further going?

- Do you see yourself continuing to learn Polish in the future?

- And do you think you would be able to support him in any way, in his Greek learning?

- When you do go back to visit your friends and family back in Germany, do they comment on how you've changed?

- How important to you is the fact that *** is growing up with two languages and two cultures?

- You referred to language as an asset and benefit. In what ways, do you think?

Appendix 7 Protocol for joint interviews

The multilingual couplehood

So, as a couple, I will ask you the question again. Could you please share the story of how you met?

What does it mean to be a multilingual couple, and could you identify the various issues related to that?

As a multilingual couple, could you share what sort of advantages and perhaps disadvantages that you've found in being a multilingual couple that might be different from a monolingual couple?

How would you distinguish yourselves as a multilingual couple from monolingual couples?

Language development and support

How do you think that the learning of each other's languages influenced your relationship?

How did the relationship influence the learning of languages?

Within both of your language learning trajectories, would you say both the formal and informal support of each other's language learning were important, or would you say one was more important that the other?

How has that language exchange affected the relationship, or the process of growing together as a couple?

Do you expect him to further his Polish language development?

Do you hope to maintain or further develop your second language?

Advice to other multilingual couples

What advice would you give to other multilingual couples, perhaps those in the beginning stages of the relationship?

(continued)

Would you encourage them to learn each other's languages? Why or why not? And in what ways?

Participant-led interview

I would now like to give you a chance to conduct your own interviews. Please feel free to ask and respond to any questions that you would like to additionally discuss.

Appendix 8 Transcription notations (Adapted from Piller, 2009:70 and Burck, 2005:197)

,	clause final intonation with more to come
.	clause final falling intonation – end of statement
!	clause final high-fall
?	clause final rising intonation – question
…	Speaker trails off or pauses briefly.
……	Long pause
word	italics – emphasis by speaker
[laughs]	brackets - non-verbal information
[???]	inaudible
[…]	omission - section of extract left out by researcher

Appendix 9 Alexa and Adam's narratives

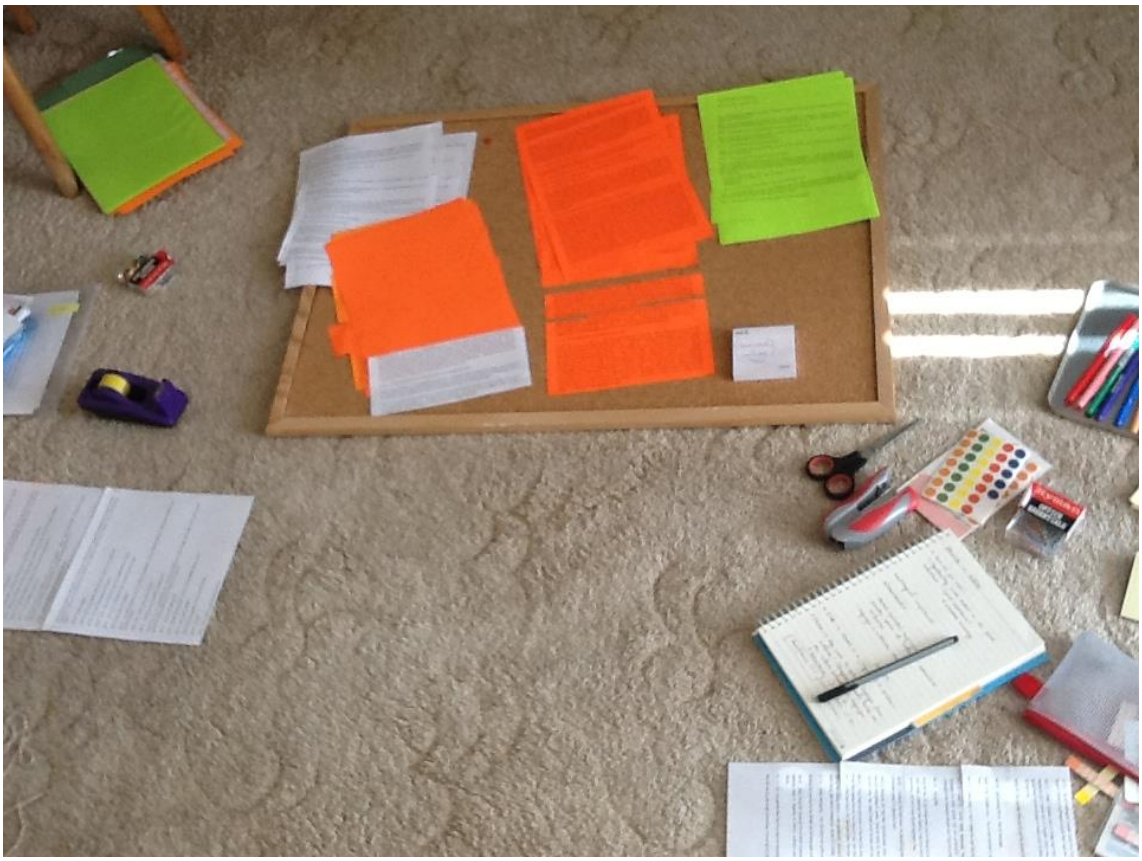
Appendix 10 Brook and Ben's narratives

Appendix 11 Celina and Cedric's narratives

Appendix 12 Dora and David's narratives

→ to be found on the supplemented CD

Appendix 13 Coding and collating for reconstructed couple narratives



Appendix 14 Initial Coding

86 Codes (C) identified in OPEN CODING stage

C01 Definition of multilingual couplehood
C02 Relationship between language and culture
C03 Negotiation between self and couplehood
C04 Language as an independent entity (with its own characteristics and properties)
C05 Less dominant language used as private language
C06 Use of language(s) to show additional meaning or disposition
C07 Use of language(s) as providing options for expression and behaviour
C08 Differences in languages and cultures as interesting discussion topic
C09 Extended families as a potential cause of tension
C10 Struggle to maintain cultural identity
C11 Learning English at school
C12 Proficiency in a shared language
C13 Positive attitudes towards other culture(s) and language(s)
C14 The development and support of the subtleties and cultural nuances of the second language
C15 The development and support of second language vocabulary
C16 The development and support of second language idioms
C17 Discrepancy between perceived second language proficiency between self and other
C18 The development of the second language through natural exposure to the language and culture (e.g. books, television, authentic conversation)
C19 Second language learning motivation (past, present, and future)
C20 The role of the children in second language development and support
C21 Lack of practical need to develop and support the second language
C22 Challenges to instigating more formal and structured forms of ‘learning’ and ‘teaching’ a second language
C23 Perceptions of identity changes in self and other
C24 Perceptions of identity changes from friends and family
C25 Self-identification in relation to home language and culture
C26 Performance of linguistic identity

C27 Perceptions and behaviours of multilingual couple identity
C28 Lack of fluent common language as a positive
C29 Use of a hybrid language
C30 Difference of first languages and cultures as strengthening communication
C31 Difference of first languages and cultures as just another relationship variable
C32 Linguistic misunderstandings
C33 Differences of cultural norms and etiquette causing tension
C34 Communication issues owing to word choice
C35 Communication issues owing to pronunciation
C36 Recognition of gaps in second language use
C37 Extended family and friends as motivation to improve second language
C38 Written communication in a second language (letters, texting…)
C39 Extended family facilitating second language support and development
C40 Complete familial integration as facilitating second language development
C41 Multilingual couplehood as fun and interesting
C42 Formal second language learning (outside of relationship)
C43 Social hobbies as facilitative of second language development
C44 Negative preconceptions of second language before the relationship
C45 English as primary language of relationship
C46 English as primary language owing to relative proficiency
C47 Formal second language learning (during relationship)
C48 Efforts to maintain proficiency in second language
C49 Deterioration of second language proficiency
C50 Negative perceptions of own culture
C51 Strong affiliation with home culture and language
C52 Mixed linguistic and cultural identity
C53 “Outsider” identities
C54 Socio-historical relations between different languages and cultures and existing cultural stereotypes
C55 Development of meaningful relational ties with partner’s language
C56 British perceptions (attitudes) towards second languages
C57 Changes in prioritising one’s cultural background

C58 Expectations to develop second language

C59 Language as socio-economic capital

C60 Advice to other multilingual couples[15]

C61 No prior exposure to second languages or cultures

C62 Other's perceptions of second language proficiency

C63 Support with regional second language accents and dialects

C64 Support with second language writing

C65 Modes of second language support

C66 Error correction

C67 Spouse as translator/interpreter/mediator

C68 Becoming linguistically dependent on spouse

C69 Motivations to converse better in second language

C70 Lack of investment of time and effort into developing second language

C71 Difficulty of the second language as a deterrent

C72 Perceptions (attitudes) towards second language learning

C73 Deterioration of first language (native tongue)

C74 Distinction between 'first language' and 'mother tongue'

C75 Commitment to learning the other's language

C76 Differences in language as a factor of attraction in the relationship

C77 Differences in culture as a factor of attraction in the relationship

C78 Differences as challenging norms and expectations

C79 Development of a sensitivity and understanding of difference

C80 Uniqueness of cultures and languages coming together

C81 Out-of-school English tuition

C82 Positive role models for second language development

C83 Negotiation of language learning and teaching

C84 Prioritising speaking and listening over literacy in second language

C85 Relationship between language and thought

C86 Multilingual relationship as broadening horizons

[15] This was a question asked in all the joint interviews, but it was later deemed unnecessary and inappropriate to include in the presentation and discussion of data, thus omitted in the subsequent stage of axial coding.

Appendix 15 Axial coding

(86 codes refined and merged into 46 axial codes grouped under 10 themes)

Theme 1 Defining multilingual couplehood

AC01 (← C01)

Definition of multilingual couplehood (responses to the interview question)

AC02 (← C02, C85)

Multilingual as intercultural

Theme 2 Characteristics (features) of multilingual couplehood

AC03 (← C45, C46)

One language as the primary language of relationship

AC04 (← C05)

Less dominant language used as private language

AC05 (← C06, C07)

Use of language(s) to show additional meaning or disposition

AC06 (← C08)

Differences in languages and cultures as interesting discussion topic

AC07 (← C32, C34, C35)

Linguistic misunderstandings

AC08 (← C33)

Differences of cultural norms and etiquette causing tension

AC09 (← C12, C17)

Discrepancy between self- and other- perceived second language proficiency

Theme 3 Perceptions of linguistic and cultural differences

AC10 (← C30)

Difference of first languages and cultures as strengthening communication

AC11 (← C31)

Difference of first languages and cultures as just another relationship variable

AC12 (← C54, C56, C72)

Socio-historical relations between different languages and cultures and existing stereotypes

AC13 (← C28, C76, C77)

Differences in language and culture as romantic attraction

AC14 (← C78, C79, C86)

Differences as challenging norms and expectations

AC15 (← C41)

Multilingual couplehood as fun and interesting

Theme 4 Identity

AC16 (← C27, C80)

Perceptions of a multilingual couple identity

AC17 (← C03, C10, C57)

Negotiation between self and couplehood

AC18 (← C03, C23, C55)

Perceived changes in identity (self and other)

AC19 (← C24)

Perceived changes in identity (by friends and family)

AC20 (← C25, C50, C51, C52)

Self-identification in relation to home language and culture

AC21 (← C26, C36, C53, C62)

Performance of second language identity

Theme 5 Language

AC22 (← C04)

Language as an independent entity (with its own characteristics and properties)

AC23 (← C59)

Language as socio-economic capital

Theme 6 Other significant relationships

AC24 (← C09)

The extended family as a potential cause of tension

AC25 (← C37, C39, C40)

The extended family facilitating second language support and development

AC26 (← C20)

The role of the children in second language development and support

Theme 7 Before the relationship

AC27 (← C11, C81)

Learning English at school

AC 28 (← C13, C44)

Positive/Negative attitudes towards other culture(s) and language(s)

AC29 (← C61)

No prior exposure to second languages or cultures

Theme 8 Language learning motivation

AC30 (← C19, C69, C75, C82, C84)

Second language learning motivation (past, present, and future)

AC31 (← C21)

Lack of practical need to develop and support the second language

AC32 (← C58)

Expectations of a spouse for their partner to develop second language

Theme 9 Second language support and development (method and content)

AC33 (← C29)

Use of a hybrid language

AC34 (← C38)

Letter writing and texting as a way of developing the second language

AC 35 (← C14)

The learning and support of the subtleties and cultural nuances of the second

language

AC36 (← C15. C16)

The learning and support of second language vocabulary, expressions, phrases and idioms

AC37 (← C63)

The learning of accents and pronunciation

AC38 (← C64)

The learning and support of second language writing

AC39 (← C18, C43, C65)

The learning of the second language through exposure to and integration with the language and culture

AC40 (← C66)

Error correction

<u>Theme 10 Additional considerations</u>

AC41 (← C67, C68)

Spouse as translator/interpreter/mediator

AC42 (← C22, C83)

Challenges to instigating more formal and structured forms of ‘learning’ and ‘teaching’ a second language

AC43 (← C42, C47)

Formal second language learning (outside of relationship)

AC44 (← C48, C49)

Second language maintenance / deterioration

AC45 (← C73, C74)

First language maintenance / deterioration

AC46 (← C70, C71)

Practical restraints / deterrents in second language development

Appendix 16 Axial code distribution across couples

Theme	T1		T2							T3					
Axial Code	AC01	AC02	AC03	AC04	AC05	AC06	AC07	AC08	AC09	AC10	AC11	AC12	AC13	AC14	AC15
Couple A	X	X	X	X	X	X			X			X	X		X
Couple B	X	X	X	X				X		X	X	X			X
Couple C	X		X		X	X	X			X			X		X
Couple D	X		X				X	X	X			X	X	X	X

Theme	T4						T5		T6			T7		
Axial Code	AC16	AC17	AC18	AC19	AC20	AC21	AC22	AC23	AC24	AC25	AC26	AC27	AC28	AC29
Couple A	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Couple B	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	
Couple C	X		X	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X
Couple D	X		X		X	X			X	X	X	X	X	

Theme	T8			T9							
Axial Code	AC30	AC31	AC32	AC33	AC34	AC35	AC36	AC37	AC38	AC39	AC40
Couple A	X	X				X	X			X	
Couple B	X	X		X	X	X	X			X	
Couple C	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Couple D	X		X			X		X	X	X	X

Theme	T10					
Axial Code	AC41	AC42	AC43	AC44	AC45	AC46
Couple A		X				X
Couple B			X	X		X
Couple C	X	X	X	X	X	X
Couple D	X	X	X		X	X

Appendix 17 Construction of “narrative beginnings”

In employing a narrative approach based on relational understandings in the research of multilingual couple identities, I thought it only natural that I treat this self-reflection also as a “mini” narrative inquiry, using similar methods to gain insight into my own relational and narrative background and perspectives. With the aim of allowing my own narrative to emerge from its telling and subsequent retelling(s), an interview prompt (see below) was devised for my significant other, who took on the role of interviewer. The conversation (or “interview”) was recorded, transcribed, and then reconstructed as the reflexive piece presented here. As with any narrative of relational selves, the text is somewhat “messy” and to some extent “censored”, but hopefully illuminating for the reader (as it was for me) in understanding the relational influences inherent in the performance of my identity as researcher.

Writer’s note: As odd as it may seem to pose questions that I knew I would be answering, I would encourage others in doing the same, as they may be surprised with what they find.

<u>Interview prompt</u>

Questions:

Could you briefly introduce yourself, and your background that may have relevance to the topic of your research (ex. As a bilingual speaker/language learner/language teacher)?

(continued)

What is(was) your own experience of being in a “multilingual couple” and how do you think it may have influenced your study?

Do you think you had any assumptions in what you might find going into the research? (retrospectively)

How did you position yourself (or seek to position yourself) as interviewer?

How would you describe your relationship with your research participants?

In what other ways do you think you may have been biased in the conduct of the interviews, and then the subsequent analysis, presentation, and discussion of the data?

Appendix 18 Excerpt from Brook and Ben's joint interview

Ben: I think you see it more as a… On a practical level, you speak German in order to communicate with someone, rather than… You know, cos… You don't really get, as you said earlier, you don't get drawn to the German culture, and… that comes through as judgment, even if it's just some silly remark, the German… I'm noticing that negative approach… that negative feeling about Germany, and it's the same with your parents…

Brook: You mean the Germans in general?

Ben: Yeah, it's always portrayed as… in a negative way, I think.

Brook: Do you?

Ben: Yeah.

Brook: That's interesting.

Ben: Because also your dad has a very… Well, Euro-sceptic, isn't he?

Brook: Yes.

Ben: So, you know, that… that place into that same thing.

Brook: Yeah, I think sometimes you take things… a bit personally, as if they're against all Germans, and actually it's not. But I do, I mean, generally in terms of British society, definitely. My dad, did I tell you before, my dad has two German sons in law? My sister married a German as well. And… Yes, so… Well, my parents have two German son in laws, so my dad, as a joke, and I think both sons in law take it as a joke, calls them his 'Hans in law', which is… but I mean, only, you know, it's, it's not all the time. You wouldn't say it even once a year, it's a… You know, it's a… That's probably what you mean, isn't it?

Ben: No, no… I don't take to that, it's… I can't…

Brook: Cos he doesn't want to be part of Europe.

Ben: Yes, for many reasons. No, I can't recall various things that have been said by you or, you know, by him, but… It's sort of deep down, it comes up. It's sort of like…

Brook: It's interesting, because I feel as though… Because I lived in Germany, I… I have a right to say, to generalise about Germany, and you generalise about England and the English in just the same way, because you've got the right, because you live here, and it's very funny how that come with the… with the language, almost, like… Well, I can speak the language, I know what they're like… Do you know what I mean? It's a… It's not a good thing, but it happens doesn't it? Do you think, though, that our family is anti-German? Is that… You're not saying that, are you?

Ben: Not anti-German, no, because, you know, Roger would be too polite to say anything like that.

Brook: He's not, though, he's…

Ben: I know he's not biased, there are certain things that wind him up, yeah, and… And it's also, I think, misunderstanding, because he doesn't speak German, he doesn't get the subtleties, yeah, so… He misses a lot of the things…

Brook: About, you mean, about German politics, and how the system works, and how…

Ben: German culture as well. I mean, I don't mean that in a negative way, it's just that… It's a little bit of ignorance.

Brook: Do you think it's any different from you and I, for example, having a good rant about something that an Italian politician had done, kind of, hearing something on the news, having a vague knowledge about something, and having a good old rant about it from our own perspective?

Ben: Well, I think… that's true, but what matters is the children are there at the same time. They get a negative impression of Germany.

Brook: That's really interesting, though, because I would say that all through our children's lives, Dad in particular has been really careful to not… be more… positive about Englishness. I would really say that. For example, he took… the kids were reading a book about the war in… I think they were doing, our daughters were going to do Anne Frank's Diary at school, and my dad said we need to get this sorted out before they learn about it from school from a one-sided perspective, so what we need to do is that them to France, and show them the…

Ben: And Belgium.

Brook: And Belgium, and show them the war graves, and discuss it properly. Because, of course, all his grandchildren, his 6 grandchildren, are half German. And so he said, “Well, we’ve got… There are graves there from our family. Find out,” he said to me, “Find out where the graves are from Ben’s family, and we’ll go and we’ll do the whole lot, and show them that everybody is the same, no matter what language they speak, no matter what country they come from.” And that was, he was really determined that his grandchildren shouldn’t learn about all of that stuff from a British perspective. And he drove there with all the children, and they went away for 4 days, and that’s what they did. So I would say that he… He’s really, he really wants…

Ben: Oh, yeah, he takes it in a responsible way, and I’m not… I think what I mean is more of this, sort of, casual, flippant comments, cos he would be… Anything more serious, he would certainly not do.

Brook: Yes, yes.

Ben: You know, cos he’s too respectful of… of that aspect of the family now, and I mean, he’s a wonderful person, but those little… niggles.

Brook: Hmm… Interesting.

Appendix 19 Excerpt from Dora and David's joint interview

The joint discussion of this topic comprised over 10 pages of transcripted data, of which a summary and brief discussion are presented in the main text of the thesis. The excerpts provided here are examples of the conversation to illustrate the extent of the tension experienced by the couple.

Soo: And what was the motivation for that? For you to learn Greek?

David: I think it was really driven by… um, visits. The visits, the exposure to… to situations where I felt I'd be obligated to speak in Greece. I think that obligation…

Dora: To communicate…

David: Communicate. [omission] And you were always very helpful about that, weren't you? You've always been patient. But, you know… and never really imposed it, have you?

Dora: No, to be honest, I don't think it was… Well, what do you mean 'impose'? Mean I couldn't…

David: Well, I mean, obligate me in some way. I mean, you were always, "Nah, it doesn't matter." (says it in Greek)

Dora: (laughs) Well, I wouldn't impose to anybody to learn, you know…

[omission]

David: But the flip side to it all is that Dora has never really imposed it, but also then, when we were in a Greek situation, there's not a lot of assistance. I mean, you don't sort of… If I don't learn it, you'll be okay with that, wouldn't you? But you wouldn't then sit there and translate a lot for me.

Dora: Well, you do that at first, this sitting and translating… It's you have to learn, you have to do it because… you do it in the first, second time, after… you don't *do* it because it's very tiring, and anyway you expect the other person to do something by themself. It's enough! (laughs)

[omission]

David: The linguistic journey is this for me, alright. At the beginning…

Dora: It's… out of the question for this to happen in every situation…

David: Of course I'm not… I'm not being some kind of *Fascist* that everything should be communicated or passed through me, 'What did he say? What did she say? I don't understand.' I'm talking about at some level, *fundamentally*, I don't know what the hell is going on in the situation, and I sit there, and it's a great embarrassment to me. And I feel embarrassed that that's not being explained for me, and then sometimes… people say, "Well, what do you think?" and I've actually drifted off into my own mental space, and people are looking at me saying, like, as if I'm not paying attention! *That's* what can happen to *me*. I've exited the space because I'm not engaging with it, and then I'm sort of reintroduced, and I don't know what's going on, and I don't look like I'm paying attention, like I'm not *interested*. And so the suddenly you get constructed in a certain way. [omission] I feel sometimes… partly it's my *own* fault because I hadn't learned to take responsibility for that, but also in these situations, sort of… cut high and dry, and seeing to sort of feel like a bit of a… that I'm not trying or not interested in the situation. But I take your point.

[omission]

Dora: [W]hen I first came to England, before I met you, I was exposed in this exactly the same thing, that people, they were speaking between them, I would sit there alone, and I couldn't understand what they say. But because I tried and because I was taking the book and because I was trying hard I gradually came into a level to understand…

David: Yes, but you can't compare like with like there… because my journey's different, and I'm not going there… Only for Christmas and…

Dora: No, no, you are different, but I'm telling you how I learned. I learned, okay. I'm telling you how I learned gradually. [omission] I learned because I was exposed, because I was trying to understand. And I was reading. I was reading, I was trying. You will learn Greek, if you try… [omission] If you don't understand, it's your responsibility to learn the language… [omission] This is what you're saying is that if I don't assist you, you don't learn.

David: No, recognition of the fact that I probably never will *because* of the situation I'm in. You don't accommodate that enough. That's what I'm saying. It's not about me learning, it's about me saying, "This is where I am, and probably will be."

That's what I'm saying. [omission] It's not about *learning*. It's about saying how is that person participating in that *relationship* with his family. It's not about learning.

[omission]

Dora: Yes, this is the issue, but the issue with you in particular, because I have seen it in other people as well, is that… You are in this situation and as you say, you will be like that, but you are exposed enough that you can improve your situation.

David: Yes, because you're based on the premise that it's about some kind of idea… of *learning*. [omission] [T]hat's why I do carry… guilt, because the language, in that situation, there is some notion of acquisition, there is in a sense that you repeat the situation, the circle should be moving on, right, you come back to the same point, but you should move on. And there is that sort of expectation, but I'm just talking about *enabling* someone broadly to understand what's going on. I often feel… cut loose from the situation. And I think that's on the basis of, 'Oh, we know David now. He should know by now. He's got the responsibility…" or probably from your family's perspective it's 'Oh, well, we know David. He'll never get that…"

[omission]

Dora: No, listen a little bit what other people say. You feel like they don't incorporate you in the situation, but the others, when you arrive there they say after six or seven years, that you have learned. When you arrive, they speak to you like you know. You are not a stranger anymore, you come enough times here…

David: Yes, exactly, but I think the other dynamic is that when I go to your village, I would sit there, and they'd be talking to me initially, asking questions, and then there's a point where they know I can't participate in that, and I'm interacting less as I go on. So there's this big long… bit which is… where I am and what I can talk about and then suddenly the rest of the time it's all…

Dora: *You* feel like that. You feel like that.

[omission]

David: Also I think, your approach to it, you're very, sort of, phlegmatic. Do it. If you don't want to do it, it's up to you. Right? At one level. But then if you actually

were to be teaching, to actually teach, your style would be… Uh… no, your style would not be encouraging. That is your problem. You wouldn't encourage me. You would be more about… saying what I'm not doing right than what I'm doing right, and I think I… like a lot of people tend to respond to encouragement, and need some kind of encouragement. So to be told I'm not learning is not… is a disincentive. Or I'm not doing well is a disincentive for learning for me, and that has always happened.

[omission]

Dora: See, this is one of the issues you've got. You have to find a way that you will study. If you don't study, you do not learn the language. You are not exposed so often. If you were living in Greece perhaps you would learn by… you know, you hear. If you are not there, you will have to have… something to… to expose in a different way. To read something or… This is interesting because we are here in a relationship, as you say, and… I blame you that you don't try to learn, you don't try enough, and you blame me that I don't help you.

David: And therein lies the chicken and the egg.

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