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Visiting 'Home': Contacts with the homeland, self-reflexivity and emergent migrant bilingual identities

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There has been increasing interest recently in the way that additional language learners' identities are affected and changed by their experiences in developing proficiency in another language. In the case of migrants, this is also affected by familiarity with their new country and language, and their transition into life in a new social and cultural environment. National and linguistic elements of identity are only part of people's multifaceted identities. However, these are of particular significance for language teachers and central to identity shifts involved in language acquisition and settlement in a new country. We present data from two adult EAL (English as an additional language) learners' accounts of their developing bilingual identities in the Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP). In particular, we focus on one student's self-reflexivity as she described how her experiences of travelling back to her homeland of People's Republic of China (PRC) contributed to the development of her emerging bilingual identity. This is supported by a shorter extract from a Colombian student's experience, as she described her difficulties in communicating something of her Australian experience to her family in Colombia. The study suggests ways in which language teachers can assist their adult immigrant learners to explore this aspect of their growth as bilingual speakers in their new language.

Keywords: *bilingual identity; language proficiency; self-reflexivity; teaching*

Introduction

In this article we present data on the feelings and experiences of two adult EAL learners learning English in the AMEP (Adult Migrant Education Program), in relation to their developing bilingual, intercultural identities. We report how contact with family in their home country had a crystallizing effect in helping them to realise how they were changing, and briefly consider how

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EAL (English as an additional language) teachers may use such insights to assist their learners with this dimension of their learning.

In recent years, the notion of identity has been seen as a significant dimension of the bilingual nature of learners of additional languages (Norton Peirce, 1995; Block, 2007). For applied linguists and EAL teachers, a particular area of interest is how language learning, language socialisation, and multilingual language practices affect the processes of identity construction of migrants. Recent applied linguistics literature includes work that covers the issue of migrant linguistic identity, for instance Block's study of second language identities (Block, 2007), Pavlenko, Blackledge, Piller, and Teutsch-Dwyer's (2001) edited collection on language learning and gender, and Bayley and Schechter's (2003) collection of papers on language socialisation and multilingualism. Almost all of these works have emphasised the fundamental relationship between sociolinguistic variables (such as language choice, language mixing, and attitudes towards language) and the ongoing construction of migrant identities.

However, while identity has been explored in conceptual and theoretical terms (for example, Block, 2007) and in other contexts, the nature of the bilingual identity of EAL learners and the processes that effect this development have not been extensively explored in ways that relate to the language classroom and life experiences of individuals involved. We try to redress this gap in reporting and discussing the experiences of two students learning English in the AMEP.

Understanding 'identity': Theoretical background

The traditional approach to culture in language teaching has been to adopt an essentially anthropological understanding of culture as a the way of life of a people, including diverse dimensions such as attitudes, values, practices, significant events and artefacts that are involved in the practices of a defined cultural group such as Damen (1987). In this view, culture can be seen as fixed and a set characteristics of people. However, more recent post-structuralist conceptions of culture have emphasised the dynamic dimensions of culture. Post-structural theory is more interested in how meaning is constructed, rather than derived from apparently 'objective' structures. From that perspective, culture is a process of dialogue and interaction, and more dynamic and subjective dimensions of culture such as identity are considered in

understanding culture (Ang 2001; Grossberg 1996: Hall, 2002;). For instance, in regards to understanding EAL learner identities, post-structuralist theoretical approaches recognise the importance of changing perceptions of 'self', multiple belongings, and more cosmopolitan ties that exist between learners and their international networks of family and friends. In other words, identity construction is seen as a fluid and continuous process of 'becoming' instead as a fixed and definable state of 'being'.

At times, advocates of post-structuralism have been highly critical of the older perspective, even arguing that because all identities are fluid, individuals should not be defined in terms of traditional categorisations such as national or ethnic identities. The argument presented is that a focus on national identity for instance can lead to an inappropriate essentialisation of learners (Hall, 2002; Ramanathan & Pennycook, 2008; Spack, 1997). While we recognise the insights provided by these arguments and understand the dangers of over-simplified labels, we also argue that in everyday lived experience, individuals themselves do continue to see significant parts of their identities in these terms. For instance, even individuals who claim to be 'citizens of the world' would usually still feel and form strong ties with particular locales or modes of identification. Moreover, categorisations such as national, ethnic, class and religious identities do continue to hold significance to the majority of individuals. Robbins (1998) argues that even the most fluid identities or worldviews are 'shaped by particular collectivities that are socially and geographically situated' (p.3). This means that it would be irresponsible for scholars to completely dismiss and disregard these categories. To do so would also be disempowering for individual subjects as it denies their agency to express or suppress such sentiments. Considering this, we prefer to follow the approach of others such as Block (2007), who sees national and ethnic identity parts of a complex melange of elements that make up an individual identity.

Intercultural approaches to language teaching emphasise the target outcome of language learning as the development of bilingual competences and identities. They point out the complex and multifaceted nature of identity (Block, 2007; Byram, 1997). In the discussion that follows, we work with the changing sense of cultural and linguistic aspects of a learner identity, which we acknowledge as more complex and multifaceted than we can fully explore here. We work with and focus largely on the national and

language identity of the learner partly because it is of significance and prominence in the contexts we work in as researchers of immigrant language learning. It is also significant because that is how the learners talk of and perceive their identities in the data we explore. From such explorations, a clearer understanding of the development of a bilingual identity and how it can be facilitated in the classroom may emerge.

We also refer to a number of studies that have looked at the phenomena of immigrants making visits to their home countries in the contexts of increasing globalisation and mobility. The study of return migration has received considerable attention in recent years (Ahlburg & Brown, 1998; Duval, 2004; Ley & Kobayashi, 2005). Much of this attention has been directed toward the view of immigrants as central actors with meaningful social agency who negotiate numerous delocalized 'permutations' in their personal and familial relationships. As Duval argues, such approaches consider, and adopt, 'notions of global mobilities and ethnoscapes, and recognize the nature of individual identities and practice' (Duval 2004 p. 52). The data we report both relate to and elaborates this body of work.

In exploring notions of identity in intercultural contexts, scholars also need to be aware that the notion of identity itself may be culturally constructed, and that all of us are working within our own culturally-framed conceptualisations, which may be different from those of the learners we research or teach. We note some discussion within Confucian-influenced cultures, which argues that the conventional historical narrative of specific cultural groups such as the Vietnamese and Chinese plays a very significant role in the identity of individuals in those cultures, in ways which have been de-emphasized by more fluid understandings of culture in the West (Phan, 2008). We view the two approaches as complimentary for our case study as it allows us to not only understand identity construction as an on-going process, but also one that is 'grounded' in particular localities, attachments, and worldviews. As our principal subject in this discussion is of Chinese background, we re-emphasise the point that we need to attend to our students' own conceptions of their identities. As such, the subjects' perceptions of national and ethnic identities, as well as their views on kinship and 'home' are parts of our analysis of their developing bilingual identities.

The context: The LTS study and two learners' experiences

Xiao Mei[1] and Lila were participants in a large research project undertaken by the AMEP Research Centre entitled 'Language Training and Settlement Success' (LTS), conducted for the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC)[2]. The study was designed to discover the relationship between language learning and settlement success among adult students in the AMEP (Yates, 2010). The research was a longitudinal multi-site, participant ethnography that explored issues related to language learning and use in context. Individual formal and informal interviews were chosen as the primary data, in order to place participants' own narratives and experiences of language learning at the centre for the project analyses. A key assumption of this ethnographic approach is that social phenomena such as language learning need to be explored in context and that the researcher needs to become a participant observer in order to understand that context. The aim therefore is to provide a description of a particular group rather than to test hypotheses (Richards, 2003). The project therefore sought participants while they were studying in the AMEP and followed them for one year as they studied, worked and interacted in the community.

Four interviews were conducted with each participant, once every three months for one year (2008-2009). There was a total of 152 participants from eleven data collection points at AMEP centres across six Australian states. In the interviews, participants were asked questions regarding their language learning progress, migration experiences, and challenges faced as they were going about building new lives in Australia. Along with the interviews, project researchers also collected data emanating from participants' AMEP course assessments, as well as samples of recorded daily interactions.

These rich data gave researchers a deeper understanding of participants' experiences of English language use and learning. However, an unexpected aspect of the data collection process was the participants' own self-reflexivity (understood here as the

[1] Xiao Mei and Lila are pseudonyms.

[2] We would like to acknowledge the support of DIAC in their funding of the LTS project through the AMEP Research Centre in 2008 and 2009, and thank our colleagues on the project team for their support in gathering and analysing the project data. The responsibility for the views expressed in this article however, rests with the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of either DIAC or other members of the research team.

participants' ability to analyse their own life situations) over changes in their identities, whether national, ethnic, or linguistic, and their sense of belonging in the Australian communities in which they lived. Because of the ethnographic nature of the data collection and particularly the quarterly interviews, participants were forced to think about both their language learning progress and life changes. Every time participants met with their allocated interviewer, they answered questions about some of the challenges and significant events (to do with their improving language skills and migration experiences) that they encountered in their daily lives. As a result, a number of participants expressed a deep sense of awareness over how their improving linguistic abilities had enabled them to interact and understand Australian society better, therefore making them feel more 'at home'. Furthermore, participants who, like both Xiao Mei and Lila, visited their countries of origin at some points during the duration of the project, got a rare glimpse of how their identities had evolved in comparison to their former 'selves' and environments. Such unique narrative-based data are valuable as they reveal much about how language learners make sense of their changing identities and language learning experience.

At the time of the LTS study, Xiao Mei, the primary case study in this article, was learning ESL in the AMEP in one of Australia's smaller capital cities. As an AMEP learner she was like many of the other participants and AMEP clients, learning English to improve her circumstances in Australia. She was married to a native speaker of English, having married some years before coming to Australia. While she always spoke English with him, she found that when she moved to Australia she needed to improve her English to enhance her employment opportunities and to improve her life in the community. She had a son attending primary school, whose English was improving and who she anticipated would grow up as 'Australian', as well as to retaining his sense of his Chinese heritage.

Xiao Mei was remarkable in her eloquence in articulating her changing and developing intercultural identity. Without specific elicitation, in the first project interview she volunteered the fact that she was thinking about her changing identity, and that of her son. In China, she had a professional background, working in the legal system, studying law and working in a business, and after her arrival in Australia, she worked as a tutor in the Chinese department of a university. She also completed an honours thesis. So it was not surprising to find her articulate and reflective. While

Xiao Mei was demonstrated greater self-reflexivity than some other LTS project participants, her experiences and views shared commonalities with a number of other subjects. The participants in this study were largely migrant women between the ages of 20 to 50, who were either the spouses of English-speaking Australian men or had migrated to Australia with their husbands from their home countries. This is illustrated by the data we present from Lila, a young Colombian woman, who also made some reflective comments about her changing bilingual identity as she visited her family in Colombia.

The data

The data we present here are excerpts from LTS project interviews. They are presented here as excerpts from longer conversations. The issue of identity arose in the first project interview when the differences between life in Australia and China were being discussed. This led to an initial conversation about identity, which set the basis for further discussion around this theme in subsequent interviews. The following data are parts of those conversations.

Xiao Mei

1. Attitudes to relationships in Australia and China

In the first quarterly interview it was clear that Xiao Mei had developed some ambivalence in her attitudes to the way of life in each country, perhaps influenced by the perceptions and comments of her Australian husband:

XM:	Maybe it's just my own every day life. Most of time I'm just you know, our house just in [name of her suburb on the urban-rural fringe of the city] where there is countryside. I just feel, um, people bit isolated each other.
R3:	Okay, yeah so you don't feel connected?
XM:	Ah yes that's right. Yes that's what I wanted to.
R:	A little bit isolated and …
XM:	Yeah. Seems people are too, they seem happy to be that way. Maybe - I'm Chinese. Chinese are always like, oh, together, it's too close. My husband is 'you are too close'. No your own space. I say yeah, we are too close. [laughs]
R:	[laughs] Okay.

[3] The academic researcher conducting the interview.

XM: So that way, you know.
R: So what do you really like about China? Do you like that closeness between people in China?
XM: Yeah, yeah, no, not every, sometimes you have no space! It's too close.

First quarterly interview, July 2008[4]

Xiao Mei had been using and learning English for several years, but living in Australia for two years and four months at the time of this interview. At this point she was demonstrating a bicultural identity, a capacity to see the significant cultures in her life from both 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives, leading to some ambiguity in her attitudes about each way of life, perhaps reflecting the perspective of a 'third place' between the two (Bhabha, 2004; Kramsch 1991). This ambiguity was reflected in her final response; 'yeah yeah, no', when asked if she liked the closeness between people in China.

2. Identity in the context of living in Australia and travel to China

A few months later, in the second interview, a similar theme emerged in terms of a dual identity, though it was related to being either in Australia or in China. The sense of having two identities was also often not comfortable, nor was it stable:

R: What do you want to be?
XM: I think um in my situation it's a bit like my son. When I was in China oh I'm Chinese. Everything's so just like I feel home. But then when I'm in Australia … [laughs]
R: You feel Australian.
XM: Yeah it feels like I'm Australia.
R: Yeah. Okay right.
XM: So Australia because, um, yeah. Different. Totally different thinking you know.
R: Okay, yeah. So when you are like that, when you can be Chinese, and Australian. Is that a good way to be? Or is that a difficult way to be.
XM: [laughs] Ah yeah, at the moment I don't know. It's always changing you know. Yeah. At the moment I'm still thinking it's a bit difficult. Yeah, and in some way I like

[4] Interview data are taken from transcriptions of LTS project interviews. The transcriptions have been slightly edited and modified to delete repetitions and false starts, and to increase readability.

> Australia way. And some way I like Chinese way. So it's very, struggle inside, yeah.

Second quarterly interview, October 2008 [emphasis added]

3. Critical incidents with family on a visit to China, and realizations of a changing self

But the profound nature of the change Xiao Mei was experiencing became clearer when she recounted an incident that had occurred when she was in China visiting her parents:

> XM: Last year when I went back to my family I just argue with my parents, so my brother said wow you're, what happened about you? Because he said the way you speak and the attitude to talk to parents. They said, oh, you are the daughter never argue with the parents. And later, I think maybe I'm already different from the old old one. I think their way, their thinking is very strange. I try to change them so that my brother laugh and say, "Oh come on."
>
> R: What did he say?
>
> XM: Wow, if you next time come back home we can't communicate with you.
>
> R: Really? And what about your parents, did they say anything?
>
> XM: Yeah they also said, "Ah you just, God. You are just like, ah, they criticise me. They said the way you speak and just like you know too much about Western culture.

Second quarterly interview October 2008 [emphasis added]

Xiao Mei was becoming aware of the changes in her way of thinking as her bicultural identity was developing, almost without her realising, leading to the conflict with her parents and brother in China. It seemed the changes were also apparent to her family, who attributed her behaviours to her developing Western ways of thinking.

In another part of the same interview Xiao Mei reflected that these changes meant she had to consciously think about being more Chinese when she returns to China. She also commented that she had become like other 'overseas Chinese' (*hoaqiao*), whom she had once found difficult to understand:

> R: So you have to be more Chinese when you go back.

XM: More yeah. And don't argue with them. Because if they are different thinking then just try to see oh they are different, now you are different, yeah. [laughs]
R: It's very interesting.
XM: Yes
R: And very difficult I think when you are there.
XM: Yeah now I understand. Because before ah many overseas Chinese they think they back to China after many years, they always ah, 'I'm home now, I miss'. But they, I say, "Why you miss China? Why you are still live overseas. Just come back. I don't understand that.
XM: Now I understand.
R: So now you understand the overseas Chinese.
XM: Yeah I know, you can't go back.
R: So you have made a journey inside yourself.
XM: Very hard.

Second quarterly interview, October 2008. [emphasis added]

Xiao Mei realised this growth in her sense of herself was long-lasting, and that it was not possible to go back to being the way she was.

4. Changing perception of 'home'

Following the second visit home in 18 months after arriving in Australia, Xiao Mei described how the movement between China and Australia crystallised for her the fact that she had unexpectedly come to see Australia as home:

R: And so what did it feel like when you went back [to] China?
XM: [laughs] I can tell before that trip, I always think, oh, I still think of my home as in China.
R: Yeah.
XM: Here is somewhere I just live.
R: Okay, yeah.
XM: Yeah. Some ah, other people's country, not mine. But ah, yeah, after these three months, yeah, it's the first time when I back to [state in which she lives]. Ah I really think oh, I'm back home.

Third quarterly interview, March 2009

Xiao Mei's sense of the location of 'home' had been part of her developing bilingual identity. She originally saw her residence

in Australia as a physical location, rather than an emotional attachment, but her travel between Australia and China helped her to see this in a different light.

5. Expectations prior to immigration

Despite her eloquence on the topic, it emerged in the final interview that prior to emigration Xiao Mei had not anticipated that the shift to Australia would involve issues of identity. She had retained some property in China and felt that China would always be her home, a place she would be easily be able to return to if need be:

R: When you made the decision to come to Australia,
XM: Mm-hm
R: did you expect this change of identity to be part of the process of coming to live in Australia?
XM: No, no, no, no idea [laughs]
R: No idea.
XM: Yeah.
R: So that caught you by surprise?
XM: Yeah, surprise, yeah.

Quarterly interview 4, May 2009.

Xiao Mei's comments about the changes she felt clearly illustrate the ways in which second language learners experience changing identities and develop intercultural perspectives. Xiao Mei could see both Australian and Chinese society from both insider and outsider perspectives when she spoke about life in each country, reflecting a developing bilingual and intercultural identity. Her experience of transition between two cultures helped sharpen the sense of changing identity, as well as producing uncomfortable moments. Travel back to China and critical incidents with her family helped Xiao Mei to realise that she was changing and developing an identity that builds on, yet transforms, her former self. Her acculturation into Australian ('Western') norms resulted in behaviour towards her parents she once considered inappropriate, if not unthinkable. This experience helped her to understand that she had changed, and she now identified with overseas Chinese, whom she always saw as different from the Chinese in China, somehow *of China*, but not *mainland Chinese*.

Xiao Mei's experience of not anticipating such changes also suggests immigrant EAL learners may not anticipate the ways in

which the experience of settlement in a new country may change them. Xiao Mei's sense of her residence in Australia moved from being a physical location to an identity attachment, as Australia supplanted China as the place she regarded as 'home'. Despite her involvement in a long-term intercultural relationship prior to migration to Australia, she had not anticipated that the move would result in such profound emotional and attitudinal changes to herself.

This suggests that the process of development of a bilingual intercultural identity is not neither easy nor predictable. While the way she spoke about her changing identity in the interviews indicated this was in some ways a very interesting, even enjoyable development, and not one she regretted, she also described how it was hard, and 'a struggle inside myself'.

Lila

Lila, a 27 year-old student from Colombia, also reflected on her changing, bilingual identity through experiences of visiting her home country. Her bicultural identity had been shaped by her life in Australia, but was also interconnected with changing family dynamics and a visit to her family 'at home' in Peru. Having been in Australia since 2006 after marrying her Australian-Colombian husband, Lila visited her family in Colombia for the first time in early 2009. She recounted how, prior to her departure, she had expected everything to be the same as what it was before she left for Australia. She was the youngest in her family and somewhat introverted. Lila was close to her family and reported that she used to be very emotionally and socially dependent on her mother and older sister. She had expected these dynamics to remain unchanged and was surprised to find this was not the case.

Upon her arrival in Colombia, Lila was shocked to find that her old bedroom had been converted into a study. She was relegated to the living room and found herself without a personal space in her family home. Moreover, she was initially sad upon the realisation that, in her absence, her family had carried on with their lives and consequently, she no longer had the same relationship dynamics with her mother and sister. This made Lila realise that she had also changed, and that her identity was no longer just as a Spanish-speaking Colombian, but also as an English-speaking Australian. The linguistic dimension emerged when Lila referred to a critical incident where she was trying to explain the February, 2009 'Black Saturday' Victorian bushfires to her family. She

struggled to explain a 'bushfire', because there was no Spanish equivalent of the word with its connotations in Australia. Her inability to explain a 'bushfire' signified her developing understanding of certain Australia-specific knowledge that her family in Colombia did not have access to. For Lila, this instance was the turning point where she had realised that her 'home' was now in Australia, and that she had changed as a person:

R: It is interesting that you realised just how much you have changed because of the word 'bushfire.' [laughs]

L: Yes [laughs]. And at first I was so upset because I thought I was now invisible to my family. I thought I didn't have a place anymore in my family home [long pause]. But then I realised that I changed too.

R: In what ways have you changed?

L: Hmm, I think I was so surprised that I knew something that my family didn't know. When I was still living in Colombia, I was so shy and let my mother do all the talking for me. But now, I'm independent and have different experiences in Australia.

R: How did that make you feel?

L: A little sad at first. But I think this is good for me. Australia is now my home and everyone has to move on.

Quarterly interview 3, March 2009.

Discussion

These articulate comments from two EAL learners provide insights than can help teachers and researchers to understand the development of emerging bilingual intercultural identities in language learners. Xiao Mei and Lila's comments offer insight into the experience of moving into the 'Third place' (Bhabha, 2004; Kramsch, 1993), and illustrate how changing intercultural identity can be discerned within interconnected and multifacted identities (Block, 2007).

In Xiao Mei's case, national and linguistic identity was at the forefront of the identity change she experienced. She was constant in the interview data about her sense of mother and wife, while the profound changes she experienced relate to her changing sense of being both Chinese and Australian and someone who encompasses these two cultural perspectives and experiences. The implication of this is that while identities are multiple and complex, in Xiao Mei's case it was the national and linguistic dimensions of identity

that were most changed by the experience of language learning and the development of a bilingual and intercultural identity. A consequence of this was a realisation of a changing dynamic in the relationship with her family in China. For Lila, changing family roles were also intermingled with a changing linguistic identity.

Both Xiao Mei and Lila were part of a significant group of project participants whose immigration to Australia followed marriage to an Australian resident. Because of the intensity of their cross-cultural relationships, these learners perhaps faced the issues of a developing bilingual identity more sharply than learners whose encounter with English speaking culture was slightly more distant. It is also possible that learners in such intercultural relationships move further and faster in the development of an intercultural identity, due to the dynamics of these relationships.

In the context of the conversations with Xiao Mei and Lila, contact and communication with family in their country of origin seems to have had a catalytic effect on their realisation of a developing and changing bilingual intercultural identity. In both cases changing family dynamics were also associated with a changing sense of linguistic identity. The interaction in the country of origin stimulated exploration and thinking about what is similar and different between these two cultures, and what it means to be a participant in both. This resonates with the findings of the literature mentioned above on the experiences of immigrants moving between Australia and their countries of origin.

Implications

These accounts relate to and illustrate some of the more theoretical discussions of changing identity in language learning and settlement. They also suggest that travel to an immigrant's home country in the period after settlement may have impact on the learner's emerging bilingual identity, by evoking a realization that the person is a part of each place, and can operate effectively in two different linguistic and cultural contexts. Paradoxically, revisiting one's own home country may be a cause for a revival of the familiar, but may also be a cause of realizing how much an individual has been changed by the experience of living in a new country and using a new language.

In a contemporary globalised context, increasing numbers of immigrants travel back to their country of origin with relative ease. There are also ways in which the internet and technology facilitates interaction and communication with the home country by more

easy telephone access, email, Skype, chat and social networking sites, and access to web pages based in the country of origin. Immigrant EAL learners can be relatively easily and frequently immersed in their home cultures, in ways that go beyond the contexts of émigré communities in their new country.

The final implication relates to language classrooms and how the sorts of experiences described by Xiao Mei and Lila can inform EAL teachers about ways in which they can assist and support this significant part of their students' learning. Xiao Mei and Lila's experiences also connect with the theme in the language teaching literature that advocates making explicit connections between learners' home cultures and the culture of the target language they are learning (Byram, 1997; Corbett, 2003; Liddicoat & Crozet, 2000).

This suggests that teachers can help students to reflect on and explore the extent and ways in which they may be developing intercultural identities. This could be done through sensitively involving their immigrant students in explorations of their experiences of visits to their home country, or contacts with their home country. Sensitive exploration of critical incidents where students have had an experience that has made them realize they have in fact changed may be productive. This may assist learners in realizing ways they have become more familiar with aspects of their new country's/language's culture, or become aware of new ways in which they are now acting or thinking. Sharing stories and experiences, such as those of Xiao Mei and Lila in teaching and learning materials, and using the experiences of learners who are articulate about such experiences can also assist other learners to reflect on their own experiences with a view to better understanding themselves.

In conclusion, we present these learners' accounts of their changing identities not because we see them as definitive or representative. We see these two brief accounts as indicative of some of the possibilities that adult additional language learners may experience. We expect there will be as many accounts of this experience as there are learners, as no two individual's experiences will be quite the same. We believe that teachers need to be aware of this dimension of language learning, and alert to the value of sensitive consideration and exploration of learners' reactions and responses to events that highlight their changing identities. Such exploration has the potential to stimulate and support learners through what Xiao Mei called the unexpected 'struggle inside'.

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