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"My Purpose Was to Help Them With Accounting, Not English": An Exploratory Study of Languages Other Than English in Peer Assisted Study Sessions

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"My Purpose was to Help Them With Accounting, Not English": An Exploratory Study of Languages Other Than English in PASS

Briony J. Supple, Gill Best, and Amanda Pearce

ABSTRACT

This paper considers when and for what purposes Peer Assisted Study Session (PASS) Leaders at an English medium university use their first language (when that language is not the dominant language of instruction) to facilitate PASS sessions in an English speaking university.

This small qualitative exploratory study examines the experiences of eight PASS Leaders who speak a language other than English. The paper explores how and for what purposes the PASS Leaders utilised their first language (referred to as L1) of Chinese or Vietnamese and their second language of English (referred to as L2). The research participants revealed complex and well-considered decision-making processes regarding the language(s) they used in their sessions as PASS Leaders. Broadly, the language they used depended on the linguistic backgrounds and preferences of the session attendees, the concepts covered in the sessions, and the importance PASS Leaders ascribed to learning English over learning the subject's content. We suggest that there may be room for languages other than English as a "medium of instruction" in PASS sessions. Our initial investigations warrant broader discussion and further research within the PASS/SI community about the role L1s can play in enhancing the student learning experience in PASS sessions, for both PASS Leaders and PASS attendees.

INTRODUCTION
PASS and the Victoria University Context
The Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) program is a student peer learning program based on the Supplementary Instruction (SI) model from the USA (Sole, Rose, Bennett, Jacques, & Rippon, 2012). It involves student mentors (referred to in this paper as PASS Leaders) who have previously excelled in a subject of study facilitating weekly review sessions with a group of students who are currently studying the subject (referred to in this paper as attendees). PASS sessions are voluntary and open to anyone who is a current student in the subject. PASS Leaders use collaborative learning approaches to facilitate sessions which run for an hour in duration once a week. The sessions are aimed at helping students better understand the content of the subject in a group-based setting where they learn with and from their peers and build positive relationships with other students.

In PASS the more equal power distribution inherent in relationships with near peers creates a learning environment that is generally more relaxed than "formal" learning settings, such as lectures and tutorials. Such a non-threatening environment encourages learner voices to be heard (Hurley, Jacobs, & Gilbert, 2006). Having completed the same subject of study as the attendees, PASS Leaders can recognise and relate to the learning experiences of the attendees. PASS sessions are planned by the PASS Leaders and facilitated in a way to encourage active, group-based learning rather than solitary, passive learning (Murray, 1997; Sole et al., 2012). While lecturers have expert knowledge of their particular discipline, in the PASS context it is the students who are the experts—they bring their knowledge and experience of studying the subject and being a successful student to share with attendees (Couchman, 2008). In their role as expert students, PASS Leaders are in effect translating the multiple discourses and practices of the institution for students (e.g., lecturer expectations, subject guides, assessment criteria, study skills, and strategies for excelling in the subject), and in doing so, PASS Leaders are helping students in their navigation and understanding of various institutional codes (Couchman, 2008).

PASS at Victoria University (VU) has a strong track record of contributing to student success and enhancing the academic experience of its students. The PASS programs at VU have received national recognition, which includes a citation from the Australian Teaching and Learning Council and three Australasian Student PASS Awards for an outstanding team and for new Leaders. As part of VU's overarching Students Supporting Student Learning (SSSL) programs, an adapted version of the established PASS model (Martin & Arendale, 1992) has been running since 2003. The major modification to this model involved assigning two PASS Leaders to facilitate the PASS sessions rather than one. PASS Leaders are required to attend two days of training at the start of semester and one day of "top up" training mid-year. As part of their role, they participate in weekly PASS Leader development workshops to discuss their sessions and post to an online platform about their experiences each week. PASS sessions occur once a week over the semester and run for one hour.

VU has a richly diverse student cohort. Located in the west of Melbourne, Australia, its student demographic is characterised by first in family (being the first person in the family to pursue study beyond high school level), low socio-economic, refugee, and migrant backgrounds, as well as international students. In 2013, there were 24,260 non-English speaking students attending VU, which was 49.6% of the total student cohort (Victoria University, 2014).

PASS in AIS and the Chinese student cohort

PASS was first implemented in the subject of Accounting Information Systems (AIS) in Semester 1, 2010, with four PASS Leaders who ran their sessions in pairs. These four PASS Leaders, three females and one male, were international students from China who had completed a VU Diploma of Business in English at one of VU's partner universities in China.

Chinese students from the partner institutions usually arrive in Australia at VU in Semester 2 to begin a specialisation such as Accounting, of which their first subject is Accounting Information Systems (AIS). The majority of VU's onshore Chinese international students have credit for most first year

subjects of a Business degree, including the core Accounting subject, Accounting for Decision Making. Chinese students from the partner universities form the vast majority of the AIS cohort. These students then study in Australia for two more years to complete their degrees.

In 2010, the PASS Leaders for AIS were selected according to VU's methods for student mentor recruitment, which at the time was via an email from the lecturer who invited all students who had completed the subject with a high distinction grade (85% and above) to apply, followed by attendance at an interview and training session. Since student mentoring pairs were assigned based on common availabilities, not language commonalities, it was pure coincidence that the student PASS Leaders for AIS in semesters 1 and 2 in 2010 and 2011 all spoke Mandarin Chinese as their first language (L1). The only non-Chinese speaker, an international student whose L1 was Vietnamese, was a student mentor in 2012.

Attendance by student attendees at PASS in AIS in Semester 1 in the first year was low, averaging around 10 students per session, but Semester 2 saw a dramatic increase with some sessions having up to 40 students in attendance. It became clear that this was largely due to the arrival of a new cohort of Chinese international students who had attended the same universities as the PASS Leaders.

During the first iteration of the PASS program in AIS, the four international PASS Leaders from China attended weekly development workshops with the PASS supervisor. After some weeks, although not explicitly stated, it became clear through a number of different comments made by the PASS Leaders that they were speaking in Mandarin Chinese in the PASS sessions rather than English (their L2).[1] The PASS Leaders seemed uneasy about being too open about their use of their L1, avoiding discussion of language use in their sessions. However, the PASS supervisor was keen to let the PASS Leaders know that use of their L1 was acceptable and to be encouraged. She also wanted the use of L1 to be discussed openly in the PASS development workshops that she facilitated for the PASS Leaders each week. In order to broach the issue, she shared with them a recent experience where she had raised with colleagues the fact that the PASS Leaders were speaking their L1 in their PASS sessions. She relayed to the PASS Leaders that she had told her colleagues that she condoned and encouraged the use of L1 in the PASS sessions. The PASS Leaders seemed pleased and relieved at hearing this and from that point discussed their use of L1 more openly.

The PASS supervisor had indeed raised this topic with colleagues, who had responded negatively to the PASS Leaders' use of L1. These colleagues argued that students from overseas needed to be encouraged, if necessary, forced, to use English as they were enrolled in an English speaking university.

This and other experiences working with non-native English speaking students in their roles as PASS Leaders led our PASS Supervisor team to question and further develop our thinking concerning the use of L1 and L2. Rather than merely encourage the use of L1 as we had to that point, we raised

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[1] The term L2 is used here for English; however the authors acknowledge that English may be an individual students' L3, 4 or 5.

this question: To what extent do we have the right to force PASS Leaders to adhere to an English-only practice, when we don't fully understand the reasons behind using L1 versus L2?

LITERATURE REVIEW
This literature review considers some of the main theoretical arguments underpinning the use of different languages in learning contexts. We use the phrase "English only" here to mean a setting where the use of L1 is openly discouraged. The literature review considers: 1) research surrounding the best way to learn a language and the socio-political significance of language; 2) the consideration of the various identities people have and how this is inextricably linked to language; 3) the important role language plays in creating communities and a sense of belonging; and 4) the ways multilingual students use different languages in their learning. The parallels between these arguments and the tenets of peer learning are then explored.

Language learning: Best in an English (L2) only or multi-lingual setting?
There are a variety of reasons why students decide to undertake study in a second language. These can be categorised as either affective or instrumental motivations. Affective motivations pertain to more intrinsic rewards like a feeling of wanting to belong to, feel close, or even become similar to speakers of that language. Instrumental motivations relate to the idea that competency in a second language can bring about rewards such as better job prospects (Dörnyei, 2003; Masgoret & Gardener, 2003; Noels, Pelletier, Clement & Vallerand, 2000). While the affective drivers for learning a second language are related to emotional identification with the L2 group, instrumental motivations rely on a tangible benefit or cost, and consequently, if this benefit or cost is taken away, the extrinsic incentive for learning the language no longer exists (Noels et al., 2000). Regardless of the motivations, this section considers the pros and cons of and English-only versus a multi-lingual setting.

English (L2) only setting: The good
Some studies into Second Language Acquisition have found that both the quantity and quality of L2 input a learner receives is vital in language learning. Quantity and quality of input for adults learning an L2 is understood as being just as important as children learning an L1 (Flege, 2007, 2012; Serrano, 2012). Flege's (2007; 2012) work in particular highlights the importance of how the quality and quantity of input positively correlates with improved pronunciation for L2 learners. Learning a language in an intensive or immersive setting has also been shown to increase depth of learning and reduce errors in adult learners (Serrano, 2012).

High quantity and quality exposure to L2 has also been shown to increase motivation to learn the language as a means of understanding others or being understood by others and aspiring to higher degrees of autonomy in a study abroad setting (Pavlenko, 2011; Serrano, 2012). Learners have also reported a perception of improved fluency through language immersion (Pavlenko, 2011).

At a deeper level, learners have reported a sense of linguistic assimilation where the thought processes of learners is influenced by being in the country, suggesting deeper levels of learning not only about language but also cultural

influences. As Pavlenko (2011) suggests in this regard, "[o]nly when speakers move to the country where the language is spoken…this language begins to exert influence on their thinking, and even then the influence is not immediately apparent" (p. 5).

Finally, the sheer pragmatics of maintaining a multi-lingual classroom can be challenging. There are likely to be a number of students from a diverse array of nationalities and language backgrounds situated in the one classroom. As a matter of courtesy and practicality, an English-only classroom can sometimes be the only way of maintaining fairness and limiting social isolation. Insisting on English as the lingua franca in these contexts may be seen as the only way to create a harmonious learning environment.

Naturally PASS sessions do indeed draw attendees from many different backgrounds. Our findings and discussions include these considerations.

English (L2) only setting: The bad, the ugly, and the complex
It has been argued by some scholars that native speakers of English dominate so-called "expertise" in English language teaching (Lin, 2013) and are guilty of making frequent assumptions surrounding authority, superiority, and privilege (Pennycook, 2001). The compartmentalisation of languages in the classroom at the insistence of educators is reflective of "imperialist and colonialist forces and interests" (Lin, 2013, p. 524). It is argued that these beliefs have been at the core of modern approaches to language learning and teaching, particularly the belief that English is best learnt and taught in a monolingual "English only" setting (Cummins, 2007; Cenoz & Gorter, 2013; Taylor & Snoddon, 2013). As we discussed above, the rationale for these approaches is couched in pedagogical terms; that is, the greater the exposure to English, the more quickly students will learn and internalise the language and become closer to a native-like proficiency (Cenoz & Gorter, 2013). Practitioners can therefore be sceptical of the idea that there is value in including and encouraging a students' L1 in the classroom (Taylor & Snoddon, 2013). Proponents of multi-lingual classrooms suggest that part of the problem is that the practice of teaching and learning English as a second language has been underpinned by approaches which place native speaker competency as the goal, thereby situating bilingual learners in deficit terms, what May (2014) refers to as "the monolingual bias." Approaches to research in these terms have failed to recognise learners' existing bi/multilingual abilities and the way that languages can complement one another. Cook (1999) and Ortega (2013) suggest that there are serious flaws and ethical issues within studies of language competency with the monolingual bias and that these beliefs have obscured the actual nature of a successful L2 learner.

A variety of scholars suggest in fact that the use of L1 scaffolds learning in the L2 (Cook, 2001; Cummins, 2007; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003; Swain & Lapkin, 2000). L1 use "facilitates L2 production and allows the learners both to initiate and sustain verbal interaction with one another" (Brooks & Donato, 1994, p. 268). In other words, the use of L1 actually helps the development of L2; the use of L1 and L2 need not be seen as mutually exclusive but as skills that complement one another.

Learning a language is also a complex and multi-faceted skill, which involves a number of variables, such as prior learning and individual language

aptitude. There also remains the question of whether there is in fact a "critical period" for language learning to take place, as with the case of an L1, and whether this is applicable to learning an L2 for adults (Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam, 2009; Birdsong, 2005, 2014).

Code switching and a sense of belonging

Speakers of more than one language often engage in a process known as "code-switching." Code-switching refers to the situation which occurs when a speaker uses two or more languages during one or several turns of talking (Bahous, Nabhani, & Bacha, 2014; Pagano, 2010). In the context of this study, code switching occurred when a student was speaking English and suddenly reverted to Chinese or Vietnamese, or vice versa.

There are a number of reasons that speakers may code-switch from the L2 to L1, or in this context, from English to Chinese or Vietnamese in a classroom setting. Studies have found that some learners will code-switch in order to argue a point more effectively, to enable a shared understanding and interpretation of challenging information, to overcome perceived communication problems, to allow for greater depth and meaning in discussions, to enable faster task completion, and to facilitate learning of concepts at a deeper level or when simply thinking aloud (Bahous et al., 2014; Ludi, 2005; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2003). In a multilingual classroom, a teacher may code-switch in order to motivate, praise, or get the attention of the listeners, reinforce main ideas or difficult concepts, and clarify instructions and/or expectations for a task (Bahous et al., 2014).

Code switching is also used to show belonging to a group, affinity with a listener, or to reflect a listener's preference (Bahous et al., 2014). Language choice when used for these purposes therefore enables integration of members into specific groups and is pivotal to creating a sense of community and belonging (Bahous et al., 2014; Cook, 2001, Grim, 2010; Norton, 2013). A learners' use of L1 is a "valuable part of learning as social enterprise" (Cook, 2001, p. 408). Belonging to a part of a group can help make learners feel comfortable and reassured, creating "an informal non-threatening atmosphere more conducive to learning" (Bahous et al., 2014, p. 358). Conversely, monolingual settings can make learners feel alienated and threatened (Hall & Cook, 2012; Littlewoood & Yu, 2011).

This leads us to our first research question: What are the processes adopted by learners in negotiation and decision-making around particular language use? Are these purely a matter of pragmatics (e.g., "it's easier to speak my own language") or more sophisticated reasoning, such as building a sense of belonging?

A sense of belonging is intrinsic to the social constructivist (Vygotskian) foundations upon which PASS is built (Jacobs, Hurely, & Unite, 2008). A Vygotskian practice means PASS Leaders facilitate a collaborative learning environment where student attendees are guided to build on their current knowledge and engage in problem solving together, thereby pushing them into higher and deeper levels of understanding (Hizer, 2010). Given its social constructivist underpinnings, PASS sessions are active, contextual, and predicated on social interaction, supporting students to build upon knowledge from prior experiences (Hizer, 2010). Constructivist perspectives

of learning suggest that "new knowledge and understanding is based on what learners already know and believe" (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000, p. 10). According to Vygotsky, effective learning therefore means drawing upon prior knowledge. Prior knowledge, however, includes not only previously taught information or skills, but also "the totality of the experiences that have shaped the learner's identity and cognitive functioning" (Cummins, 2007, p. 232). It necessarily follows that this prior knowledge is entwined within a learners' own language via their understanding of concepts in their L1 (Hall & Cook, 2012).

This leads to our second research question: How do the processes and decisions used by PASS leaders when evaluating when to use students' L1 align with core PASS principles (e.g., collaborative and interactive learning, deep learning, and scaffolding)?

The research problem
If learning is to be a truly collaborative exercise in a multi-lingual context such as the ones found at VU, we were keen to see how language(s) could create a meaningful part of those learning experiences from the peer mentors' perspectives.

Previous studies concerning the use of L1 in an L2 setting have been situated in the context of the "traditional" classroom setting; that is, a teacher and student(s) model (such as Bahous et al., 2014; Cummins, 2007; Dörnyei, 2003; Hall & Cook, 2012; Ludi, 2005; Norton, 2013; Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012). Such studies can add conceptually to our understanding of some of the theoretical arguments underpinning our research, such as motivations for language use, creation of bilingual communities, and multilingual competencies. However, these studies focus on the "traditional" classroom setting rather than the PASS context.

Studies specific to the use of the L1 in a student peer mentoring context are lacking. Research into peer groups and language use in Banda's (2007) study involved a consideration of the value of using L1 in academic learning situations in South Africa and the use of L1 (Xhosa) over L2 (English). This research demonstrates how peer learning in a multilingual context provides learners with the opportunity to problem solve more effectively while feeling comfortable enough with peers to engage in collaborative learning. However, while Banda's study looked specifically at L1 in a peer learning context, the peer learning context was "unregulated" and "informal" (p. 17). This was apparent in the way some of the student groups had no clear facilitator, and the groups were not given support or training by an academic or other staff member. This is in contrast to PASS, which is a regulated and formal learning context; that is, PASS is organised by coordinators, and PASS sessions are run by purposefully recruited and trained PASS Leaders who excelled in their subject and attend compulsory development workshops to learn about pedagogy and peer learning. We could not find any previous studies specific to the use of L1 in Supplemental Instruction and/or PASS.

We therefore set out to examine when and for what purposes the PASS Leaders were using the languages of Chinese or Vietnamese (L1) and English (L2) in their sessions. We then posed the following research questions:

1. What are the processes adopted by PASS Leaders in negotiation and decision-making around particular language use? Are these purely a matter of pragmatics (e.g., "it's easier to speak my own language") or more sophisticated reasoning, such as building a sense of belonging?
2. How do the processes and decisions used by PASS leaders when evaluating when to use students' L1 align with core PASS principles (e.g., collaborative and interactive learning, deep learning, and scaffolding)?
3. How can PASS practitioners learn from these processes, and how can we start to more fully understand the depth of reasoning behind language choice? (Discussed in the conclusions section of this paper)

METHOD

In order to investigate our research questions, eight students who spoke Chinese or Vietnamese as their L1 and who had been or were currently employed as PASS Leaders in AIS at VU in 2010, 2011, or 2012 were invited to participate in the study. Each student was interviewed individually for up to two hours by one of the authors about their use of L1 and L2 within their PASS sessions.

In order to ensure rigour and credibility as a qualitative study, we employed some of the following techniques from Whittemore, Chase, and Mandle's (2001) synthesis of common strategies for demonstrating validity in qualitative research. These are summarised below as dot points with an explanation which details how the suggested strategy was applied to this research.

- *Design consideration—Giving voice.* We asked a third party (a staff member who had had not previously met the PASS Leaders) to undertake the individual interviews so that participants would feel more open in describing their experiences. We viewed interviews as the best way to capture individual ideas. Asking an unknown third party to undertake the interviews was a more ethical approach so students would not feel coerced into participating or concerned that their comments might have a negative consequence.
- *Data generating—Providing verbatim transcription.* We did not correct grammatical errors in the data so as to retain the true voices of the students.
- *Analytic—Articulating data analysis decisions.* We transcribed the interviews, and due to our familiarity with thematic analysis, we used an applied thematic analysis approach (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). This approach is concerned with identifying codes in the raw data, which are then used to create organisational themes. The analysis proceeds through a series of stages: familiarisation with data, code generation, and labelling of theme names. We read the transcripts a number of times, both individually and collectively, which ensured we were immersed in the data. We used hard copies of the transcripts to identify codes and we used different coloured highlighter pens to separate visually the different organisational themes. We preferred hard copy transcripts rather than computer software (e.g., NVivo) since it allowed us to get close to the data.
- *Presentation.* We present our findings by acknowledging our perspectives as researchers, providing detailed quotes from

participants for analysis, and maintaining true voice by not correcting the grammar or language of participants.

- *Reflexivity by the researchers.* Our beliefs around the uses of English in PASS sessions was articulated very early on. One of the authors was open about her opinions actually changing as a result of being involved as an investigator.

In order to adhere to ethical considerations, all participants were given a pseudonym. The seven PASS Leaders who spoke Chinese (Mandarin) and their first language were Caroline, Christina, Diana, Keith, Yvonne, Jemima, and Lynette. Tammy spoke Vietnamese as her first language. The time spent in Australia by these PASS Leaders at the time of the interview ranged from one year to almost five years. Four of the PASS Leaders came to Australia as part of the partner institution arrangement with VU. The Vietnamese student, Tammy, came as an independent student; that is, she was not affiliated with a partner institution and had previously studied at a university in Ho Chi Minh City.

The PASS Leaders worked together in the following pairings: Christina and Keith, Jemima and Yvonne, Caroline and Lynette, Diana and Tammy.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The first main theme, *language and social interaction,* looks at how interactions between PASS Leaders and student attendees informed the negotiation of which language to use in the sessions. This theme is inextricably linked to the second main theme, *purpose*; that is, how and why the PASS Leaders actually used L1 or L2 in the sessions. The third main theme, *the facilitation of learning communities* considers some of the perceptions of the PASS Leaders regarding their role in facilitating the learning of others and a comparison of approaches to teaching and learning in their own countries in comparison to Australia. The final theme also considers how language negotiation, language purpose, and ideas about learning combine to create rich, engaged communities of learners where students learn from each other's' experiences in the "foreign" university environment. Each of these themes is explored in more detail below.

Theme 1: Language and social interaction

The data revealed how the decision around whether to use L1 or L2 was openly discussed between the student PASS Leaders in their pairs and how these decisions around language use were carefully negotiated and involved a complex consideration of the language backgrounds and needs of the students who attended their sessions.

The PASS Leaders had no control over who attended their sessions on a weekly basis, meaning that some weeks they may have had all Chinese speakers, and other weeks there may have been students in attendance who did not speak Chinese. Their reflections on when and why they used L1 in the sessions indicated sensitivity and reflected the needs of the group, a concern for the feelings of individuals in the group, and their flexibility around this:

> I don't want to use Chinese if local students are there. It would make them feel separated. It's not what we want. If one or two students are

> Chinese I would definitely not use Chinese … even if they ask me in Chinese I would always explain in English. (Keith)

> When students are from other backgrounds and they might feel uncomfortable and that's why we avoid Chinese if there are local students for whole class. (Jemima)

These approaches were also negotiated openly with the students attending the sessions. Diana and Christina both mentioned instances where an attendee in their session had wanted a concept explained in Chinese. In this case they asked the non-Chinese speaking students who were in attendance whether they would mind if they re-explained the concept in Chinese. In these situations there was acknowledgement by the PASS Leaders about feeling under pressure to speak Chinese. However, their openness in acknowledging other students from non-Chinese speaking backgrounds shows a sensitivity to and awareness of the other students' needs and levels of comfort.

This is not to say, however, that all students were comfortable with the use of a language other than English in the session. Tammy, the Vietnamese PASS Leader, mentioned a situation where a student asked whether the students speaking in Chinese were actually talking about him. Tammy and Diana responded to this by making sure Tammy was available to directly work with this student (in English) more often and make him feel more comfortable in the sessions.

The decision about the use of one language over another in a PASS session was also negotiated with students attending the PASS sessions. Caroline, Diana, and Keith mentioned how there was pressure placed upon them by the students attending to use Chinese in their sessions. They spoke about how they felt that it was important to keep these students happy to ensure they would keep returning to their PASS sessions:

> Students want us to explain everything in Chinese because it's their first year and it's very hard to them. (Keith)

> We sometimes felt the pressure to speak Chinese from some students. Some of the students their English is not very good and also they're not very good students in China with accounting. (Jemima)

Language use therefore became a tool for creating and maintaining engaged communities of learners and ensuring repeat attendance. Diana mentioned that she attended PASS sessions as a student in the year prior to becoming a mentor and would not have attended if the sessions had been run in English only. Diana's perception was that some attendees felt more comfortable using Chinese, whereas students who chose the English session were already very confident with their English.

The creation of these learning communities by the PASS Leaders is also important from an international student transition perspective—most students who study Accounting Information Systems are newly arrived in Australia. Caroline suggested that when the newly arrived students hear someone talking Chinese, it would help them to feel less homesick as "at first they are very helpless, they don't know how to ask for help."

Students are also likely to feel helpless in a new learning environment due to the fact that, according to these PASS Leaders, the educational cultures and approaches to learning in the two countries are very different. As Jemima stated, "Students have no time to adapt to the education system, culture of language...it's a big jump coming to Australia to do AIS." Caroline spoke at length about how learners in Australia are expected to facilitate and create their own learning and develop independence compared to China where education is guided and dictated more by lecturers and parents. This was echoed by Tammy who also spoke about a limitation of resources being available online in Vietnam and how students were not encouraged to ask questions in lectures or tutorials. Caroline perceived the differences in learning and teaching in China compared to Australia in terms of the proverb, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." According to Caroline, "in China they will always give you the fish ... and here teach you how to fish, so totally different I think."

Caroline, Jemima, Christina, and Lynette mentioned how having these cultural differences made explicit to newcomers in their own language helps students to feel less isolated and become more active and positive about learning.

> It is very easy for the PASS Leaders to talk and very easy for the attendees to understand because most of the attendees studying AIS come here for their first semester and are newcomers so they feel everything is strange, fresh and new. They need time to adopt to this new environment. So I think using Chinese is better for them. (Lynette)

These PASS Leaders would also help the attendees to understand other aspects of coming to Australia such as information about "part time jobs...and how to make friends with the local student" (Lynette).

Theme 2: Purpose

The different languages were used for different purposes in the sessions. Caroline mentioned how she and Lynette used Chinese for specific questions and "question times" at the end of their sessions but primarily ran their sessions in English. She and Lynette would devote time to planning which parts of the session would be in Chinese and which parts would be in English. However, if they had any students attending who did not speak Chinese then the lesson would revert to all English, unless a complex concept came up where they were directly asked to help in Chinese. Christina and Keith used Chinese for specific concepts (e.g., when talking about accrual accounting and building on shared content knowledge from China), but most activities were conducted in English. Jemima and Yvonne adopted a similar approach. As Jemima stated, "We used English most of the time and I tried to avoid using Chinese in my instructions for activities. But if I really having difficulties I use Chinese for assistance."

Christina and Keith seemed to be the most concerned about the attendees being in Australia to improve their language. For this reason they also made sure there were opportunities in their sessions for the attendees to speak in English with and in front of one another to practice. When there were students who attended from English-speaking backgrounds, Christina and Keith made a conscious effort to get the attendees in pairings where students

would be "forced" to speak in English. As Christina stated, "I tried to make Chinese students sit next to domestic students...I think it's better for them to sit next to Australian students."

Diana and Lynette based their decision on which language to use on their own feelings of competency; they felt their level of English wasn't good enough to facilitate a whole session and so they used only their L1.

Jemima and Keith mentioned their initial feelings of anxiety around using their L1—a sense that they were perhaps "doing the wrong thing" by speaking Chinese in their sessions. As a result, they first developed a "rule" in their sessions that in the first instance they would use English as the default and "tell them [the students attending the session] we can't speak Chinese all the time...it's the rule" (Keith).

Tammy and Diana primarily used English in their sessions due to the fact that Tammy's first language was Vietnamese. There was a significant amount of negotiation and language switching which occurred in their sessions. As Tammy explained:

> If one of the students understand...then he or she can explain it to the other students [in Chinese]. But in case no one understand...like if it's a very complicated concept, Diana have to explain in Chinese because most of my attendees were Chinese. There was one mentee who doesn't speak Chinese and I have to explain to him in English.

Theme 3: The facilitation of learning communities

The PASS Leaders' decisions around which language to use also reflected their motivations for learning. For Diana, getting a high mark in accounting was the most important thing; the English language component was secondary. As Diana stated, "I just helped them with accounting. My purpose was to help them with accounting, not English." This belief meant more of an explicit focus on learning outcomes for the students related to the content, rather than the language. For Diana, Caroline, and Lynette, a focus on helping students with the content was how they conceptualised their role as student mentor. These PASS Leaders articulated beliefs that using Chinese was "efficient," "convenient," and saved time, these qualities being of particular importance as the time in the sessions could be devoted to actual learning of the content and getting through "more of it" rather than trying to explain concepts or activities over and over in English. Diana and Yvonne talked about how using English was clumsy; using the L2 as a means of explaining concepts would take "10 sentences compared to one in Chinese" (Yvonne). The perceived efficiency of using the language, according to some of the PASS Leaders, was a win-win situation: running the sessions in Chinese meant less preparation time for the PASS Leaders and a sense that there would be less pressure on the students during the session itself to speak in L2 if they were not confident (Diana, Lynette).

Diana, Caroline, Lynette, and Yvonne believed their role as PASS Leaders was to focus on helping their attendees to understand the content. To these PASS Leaders this meant not being concerned about using English. This contrasted with beliefs of Keith, Christina, and Jemima who talked more about the importance for attendees of having an understanding of the concepts in both

languages. Keith explained how he used L1 to help explain concepts rather than relying on translating:

> When they are confused…for example…accounting conceptual framework…when you translate it from the dictionary it doesn't explain it exactly so we connected this concept to what they learnt in China….this definitely it provides a better understanding.

Jemima and Christina also mentioned how they tried to link concepts between what they were learning in Australia to what was learned in China:

> Our Chinese teachers tried to use the right words in English in China but they were not always correct…so we try to link what we're learning in Australia to what we learned in China. (Jemima)

> It's better for us to learn the terminology in both languages because if we go back to work in a company in China and if we have to explain something in Chinese…that's why we link the ideas of what we learned there and what we learn here. (Christina)

Allowing learners to engage in concepts in their L1 in a collaborative way is in fact fundamental to the ways by which people learn (Tomasello, 1991, as cited in Cook, 2001). Therefore, in order to facilitate meaningful learning which builds upon previous knowledge in a holistic way, learners should be able to engage in L1 dialogues in order to enable deeper understanding.

The implications stemming from this study have helped to answer the third research question we sought to answer: How can we as PASS practitioners learn from these processes, and how can we start to more fully understand the depth of reasoning behind language choice? There is a sense that the feeling "out there" within the SI and PASS community might be that students simply find it "easy" to speak in their L1, that it is a lazy option. As we have argued and the data has shown, the PASS Leaders' use of L1 in their sessions is built upon complex decision-making which is underpinned by the tenets of bi/multilingualism, constructivism, and learning as a social enterprise. We would suggest that we are only just starting to understand and unravel the complexities behind language choice and student peer mentoring, and we encourage open dialogue to occur with PASS Leaders and their supervisors regarding how they can best learn from each other and provide support.

In answering our three research questions, the results from the data revealed sophisticated decisions based around social interactions, how language can serve different purposes for learning, and the PASS Leaders' internalised understandings and beliefs about learning. Using L1 did not occur simply because the PASS Leaders "couldn't be bothered" with English.

These processes do indeed reflect in a number of ways the PASS principles of deepening learning, creating collaborative and interactive spaces, helping student transition, and enabling success. These are reflected in the fact that what was taking place in the PASS sessions in terms of students using their L1 is in alignment with the principles of social constructivism and learning, the very tenets upon which PASS is built. The PASS Leaders spoke about how they were concerned that their choice of language could either unite or isolate students, a reflection of how the PASS Leaders had an internalised

sense of learning being predicated by social interaction. The fact that they were also open with the student attendees in the sessions about these decisions is further evidence of this.

The ways in which language was actually used in the sessions also reflects how the PASS Leaders were working to make contextual and socially meaningful learning experiences for the student attendees. The example of how the PASS Leaders worked to create links between and build on concepts which the students had already learned in China is an example of their ability to build on knowledge gained from prior experiences. These data reflect the literature surrounding the important and varied uses language can play within learning contexts and cannot be ignored when considering how bi/multilingual learners use different languages in their repertoire (Grim, 2010; May, 2013; Norton, 2013; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003; Sridhar, 1994, as cited in May, 2013).

CONCLUSION
We position these findings within a perspective which sees the use of L1 in classrooms as a benefit to learners and argue that language is part of the "whole person," which cannot and should not be separated for the purposes of learning (Banda, 2007; Brooks & Donato, 1994; Cook, 1999, 2001; Grim, 2010; Levine, 2003; May, 2013; Norton, 2013; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003; Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Taylor & Snoddon, 2013). Indeed, we argue that these approaches are in alignment with social constructivist perspectives of PASS and are more respectful to student PASS Leaders in considering how their language choices can create meaningful learning and connected, engaged communities of learners. The limitation of this study points to the need for further research in this area—the small sample size means the generalisability is limited. Furthermore, the context of this study means that for the Chinese speaking PASS Leaders, the majority of the attendees spoke the same language—this may be a unique situation which is not replicated at other institutions. A consideration of the perspectives from the attendees would also strengthen possible further arguments around how effective the use of L1 is to their learning, expectations, needs, and motivations in attending PASS. A comparative study between attendees who were able to use L1 versus those who were not would also be interesting in terms of investigating the actual benefits attained; that is, whether a group who uses L1 actually achieves better grades in the subject than those who do not.

In terms of our third research question, as practitioners we use these critical approaches and research findings from this small study as a starting point to inform further iterations of the PASS program for the VU context and as a way of challenging our own preconceived notions of language use, language choice, identity, and learning. We would encourage other practitioners to do the same; that is, to actively involve PASS Leaders in dialogue about language use in the PASS context and to openly talk about what may in fact be the elephant in the room for bilingual students. We would suggest that this creates a new approach for PASS supervisors to also become active learners and to collaboratively construct meaningful approaches to the training and support of bilingual PASS Leaders.

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