



David Singleton

University of Pannonia, Hungary

Simone E. Pfenninger

University of Salzburg, Austria

L2 Proficiency as a Function of Cultural Identity in Interlingual Couples

Abstract

The “love factor” has increasingly figured in SLA research. Thus, Piller (2002) studied the language “glue” between cross-lingual couples; Marinova-Todd (2003) found a link between L2 proficiency and co-habitation with native speakers; Muñoz and Singleton (2007) reported a romantic connection between successful late L2 learners and native speakers; Gonçalves (2013) explored hybridity in bicultural relationships; and Kinsella and Singleton (2014) found that the participants in their study of late L2 learners whose L2 test results were all within native-speaker range had native-speaker life-partners. This issue is now being taken very seriously, as Dewaele and Salomidou’s (2017) recent article on “loving [...] in a foreign language” demonstrates. In the present article we report on the results of some recent qualitative research, based on interview data collected from five individuals who are involved in intercultural and cross-lingual relationships. The research shows the L2 learning process to be clearly influenced by the affective context in which it occurs. The data also suggest that identity construction may be moved in a particular direction by the language principally adopted by the couple, and that, for the partner for whom this language is an L2, the results can be dramatic in terms of both linguistic and cultural affiliation.

Keywords: identity, interlingual couples, love, L2 proficiency, affective

Introduction

With the increasing urge in today’s society to travel as well as to engage and communicate with people from all over the world, many people have found love with a person from a different country from their own and, as a result,

find themselves living in an intercultural, binational relationship. While it is argued that such a cross-cultural exchange can offer many advantages, such as the sharing of traditional customs, people in intercultural relationships often find their own cultural understanding to be challenged, as they are confronted with the juggling of identities and the ideologies associated with them (see Breger & Hill, 1998). As language has been shown to form an essential part of an individual's identity (e.g., Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, 2005, 2010), being able to speak one's native language in an intercultural relationship has been argued to be a stabilizing component of individual identity construction, while the abdication of native language use has been portrayed as rather adverse.

Interlingual relationships have, on the other hand, frequently been talked about in SLA research in connection with the dramatic rise in L2 proficiency of the partner who opts to use the language of his/her "significant other." One thinks of Marinova-Todd's (2003) study of 30 post-pubertal learners of English from 25 countries, which found that the six most proficient participants cohabited with native English speakers. Or of Muñoz and Singleton's (2007) study, which found that of the most successful late L2 learners, in a group of 11 Spanish/Catalan-L1 near-native learners of English they investigated in Ireland, one was espoused to an Irishman and the other had an Irish boyfriend (whom she subsequently married).

Nor are we surprised by such results. We always knew that falling in love with a speaker of another tongue could change not only your life, but also your command of his/her language—and, adverting to our earlier point, to some extent your sense of self. Such changes very much relate to "the degree to which the individual is open to disruptive novelty in terms of developing identity" (Skrzypek & Singleton, 2016, p. 89; cf. Schumann, 1976). This kind of openness appears to be encouraged by romantic love, which seems to have the capacity to take the threat out of threats to identity. As Gonçalves (2013) points out, at least some of the people experiencing intercultural relationships are "culturally hybrid individuals," "living in the in-between" (2013, p. 528). They live another identity, besides the one they grew with, and perform accordingly.

Such developments are not unique to intercultural couples. One thinks of the Latin poet, Quintus Ennius, who, because he had three languages, used to say he had three hearts. In a similar vein, Dewaele (2016) mentions Pavlenko's (2006) analysis of the feedback from the Bilingualism and Emotion Questionnaire. Pavlenko found that almost two-thirds of participants reported feeling like different people when they switched languages. Interlingual/intercultural couples do though offer prime examples of the phenomenon!

This paper aims to contribute to our understanding of language acquisition in "bilingual, cross-cultural, interpersonal communication" (Piller, 2000, p. 1). It outlines the obstacles and communicative challenges confronted by three intercultural couples as well as their varying motivation and success in learning,

maintaining and using a second language. With communication as a vital factor in the make-up of a modern romantic relationship (see Piller, 2001), how and to what extent do significant others in couples whose languages, cultures, and identities differ influence each other with respect to L2 acquisition, maintenance, and attrition? How do the couples choose their language? What are the reasons behind those choices? We report on three cases of relationships involving pairs of native speakers of different languages. We describe the communicative configuration that resulted in each case and tentatively explore an explanation for the differences between them.

Literature Review

Identity Construction and SLA

Communication between partners is crucial for a relationship (Piller, 2001). Additionally, when the two individuals in question stem from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, an extra dimension is added to an already complex psychological process (Dewaele & Salomidou, 2017, p. 117). Importantly, in situations of cultural contact, equal status may be won, if at all, via struggle (Bucholtz & Hall, 2003). It is now widely understood that engagement in language learning is an “investment in a learner’s own identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space” (Norton, 2013, p. 51). The period of destabilization described above has also been referred to as the third place (Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1996), in which the past and present “encounter and transform each other” (Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 170).

In her 2002 study of German-English couples, Piller describes the importance of private language, which is the central element of the relationship, “a glue that binds it together” (p. 222). Piller found that many couples perceive their private language as the foundation of their relationship: “[...] we were both happy then that we could speak German, and our relationship started with drinking coffee and speaking, and so speaking was very important to us and whenever we are having a serious conversation, it really needs to be in German, otherwise it doesn’t go well, and it doesn’t feel right” (Piller, 2002, p. 222). Dewaele (2013) went on to describe this private communication as depending on three channels: a visual channel such as body language, facial expressions, and gestures, a vocal channel such as vocalizations, prosody, intonation, pitch, volume, and a verbal channel that covers the content of the speech. If the information shared between the partners is not congruent on all three channels, difficulties within the communication can arise. For instance, when somebody

sounds but does not look angry, or when somebody says something positive without looking and sounding positive (Dewaele, 2013; Dewaele & Salomidou, 2017, p. 118).

Love and SLA

SLA research is now taking the love issue and its consequences very seriously: various studies, some of which have already been mentioned, have focused in detail on the language of love among multilinguals and their preferred languages for inner and articulated speech. Kinsella and Singleton (2014) found that, of the 20 Anglophone late learners of French they investigated, the three whose French test results were all within native-speaker range had each married French natives and had either bilingual or French-speaking children. French, for all three, was the language spoken at home. Thus, all three had strong links to the French community, and the majority of their social interactions were carried out through French (Kinsella & Singleton, 2014, p. 16). In 2008, Dewaele found that while the phrase *I love you* has most emotional weight in an L1, 30% of investigated participants felt that it had equal weight in their L1 and an LX, and 25% felt it was stronger in their LX. In their wide-ranging article on “loving a partner in a foreign language,” Dewaele and Salomidou (2017) explored the perceptions of multilinguals reflecting on emotional communication in LXs in romantic relationships, concluding that love in an LX is perfectly possible but it adds “some extra challenges,” while love and sex allow partners with different L1s to bridge the inevitable linguistic gaps and to create their own unique multilingual and multicultural relationship. The authors (p. 117) quote the claim made by Piller (2002)—in regard to a study of German-English couples—that these days in intimate relationships—including crosslinguistic relationships—communication is key. Dewaele and Salomidou note that, amongst their own participating couples, one of the partners’ languages often became “the language of the heart” (p. 128) for both, and the females more often adopted the language of the males. We shall see in what follows, however, that this trend is not without exceptions.

Addressing the issue of hybridity in terms of identity construction, Said argued as early as 1999 that “all cultures are involved in one another” and “none is considered to be single and pure, all are hybrid and heterogeneous” (pp. 112–115). Nevertheless, partners living in an intercultural relationship, who experience this ‘in-between’ or ‘third place’ of cultures, often do not see themselves as hybrid (Bhabha, 1994; Bystydzienski, 2011; Gonçalves, 2010). Exploring hybridity in bicultural relationships in a Swiss context, Gonçalves (2013) bases her research on Bucholtz and Hall’s sociocultural linguistic model, which views identity as emergent in social interaction, but emphasizes its so-

cial salience in that identity becomes the social positioning of self and others (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 586). Bucholtz and Hall's concepts of sameness and difference take a central position in our study—two phenomenological processes that emerge from social interaction. According to the authors (2003, p. 369), sameness allows for individuals to imagine themselves as a group, while difference produces social distance between those who perceive themselves as unlike.

In an earlier study Gonçalves (2010) re-conceptualizes the saliency of individuals' situated past identities, positions, and practices and juxtaposes them with individuals' current situational identities, positions, and practices in order to facilitate their rejection of hybridity, by proposing the terms *situated* and *situational identities* within ethnographic studies. *Situated identity* is described as “an individual's sense of self, which is often characterized as ‘stable,’ ‘fixed,’ and ‘unchanged’ in that it is how individuals consider themselves to be or act inherently” (Gonçalves, 2010, pp. 81 ff.). Furthermore, *situated identities* can also refer to how individuals are “seen,” placed or situated by others as certain individuals within a specific context. A *situational identity*, on the other hand is more flexible, dynamic, temporary and can be constructed by oneself or co-constructed by others (Gonçalves, 2010, pp. 81 ff.). Having analyzed individuals' first-order perception of identity in a Swiss context, Gonçalves concluded that hybridity ultimately means “scrutinizing interpersonal discourse within an intimate community of practice where the positioning of self and other constantly emerges” (2010, p. 86):

While it is impossible to account for identity “as a whole,” [...] individuals living in a binational relationship come to terms with their hybrid cultural identities by discursively co-constructing this notion and, simultaneously, performing hybridity by drawing on an array of language resources and linguistic features. (Gonçalves, 2013, p. 544)

Finally, it is also interesting to note that some neuroscientists (e.g., Aron, Fisher, Mashek, Strong, Li, & Brown, 2005) have characterized romantic love as not so much a specific emotion as a “motivation state” with respect to an imperative to be with the beloved and to protect the relationship in question. Clearly, such an imperative is, among other things, connected to seeking out means of communication and to developing and looking after such means—with obvious implications for skills in relevant languages.

This Study

Data, Participants, and Site of Study

Semi-structured interviews were carried out in Austria (community language German) with five participants (two couples and one male individual) who were in relationships involving different languages and cultures. The couples in question used English as their main language of communication at least at some point in their relationship, whereas the individual male reported German as the overwhelmingly dominant language of his relationship. The participants were carefully selected in regard to sharing essential features such as age and length of relationship at the moment of the interview. While Caitlyn (L1 English) and Stefan (L2 German) used Caitlyn's native English as their common language, Daniela (L1 German) and Vratislav (L1 Czech) used English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). In Kevin's (L1 English) case, on the other hand, the community language, Austrian German, was the language he and his partner (L1 German) used for marital communication.

Caitlyn and Stefan met in South Africa, during Stefan's participation in a student exchange program at Caitlyn's home university. After the year-long exchange, the couple moved to Salzburg, Austria, as Stefan already had a secure job and Caitlyn had just finished her undergraduate degree at the time. In terms of language practices, the couple speak English exclusively, as Caitlyn's German proficiency is as yet insufficient in order to have a spontaneous conversation. While Caitlyn did take a German language class at university for the duration of one semester, she has stated that she stopped taking classes of any form and is now "picking up bits just as she goes along," which has apparently significantly undermined her progress in German.

Daniela and Vratislav met during Vratislav's business travels to Vienna which was Daniela's place of residence at the time. After a short time of practicing a long-distance relationship, Daniela moved to Prague as she was admittedly "more flexible" due to the conditions of her job as a singer/actress. As neither of the two spoke each other's native language at the time, the couple have been using English as main language of communication since the start. Both individuals show a high English proficiency as both use English on a daily basis as part of their occupations respectively. Since living in Prague, Daniela has been taking Czech lessons on a regular basis and is already able to have an unprompted conversation in Czech. Vratislav has also just started taking German lessons online. His skills are yet at a beginner's level, as he has only been actively practicing for a few weeks and is not exposed to German on a regular basis. Table 1 summarizes the basic information about the above participants.

Table 1
Information about the participants

Couple	NL2		ELF	
Name	Caitlyn	Stefan	Daniela	Vratislav
Nationality	South-Africa	Austria	Austria	Czech Republic
Native Lang.	English	German	German	Czech
Age	25	26	27	29
Occupation	university student (MA)	quality/process manager	translator, singer, dancer, actress	IT manager
L2	–	English	English	English
Location	Salzburg, Austria		Prague, Czech Republic	
Length of Relationship	2 years; 6 months		2 years; 9 months	

Finally, Kevin grew up monolingually and monoculturally, learning no languages other than English—even at school—until the age of 16. Nevertheless, his local high school did what his appetite for contact with other languages and cultures by exposing him to encounters with visiting foreign exchange students. On returning to America, he began his tertiary studies, in which he focused on Spanish and Chemistry. During the late 90s, when he was living in Spain, he made the projection that the German language would become dominant in the EU “domestic” market. On the basis of this projection, he decided to learn German by taking part in an exchange program that took him to Graz in Austria. It was in Austria, in his 20s, that he had his “significant encounter.”

Task and Procedure

The following questions guided the conversations:

1. Do both of you speak each other’s native language on a sufficient level for basic communication? If not, do you understand your partner’s first language?
2. Which language(s) do you use? Have you and your partner created your own language?
3. Do you correct your partner when he/she makes mistakes in his/her second language?
4. Do you have any troubles in making yourself understood?
5. How does it make you feel when you talk to native speakers?
6. What do you consider to be stronger: your community language or English as a world language?
7. In how far has the constant exposure to your second language affected your first language use? Do you consider this change to be positive or negative?

8. Have you noticed any difference in terms of formality and register when using your first and second language? For example, using more advanced vocabulary in one language.
9. Are there any holidays/customs/traditions that you share with your partner, which you may have not celebrated before your relationship?
10. Do you feel like you have adapted an “Austrian way of life”? If yes, please exemplify.

This set, however, only functioned as rough guideline, as in all cases a natural, non-scripted conversation between interviewers and interviewees developed. The rationale for this design was twofold: on the one hand, it aimed to elicit self-reported information on the couple’s language practices and language attitudes, and, on the other hand, to yield samples of couple talk (see also Piller, 2002).

The transcripts were coded manually and divided into four main topics emerging in all the conversations, that is, everyday socio-cultural practices (cultural immersion), L2 learning motivation, identity claims (implicit identity claims, explicit identity claims), and language choice and language practices (incl. couple discourse). For the purpose of this paper, we focus on drivers of second language acquisition, maintenance, and attrition.

Results and Analysis

The Far-travelling American

Up to the point of commencing German, Kevin had never been persuaded by the merits of formal instructional language learning—perceiving full immersion in the target language to be the only valid methodology. Nevertheless, in Austria, he found he was able to use his knowledge gained from learning Spanish to catalyze his acquisition of German. His oral proficiency developed from the A1 to the C2 (CEFR) level within six months (when he was 23–24 years of age). His writing and reading proficiency, by his own account, lagged significantly behind and still does 14 years later. This remarkable progress—and the area in which it occurred—is clearly not solely attributable to his transfer of skills acquired during his struggle with Spanish. The extraordinary flowering of his oral proficiency in German—whose phonological, grammatical, and lexical resemblance to Spanish is distinctly limited—may more plausibly be explained in terms of the consequences of his “significant encounter.” Let us allow Kevin now to continue the story in his own words:

- (1) I returned home to finish my undergraduate studies and then returned a year later to get married to my Austrian wife. Since then, I have been living and working using almost exclusively the German language. My wife and I only spoke German to each other—it was almost as if speaking English was some sort of pseudo-communication. Even after my first child was born, we still spoke German. I knew that I had to speak English to her, if she was going to be bilingual, but it didn't feel "real" to speak English at home or in public with my family.

Here we see the beginnings of identity being modified through the sedimentation of what Bucholtz and Hall (2003) call "habitual action." They (p. 378) argue that although linguistic practice is more often rooted in embodied repetition than in deliberate action, this does not preclude the possibility that it may be the outcome of social agency. The result of what happened following Kevin's "significant encounter" is that he now, according to his colleagues, performs spoken Austrian German—which he began, recall, in his twenties—"like a native," as they say. His almost exclusive use of German in his life for more than a decade clearly has a lot to do with this. Another dimension would appear to be that—at least while he was in Austria—German was the language he identified with as the authentic medium of self-expression.

Things have begun to change for Kevin more recently:

- (2) Around four years ago, I began an MA in TESOL in Ireland. At this point I was forced to use English for academic and professional development, which created a turning point for my use of language. I began to speak much more English at home and my wife began also to use some English within our relationship. Now I speak predominantly English with my children, but still feel more comfortable speaking German with them in public settings. I have also been working at the University of Salzburg teaching English which has forced me to almost exclusively speak English at work.

He claims that these changes have had a deleterious impact on his German lexicon and on what he calls his "phonological façade." It has to be said that this impact has not been registered by the German-speakers around him. Even if they are true, the fact that his German reached such a high-water mark appears to be due in the main to the influence of his relationship with his wife, including the influence of this relationship on his language identity, and any decline from that level, because of his increasing use of English, would appear to relate in part to the results of another kind of love—paternal love!

Without wishing to enter here into the critical period debate, it is perhaps worth reiterating that Kevin's first exposure to German was in his twenties—

long after the critical age is generally said by Critical Period Hypothesis advocates to have expired. The fact that he was able to make such rapid and dramatic progress seems to confirm the view that, whatever our views on the critical period, identity adjustments, induced by love or otherwise, are an extremely important dimension of successful L2 learning in adulthood (cf. Skzypek & Singleton, 2016; Schumann, 1975).

The Adaptable but Thwarted South African

For our second case-study we shall again focus on an Anglophone who became very attached to an Austrian and who moved to Austria to be with him. In this case, however, we do not see the very rapid attainment of proficiency in L2 German under conditions of virtually total immersion but a more problematic development in a context where both English and German are at play, and where openness to both cultures on the part of both partners in the relationship is very striking, but where the situation presents some obstacles to the L2 acquisition of German on the part of the English speaker.

This second story begins in South Africa, where Caitlyn, an English-speaking South-African meets Stefan, a German-speaking Austrian taking part in a student-exchange program and studying for a year at Caitlyn's home university. At the end of the Stefan's year-long exchange, Caitlyn moved with him—her studies incomplete—to Austria, where Stefan had a secure job waiting for him. The couple spoke (and still speak) English exclusively to each other. While Caitlyn did take a German language class at university for the duration of one semester, she has apparently now stopped taking German classes of any form and is, according to her own account, “picking up bits just as she goes along.”

It is particularly interesting, and not a little surprising, that neither Caitlyn nor Stefan shows an unshakeable attachment to their home culture. Caitlyn says that when she first moved to Austria she was “very much South African” but that now when goes back to South Africa she misses aspects of life in Austria:

- (3) In the beginning when I first moved here I was very much South African. [...] I'm like that when I'm in South Africa, I've missed stuff from Austria and I'll miss Austrian things.

Caitlyn refers to herself as “being South African” using the past tense, emphasizing her increasing adaptability and hybridity of her cultural identity. Stefan expresses similar sentiments. He says he was never “that proud Austrian that just likes Austrian things and nothing else. [...] [S]ince I have been South Africa like, like a part of my heart is there.”

Caitlyn and Stefan both, then, evince cultural permeability, which is evident from the way in which they combine elements from both cultures on high days and holidays. Thus Caitlyn says:

- (4) Yeah, so now we've like combined it. So, when we've with Stef's parents for Christmas we'll do it on the 24th at night [the Austrian way] but then we'll also do something on the 25th as well [the South African way].

On the language front, however, she reports that going about her daily routine does not necessarily require her to speak German, and that her efforts to communicate in German do not evoke an encouraging response:

- (5) Obviously, the main problem is the language but that's all up to me to just learn German. It's harder than I thought and people aren't as... welcoming with regards to like the German people in the city, if I try and speak German a lot of people are like "no." They're not willing to have a conversation with me. Like, people our age at the university or Stef's family, they're willing to talk to me no matter how stupid I sound, but other people aren't interested really.

Thus, Caitlyn feels that her L2 acquisition benefited from the way she is treated by others. Her mention of the willingness of her immediate circle to "speak German no matter how stupid she sounds," brings us back to Stefan's role in the situation. Through the course of the interview, he repeatedly stresses his being perfectly comfortable speaking English. He also speaks in a diminishing way of his own German: "Usually I'm not speaking proper German." He is referring here to his very distinctive Austrian accent and to the fact that Austrian German contains elements that are not in use in the German of Germany. Stefan also reports that it is odd for him to speak Standard German to Caitlyn, "because," he says, "we met in English and it's like talking in a foreign language to her... like it feels weird." This is the nub of the matter; Stefan muses that if they spoke more German to each other, Caitlyn would learn more, and Caitlyn protests that when they visit Stefan's parents they "speak a lot more German, because his mum doesn't really speak English," but the fact is that *their* language, the language of their initial encounters, the language of their first endearments, the language of their entire relationship is English.

The fact that—despite Caitlyn having moved to a German-speaking country to be with her German-speaking partner—the language through which she has continued to express herself (including her feelings) to him is English, and this is also the language through which he feels most comfortable expressing himself to her. For the purposes of their intimate relationship, German is superfluous.

The Case of the ELF Couple

Both couples show high degrees of cultural immersion and have explicitly mentioned social conventions they practice in order to actively perform hybridity. Strikingly, in both cases this adaptability was stressed by the female participants, who also both left their individual cultural environments in order to move in with their partners:

- (6) Daniela: There are some differences, like, for example, when you celebrate Easter there are many different traditions (both laugh).

Interviewer: Can you tell me an example?

Daniela: No, so in the Czech Republic at Easter the boys go from house to house with a stick and beat the girls! I'm not kidding! And this means the girls will be healthy the whole year. So yeah... in his family they do that but I still get to make my Easter nests so it's okay (both laugh).

In sociolinguistic research this tactic is typically referred to as “distinction,” which is the mechanism whereby salient difference is produced (Bucholtz & Hall, 2003, p. 384). As our example demonstrates, distinction most often operates in a binary fashion, establishing a dichotomy between social identities constructed as oppositional or contrastive. However, example (5) also illustrates that Daniela seems to have found compromises in terms of their respective cultural practices and that she seeks to celebrate “the best of both worlds.” Open-mindedness towards their partners’ respective native culture thus seems to be present in both female participants, yet it was only when interviewing the ELF couple that the influence of language on cultural immersion was explicitly stated. While Caitlyn stated that her going about her daily routine does not necessarily require her to speak German (see above), Daniela continuously stressed the importance of speaking Czech within the city of Prague and emphasized her desire to become part of Czech culture in connection with her L2 learning motivation:

- (7) I always think if you want to get to know a culture and want to become a part of it, it is really important to know the language or at least do your best to learn it.

Therefore, it can be argued that cultural immersion and the cultural hybridity it involves seem to be less affected by the status of the main language of communication within the setting of cultural practices, but plays an essential role regarding the status of the main language of (in this case) English in relation to the community language. The less an individual seems to “get by” using English within the non-native community, the higher the value that is placed

on the community language with regard to cultural importance. The results somewhat contradict previous ELF studies; according to Jenkins (2008), for instance, ELF emphasizes the role of English in communication between speakers from different L1s and emphasizes that people have something in common rather than their differences.

While Caitlyn's social network does not require her to learn German, a different picture emerges for Daniela, whose non-native language community is less familiar with the English language. This has resulted in Daniela taking Czech lessons from the very beginnings of her move to Prague:

- (8) I started with individual lessons from the beginning on when I first moved here, and now I'm doing a course twice a week which actually helps me a lot. So now we talk a lot more Czech to each other and I pick up a lot more of the language when we speak to each other.

She states that while she and Vratislav initially only used English, her motivation in acquiring the community language has resulted in them increasingly including Czech into their everyday conversations as a couple. Vratislav, on the other hand, has not yet started taking a language class but is planning to do so soon:

- (9) Vratislav: No we don't speak German because I'm too lazy (laughs).
Daniela: But he is starting a course really soon! It's just because we live in Prague I need to use Czech a lot more than he needs to speak German.
Vratislav: Yes, that's definitely one of the major reasons why also now speak a lot more Czech with each other.
Daniela: Yes, that's why I have a much bigger motivation to learn Czech and I focus more on it so there is not space for German unfortunately.

Like Stefan, Vratislav did not have to leave his country for his relationship and was able to continue with his life previous to his intercultural relationship. However, unlike Stefan, who openly admitted to his lack of patriotism, Vratislav showed the stability that is usually reported in ELF couples, referring to his being able to maintain his language practices as they were prior to the relationship to the assurance of his cultural identity:

- (10) I still speak my native language and I still speak the same way I did before, using English at work. So I don't think my identity has really changed. I am really Czech! (laughs)

Daniela further emphasizes the importance of the language community to her as their ELF, English, appears to be less widely-spoken within their language

community when compared to the Austrian community described above. She also explicitly states her partner's family to be her main motivation behind her process of acquiring Czech:

- (11) My main motivation is not even the people here but mostly his family, because they don't speak any German or English and I just want to talk to them. With my family and German it's not that much of a problem but it's just annoying when he always has to translate everything.

Concluding Remarks

Piller (2002) points to the crucial importance of the couple's private language, which she describes as the central element of the relationship, "a glue that binds it together" (p. 222). Unlike in some previous research findings (see, e.g., Piller, 2001, 2002), however, our couples reported that they did not necessarily stick exclusively to this private language in each other's presence, deploying another language when circumstances demanded it.

The "glue" in the case of Kevin's relationship is German. Kevin went to Austria with a view to acquiring German, and his partner had little English. Accordingly, it was natural and necessary for German to be their language of intimacy, and as a result it became the language with which Kevin increasingly identified and which developed into the (for many years) language of his everyday life. The fact that English has entered more into the picture now has to do with the arrival of children and also developments in his professional life.

In the case of Caitlyn and Stefan the "glue" is English, Caitlyn's L1 and a language in which Stefan is very proficient; this is the language in which their relationship first began (in an Anglophone context) and in which their communication overwhelmingly continues. It also happens that in Caitlyn's milieu in Austria she can use English for most everyday purposes, which effectively allows the glue of her relationship also to function as the glue of her day-to-day living. She does, however, try to speak German with Stefan's family. Interestingly, in respect of both the above relationships it was the language of the female partner that was adopted as the couple's "language of the heart."

Regarding Daniela and Vratislav, the "glue" in this instance is the native language of neither, but a language they both know well, English, and in which their relationship began. Interestingly, the present trend is for Daniela to incorporate more of Vratislav's L1 (Czech) into her discourse than for Vratislav

to use Daniela's L1 (German). This is no doubt partly because they are now living in Prague and Daniela cannot always get by in English in the context of day-to-day living, although she makes much of her desire to be in contact with his family, who have no English or German.

References

- Aron, A., Fisher, H., Mashek, D. J., Strong, G., Li, H., & Brown, L. L. (2005). Reward, motivation and emotion systems associated with early-stage intense romantic love. *Journal of Neurophysiology*, *94*, 327–337.
- Bhabha, H. (1994). *The location of culture*. London: Routledge.
- Breger, R. A., & Hill, R. (1998). *Cross-cultural marriage: Identity and choice*. Oxford: Berg.
- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2004). Language and identity. In A. Duranti (Ed.), *A companion to linguistic anthropology* (pp. 369–394). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2005). Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach. *Discourse Studies*, *7*(4–5), 585–614.
- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2010). Locating identity in language. In C. Llamas & D. Watt (Eds.), *Language and identities* (pp. 18–28). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Bystydzienski, J. M. (2011). *Intercultural couples: Crossing boundaries, negotiating identities*. New York: New York University Press.
- Dewaele, J.-M. (2013). *Emotions in multiple languages*, 2nd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dewaele, J.-M. (2016). Multi-competence and emotion. In V. Cook & Li Wei (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of linguistic multi-competence* (pp. 461–477). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dewaele, J.-M., & Nakano, S. (2012). Multilinguals' perceptions of feeling different when switching languages. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *34*(2), 107–120.
- Dewaele, J.-M., & Salomidou, L. (2017). Loving a partner in a foreign language. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *108*, 116–130.
- Gonçalves, K. (2010). Negotiating identities and doing Swiss in intercultural couples. *SPELL: Swiss papers in English language and literature*, *24*, 75–89.
- Gonçalves, K. (2013). 'Cooking lunch, that's Swiss': Constructing hybrid identities based on socio-cultural practices. *Multilingua: Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Communication*, *32*(4), 527–547.
- Hall, S. (1996). Introduction: Who needs 'identity'? In S. Hall & P. du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of Cultural Identity* (pp. 1–17). London: Sage.
- Kinsella, C., & Singleton, D. (2014). Much more than age. *Applied Linguistics*, *35*(4), 441–462.
- Marinova-Todd, S. (2003). *Comprehensive analysis of ultimate attainment in adult second language acquisition*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University.
- Muñoz, C., & Singleton, D. (2007). Foreign accent in advanced learners: Two successful profiles. *The EUROSLA Yearbook*, *7*, 171–190.
- Papastergiadis, N. (2000). *The turbulence of migration*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

- Pavlenko, A. (2006). Bilingual selves. In A. Pavlenko (Ed.), *Bilingual minds: Emotional experience, expression and representation* (pp. 1–33). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Piller, I. (2001). Linguistic intermarriage: Language choice and negotiation of identity. In A. Pavlenko, A. Blackledge, I. Piller, & M. Teutsch-Dwyer (Eds.), *Multilingualism, second language learning and gender* (pp. 199–230). Berlin–New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Piller, I. (2002). *Bilingual couples talk: The discursive construction of hybridity*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Schumann, J. (1975). Affective factors and the problem of age in second language acquisition. *Language Learning*, 25, 209–235.
- Schumann, J. (1976). Social distance as a factor in second language acquisition. *Language Learning*, 26(1), 135–143.
- Skrzypek, A., & Singleton, D. (2016). Age and identity. In V. Regan, C. Diskin, & J. Martyn (Eds.), *Language, identity and migration* (pp. 83–97). Oxford: Peter Lang.

David Singleton, Simone E. Pfenninger

Die Gewandtheit in der Zweitsprache als Resultante der kulturellen Identität bei verschiedensprachigen Paaren

Zusammenfassung

Der „Liebesfaktor“ spielt immer größere Rolle in den Forschungen zur Erwerbung der Zweitsprache. Ein Beispiel dafür ist Piller (2002), die in ihren Forschungen die Sprache als ein gewisses Bindemittel zwischen verschiedensprachigen Lebenspartnern untersuchte. Marinova-Todd (2003) ist zum Schluss gekommen, dass es eine Wechselbeziehung gibt zwischen dem Gewandtheitsgrad in der Zweitsprache und dem gemeinsamen Leben mit einem Muttersprachler. Muñoz und Singleton (2007) betrachteten ein romantisches Verhältnis zwischen den die Zweitsprache im späten Erwachsenenalter mit Erfolg Lernenden und den Muttersprachlern. Gonçalves (2003) dagegen untersuchte die Hybridität der partnerschaftlichen Beziehung von den von zwei verschiedenen Kulturen abstammenden Personen. Kinsella und Singleton (2014) wiederum behaupten, dass die im späten Erwachsenenalter eine Zweitsprache Lernenden, die in Sprachtests die den Muttersprachlern ähnlichen Ergebnisse erreichten, einen Lebenspartner hatten, der Muttersprachler war. Der neueste Beitrag von Dewaele und Salomidous (2017) ist der „Liebe [...] in einer Fremdsprache“ gewidmet, was klarmacht, dass sich gerade diese Frage heutzutage im Interessengebiet der Forscher befindet. Der vorliegende Aufsatz führt die Ergebnisse der kürzlich durchgeführten quantitativen Forschung in Form einer Umfrage an. An der Umfrage nahmen fünf Personen teil, welche in festen zwischenkulturellen und zwischensprachlichen Beziehungen waren. Die erreichten Daten weisen darauf hin, dass der Prozess des Zweitspracherwerbs mit seinem affektiven Kontext eng verbunden ist. Aus den Daten folgt darüber hinaus, dass der Prozess der Identitätsentwicklung durch die Kommunikationssprache der Lebenspartner bedingt ist. Die Folgen des Prozesses, wie die Forscher behaupten, können für den diese Sprache als Zweitsprache sprechenden Partner sowohl hinsichtlich der Sprachangehörigkeit als auch der Kulturangehörigkeit dramatisch sein.

Schlüsselwörter: Zweitspracherwerb, Spracherwerb, Identität, Liebe, Motivation