

“How am I to become a woman in an American vein?”: Transformations of gender performance in second language learning

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1. Introduction

Recently, I have argued elsewhere that successful second language (L2) learning by adult immigrants involves, above all, agency, and, as a consequence, ‘discursive assimilation’, (re)positioning and self-translation (Pavlenko 1998; Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000). ‘Self-translation’, in this view, refers to the reinterpretation of one’s subjectivities in order to position oneself in new communities of practice and to ‘mean’ in the new environment since “the person can only be a meaningful entity, both to himself or herself and to others, by being ‘read’ in terms of the discourses available in that society” (Burr 1995: 142). In this paper, I address one aspect of this discursive (re)construction of identity – transformations of gender performance – situating it within a language socialization perspective that views second language learning as an essentially social process, whereby the relationship between the learner and the learning context is dynamic and constantly changing (Peirce 1995).

Since gender identity is a social and cultural construct, societal conceptions of normative masculinities and femininities may differ cross-culturally and thus lead to modifications of previous models according to the new circumstances. Cultural changes in immigrants’ and refugees’ individual and community understandings of gender roles are well documented in the literature on immigrant women (Buijs 1993; Gabaccia 1994; Gordon 1995; Hegde 1998; Liebllich 1993) and refugee communities (Camino and Krulfeld 1994; Cole, Espin, and Rothblum 1992; Ledgerwood 1990). Krulfeld (1994) suggests that immigrants’ gender concepts, roles, and behaviors are most likely to change in the areas of greatest articulation within the dominant society (for immigrants in the United States, for instance, this change may entail a reconceptualization of the role of gender in education and employment). The modification will also be mediated by individuals’ race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality, as well as by gender ideologies in the communities in question. The changes in gender roles in the process of cultural adaptation may lead to tensions and difficulties in re-

lations between men and women in the minority community, between spouses, between parents and children, and to individual concerns and anxieties with regard to professional and social status (Benson 1994; Gordon 1995; Krulfeld 1994; Ledgerwood 1990; Lieblich 1993).

The study of gender as an important constitutive aspect of immigrant and refugee experience is a relatively new field: it came to light only in the last decade under the influence of feminist and postmodernist reconceptualizations of history and sociology. So far, changes in individual and community views of gender roles have been explored with regard to available subject positions, intimate relationships, parent-child relationships, and employment (Buijs 1993; Camino and Krulfeld 1994; Cole, Espin, and Rothblum 1992; Gabaccia 1994; Gordon 1995; Hegde 1998; Ledgerwood 1990; Lieblich 1993). While acknowledging the importance of language mastery for assimilation in a new society, none of the studies so far have considered language learning as a separate area of concern. On the other hand, existing literature on second language acquisition, bilingualism, and gender (Burton, Dyson, and Ardener 1994; Ehrlich 1997) does focus on language learning and use as mediated by gender, but has not yet considered what possible transformations may occur in discourses of L2 users as they attempt to occupy new gendered subject positions. Thus, while acknowledging other important aspects of gender transformations, a discussion of which can be found in the literature on immigrant experience, my study focuses on changes in the discursive performance of gender in the process of second language socialization.

2. Theoretical framework

The present work is informed by feminist poststructuralist perspectives, which emphasize the constitutive role of language, suggesting that it is the speech communities that produce gendered styles, while individuals make accommodations to those styles in the process of producing themselves as gendered subjects (Cameron 1996). As a result,

who one is is always an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one's own and others' discursive practices and within those practices, the stories through which we make sense of our own and others' lives. (Davies and Harré 1990: 46)

From this viewpoint, it comes as no surprise that a transition to a different culture, a different society, may involve a change in how one views and performs gender. This is not to say that gender performance within a particular society is predetermined, but to point out that the range of subjectivities validated within each community, subculture, or culture is ultimately limited – even though constantly negotiated and reconstituted. The assumption of a limited range of available subjectivities is of crucial importance here, as a theory of multiple, fragmented, and fluid identities that does not distinguish between a range of discourses and subjectivities available within and between cultures, is not particularly helpful and informative. Assuming that such a range exists – and that it may not coincide between the two communities in question – allows us to explain why transitions between cultures may result in changes of ideologies, discursive practices, and meanings allocated to various categories, in particular, the category of gender. Border-crossers may find themselves in a situation where their previous subjectivities cannot be coherently and/or legitimately produced and understood and, thus, appear discontinued, while the subjects resist or produce new social identities through repeated performances of various acts that constitute a particular type of identity (Butler 1990; Cameron 1996; Pavlenko 1998). This dilemma is illustrated in a well-known memoir by Eva Hoffman (1989), *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language*, where the Polish-born protagonist is informed by her fellow classmates at Rice University: “This is a society in which you are who you think you are. Nobody gives you your identity here, you have to reinvent yourself every day” (p. 160). She then proceeds to ask:

...I can't figure out how this is done. You just say what you are and everyone believes you? That seems like a confidence trick to me, and not one I think I can pull off. Still, somehow, invent myself I must. But how do I choose from identity options available all around me? (Hoffman 1989: 160)

Alice Kaplan (1993), the author of another memoir, *French Lessons*, suggests that it is the possibility of inventing and adopting a different identity that may prompt people to move away from the culture that doesn't “name them” (p. 209). It is critical, however, to underscore that one's subjectivities are not entirely a product of one's own free choice and agency: they are co-constructed with others who can accept or reject them and impose alternative identities instead. Often, depending on the power balance, it is others who define who we are, putting us in a position where we have to either accept or resist and negotiate these definitions. In particular, language behavior that does not conform to the community norms is frequently seen as marked. This attribution of new

meanings to one's speech acts and behaviors is illustrated in stories told by a well-known linguist, Anna Wierzbicka (1997), who came to Australia from Poland as an adult only to find out that her ways of performing femininity, being a mother or a daughter, may not carry the same value and elicit the same response in her new environment:

... when I tried to soothe my children in the first weeks of their lives with anxious Polish invocations of '*Córeńko! Córęńko!*' (lit. 'little daughter! little daughter!') my husband pointed out how quaint it sounds from the point of view of a native speaker of English to solemnly address a new-born baby as 'little daughter.' (Wierzbicka 1997:117)

... when I was talking on the phone, from Australia, to my mother in Poland (15,000 km away), with my voice loud and excited, carrying much further than is customary in an Anglo conversation, my husband would signal to me: 'Don't shout!' (Wierzbicka 1997: 119)

Individuals engaged in non-standard speech acts may oftentimes be seen as outsiders, which is, ironically, what happens to Hoffman (1989) who goes back to Poland twenty years after her family left the country. Meeting with her childhood friends, she runs into a series of misunderstandings as life stories are not always easily interpretable across cultures and dynamics of conversation may be entirely different. Her interaction patterns give her away: "Leave her alone, she's American," says one of her friends to another, irritated by Eva's urge to look for solutions, a speech act which has no appeal in Eastern European contexts (Hoffman 1989: 256).

Based on a theoretical framework which understands identities as dynamic, fluid, multiple, and socially constructed, in what follows I will demonstrate that linguistic and cultural transitions of immigrants and expatriates represent a meaningful and fertile site for exploring and problematizing the relationship between language, gender, and identity. To look at ways in which second language learners negotiate and transform gender performances in discourse, I will examine a corpus of first person narratives by L2 learners, which includes, but is not limited to, cross-cultural memoirs, a genre that recently came to attention in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) as a legitimate source of data, complementary to more traditional empirical paradigms (Kramsch and Lam 1999; McGroarty 1998; Pavlenko 1998, 2001, in press a; Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000; Schumann 1997; Young 1999).

Three terms will be used interchangeably to refer to the individuals discussed in the present study: 'L2 learners', 'L2 users' and '(adult) bilinguals'.

The first term, traditionally used in the field of SLA, underscores the fact that all the individuals in question have learned their second language later than the first. The second term emphasizes that all of them are legitimate and regular users of their second language. Finally, the term 'bilinguals' is used in agreement with Grosjean's (1998) functional definition of bilinguals as individuals who use both languages on a regular basis, regardless of whether they are equally fluent in both.

3. Research design and methodology

The corpus of 30 L2 learning stories examined in the present study consists of two types of first person narratives: (1) 25 cross-cultural autobiographies which focus on second language learning and use, and (2) 5 oral narratives about second language learning. Three criteria guided the selection of narratives in the present study. First of all, I have limited the corpus to stories which discuss both second language learning and use and the relationship between language and gender. Second, to acknowledge social, linguistic, and cultural constraints on life-storytelling (see Linde 1993), I limited the corpus to stories written or told in English in the US (with the exception of two narratives I have elicited in Russian and two essays by Wierzbicka 1985, 1997, who resides in Australia). Third, all memoirs in the corpus were published between 1973 and 2000, as 1973 is considered to be the turning point for modern women's autobiography, coinciding with the strengthening of the feminist movement, which prompted women to create new spaces for themselves and to tell stories previously considered untellable (Heilbrun 1988).

The first set of narratives in the corpus consists of 12 book-length cross-cultural autobiographies (Alvarez 1998; Davidson 1993; Dorfman 1998; Hoffman 1989; Kaplan 1993; Kingston 1975; Lvovich 1997; Mar 1999; Mori 1997; Ogulnick 1998; Rodriguez 1982; Watson 1995) and 12 autobiographic essays (Baranczak 1990; Brintrup 2000; Chambers 2000; Hirsch 1994; Kim 2000; Lee 2000; Mori 2000; Reyn 2000; Rosario 2000; Saine 2000; Wierzbicka 1985, 1997). In addition, I will refer to a biography of a Polish-American writer Jerzy Kosinski, based on multiple interviews with the writer (Sloan 1996).

To offset the written nature of the first set of narratives, I supplement it with the second set of five oral life-story interviews, four of which I conducted myself. The first two second language learning narratives, elicited in English, are part of a larger corpus of L2 learning narratives I collected in the Summer of 1998 at Cornell University. None of the informants in the larger study were asked about gender issues, and the two participants, Christina and Dominik,

were the only ones who raised these issues spontaneously. Christina is a Polish-English bilingual, who learned English as a teenager and came to the US in her twenties. Several years later, she became a literature scholar with an Ivy League Ph.D., feeling much more comfortable in English than in her native Polish. Dominik is a Hungarian-Slovak-English trilingual, who learned English upon arrival in the US three years prior to the interview; unlike Christina, he is planning to return to his native Slovak Republic after completing graduate study in the US. The other two interviews were originally conducted for another study in Russian with two Russian-English bilingual women, Marina and Natasha, in the Fall of 1999 at Cornell University. Both women studied some English in school in Russia, but mainly learned it in their twenties, upon arrival in the US, where they reside now. Natasha works in a research facility and Marina is in the process of completing her doctoral degree in psychology. The code-switching that occurred when the two women raised gender issues in their Russian narratives is extremely interesting for the purposes of this study. The fifth interview comes from a study conducted with a peasant Laotian woman, Pha, by Gordon (1995). Pha arrived in the US as a refugee and started learning English as an adult. Her interview was chosen in order to represent a voice of a working-class individual, whose socioeconomic circumstances differ from those of the other informants.

Based on the type of language socialization experienced by the narrators, the two sets of narratives can be subdivided into three categories: immigrant, ethnic, and expatriate language memoirs. Immigrant autobiographies include stories of informants who came to their new country and learned their second language – in which they now work and live – as teenagers and adults (Christina, Marina, Natasha, Pha; Alvarez, Baranczak, Brintrup, Dorfman, Hirsch, Hoffman, Kim, Kosinski, Lvovich, Mori, Reyn, Saine, Wierzbicka). Ethnic lifewriting is represented by the work of Chambers, Kingston, Lee, Mar, Rodriguez, and Rosario, who came to the US as children and/or grew up in ethnic neighborhoods and discuss a different language learning path – a transition from a minority to a majority language. It is important to note here that regardless of whether a particular person was born in the US or not, hyphenated identity terms, such as Japanese-American or Russian-American, will be used in the discussion to acknowledge the participants' own current identifications. Finally, to provide a contrast to the theme of 'Americanization', I included the interview with Dominik, who is getting ready to go back to his native country, and narratives of temporary expatriates who live in the US but had made linguistic journeys into French (Kaplan, Watson) and Japanese (Davidson, Ogulnick).

Three questions will guide my analysis of the corpus in the present study:

(1) what can personal narratives tell us about possible stages in the process of

the negotiation of gender identities in second language socialization; (2) what are the key sites of transformations of gender performance; (3) what linguistic changes take place in the transformation process. In order to carry out the data analysis, I first identified three types of references in the corpus: (1) references to the relationship between language and gender; (2) explicit attempts at repositioning, involving statements such as "I see myself as X" or "I no longer consider myself to be Y"; (3) implicit alignments with particular story participants or with the members of the audience. The length of references varied from one sentence to one thematically bound episode. These references were then coded and analyzed for information about particularly salient sites of transformation of gender identity, and the links between language and gender. The main analytical concept used to analyze the data in the present study was *positioning*, which, following Davies and Harré (1990), is viewed as the process by which individuals are situated as observably and subjectively coherent participants in the story lines. The narrative nature of the data allows me to illuminate the practice of reflective or self-positioning whereby storytellers signal, either explicitly or implicitly, that they occupy a particular subject position. The process of self-positioning is seen as closely linked to ways in which dominant ideologies of language and gender position the narrators and to ways in which the narrators internalize or resist these positionings. Two aspects of positioning will be emphasized in the study: the multiplicity of subject positions occupied by an individual at any given moment, and their temporality, whereby identity work is seen as an ongoing process. Only qualitative results of the analysis will be presented below, as quantitative information about the number of references to particular issues would be meaningless in this type of narrative inquiry, which sees any experience shared by two or more individuals as no longer fully idiosyncratic.

Three limitations of the present study need to be acknowledged before we proceed any further. To begin with, recognizing that different speech communities have different life-storytelling conventions (see Linde 1993), I chose to focus on stories told or written in English in the US. This choice limits my discussion to discursive performances of gender in American English, and leaves the question of how gendered subjectivities may be constructed in narratives in other languages to further investigation. Another important limitation is the fact that, with the exception of a few expatriate narratives, the L2 learners and users in the study are discussing their socialization into a society viewed as dominant where power relations between the majority and minority language are unequal. It is quite possible that the stories told in other cultures and in other languages may paint a very different picture of language socialization and transformations of gender performance. Finally, most of the narratives in

question are written or told by relatively successful middle-class individuals who had successfully acquired English. While the narratives of Americans who had attempted to learn another language allow us some glimpses into the nature of 'failure' in L2 learning, it is a failure experienced by speakers of a powerful language. Only further study could illuminate the experiences of immigrants who did not achieve a similar success in L2 learning and/or positioning themselves in their second language.

Despite these limitations, which I hope will be overcome in future research, I am positive that examination of first person L2 learning narratives offers a productive way to expand the study of SLA. In the present chapter, these narratives will allow me to examine how gender subjectivities, shaped by ideologies of language and gender, may be questioned, challenged, negotiated, and restructured in the process of second language socialization.

4. Transformations of gender in second language learning: data analysis and discussion

4.1. Language learning stories as a gendered genre

The analysis of the narratives in the corpus suggests, first of all, that language learning stories are in themselves gendered performances (for a detailed discussion of language memoirs as a gendered genre, see Pavlenko 2001). It is not accidental that 24 narratives in the corpus come from women and only 6 from men (Baranczak, Dorfman, Kosinski, Rodriguez, Watson; plus an interview with Dominik). Despite a careful search and a policy of including all memoirs which had a discussion of language and gender issues in at least one chapter (for books) or section (for essays), I was unable to locate any more relevant male language memoirs than the ones in the corpus. Similarly, except for Dominik, none of the male L2 learners I have interviewed about their learning invoked gender issues in their stories. In view of the theoretical framework assumed in the present chapter and volume, the 'unequal gendering' of language learning stories is easy to explain: gender is a category that is more visible for its less privileged members, just as we would expect the category of race to be more widely discussed by non-white writers. It also appears that the literary performance of contemporary American femininity – but not masculinity – is predicated on an explicit questioning of ideologies of gender and selfhood (Pavlenko 2001). In other words, "to be a woman in an American vein" may entail, among other things, questioning the meaning of being a woman.

The 'gendered' nature of L2 learning stories which portray the relationship between language and gender explains why my subsequent discussion appears to privilege women: they are the ones that talk about the issue explicitly and in-depth. Whenever possible, however, I will also attempt to comment on the negotiation of masculinities in L2 socialization, since the scarcity of discussions of the role of gender in L2 learning by male learners does not in any way suggest that gender as a system of social relations does not play a role in their learning experiences. Rather, as pointed out above, this silence indicates that at present the role of gender – unlike that of race, class, or culture – is obscured by the privileged ways in which male learners are often positioned (Polanyi 1995; for a discussion of a male L2 learner's trajectory, see Teutsch-Dwyer's chapter).

In what follows I will examine what L2 learning stories can tell us about transformations of gender in second language socialization. I will start my discussion by looking at ways in which dominant ideologies of language and gender are questioned in the L2 learners' narratives and proceed to look at the strategies of assimilation and resistance adopted by the narrators. Then I will single out four key sites, where, according to the narratives in the corpus, the traditional gender expectations are most often questioned, negotiated, and contested: intimate relationships, parent-child relationships, friendships, and work places. I will also discuss a number of ways in which linguistic devices contribute to changes in gender performance: from changes in pitch and voice quality (see also Ohara's chapter), to modifications of the lexicon, speech acts, and discursive repertoires. I will conclude by summarizing the results of the study and discussing its implications for further research on language and identity, and L2 learning and gender.

4.2. Questioning gender ideologies

Smith (1987) points out that every woman who writes autobiography ends up interrogating the prevailing ideology of gender, if only implicitly. This suggestion is fully borne out by the autobiographies in question where women – and only rarely men – are preoccupied with gender issues, in particular with social and cultural constraints on the construction of femininities which become particularly visible in transition. Due to the unique positioning of their authors, who often see themselves 'between two worlds', cross-cultural life stories question gender in unparalleled ways. It is not simply ideologies of gender that are questioned in the narratives, but ideologies of 'gender and X': gender and race, gender and ethnicity, gender and class, gender and culture, and, most no-

tably for the present study, gender and language. The bilingualism and biculturalism of the authors also allows them to examine things through multiple lenses, thus, deessentializing femininity, splintering the force of both their native and North American cultural authority, and reinventing and reimagining themselves in the process.

The depiction of gender inequality which dominated their primary language socialization is at the heart of a number of memoirs written by Asian-American and Latina women (Kim 2000; Kingston 1975; Lee 2000; Mar 1999; Mori 1997, 2000; Rosario 2000). The two Chinese-American authors, Maxine Hong Kingston (1975) and Elaine Mar (1999), separated by a quarter of a century, nevertheless share a memory of ways in which their language denied them their subjectivity. Mar (1999) recalls how her mother justified signing her school report cards with the father's name: "You always sign the man's name. It's the only one with meaning" (p. 160). Similarly, the Chinese-American protagonist in Kingston's (1975) memoir learns that "there is a Chinese word for the female *I* – which is 'slave'" (p. 56). Not only the subjectivity may be denied to women in particular communities, they may also be pressured into submission and silence. "I hated having to limit my comments on politics in conversation with men," recalls Nelly Rosario (2000: 162), a Dominican-American. "I continue to feel unsafe in Japan because of the way women are embarrassed or pressured into silence," admits a Japanese-American Kyoko Mori (1997: 243). For some women, such primary socialization, accompanied by ways in which the majority society continuously ignores Asian-Americans and Latinos, results in a "subconscious, lingering sense that I, as a female, am not good enough" (Lee 2000:137). Many, like Alvarez (1998), Kingston (1975), Mori (1997), or Rosario (2000), link this internalized sense of oppression to the language of their childhood, to particular forms of politeness they were forced to use, to turns they were never allowed to take in conversations:

I've been told that in Spanish my voice takes on a softer, pleasant, sometimes subservient timbre. The language does represent for me love and constraint, passion, warmth, and at times self-oppression. Self-oppression from obligatory Sunday mass, from parents with many rules for children growing up in New York, from a country where children and women are told too often to shut up. (Rosario 2000: 163)

It would be highly misleading, however, to say that it is particular languages, or especially first languages, that are blamed and criticized in the narratives in the corpus. Rather, the authors take on the ideologies they perceive as oppressive and the links between language, gender, and identity created by these ideol-

ogies. In doing so, they create new hybrid identities and new master narratives that were previously untellable in either language, in either community. Thus, a Panamanian-American, Veronica Chambers (2000), deconstructs the links between language, gender, and race, conventionalized in her racially mixed New York City neighborhood and proclaims herself to be a *Latinegra*, fluent in both English and Spanish:

When I spoke only English, I was the daughter, the little girl. As I began to learn Spanish, I became something more – an *hermanita*, a sister-friend, a Panamanian homegirl who could hang with the rest of them. ... When Puerto-Rican girls talked about me in front of my face, looking at my dark skin and assuming that I couldn't understand, I would playfully throw out, "Oye, sabes que yo entiendo?" Being *Latinegra* – black and Latin, has become a sort of a hidden weapon, something that you can't see at first glance. I know that many people look at my dark skin and don't expect me to be fluent in anything but homegirl. (Chambers 2000: 24)

Similarly, Mori (2000), born into an upper-middle class Japanese family, problematizes the common portrayal of 'foreignness' as a "combination of ethnicity and poverty" (Mar 1999: 158), so often imposed on the newcomers. Viewing the conventionalized portrayal of immigrant women as 'othering' she refuses to tell the stories that people are waiting to hear:

The stories ... of a brave but disadvantaged immigrant woman trying to understand an unfamiliar language, missing the customs and the foods of the homeland, overcoming one "culture shock" after another – have nothing to do with me. I resent being expected to tell such stories because I have none to tell and also because, even when they are the true stories for many first-generation immigrant women, there is something self-congratulatory or condescending in most listeners' attitudes. (Mori 2000: 139)

Moreover, it is not only immigrants, many of whom have no choice but to engage with the dominant culture, that recognize the role of gender as a powerful category shaping one's language learning and use. Similar critical questioning takes place in the narratives of temporary expatriates. "I have gone through most of my life with very little conscious awareness of how gender was affecting what and how I was learning," writes American scholar Karen Ogulnick:

After first being immersed in Japanese language and culture for 2 years in 1987, I experienced changes in the ways I felt, acted, and perceived myself as a woman. ... My desire to be accepted and recognized as a speaker of Japanese overpowered

any subconscious resistance I may have had to complying with what I perceived as submissive female behavior. (Ogulnick 1998: 135–6)

Interestingly, social pressure makes Ogulnick conform despite her apprehensions about traditional gender roles, prescribed for Japanese women, and soon she finds herself speaking *onna rashiku* 'like a woman'. This experience makes her reconsider not only ways in which ideologies of gender work in Japan but also ways in which they had shaped her identity in America:

... my vantage point, not only as a white, English-speaking American but also a woman, in between cultures, sharpened my insight into how everyday language behaviors create and sustain larger social inequities. ... My diary gave me a tool to look within myself, to try to understand more deeply how I had been socialized to be a woman in my white, American, Jewish, working-class subculture and how I was learning to speak "like a woman" in Japan. (Ogulnick 1998: 136)

Another temporary visitor, Dominik, complains about incompatible gender ideologies of America and Slovakia and the resulting feeling that he is denied certain means of self-expression and, as a result, has to suppress a part of his identity. What is interesting about his comments is that Dominik questions neither his own beliefs, nor those in his L1 community, but rather the discourses of gender and sexual harassment of the country in which he temporarily resides:

before I came here, lot of Americans warned me that ... that American culture, that these 'sexual harassment' rules, and I am, I am the type of person who jokes most of the time about sex, I mean, that's part of like ... culture ... back home, and I, I, I just feel that here, because I, I have to repress my natural personality, my natural thinking about sex ... I mean, I mean, I like to joke about it, and ... I just feel about two years, I just lost ... part of myself, or kind of like, sense for humor, as I was used to ... I just don't express myself in the same way, as, as, as I am used to ... (Interview with the author, Summer 1998)

Finally, I would like to point out that examination of gender ideologies is not restricted to narratives of middle-class educated women fluent in English and familiar with feminist discourses. Gordon's (1995) study shows that similar questioning takes place in the mind of Pha, a peasant Laotian woman who came to the US with her husband and children, nine years prior to the interview. While Pha had little if any exposure to feminism in educational contexts, her everyday interactions in Philadelphia prompted her to reappraise women's home-centered and silent role in Lao culture. In an interview with the re-

searcher, Pha portrays this role not as women's choice but as a means by which men control women in Laos: "I am your husband. I go anywhere. I do everything. You cannot control me" (Gordon 1995: 55).

Thus, it appears that despite vast differences in the subjects' experiences and learning trajectories, many women in the study share the need to reconsider gender expectations they had lived – or continue to live – by. I suggest that this critical examination of ideologies of gender may constitute the first step in the process of transformation of gender performance.

4.3. Making choices: assimilation versus resistance

Facing new femininities and masculinities, often tied to new ways of self-expression, L2 learners may opt either for assimilation or resistance to new subjectivities. The desire to assimilate to the new community may be prompted by negative attitudes to gender ideologies and discursive practices of one's native speech community, where the language 'doesn't name' the individual or labels her wrongly, while the culture devalues her and limits her options of self-expression. Such is the choice consciously made by many L2 users in the corpus, some of whom explicitly say that they perceive English as liberating (see also McMahill's chapter). "We could go places in English we never could in Spanish," states Alvarez (1998: 64) on her own behalf and that of her sisters. Similarly, Rosario (2000: 163) sees her English as "much more liberating" than Spanish which she links to the silencing of women and children. Other narrators link their choice to identity options available in the new community. Christina, a Polish-English bilingual informant, starts talking about her attitudes toward Poland, and, suddenly, turns to gender, indicating that her disassociation from Poland may be 'gender-based':

I have no natural desire to go back, no natural desire at all ... uhm ... to be Polish and to live in Poland, no connection to the land ... I have connections to my family but they are of a completely different nature, they seem to be unconnected to ... to the country ... uhm ... the sense of what a woman is supposed to do with her life ... and even though my mother is pretty independent and has an intellectual job, still, I have a sense that I wouldn't be ... uhm ... gender-free. Even here I am not really gender-free, to any extent, I am probably much less independent than most American women ... uhm ... but still ... I am ... more in control, I suppose, of what I do with my life than I would in Poland ... uhm ... I really would be an old maid in Poland by now, whereas here my choice to ... uhm ... choice, it's again a ... a problematic word ... but the fact that I am, I don't know, not married or don't have a family ... uhm ... at my age is not a problem ... (Interview with the author, Summer 1998)

Similarly, Mori (1997, 2000), who fled Japan at the age of twenty, describes her relocation to America as an escape from the restrictions of Japanese women's language and from the roles prescribed for women:

There was no future in Japan for a woman from my upper-middle class milieu who wanted to be a writer more than she wanted to be a nice suburban home-maker. (Mori 2000: 139)

These feelings are also echoed in Gordon's (1995) interview with Pha, who states: "I like America, I love America because womans [sic] have freedom" (p. 63). Notably, the perception of the new culture as allowing for more gender freedom is not limited to inhabitants of countries which some may label 'patriarchal.' A similar attitude is also expressed by a former German citizen Ute Margaret Saine (2000):

Perhaps not surprisingly, many of my German girlfriends from this and later schools emigrated, like myself, to Italy, England, Brazil, France, and, of course, the United States. In order to escape repression, particularly of gender. (Saine 2000: 172)

It is quite possible, however, that the perception of being gender-free while living in another country and speaking another language may be shaped by the fact that many new arrivals are joining their new community at a later age, having escaped childhood – and at times even school – gender socialization practices. Memoirs of Americans learning other languages clearly demonstrate that America is not a 'gender-free' heaven either (Ogulnick 1998; Watson 1995). As discussed previously, Ogulnick (1998) in particular acknowledges that her exposure to gendered discursive practices of Japanese makes her reflect back upon gendered discursive practices of English, which are similarly disempowering:

In my reimmersion into Japanese culture ... the experience was more like looking into a mirror ... one that revealed, even where there were differences, much about the condition of being a woman in my own culture. This time by being there, and being aware of how I was learning Japanese, I was also learning the many subtle and not-so-subtle ways I had been taught to speak "like a woman" in my native language and culture. (Ogulnick 1998: 10)

Flashbacks to childhood experiences brought me back to times when I was controlled, punished, and sexually suppressed. Although I perceived gender-specific codes of appearance to be more prominent in Japan, thinking back to my own cultural socialization process, I recall the gender-polarizing ways I was taught

how to speak, act, and look like a girl. I can still hear echoes of men's voices commenting on my clothes, hair, body – each one in conflict over how I should look – more modest, sexier, thinner, fatter, older, younger. Each one had an image around which I tried to mold myself. The two societies and languages may have been different, but the message that I received, implicitly and explicitly, was basically the same: that women's bodies, language, and thoughts are controlled by men. (Ogulnick 1998: 33)

Whatever the reason may be, whether it is an escape from childhood language socialization or the links perceived between American English and feminist discourses, many L2 users in the corpus appear to have chosen – or at least accepted – English as the language that gives them enough freedom to be the kind of women they would like to be. In other contexts, however, the links perceived between language and gender may prompt L2 learners, most often expatriates, to resist new subjectivities and discursive performances, often at a price of not being seen as fully fluent and proficient. This half-assimilation, half-resistance is portrayed by Ogulnick (1998) who at times feels hurt and excluded from conversation by her Japanese friends:

I may have also resented that I wasn't getting a certain attention or recognition I seemed to feel I deserved for not acting "like an American." In other words, here I was, the low woman in the hierarchy, this American woman not being appreciated for not wanting to be treated as an American woman. The irony of this is that I wanted to assimilate but didn't want to give up a certain privilege – the attention and status of being American. (Ogulnick 1998: 133)

A much stronger form of resistance is depicted in Richard Watson's (1995) memoir about his unsuccessful attempt to learn French. The author, an American philosopher and an expert on Descartes, could easily read and translate from French. At the age of fifty-five he decided to go ahead and learn spoken French in order to converse with his French colleagues. Unfortunately, his multiple attempts to master the language fail, due in part to his ambivalent feelings toward spoken French fueled by his childhood notions of idealized masculinity, incompatible with being French or sounding French:

I have a distinct dislike for the sound of spoken French. Many Americans do. Why? Because it's weak. For American men at least, French sounds syrupy and effeminate. (Watson 1995: 52)

... it was clear that it embarrassed me to speak French. I knew exactly why that was. I didn't want to sound like Charles Boyer in the movies of my childhood. We hooted and groaned when he breathed down the neck of some woman on the

screen. And there was the suggestion that he might do things to them offscreen that no real man would ever be caught dead doing. A great suspicion came over me: Real Men Don't Speak French. (Watson 1995: 12)

While the discussion above portrays choices made by individuals as agents, it is necessary to underscore that the nature of agency, and thus the nature of assimilation and resistance, is always co-constructed. No matter how much an individual would like to assimilate to a particular community, she won't be able to if the community rejects or marginalizes 'outsiders'. Similarly, it would be misleading to suggest that individuals, particularly women who come from societies perceived as patriarchal, always attempt to occupy gender subjectivities of their new culture. It is equally possible that, as convincingly demonstrated in Blackledge's chapter, they may be engaged in attempts to maintain their gender identities, which are inextricably linked to ethnicity, culture, and religion.

4.4. Undergoing gender socialization

What happens to individuals who, despite all odds, decide to embark on a long journey of appropriation of new discourses, subjectivities, and ideologies? While the comparison of the old and the new may render familiar femininities unsatisfactory, learning to perform new femininities may be a confusing experience as well, as exemplified in a poignant excerpt from Hoffman (1989):

The question of femininity is becoming vexing to me as well. How am I to become a woman in an American vein, how am I to fit the contours of my Texan's soul? The allegory of gender is different here, and it unfolds around different typologies and different themes. I can't become a "Pani" of any sort: not like the authoritative Pani Orlovska, or the vampy, practical Pani Dombarska, or the flirty, romantic woman writer I once met. None of these modes of femininity makes sense here, none of them would find corresponding counterparts in the men I know. (Hoffman 1989: 189)

For many women the absence of accepted landmarks for negotiating the paths to femininity, itself a contested cultural space, leads to recognition of mobility, plasticity, and mimicry involved in becoming a woman (Bartkowski 1995). In her discussion of Hoffman's book a Romanian-English bilingual, Marianne Hirsch (1994), suggests that even for teenagers and younger women the process may be very complex as "every transition into female adulthood is a process of acculturation to an alien realm" (1994: 74). Thus, her own and Hoffman's

process of unlearning and learning, of resisting and assimilating was a double one which must have been doubly difficult to negotiate. It must have left us doubly displaced and dispossessed, doubly at risk, perhaps doubly resistant to assimilation. If most girls leave their "home" as they move into adolescence, Hoffman and I left two homes – our girlhood and our Europe. (Hirsch 1994: 75)

One does not simply learn a new set of grammar rules and apply them to new vocabulary; new discourses come with new ideologies and practices of embodiment. Does one flirt in this new space? And if yes, then how? What does dating mean? How does one become a parent if one's own models of parent-child relationship are no longer valid? Although these questions are disquieting to everyone who makes a transition into adulthood, the bewilderment is much more severe when linguistic and cultural transition is added to the normal sensitivities concerning intimacy and personal boundaries. Some narratives in the corpus suggest that transformation of gender often starts with changes in linguistic identities and corresponding changes in discursive interactions. Anna Wierzbicka (1985), who came from Poland to Australia as an adult, recalls:

When I came to Australia to live, one of my most keenly felt experiences was the loss of my (linguistic) identity. For my English-speaking acquaintances I was neither *Ania* nor *pani Ania* and not even *pani Anna*. I was *Anna* and this did not correspond in its socio-semantic value to any of the forms used in Polish. One thing which was good about this new name was that it could be used in self-identification. In Polish I have always found it difficult to speak to friends and acquaintances on the telephone because my name in Polish does not have any form which would be appropriate for self-presentation: *Anna* is so formal and so official that it can only be used with the surname, which is entirely inappropriate when speaking to friends or relatives; *Ania*, on the other hand, is childishly self-indulgent. ... the switch from the Polish *Ania* to the English *Anna* is more than a linguistic change: it is also a switch in the style of interpersonal interaction. (Wierzbicka 1985: 189)

Mar (1999) similarly outlines her transition path, listing various names she had been given and adopted at different stages and underscoring the multiplicity of her identities:

For the purposes of this book, my name is "Man Yee." On my birth certificate and passport, it's listed as "Man Yi." On my school and tax records, it's "Manyee." When filling out official documents, I always have to pause and double check before signing, to make sure I write the appropriate name. Otherwise, I would sign as "M. Elaine Mar" automatically. Without hesitation. It's an indication of who I've become – the self expressed in English, preceded by the vestige of a name

that cannot be written, ending with the mystery of one that will never leave me. (Mar 1999: xii)

How is the transition path navigated and where do transformations take place? Usually, the transformation is achieved through participation in various discursive and social practices, most often, schooling. School plays an important role in several stories about the invention of acceptable hybrid identities, such as Chinese-American (Kingston 1975; Mar 1999) or Korean-American (Kim 2000; Lee 2000). The young women are portrayed in these stories in the process of trying out a range of linguistic devices, from a change in pitch to appropriation of new speech acts and discourses of femininity:

Normal Chinese women's voices are strong and bossy. We American-Chinese girls had to whisper to make ourselves American-feminine. Apparently we whispered even more softly than the Americans. Once a year the teachers referred my sister and me to speech therapy, but our voices would straighten out, unpredictably normal, for therapists. Some of us gave up ... Most of us eventually found some voice, however faltering. We invented an American-feminine speaking personality ... (Kingston 1975: 200)

Obviously, dieting wasn't going to make me taller or rounder, but I knew that by invoking that one word, the mantra of American womanhood, I was going to be accepted by my girlfriends in a way I'd never been before. (Mar 1999: 218)

For other learners, the process of socialization takes place later on in life, in college or at work, where a Chilean woman may become a Hispanic academic (Brintrup 2000) and a Japanese woman an American writer (Mori 1997, 2000). For Hirsch, who for many years chose to inhabit the margins, transformation is precipitated by participation in the feminist movement:

The late sixties offer many opportunities for group identity, but even as I protest the Vietnam War and become involved in curriculum restructuring, I do so from the margins. The women's movement changes all that. I join a consciousness raising group in 1970 and experience a feeling of group allegiance for the very first time in my life ... During adolescence, friendship provided a form of displacement and resistance: to cultural assimilation as well as femininity. It was a place on the border between cultures, between girlhood and womanhood. Like those early friendships, feminism itself became a space of relation and relocation, a place from which I could think and speak and write, a home on the border. (Hirsch 1994: 85-88)

In addition to educational practices and participation in various communities of practice, four other spaces are singled out in L2 learning narratives as the key sites of the negotiation of gender performance: intimate relationships, friendships, parent-child relationships, and work places. Below I will discuss each one in turn, looking at what types of negotiation and transformation may take place in each space.

4.5. Negotiating gender: intimate relationships and friendships

Intimate relationships and friendships surface time and again as one of the most difficult areas for negotiation and an authentic performance of gender. To begin with, as illustrated in the interviews with Pha, in some minority communities women may be readier than men to depart from traditional gender roles and to embrace new ones:

And Laotian families in here, in the North Philly, South Philly they get divorce a lot. ... Because the woman want to get divorce from the man, if man disagree, the woman don't care. ... I get the boyfriend and go out from you. I leave you at home. (Gordon 1995: 59-60)

New gender roles, however, may not be that easy to perform. "For a long time, it was difficult to speak these most intimate phrases, hard to make English -- that language of will and abstraction -- shape itself into the tonalities of love," confesses Hoffman:

In Polish, the words for "boy" and "girl" embodied within them the wind and crackle of boyishness, the breeze and grace of girlhood: the words summoned that evanescent movement and melody and musk that are the interior inflections of gender itself. In English, "man" and "woman" were empty signs; terms of endearment came out as formal and foursquare as other words. ... How could I say "darling," or "sweetheart," when the words had no fleshly fullness, when they were as dry as sticks? (Hoffman 1989: 245)

The meaning of the social practice of American dating appears particularly mysterious to newcomers and has to be learned and negotiated, as seen in the excerpt from Hoffman:

Dating is an unknown ritual to me, unknown among my Cracow peers, who, aside from lacking certain of its requisite accessories -- cars, private rooms, a bit of money -- ran around in boy-girl packs and didn't have a ceremonial set of rules

for how to act toward the other sex. A date, by contrast, seems to be an occasion whose semiotics are highly standardized and in which every step has a highly determinate meaning and therefore has to be carefully calibrated. (Hoffman 1989: 149)

Even Helie Lee (2000), who for the most part grew up in the States, feels that her American boyfriends continue to shy away from the vestiges of her Korean upbringing: "They felt crowded when I began each sentence with 'us' and 'ours' instead of 'yours' and 'mine'" (p. 133). Moreover, it is not only a performance of gender that may constitute a problem in a new culture, but also a reading of others' performances. Cathy Davidson (1993) points out that gendered speech acts of another culture may be impossible to read through the lenses of the first one:

More than once I've been baffled by Japanese male attentiveness, uncertain whether I'm on the receiving end of politeness or a proposition. In America I would sense a come-on immediately, but in Japan there are rituals of compliment and deferral – almost like flirtation – that I've seen men engage in among themselves. I've seen it with women, too, a jockeying among politeness levels and status codes that require a more intimate knowledge of Japan than I possess. (Davidson 1993: 90)

Difficulties in interaction with prospective partners are not limited to female bilinguals. Dominik finds it hard to talk to American women, be it friends or prospective dates, because in his native culture performance of masculinity is predicated on telling sex-related jokes:

...I always have in the back of my mind ... that you, you are not supposed to joke about sex so much, I mean, I, I still, with people who I feel really confident ... I tell some jokes, but it's much less, than I would probably do, while ... back home it's still like issue of confidence, but, but you would probably tell sexually-related jokes, or like kind of like hints ... to women you don't know so much, you know them but you, you are not so ... confident with them, while here ... it could be never a case, with me at least. (Interview with the author, Summer 1998)

When one's performance of masculinity is based on particular speech acts, such as risqué Eastern European jokes, flowery Georgian toasts, or bawdy Spanish compliments known as *piropos*, one may experience an acute discomfort in transition or cause discomfort to others. Julia Alvarez (1998) recalls how walking around the city with her father sometimes embarrassed her:

My father would stop on a New York City street when a young woman swung by and sing this song [a compliment to a woman with a lot of swing in her walk – A.P.] out loud to the great embarrassment of his daughters. We were sure that one day when we weren't around to make him look like the respectable father of four girls, he would be arrested. (Alvarez 1998: 41)

Baranczak (1990) tells a story of a well-known Polish writer, Antoni Slonimski, who after 12 years in London decided to return to Poland in 1951, at the height of totalitarianism. When asked why he had chosen to do so, he replied that he did not really feel lonely, materially deprived, or socially degraded: he was simply unable to tell jokes. The wittiest man in Poland, famous for his hilarious feuilletons, he could not stand not being funny, and opted for life under the oppressive communist regime. At approximately the same time another Pole, Jerzy Kosinski, left Poland for America. In his description of Kosinski's learning of English in America, Sloan indicates that his problem was the inability to perform another gendered speech act, flirting:

Another translation problem also preoccupied Kosinski at that time. Love, supposedly, possesses a universal language, but Kosinski did not find it so. In Poland, his silver tongue had never failed him when it came to seduction, but America presented an altogether new sort of challenge. Not yet eloquent in English, or in the different vocabulary of seduction in America, he found himself at a loss. (Sloan 1996: 120)

One of the earlier episodes of life in America, later incorporated by Kosinski into a novel, involved him and an American woman sitting on a sofa, which in Poland is called a 'Castro convertible':

... he found himself unable to summon the words to request that she stand up so that he could turn the sofa into a bed. Every way he thought of putting it struck him as crude and unsatisfactory. He was trapped in every schoolboy's dilemma, finding a way to put the question that would not alarm the woman and push her away. Thus the plight of Warsaw's master seducer. Like the schoolboy rejected, he could only meditate on the inscrutability of language – the fact, for example, that the word for "Castro convertible" in Polish is *Amerykanka* – literally, "American woman." (Sloan 1996: 120–121)

With time, however, as seen in Hoffman's memoir, intimate words can acquire meaning in the second language and the politics of heterosexual interaction can be internalized:

But now the language has entered my body, has incorporated itself in the softest tissue of my being. "Darling," I say to my lover, "my dear," and the words are filled and brimming with the motions of my desire; they curve themselves within my mouth to the complex music of tenderness. (Hoffman 1989: 245)

Later, I'll come to recognize words like "responsibility" and "hurt" as a telltale buzz emitted by the men of my generation to signal that they don't really want to get involved. Once I do, my own freedom will be lost, and I'll begin to engage in those contorted maneuvers by which the women in the same generation try to conceal their desires so as not to scare the men off. (Hoffman 1989: 188)

In addition, not only intimate relations but also interactions with friends and casual acquaintances may be a difficult terrain to navigate in a second language. When asked about domains which she finds most complicated for fluent functioning, Christina pointed out that being the exotic 'other' may work quite well in an intimate relationship but less so in a casual one:

The most difficult ones? ... the social scene, and, in fact, maybe not so much, not so much, uhm ... intimate relationships, like my relationship with Jim, but ... uhm, really, the party scene, the social scene, the kind of casual, friendly relationships, because in the intimate ones it becomes some kind of an exotic thing that you can play up on, whereas ... in a kind of acquaintance sense ... it's ... difficult to kind of hide behind ... (Interview with the author, Summer 1998)

Ogulnick (1998) emphasizes that her interactions with Japanese friends are also colored by gender. She feels that she profited more from speaking Japanese to her female than to her male friends, and that the mere presence of males influenced the interactions:

Unlike the rigid boundaries I experienced with Keio, which made me feel blocked off and distanced from him emotionally, Akemi's personal stories, vivid details, imagery, and concreteness, helped to draw me in. ... Also in contrast to what I experienced as Keio's rigid and unyielding style, I experienced Akemi as nurturing and generous, which helped make learning Japanese with her much more pleasurable for me. (Ogulnick 1998: 60–62)

In sum, we can see that gender is negotiated in intimate relationships and friendships in a number of ways. To begin with, as seen in Alvarez's (1998) memoir and Dominik's story, in order not to be misinterpreted, L2 users may have to abandon some speech acts they see as central to their performance of gender. Like Hoffman (1989) or Kosinski (Sloan 1996), they may also have to internalize new expressions and speech acts, critical for full participation in

gendered discursive practices of their new community. On the other hand, as we have seen from Christina's comment, a certain exotic 'otherness' may enhance one's sexual appeal to prospective partners in another culture (see also Piller's chapter). Finally, as seen in Davidson's (1993) and Hoffman's (1989) comments, L2 users also have to learn to interpret particular terms and speech acts in ways that conform to the norms of the L2 culture.

4.6. Negotiating gender: parent-child relationships

Parent-child relationships constitute another important domain where change is often inflicted as well as initiated. Two types of negotiation are illuminated in the L2 learning narratives in the corpus: renegotiation of the relationship with one's parents (Alvarez 1998; Chambers 2000; Dorfman 1998; Hoffman 1989; Kaplan 1993; Kim 2000; Kingston 1975; Lee 2000; Mar 1999; Mori 1997; Reyn 2000; Rodriguez 1982) and of that with one's children (Brintrup 2000; Lvovich 1997; Wierzbicka 1985, 1997). In both, cultural transition may have negative effects, such as the decline and loss of parental agency, status, and authority resulting from a marginal position occupied by parents in a new community (see also Blackledge's chapter).

In her analysis of Rodriguez's (1982) memoir which depicts a transition from a working-class Mexican background to middle-class America, Browdy de Hernandez (1997) suggests that Rodriguez rejected the model of selfhood offered by his father in favor of a model based on the "Great White father" of postcolonial society. Embarrassed by his father's inability to speak clear English, he distances himself further and further away from his father and from other Mexican males, described as "*los pobres* – the poor, the pitiful, the powerless ones" (Rodriguez 1982: 113). This language shift, prompted by the rejection of a particular ethnic, cultural, and social gendered identity, symbolizes emotional and cultural separation between Richard Rodriguez, a middle-class American man in the making, and his Mexican-American parents:

... as we children learned more and more English, we shared fewer and fewer words with our parents. (Rodriguez 1982: 23)

Kingston's (1975) and Mar's (1999) memoirs portray a similar refusal of a Chinese mother's version of femininity, that of a poor Chinese immigrant, usually performed through such speech acts as bargaining:

At department stores I angered my mother when I could not bargain without shame, poor people's shame. She stood in back of me and prodded and pinched, forcing me to translate her bargaining, word for word. (Kingston 1975: 96)

[Mother] described how she'd been walking by the Salvation Army store when she noticed a pile of furniture in its parking lot. ... I knew she meant the donation dropoff spot outside the store. It was clearly marked with big red letters on a white sign. If she could read English, she would know this too. I wanted to tell her, but I couldn't find the words. She sounded so excited. The truth would only make her unhappy. ... Wordlessly, I helped carry the coffee table home. (Mar 1999: 197)

In both cases, the rift between mothers and daughters is propagated by the mothers' lack of English skills as well as a general lack of understanding of the majority culture. The loss of authority, prompted by the cultural transition and the parents' poor performance in the majority language, is widely discussed in the literature on immigrant women (see, for example, Lieblich 1993). Clearly, many parents are conscious of the link between their loss of status and lack of mastery of the second language: the same Mar (1999) recalls her mother screaming "Go learn English so you don't end up stupid like your mother!" (p. 106). Another reason for the distancing between parents and children is the parents' difficulty in carrying out the familiar discursive practices of parenting in the new environment, as discourses of parenting may be very different across cultures and so are the understandings of schooling (see also Blackledge's chapter). Kim (2000) recalls that her parents knew or understood very little of what went on in her American school. Mar (1999) is equally unable to engage her mother in a meaningful conversation about her school experiences:

I couldn't explain these [school] difficulties to Mother. Our language didn't leave room for such a conversation. The Chinese don't ask their children, *How was school today?* They say, *What did you learn?* and *Do you understand your lessons?* (Mar 1999: 69)

Hoffman (1989) describes her parents' despair, when they realized the impossibility of transferring Polish practices onto North American soil:

They don't try to exercise much influence over me anymore. "In Poland, I would have known how to bring you up, I would have known what to do," my mother says wistfully, but here, she has lost her sureness, her authority. She doesn't know how hard to scold Alinka [Eva's sister] when she comes home at late hours; she can only worry over her daughter's vague evening activities. (Hoffman 1989: 145)

The same distance, from the parent's perspective, is portrayed in Gordon's (1995) interviews with Pha, who feels that she has lost control over her older son and is afraid that the same may be happening with the younger one:

In Laos, the childrens is very honor for parents, for their parents. They talk parents, good and politely. And they do everything for parents. But in here, the children never help parents. ... Now, I stay confusing about children. ... The children in here, when they go to school and come back home, they get, they stay in their room, they don't want to talk with parents. Every children, every parents say like that. ... They don't want to talk, and they don't want to talk Lao, too. They only want to talk together in English in their room. (Gordon 1995: 64-65)

The linguistic and cultural rift between parents and children may cross ethnic, national, cultural, and class boundaries, and Natasha Lvovich (1997), quite assimilated into the American middle class, admits with disarming honesty:

Watching my daughter growing up *American*, whatever that term means, is somewhat disturbing, painful, and confusing. (Lvovich 1997: 101)

The fact that the usual generation gap between parents and children is doubled and tripled when there is also a language and culture gap is a constant theme in the cross-cultural memoirs in the corpus (Kim 2000; Kingston 1975; Mar 1999; Lee 2000; Reyn 2000). Many authors attribute the loss of connection between parents and children to the children's desire to construct new identities in the new, more prestigious, language available to them:

With my siblings I speak English. Spanish used to be a way of tattletaling. "Alex, *no digas malas palabras.*" With our friends, too, English is the language of choice. Spanish used to be for us too right-off-the-boat, not hip enough. Spanish meant trousers and pointy shoes instead of Lees and fat-laced Pumas. (Rosario 2000: 164)

... by the time my Spanish-speaking parents were finally able to do battle for the Latino soul of their son, they discovered that they had lost me to the charisma of America, that what had begun in that hospital as a childish linguistic tantrum had, in the foster home, hardened into something more culturally permanent and drastic: the question of language had become ensnared in the question of nationality, and therefore of identity. (Dorfman 1998: 47)

[our secret language] excluded our parents but not our neighbors; it defied my mother but not passersby at the supermarket. It was a code for power, moving us closer to the majority culture, further marginalizing our parents and memories of our past. (Mar 1999: 161)

As a result of this language shift, at times, instead of being socialized, it is the children who take on the roles of socializers and help their parents to assimilate in the new country, thus reversing the expected power relations:

My parents were all too happy to let the transformation take place – it would allow me to slip painlessly and naturally into this new culture. Suddenly, my parents turned to me to construe this new world for them. I reveled in my power, child turned patient teacher. (Reyn 2000: 149)

I had a dreadful power over my mother, one that grew with each word in my American vocabulary. As I gained fluency in English, I took on greater responsibility for my family, and parent and child roles became murky. Mother spoke and read virtually no English. She needed my help to buy groceries, interpret the news, and complete all manner of forms. (Mar 1999: 159)

Assimilation came most immediately to my son, who was five years old. My husband and I placed him in charge of answering all calls in English. ... He was the tongue of the house, the role model of gestures and new ways of thinking. We looked to him as our permanent teacher. He brought in information about a variety of things. He taught us what to eat, how to buy it, when to eat it. He told us which people were our neighbors and educated us on the informality of dressing, the importance of sport, and the mentality of his teachers. (Brintrup 2000: 14)

Recognizing the linguistic advantage they have over their parents, some children may use language shift as a means of freeing themselves from the gender roles prescribed by the native culture of their parents:

As rebellious adolescents, we soon figured out that conducting our filial business in English gave us an edge over our strict, Spanish-speaking parents. We could spin circles around my mother's *absolutamente no* by pointing out the flaws in her arguments, in English. My father was a pushover for pithy quotes from Shakespeare, and a recitation of "The quality of mercy is not strained" could usually get me what I wanted. ... Our growing distance from Spanish was a way in which we were setting ourselves free from that old world where, as girls, we didn't have much to say about what we could do with our lives. (Alvarez 1998: 63)

The discussion above clearly shows that a parent-child relationship, crucial to the process of language socialization, may itself undergo a transformation in a cross-cultural transition. In particular, the parents' attempts to engage in discursive practices of 'mothering' and 'fathering' may fail, as their own practices may not be easily transferrable to the new surroundings, not easily performed in the new language, and not listened to by children undergoing rapid assimilation to a new culture.

In turn, children may perceive language shift as a way to 'set themselves free' of normative gender identities imposed on them by their first language community.

4.7. Negotiating gender: workplace interactions

The workplace is another important site where gender is performed and negotiated discursively, and where negotiation may make a difference in one's status. Mori (1997) presents her code-switching into English as a strategy that allows her to successfully perform an identity of a professional American female in conversation with her bilingual Japanese colleagues:

Talking seems especially futile when I have to address a man in Japanese. Every word I say forces me to be elaborately polite, indirect, submissive, and unassertive. There is no way I can sound intelligent, clearheaded, or decisive. But if I did not speak a "proper" feminine language, I would sound stupid in another way – like someone who is uneducated, insensitive, and rude, and therefore cannot be taken seriously. I never speak Japanese with the Japanese man who teaches physics at the college where I teach English. We are colleagues, meant to be equals. The language I use should not automatically define me as second best. (Mori 1997: 12)

In a reverse situation, Davidson (1993), an American scholar in Japan, finds that simply being a Western female boosts her status and even puts her in a different gender category, neither male nor female, but that reserved for *gaijin* 'foreigners':

In professional contexts, more than one Japanese woman remarked that I was often spoken of and to with forms of respect reserved for men in Japan. These women were broad-minded enough to be more bemused by this than resentful. When I pushed the issue, they also admitted that, if I was respected, it might be because in some sense I didn't really count. I was from another world, beyond the pale of professional competition, outside the battle of the sexes Japanese-style. It was as if my foreignness put me in some different gender category, on one level proximate and titillating, on another androgynous and remote. (Davidson 1993: 88)

the word *foreign* complicated *female* in ways that I still don't fully understand. Perhaps because in 1980 most visiting foreign professors in Japan were men, the rules for how to treat a woman in my professional capacity just didn't exist. The Japanese professors I met were all friendly, but it was obvious that my male col-

leagues, in particular, didn't quite know what to do with me. Should they invite me out with them for the normal after-work drinking as they would a visiting male teacher, or would this be an insult to me (or, worse, to my husband)? Should they exclude me from such socializing, as Japanese women professors were routinely excluded, or would I consider that to be insulting, not to mention hopelessly sexist? (Davidson 1993: 87–88)

Ogulnick (1998) is similarly concerned about the role of her various subjectivities in her unsuccessful language sessions with a Japanese male colleague Keio:

The categories Keio and I had available to us in our languages seemed to make it almost impossible for us to ever really speak the same language. Keio's maleness and the role he assumed as *sensei* when teaching me Japanese were dominant images for me; likewise my language, cultural identity, position at the university, and the color of my skin must have represented powerful symbols to Keio. (Ogulnick 1998: 49)

The quote above illustrates particularly well the co-constructed nature of language learner subjectivities: not only are the individuals in transition trying to read the mysterious signs of the new culture, but they are also read – and at times misread – by the culture.

A different issue with regard to performance of a workplace identity is brought up by Christina, a feminist and a literary scholar. During a recent trip to Poland, her native country, she found that differences in American and Polish ideologies of gender and related lack of vocabulary in Polish rendered it impossible for her to perform her professional identity of a feminist scholar:

...I suddenly worried that maybe my research is not complex enough or complex to satisfy me ... uhm ... because it seemed so mundane when translated into Polish ... but then again all the terminology that I was trying to translate didn't exist in Polish, I mean, even, even to talk about gender was impossible ... uhm ... not to mention certain theoretical issues in literature, that I was interested in, so it was not just difficult, it was also very anxiety-producing, because it was like confronting an impossibility to think about certain things in Polish... (Interview with the author, Summer 1998)

Thus, it appears that a gendered professional identity is also negotiated in a number of ways, through the lexicon, speech acts, even the choice of the language itself. This negotiation may be particularly acute in contexts where a specific culture does not accommodate female professionals or where authority

is doubly difficult to perform for female non-native speakers. The difficulty is further compounded for scholars like Christina whose performance of professional identity is predicated on particular discourses, which may not exist in their countries of origin.

4.8. Becoming a woman in an American vein

Despite all the negotiation difficulties, many L2 users may successfully appropriate gender discourses of their new culture and find ways of positioning themselves authoritatively as its legitimate and authentic members. Thus, Rodriguez writes his autobiography "as a middle-class American man. Assimilated" (1982: 3). Similarly, Hoffman states at the end of her memoir:

... When I think of myself in cultural categories – which I do perhaps too often – I know that I'm a recognizable example of a species; a professional New York woman, and a member of a postwar international new class; somebody who feels at ease in the world, and is getting on with her career relatively well, and who is as fey and brave and capable and unsettled as many of the women here – one of a new breed, born of the jet age and the counterculture, and middle-class ambitions, and American grit. I fit, and my surroundings fit me. (Hoffman 1989: 170)

Hoffman explains her own understanding of becoming a woman in an American vein as it can be comprehended only through juxtaposition of two cultural perspectives on gender, Polish and American:

I've acquired the assurance, which seems second nature to me but is relatively new for a person of my gender, that I can land in any city and within hours figure out how to get around it, use the metro, and find a good neighborhood restaurant and a decent midpriced hotel. Of course, it has helped in nurturing this confidence that I live in an imperial center whose currency is the international standard and whose language the Esperanto of the modern world. In all of this, I've developed a certain kind of worldly knowledge, and a public self to go with it. That self is the most American thing about me; after all, I acquired it here. (Hoffman 1989: 251)

For many learners, this 'becoming' also involves thinking of themselves in terms of new gender categories. Thus, Ogulnick was warned by her well-wishing Japanese friends that at twenty-five an unmarried woman turns into a piece of 'old Christmas cake':

Satoko and I seemed to find ourselves in a more marginalized social space. Whereas single men in Japan are referred to in a more positive light, as *bachelor* [bachelor], Japanese expressions for single women portray them as “old” and “unwanted”: “old Christmas cake” [*furui kurisumasu keiki*], “unsold merchandise” [*urenokori*], and “spinster” [*orudo misu*]. (Ogulnick 1998: 90–91)

Soon, she finds herself internalizing these definitions and on an outing with a female friend sees herself through a Japanese lens:

... even just being out on a Sunday afternoon, standing apart from all the (seemingly) heterosexual couples around us made us feel the sting of the stigma many single women feel when they are referred to as *sabiishi* [lonely] and not *ichinin-mae* [complete human beings]... (Ogulnick 1998: 96–97)

At the same time, it is clear that while some learners, oftentimes Caucasian like Hoffman, manage to co-construct a new gendered identity in their new culture, other women may be positioned differently as their racial and ethnic identities do not neatly fit within the gender stereotypes created by the dominant ideologies and reproduced by the media which continue to ignore the racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity of contemporary America (see, for example, Lippi-Green 1997). Not surprisingly, this subtle ‘othering’ may be internalized by the L2 users who are not reflected in their new culture. “Over the years, I came to believe that being Chinese in itself constituted ugliness and asexuality,” admits Mar (1999: 220). “To this day, after three decades of living in America, I feel like a stranger in what I now consider my own country” (1998: 44), poignantly states dark-skinned Julia Alvarez who internalized the blue-eyed and blond-haired images of American femininity. And, at the same time, she says

The truth is that I couldn’t even imagine myself as someone other than the person I had become in English, a woman who writes books in the language of Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman, and also of the rude shopper in the grocery store and of the boys throwing stones in the schoolyard, their language, which is now my language. (Alvarez 1998: 72)

It is this positioning, this reinvention and reimagining of gender identities that is the most important feature of the narratives in the corpus. They do not simply tell us stories of ‘fitting in’; instead, they rewrite what it means to be an American woman or an American man.

4.9. Losing gender in translation

While many bi- and multilinguals around the world manage to perform their gender identities successfully in their multiple languages, in some cases successful assimilation may entail a perceived loss of a gendered identity, or at least of a normative gendered identity, in the culture of origin. Thus, Rodriguez blames his socialization into English for becoming effeminate from the point of view of Mexican culture, for losing certain qualities that a real macho Mexican inevitably possesses, and in particular for becoming unusually talkative and proud of his way with words:

I knew that I had violated the ideal of the *macho* by becoming such a dedicated student of language and literature. (Rodriguez 1982: 128)

The literal loss of a gendered voice, following the process of self-translation, is commented upon by Mori:

In Japanese, I don’t have a voice for speaking my mind. When a Japanese flight attendant walks down the aisle in her traditional kimono, repeating the endlessly apologetic announcements in the high, squeaky voice a nice woman is expected to use in public, my heart sinks because hers is the voice I am supposed to mimic. All my childhood friends answer their telephones in this same voice, as do the young women store clerks welcoming people and thanking them for their business or TV anchor women reading the news. It doesn’t matter who we are or what we are saying. A woman’s voice is always the same: a childish squeak piped from the throat. (Mori 1997: 16)

In sum, it appears that as a result of second language socialization in adulthood, one’s performance of gender in the first language may no longer be seen as authentic. Even more serious problems are experienced by childhood bilinguals who escaped socialization into the gendered discursive practices of the first language and culture and, consequently, have trouble communicating. Alvarez, for instance, blames her limited Spanish vocabulary and discursive repertoires for the inability to express herself in her relationship with a Spanish-speaking boy:

In the dark, periodically broken by the lights of passing cars, Mangú began to talk about our future. I didn’t know what to say to him. Or actually, in English, I could have said half a dozen ambivalent, soothing things. But not having a complicated vocabulary in Spanish, I didn’t know the fancy, smooth-talking ways of delaying and deterring. Like a child, I could just blurt out what I was thinking:

"Somos diferente, Mangú." We are so different. The comment came out sounding inane. (Alvarez 1998: 70)

In other contexts, it is the speakers' first language speech communities that lack particular discourses critical for gender performances by these individuals. This is the case with Christina, and also with two Russian women, whose life stories I elicited in Russian for a study of gender construction in Russian discourse (Pavlenko in press b). Thirty-one year old Natasha arrived in the US five years previously and learned English upon her arrival. Marina, who is now 25 and in the process of receiving her doctoral degree, came to the US and learned English at the age of 17. While the life trajectories and even second language socialization paths of these two women are quite different (Natasha studied English in ESL classes and then went to work as a researcher, while Marina went to an American high school and then college and graduate school), they became friends because they had something in common that separated them from many other members of the Russian community in their city – their feminist attitudes. While for most of the 90-minute life-story interview the two women speak Russian, in the part that deals with the reasons they chose their feminist identities both engage in code-switching:

Mne eto raskrylo glaza na pravdu ... na pravdu ... to, chto zhenshchiny sotni i sotni let byli ... oppressed ... mne ... ia seichas eto iasno vizhu ...

'It [feminism] opened my eyes to the truth... the truth... that women for hundreds and hundreds of years were *oppressed* ... for me ... now I see it clearly ...' (Marina, from the interview with the author, Fall 1999)

S etim kak-to smiriaiutsia, s etim kak-to zhivut ... vot eta vot oppression ...

'One puts up with this, one lives with this ... with this *oppression* ...' (Natasha, from the interview with the author, Fall 1999)

Zhenshchina ot property otsa stanovitsia property muzha ...

'A woman from being a *property* of her father passes on to being a *property* of her husband' (Marina, from the interview with the author, Fall 1999)

It is interesting to note that both words, *ugnetenie*/oppression and *sobstvennost'*/property, exist in Russian and are well-known to otherwise very fluent Natasha and Marina. In a further discussion with the researcher, the explanation offered by the two women for their use of the English translation equivalents was that in Russian discourse the two words are strongly linked to Marxist discourses about private and public property and oppression of working classes in capitalist countries. The notion of *ugnetenie zhenshchin*/oppression

of women would amuse many monolingual Russian speakers, as feminist discourses are not widely known in post-Soviet countries (Pavlenko in press b). Finally, not only particular terms but even the life stories themselves, gendered and constructed in a particular place in time, may not be easily translatable into one's native language, as witnessed by the 'returning natives'. Hoffman describes one such 'loss in translation' which occurred in an encounter with one of her childhood friends upon her return to Poland:

As we try to tell each other of our lives, I can see that she can't make out the sense of my story: that I am divorced, that I live on my own in a New York apartment, that I travel all over the place, that I have ambitions to write. (Hoffman 1989: 48)

These various quotes illustrate what can be in linguistic terms described as attrition of discursive competence in one's first language, or the mismatch between discourses of gender of the first and second culture. Alternatively, this phenomenon can be seen as the loss of one's ability to perform a gendered identity in one's first language or as resistance to such performance, prompted by the inability to perform one's current gendered subjectivity and to be understood on one's own terms. The mismatch in gender performances brings to the foreground the socially, culturally, and discursively constructed nature of gender: a transition to new gender ideologies, discourses, and social relations may not only entail performance of new gender subjectivities but also the loss of the previous ones, perceived as a loss of a normative femininity or masculinity.

5. Conclusion

So, what have we learned about transformations of gender as a system of social relations – and of gender performances – in second language socialization? To begin with, it appears that 'transformations of gender', experienced by individual L2 learners and users in cross-cultural transitions, entail a wide range of inter-related phenomena, including changes in dominant ideologies of gender, normative gender roles, social and economic gender relations, and verbal and non-verbal gender performances. Examination of the first person narratives of these individuals allows us to identify some of the stages of transformation of the discursive performance of gender, the key sites where the negotiation takes place, and linguistic means involved in the process of transformation.

To begin with, my analysis of the narratives in the corpus demonstrates that different individuals may go through different stages in the negotiation of

gender identities. At the same time, most women appear to share the need to question and ponder upon gendered subjectivities provided for them by their first and second cultures. It is through this comparison that some make a choice to assimilate to the second culture, prompted by the desire to adopt a particular identity, or even to be 'gender-free', while others choose to resist if possible. Those who decide to – or are forced to – assimilate may have to undergo a painful process of naming and renaming, which may invalidate some of their previous subjectivities and position them in undesirable ways, whereby an American 'single woman' may become an 'old Christmas cake' in Japan (Ogulnick 1998). This undesirable positioning or lack of validation by the majority culture may, in turn, be resisted by the L2 users. Many, as we have seen, choose writing as a unique public space, imbued with sufficient authority, where they do not only redefine themselves in terms of discourses available in the dominant society but also attempt to assign new meanings to the terms 'American man' and 'American woman' and, in doing so, to redefine the discourses that position individuals.

Examination of the L2 learning stories also allowed me to answer my second research question and identify the key sites where negotiation and transformation of gender subjectivities may take place. These sites include – but clearly are not limited to – educational establishments, such as schools and colleges, particular communities of practice, such as consciousness raising groups, friendships, intimate and parent-child relationships, and workplaces.

My third research question inquired about ways in which discursive performances of gender may change in cross-cultural transitions. The study identified a number of areas of linguistic indexing of gender involved in the process of discursive assimilation. First of all, as we have seen, even decisions to assimilate to or to resist assimilation to a particular community may be influenced by ways in which gender is indexed linguistically in that community. The means of indexing or performing gender which appear to influence decisions include – but are not limited to – pitch and overall voice quality (Mori 1997; Watson 1995), forms of politeness (Alvarez 1998; Ogulnick 1998), gendered rules of turn-taking in conversation (Mori 1997; Rosario 2000), speech acts such as bargaining or joking (Alvarez 1998; Baranczak 1990; Kingston 1975; Mar 1999; Dominik), and, most importantly, identity options afforded by particular speech communities (Christina; Kingston 1975; Mar 1999; Ogulnick 1998; Saine 2000). A similarly wide range of discursive practices is involved in the process of transformation and language choice. Some L2 users may consciously or unconsciously attempt to adjust their pitch and voice quality in order to come across as more feminine or more masculine in their L2 community (Kingston 1975; Mori, 1997; see also Ohara's chapter), while others

simply sound different in the two languages (Rosario 2000; see also McMahill's chapter). Some L2 users may also modify their lexicon, discarding the terms which are not comprehensible or validated in their new community, and incorporating new terms, in particular identity terms, terms of endearment, and terms related to feminist discourses (Hoffman 1989; Ogulnick 1998; Wierzbicka 1985, 1997; Christina; see also McMahill's chapter on ways in which female Japanese learners use English subject pronouns). The appropriation of the new terms may, in turn, lead to code-switching, which was identified in the study as a strategy that allowed bilingual women Marina and Natasha to perform the gender identity of their choice in the L1. Not only the lexicon but also speech acts may be subject to modification. Some individuals (e.g., Dominik) may feel the need to abandon particular speech acts, such as ribald jokes or *piropos*, which in certain cultures are used to perform masculinities but in others may be perceived as instances of sexual harassment. Another area where change may be visible is turn-taking whereby adopting their gender subjectivities of choice some women may feel more entitled to voicing their opinions and participating as equal interlocutors (Alvarez 1998; Rosario 2000; see also McMahill's chapter). In addition, discursive assimilation is visible not only in performance but also in appropriation of new ways of interpreting particular terms, speech acts, and discursive practices, distinguishing, for instance, between flirting and politeness (Davidson 1993; Hoffman 1989). Not surprisingly, the study of narratives also targets narratives themselves, and particularly life story narratives, as language- and culture-specific, so that a change in speech communities may precipitate the need to retell one's gendered stories in different ways (Hoffman 1989). Finally, the analysis of L2 learning narratives demonstrates that not only do these narratives provide us with important insights into the nature of transformation of gender performances but that they also constitute gender performances, whereby American femininity – but not masculinity – is performed by focusing on gender as a theme (see also Pavlenko 2001).

Lastly, I have also argued in this paper that L2 learning stories, and in particular language learning memoirs, are unique and rich sources of information about the relationship between language and identity in second language learning and socialization. It is possible that only personal narratives can provide a glimpse into areas so private, personal, and intimate that they are rarely – if ever – breached in the study of SLA, and that are at the same time at the heart and soul of the second language socialization process. In the present study, the analysis of L2 learning narratives allowed us to see both where and how transformations of gender performance may take place in the process of second language socialization. It is up to future research, based both on personal insights

and on third person observations, to examine, modify, and expand these suggestions.

In view of the approach taken here, some of the crucial questions in the future study of transformations of gender performance in second language learning become the following: What are the ideologies of gender in the learner's community of origin and how is the learner positioned in that community? What kinds of repositioning would a transition involve? How would the learner's gender, sexual, ethnic or cultural identity be read in terms of the second culture? What social practices is the learner permitted, enabled and/or encouraged to participate in? Which discourses, practices, and speech acts become the sites of struggle in the process of transition and internalization of new subjectivities? Only when these and many other questions are answered with regard to a wide range of learners from various linguistic, cultural, ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds, will we be able to understand what it takes to become a woman – or a man – in an American – or any other – vein.

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(Re)constructing masculinity in a new linguistic reality

Marya Teutsch-Dwyer

1. Introduction

Some of the recent work on masculinity proposes that men's identities have become more problematic as a result of changes in society (Faludi 1999; Johnson and Meinhof 1997). Gender roles, within the poststructuralist view, have come to be regarded as socially constructed, fluid, and variable, with boundaries not as fixed as has been popularly believed (e.g., Bergvall, Bing, and Freed 1996). More importantly, masculinity is no longer viewed as the unproblematic norm against which female language is scrutinized and problematized (Johnson 1997).

Assuming that variability exists in masculine identities and that language plays divergent roles in the social construction of these identities (Johnson 1997), how is masculinity fluid and unstable when confronted with new linguistic and new cultural realities? Are men subject to power relations similar to those that existed in the first language environment? What role does second language acquisition play in gender relations and masculine identities? Few of these questions have been addressed in the research literature so far (but see Pavlenko's chapter). Generally speaking, despite the new approach to research on gender and second language acquisition, male learners – as opposed to their female peers – have received relatively marginal attention so far. One wonders what are the reasons behind this obvious asymmetry. Is it the continuation among researchers of the tradition that men and masculinity are to be treated as the 'norm' against which women and femininity and female linguistic practices need to be scrutinized? Or is it, perhaps, the fact that the social pressures and social expectations 'disallow' men from divulging their inner failures and tribulations, including those associated with second language learning, thus making female informants more accessible and more informative? We may never find out.

In an attempt to bring some symmetry to research on gender and second language acquisition, this chapter focuses on one male's language development in a new linguistic and social reality. The research results are based on an eth-